

Groton Daily Independent

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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: Groton vs. Sisseton at 2 p.m. in the championship game.

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PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445

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



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.

Monday, July 28

Senior Menu: Sloopy joe on bun, oven roasted potatoes, winter blend, apricots.

Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, with Potluck at noon.

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

Jr. Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton

Jr. Teeners Regional TBD

Groton Soccer Camp

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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.

Wrestling Legend Dies

Pro wrestling star Hulk Hogan died of cardiac arrest yesterday at age 71. The two-time World Wrestling Entertainment Hall of Famer and six-time WWE champion was a cultural icon, elevating pro wrestling to a multibillion-dollar industry in the 1980s.

Hogan was born Terry Bollea in 1953 in Augusta, Georgia. He began his wrestling career in 1977, eventually taking on the comic-book-inspired alias "Hulk" (Hogan measured over 6 feet, 7 inches tall, at one point weighing 320 pounds). Hogan was known for firing up crowds, cupping his ear to encourage cheering, and shredding his shirt. He headlined the first-ever WrestleMania in 1985 and seven other times, drawing tens of thousands of attendees.

Hogan also starred in cartoons, a reality TV series, and movies including "Rocky III" (1982) and "Mr. Nanny" (1993). He won a privacy lawsuit against celebrity website Gawker in 2016 and spoke at the 2024 Republican National Convention.

Thailand-Cambodia Border Dispute

Clashes between Thai and Cambodian troops erupted yesterday, escalating a longstanding border dispute that has left at least 11 dead, including an 8-year-old boy, and wounded several others. Fighting began near disputed ancient temple sites like Ta Moan Thom and Preah Vihear, involving artillery, rocket fire, and at least one F-16 jet. Both nations closed border crossings and blamed each other for initiating the violence.

The border dispute dates back over a century to when France—which occupied Cambodia from 1863 to 1953—mapped the 508-mile border mostly along a natural watershed. However, the map placed Preah Vihear—which lies on the Thai side of the watershed—in Cambodia. Thailand accepted this map until the 1930s, when it conducted its own land survey of the watershed, eventually contesting the map to the International Court of Justice. In 1962, the court ruled the temple belonged to Cambodia.

Recent violence escalated after a Cambodian soldier was killed and Thai troops were wounded by land mines in May. Similar clashes in 2011 killed 20 people and displaced thousands.

Fertility Rate Falls

The US fertility rate dropped to an all-time low last year, with fewer than 1.6 children born per woman, federal data revealed yesterday.

The report highlights a decline since 1957, when the rate peaked at 3.8 births per woman. Until 1971, the US was among the few developed countries that consistently saw enough births to replace older generations: about 2.1 children per woman. Today's rate resembles those long seen in Western Europe; fertility rates have been dropping worldwide.

The decline in the US is partly attributed to women having children later or not at all. Despite the falling total fertility rate, births among women aged 40 to 44 have almost continuously increased since 1985.

Immigration increasingly drives population growth, with an uptick in childbearing women contributing to a 1% rise in births last year compared with 2023. As the Trump administration moves to curb immigration, it has proposed boosting the birthrate through expanded IVF access and newborn savings accounts.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Comic-Con International 2025, the world's biggest comic book and pop culture convention, kicks off in San Diego; see full schedule of TV and movie panels.

Chuck Mangione, two-time Grammy-winning jazz musician who released more than 30 albums, dies at age 84.

The 112th Tour de France wraps this weekend; see updated standings heading into final stages.

All five charged members of Canada's junior world hockey team found not guilty of 2018 sexual assault.

Science & Technology

OpenAI to release GPT-5, the latest version of its flagship large language model, in August; reports suggest upgrade will include a new version of its video generator, Sora.

Grand Canyon fossil discovery reveals a number of new complex species; discovery helps fill in the fossil record during the Cambrian explosion, roughly 500 million years ago.

Researchers identify genes that, when "turned off," inhibit the ability of the Ebola virus to infect hosts; findings may lead to new treatments for emerging diseases.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.1%, Dow -0.7%, Nasdaq +0.2%); S&P 500, Nasdaq close at fresh records.

Southwest shares close down 11% after airline trims full-year profit.

Intel beats Q2 revenue estimates; plans to cut 15% of workforce.

UnitedHealth faces federal criminal and civil investigations over its Medicare billing practices; America's largest private insurer also launches third-party review of its business policies.

Federal Communications Commission approves Skydance Media's \$8B acquisition of Paramount.

President Donald Trump visits Federal Reserve headquarters in Washington, DC, to tour the central bank's estimated \$2.5B renovation project; Trump and Fed Chair Jerome Powell publicly disagree on estimated cost.

Politics & World Affairs

Justice Department launches strike force to investigate claims by Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard of wrongdoing by Obama-era intelligence officials following 2016 election.

DOJ meets with Ghislaine Maxwell, former associate of sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein.

The US cuts short Gaza ceasefire talks, accuses Hamas of negotiating in bad faith after group's response to latest proposal.

Two people in Gaza die of malnutrition over the past 24 hours, per Gaza health officials.

France says it will recognize Palestine as a state in September, first G7 country to do so.

Russian passenger plane crashes in the country's far east, killing all 48 people onboard; cause of the crash was not immediately clear.

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Ace of Hearts Drawing

The Ace of Hearts drawing was held Thursday night at the Groton American Legion. The jackpot was \$5,821. Ticket sales for the week was \$370. The name of Lisa Adler was drawn. She picked card 22 which was the 10 of Hearts. She won the consolation prize of \$37.

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Boston Marlow gets ready to mark the spot where Superintendent Joe Schwan is pointing. Earlier in the day Groton Area Maintenance Director Ryan Scepaniak and one of his helpers cleaned the multipurpose facility at the skating pond. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Names Released in Beadle County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 14, mile marker 344, near West Park Avenue, Huron, SD

When: 7:54 a.m., Monday, July 21, 2025

Driver 1: Caleb William Schuette, 31-year-old male from Miller, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2001 Buick LeSabre

Seat belt Used: Yes

Driver 2: Jeremy Elmer Getscher, 34-year-old male from Wolsey, SD, no injuries

Vehicle 2: 2007 Kenworth Construction T800

Seat belt Used: Yes

Beadle County, S.D.- A Miller, SD man died in a two-vehicle crash Monday morning in Huron, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Caleb William Schuette, the driver of a 2001 Buick LeSabre, was traveling northbound on West Park Avenue and failed to yield at the stop sign and entered the intersection at US Highway 14. A semi, driven by Jeremy Elmer Getscher, was traveling eastbound on Highway 14 and collided with the Buick. The Buick came to rest in the northwest ditch and the semi came to rest in the eastbound lanes of US 14, closing the highway for approximately five hours.

Schuette sustained fatal injuries. Getscher was not injured.

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

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



FACT BRIEF

Fact brief: Is chislic recognized as a state symbol in South Dakota?

July 24, 2025

FACT BRIEF

Yes.

South Dakota officially designated chislic, a dish of fried or grilled salted cubes of meat sometimes served on skewers, as the official state “nosh” in 2018.

The bite-sized food has been a uniquely South Dakota dish since the late 1800s, when the German-Russian immigrant John Hoellwarth is credited with bringing it to the United States. The term “chislic” likely came from the Turkic “shashlyk” – a dish of skewered and grilled meat. In Russia, it consists of meat cubes grilled over an open fire.

Chislic is mostly found in southeastern South Dakota, and the town of Freeman is considered the Chislic Capital of America. It also can be found in other German Russian communities.

In 2018, Freeman hosted the first South Dakota Chislic Festival, and 8,000 people showed up after organizers expected 2,000. The 2025 event will be held July 26 and will move to an every-other year format.

Groton Legion Post 39 Victorious Over Big Stone City Badgers

By GameChanger Media

Groton Legion Post 39 were triumphant over Big Stone City Badgers 6-1 on Thursday in the championship semifinal of the Region Tournament being played in Sisseton. Groton will play Sisseton in the championship game today at 2 p.m.

Groton Legion Post 39 were the first to get on the board in the first when Gavin Englund singled, scoring two runs.

A single by Nick Morris extended the Groton Legion Post 39 lead to 3-0 in the bottom of the third inning.

Jarrett Erdmann stepped on the hill first for Groton Legion Post 39. The hurler surrendered seven hits and one run over six and two-thirds innings, striking out five and walking four. Isaac Brown started on the mound for Big Stone City Badgers. The starting pitcher surrendered 10 hits and six runs (four earned) over six innings, striking out five and walking none.

Groton Legion Post 39 accumulated 10 hits in the game. Alex Abeln, Groton Legion Post 39's number eight hitter, led the team with three hits in three at-bats. Morris and Englund were tough to handle back-to-back in the lineup, as each drove in two runs for Groton Legion Post 39. Brevin Fliehs and Carter Simon each collected multiple hits for Groton Legion Post 39. Teylor Diegel stole two bases. Groton Legion Post 39 ran wild on the base paths, piling up four stolen bases for the game. Groton Legion Post 39 turned one double play in the game.

Braxton Brandriet led Big Stone City Badgers with two hits in four at bats from the leadoff position. Connor Ohm led Big Stone City Badgers with one run batted in. The right-handed hitter went 1-for-2 on the day. Kirby Olson stole two bases.

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Groton Locke Electric Defeat Hitmen Amateurs On Multiple Hit Performance By Ty Sieber

By GameChanger Media

Ty Sieber collected three hits in six at bats, as Groton Locke Electric defeated Hitmen Amateurs 9-8 on Thursday. Sieber doubled in the fifth inning, singled in the ninth inning, and singled in the ninth inning.

Groton Locke Electric rallied for the victory despite trailing 5-1 in the fifth.

Hitmen Amateurs were the first to get on the board in the third when Gunner Brueggeman drew a walk, scoring one run.

Groton Locke Electric flipped the game on its head in the top of the ninth, scoring six runs on four hits to take the lead, 9-6. The biggest blow in the inning was a single by Sieber that drove in two.

Wyatt Locke earned the win for Groton Locke Electric. The pitcher allowed four hits and two runs over two-thirds of an inning, striking out one and walking one. Brueggeman took the loss for Hitmen Amateurs. The hurler went two innings, allowing five runs on five hits, striking out three and walking two. Ryan Groeblichhoff stepped on the bump first for Groton Locke Electric. The starting pitcher allowed five hits and five runs over six innings, striking out 10 and walking four. Layne Cotton stepped on the bump first for Hitmen Amateurs. The starting pitcher allowed six hits and two runs over six innings, striking out seven and walking three. Jonah Schmidt threw one and two-thirds innings of zero-run ball for Groton Locke Electric in relief. The hurler allowed zero hits, striking out one and walking one.

Groton Locke Electric tallied 12 hits in the game. Brian Hansen and Dylan Frey each collected multiple hits for Groton Locke Electric. Groton Locke Electric had patience at the plate, amassing eight walks for the game. Locke and Cade Larson led the team with two walks each. Groton Locke Electric didn't commit a single error in the field. Larson had the most chances in the field with 12.

Hitmen Amateurs collected 10 hits in the game. Cotton provided pop in the middle of the lineup, and led Hitmen Amateurs with two runs batted in. The pitcher went 2-for-5 on the day. Blaze Herdman led Hitmen Amateurs with three hits in five at bats. Brueggeman and Beau Kirsch each collected multiple hits for Hitmen Amateurs. Hitmen Amateurs had patience at the plate, piling up nine walks for the game. Ryan Engle, Tyler Cunningham, and Miles McPeak led the team with two free passes each. Herdman stole two bases. Hitmen Amateurs didn't commit a single error in the field. Brueggeman had the most chances in the field with eight.

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Groton Locke Electric 9 - 8 Hitmen Amateurs

📍 Away 📅 Thursday July 24, 2025

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	R	H	E
GRTN	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	6	9	12	0
HTMN	0	0	2	0	3	0	0	1	2	8	10	0

BATTING

Groton Locke Electric	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
T Sieber #24 (SS)	6	1	3	3	0	0
D Frey #6 (RF)	5	1	2	1	0	3
C Cama... #10 (C)	1	0	0	0	0	0
B Althoff #1 (3B)	5	1	1	1	0	0
J Schmidt #21 (CF)	4	2	1	0	1	0
B Hansen #18 (1B)	5	1	2	0	0	0
W Locke #38 (2B)	3	1	1	0	2	2
A Jones #7 (LF)	4	1	1	2	1	3
C Larson #17 (C)	2	1	1	0	2	1
S Locke #15 (2B)	0	0	0	1	1	0
R Groebli... #0 (P)	4	0	0	0	1	2
Totals	39	9	12	8	8	11

2B: T Sieber, D Frey, B Althoff, **TB:** T Sieber 4, B Hansen 2, D Frey 3, J Schmidt, B Althoff 2, A Jones, C Larson, W Locke, **LOB:** 11

PITCHING

Groton Locke Electric	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
R Groebli... #0	6.0	5	5	5	4	10	0
J Schmi... #21	1.2	0	0	0	1	1	0
T Sieber #24	0.2	1	1	1	3	1	0
W Locke #38	0.2	4	2	2	1	1	0
Totals	9.0	10	8	8	9	13	0

W: W Locke, **P-S:** T Sieber 20-5, R Groeblichhoff 110-68, J Schmidt 25-14, W Locke 28-12, **WP:** T Sieber, R Groeblichhoff 4, W Locke, **HBP:** W Locke, **BF:** T Sieber 5, R Groeblichhoff 27, J Schmidt 6, W Locke 7

Hitmen Amateurs	AB	R	H	RBI	BB	SO
C Stephe... #11 (1B)	4	2	1	0	1	1
B Herdm... #24 (SS)	5	2	3	0	0	0
L Cotton #4 (P)	5	2	2	2	0	1
G Bruegge... #1 (C)	4	1	2	0	1	2
B Kirsch #30 (3B)	5	0	2	1	0	2
R Engle #25 (LF)	2	1	0	0	2	1
M McPeak #17 (RF)	3	0	0	0	2	3
T Cunnin... #15 (2B)	3	0	0	0	2	1
P McDo... #29 (CF)	4	0	0	1	1	2
Totals	35	8	10	4	9	13

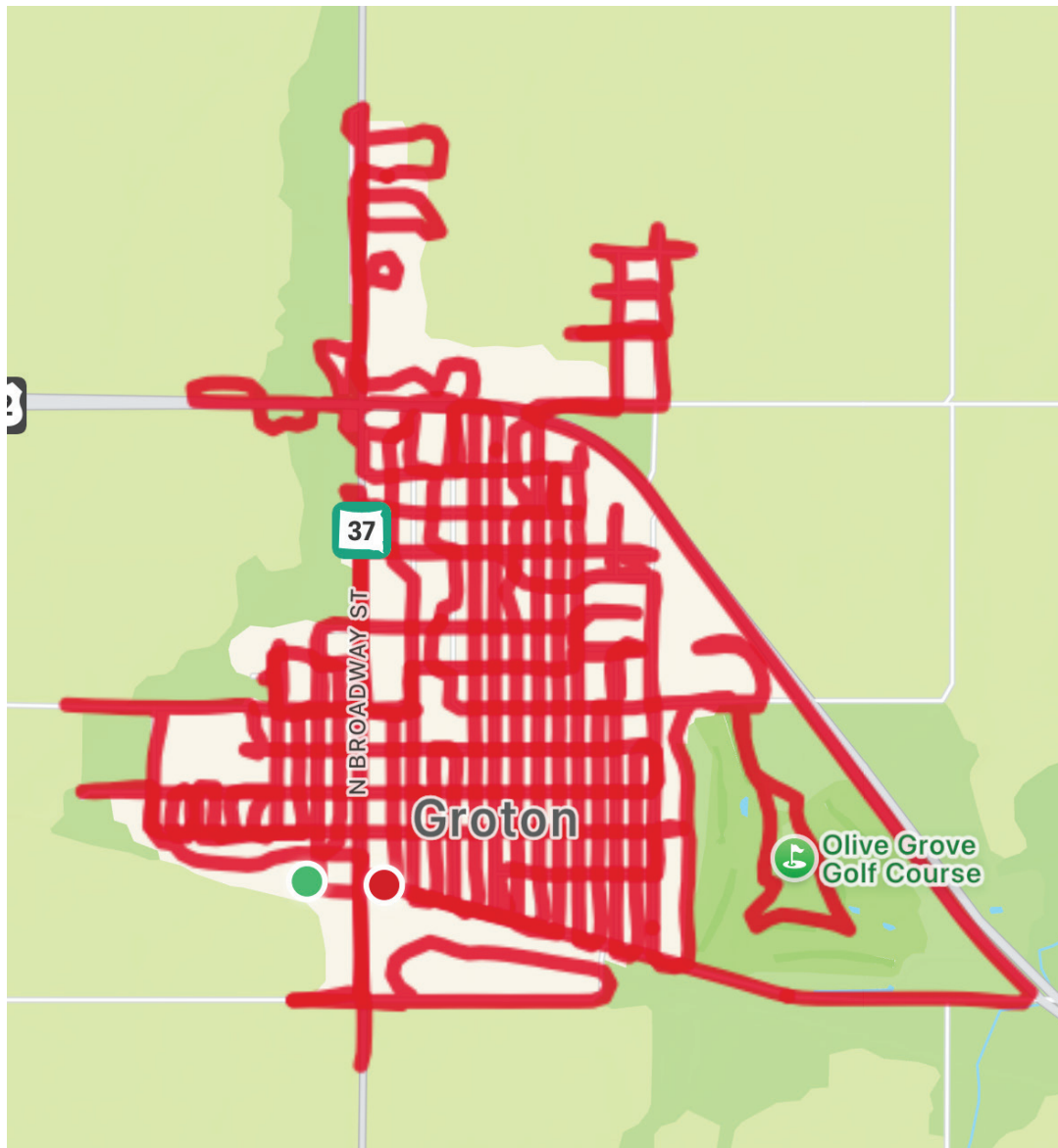
2B: B Kirsch, **3B:** L Cotton, **TB:** B Herdman 3, B Kirsch 3, C Stephenson, G Brueggeman 2, L Cotton 4, **HBP:** R Engle, **SB:** B Herdman 2, **LOB:** 10

Hitmen Amateurs	IP	H	R	ER	BB	SO	HR
L Cotton #4	6.0	6	2	2	3	7	0
G Brueg... #1	2.0	5	5	5	2	3	0
C Steph... #11	1.0	1	2	2	3	1	0
Totals	9.0	12	9	9	8	11	0

L: G Brueggeman, **P-S:** C Stephenson 31-16, G Brueggeman 50-26, L Cotton 108-68, **WP:** G Brueggeman 4, L Cotton 2, **BF:** C Stephenson 7, G Brueggeman 13, L Cotton 27

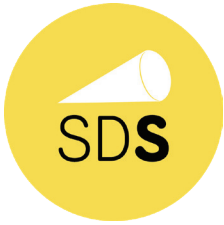
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Adult Mosquito Control

The City of Groton conducted adult mosquito control last night. The temperature was 70-78 degrees with the wind out of the SSW the first hour and SSE after that at less than 5 mph. 10.3 gallons of MasterLine Kontrol 4-4 (with 4.6% Permethrin. Travel time was 2 hours and 49 minutes with a distance of 34.32 miles. During my travels I saw 18 rabbits, 6 cats and 4 geese. Total cost of the application was around \$611.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Federal funding uncertainty risks destroying adult education programs in South Dakota, directors say

Centers count on government help to serve nearly 2,000 people in the state, including those taking GED exams and learning English

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - JULY 24, 2025 12:48 PM

Autumn Tree Top knows what a high school certificate means.

It can mean higher pay, college and a career.

It can mean setting an example for her children.

It can mean stability, fulfillment and confidence.

Each morning, the 29-year-old mother of three wakes up early and goes to school at the Career Learning Center of the Black Hills. She works at Taco John's as a shift manager and lives at OneHeart transitional housing in Rapid City.

Tree Top, who is Lakota, wants to become a social worker, or perhaps work with kids. She believes her personal experience with addiction, dropping out of school, homelessness and interacting with the justice system will help her connect with those she serves. Staff at the center are helping her decide what path is best.

She started working toward her high school equivalency certificate this year and just has to pass her math test before her children can watch her walk across the stage.

"It's challenging. But it's helping me feel like I'm achieving something I missed an opportunity for a long time ago," Tree Top said. "Now I get that chance again."

That chance is in jeopardy for thousands of South Dakotans like Tree Top, according to directors of adult education centers.

The U.S. Department of Education paused distribution of \$6.8 billion in congressionally approved funds for schools and educational programs on June 30, saying it was reviewing the funding to ensure it's spent "in accordance with the President's priorities and the Department's statutory responsibilities." The department has since released \$1.3 billion for summer programs and before- and after-school programs, but the rest remains out of reach for schools and adult education centers.

Advocates warn of economic 'ripple effect'

Adult education programs help students prepare for high school equivalency exams, such as the GED



Autumn Tree Top works on a math problem on July 17, 2025, at the Career Learning Center of the Black Hills in Rapid City. (Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

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tests. That credential allows South Dakotans to apply for college, enroll in an apprenticeship program or apply for a job that requires a diploma. The programs can also offer civics and citizenship instruction; workplace, health, family and digital literacy training; and correctional education for prisoners reentering society.

Adult education advocates worry not only about the paused funding, but about potential future funding cuts, said Sharon Bonney, CEO of the Coalition on Adult Basic Education. President Donald Trump has attempted to dismantle the federal Department of Education, and his budget request in May included \$12 billion in spending cuts for the department. Some advocacy groups have said the budget proposal doesn't include funding for adult education.

Given the "number of victories" Trump has secured this year, Bonney expects "he'll have his way" on education spending, too.

Bonney said programs nationwide anticipate layoffs and closures. That would create a ripple effect in the workforce and economy, she said, keeping people from getting the education they need to find a job, go to college or increase their pay.

South Dakota reported 1,833 adult learners in the state based on the latest available data. Just under 15,000 working-age adults in South Dakota aren't in the workforce and don't have a GED certificate, while another 39,129 are working without high school credentials, according to the National Reporting System for Adult Education.

Loss in federal funding 'destroys' South Dakota programs

Federal funding on average accounts for 45% of adult education government funding in South Dakota, based on 2024 grant awards.

South Dakota programs haven't received \$1.4 million in funding due to the freeze. In 2024, four adult education organizations and two school districts received a combined total of \$1.26 million in federal funds to operate. The state covered another \$1.2 million.

The state Department of Labor and Regulation is sending adult education organizations some funding leftover from last year's grants and state general fund appropriations. The money will help fill gaps through the end of September, according to a department spokesperson.

Black Hills Special Services operates the Career Learning Center that Tree Top attends. It received \$513,710 in combined state and federal funding in 2024 — 100% of its operating budget, according to Stephenie Rittberger, adult education coordinator. Federal funding accounts for 32% of its budget.

Of its 517 students, 428 self-report as low-income, a majority are Native American, 101 live in unstable housing and 68 experienced homelessness in the last year.

Demand for adult education is growing in the Black Hills and Rapid City area, Rittberger said. Less federal funding could mean cutting programs and forcing students to sit on waiting lists.

A 32% gap in funding due to the federal loss is something Rittberger said local businesses and local governments can't fill, especially when they're already contributing. While state and local funding make up the center's entire operating budget, other entities donate space for classes. One local nonprofit provides funding for test scholarships, which students would have to pay for otherwise.

"I can't expand, I can't look at what's better or what's next," Rittberger said. "I need to look at how to keep my sites as best I can because I know when rural places or Rapid City loses a service, it takes years to get it back."

For Cornerstones Career Learning Center, a Huron-based adult learning program with offices across eastern South Dakota, a nearly 50% shortfall in its operating budget "destroys" its program. It will have to cut the number of people served or shrink the geographical area, said Executive Director Kim Olson.

The organization receives more from the state and federal government than any other adult education center in South Dakota: \$783,310 in 2024, including \$392,810 from the federal government. It provides virtual adult education classes to 836 people across the eastern half of the state.

Rittberger and Olson said adult learning centers plan to ask for more state funding to replace the po-

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tential loss in federal funding. Meanwhile, legislators learned this week that they're facing a tight budget next year with revenue potentially \$25 million short of projections.

Adult education delivers a return on investment, advocates say

Students and staff both feel the stress of the funding freeze, Rittberger said. Teachers feel devalued, and students are worried they'll lose a safe place to learn.

Cynthia Roan Eagle, 54, has been working toward her GED certificate since 2002. Roan Eagle, who is a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, said she is disabled, stemming from an abusive childhood that kept her from graduating high school.

"It's been trying. I've been off and on because of jobs or because I lost the motivation," Roan Eagle said. "But now I have it. I'm doing this for myself. No one is going to get my diploma for me."

Roan Eagle works on a mobile cleaning crew at Ellsworth Air Force Base, a job she secured through disability services organization Black Hills Works. Her pay increased from \$11.25 to \$17.25 an hour because of her increased critical thinking skills and passing subtests on her way to get her GED certificate.

After more than two decades watching her friends and peers earn their credentials, she's ready. She plans to pass her last test in January and perhaps start taking college courses through Oglala Lakota College or at Black Hills State University. She said Rittberger offered to sit in on some classes with her to see if it's the right fit.

"If this program is pulled, there's no way to do this. You can't get a good paying job, you can't go on to higher education, you can't do anything," Roan Eagle said. "We need this program because it helps a lot of people, including myself."

English classes, literacy 'help America become great'

At Cornerstones, 69% of students are English language learners, while the remainder are working on their GED exams.

Rosemary Hicks earned her GED diploma at 58 years old in March. Originally from Brazil, Hicks and her teenage daughter were deserted by their abusive husband and father in the United States while visiting on a tourist visa in 2017, she said. While she stayed in a women's shelter in Huron, she was encouraged to take English classes and apply for a green card to become a U.S. citizen.

Hicks is on track to earn her citizenship in September. After that, she plans to take college courses to start a new career in psychology. She currently cleans rooms at the Huron Regional Medical Center — a job she was only able to secure after passing her GED tests.

Earning a better education earns a better future for herself and her daughter, she said, but also for her new country. Without Cornerstones, Hicks said, she wouldn't have been able to advance in her life or work.

"I feel safe here. I feel comfortable here. I feel grateful, and I will say to everybody: Stay in school until you can do that," she said. "No matter if you're a young adult at 25 or a grandma like me at 58, the important thing is to continue and learn and help America become great."

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.

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Trump signs law yanking \$9B from NPR, PBS, foreign aid

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JULY 24, 2025 5:23 PM

President Donald Trump signed into law Thursday the bill Congress passed earlier this month to revoke \$9 billion in previously approved spending for public broadcasting and foreign aid.

Trump's signature was expected after his Office of Management and Budget compiled the list of requested rescissions.

Congressional Republicans approved a small slice of what the White House initially wanted, but the effort still represents a win for Trump, who used small majorities in both chambers of Congress to claw back money approved in bipartisan spending laws.

The law rescinds \$1.1 billion for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a congressionally chartered nonprofit that provides a small share of funding for National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service but accounts for much larger portions of local public broadcasters' revenue. The funding had been approved to cover the next two fiscal years.

The law also cancels about \$8 billion in foreign aid accounts, including global health initiatives.

Republicans have long criticized NPR and PBS news programs as biased toward politically liberal points of view, while Trump's America First movement has consistently called for reducing foreign aid.

The law does not touch the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, after Senate Republicans removed a provision to defund the program created during Republican George W. Bush's presidency.

No Democrats voted for the law. Two Republicans in each chamber — Sens. Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Reps. Brian Fitzpatrick of Pennsylvania and Mike Turner of Ohio — voted against it.

It passed 51-48 in the Senate and 216-213 in the House. Each chamber took votes in the wee hours as Republicans raced to meet a July 18 deadline.

Senate Appropriations Vice Chair Patty Murray, a Washington Democrat, warned the move undermined the annual appropriations process, which typically involves consideration of rescissions requests during bipartisan negotiations over government spending.

Congress last approved a stand-alone rescissions bill in 1992, following a series of requests from President George H.W. Bush, according to a report from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service.

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.



National Public Radio headquarters on North Capitol Street in Washington, D.C., on Tuesday, July 15, 2025. (Photo by Jacob Fischler/States Newsroom)

Jury orders former prison warden to pay inmate \$105,000 for poor nutrition

State mum on appeals, and on whether it will pay damages in federal civil rights case

BY: JOHN HULT - JULY 24, 2025 5:07 PM

A Sioux Falls jury ordered a former state prison warden to pay \$105,000 in damages to an inmate after a federal civil rights trial, but it's unclear if the warden or state will pay the award.

Mark Christians, 45, sued a series of Department of Corrections employees in 2020, alleging that inadequate nutrition caused him to lose 90 pounds between 2017 and 2018 at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield. He also alleged that prison food had made him ill and left him with permanent health conditions.

In 2022, he amended his lawsuit to include allegations of cruel and unusual punishment during a 2021 stay in disciplinary housing at the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

Christians lost weight during that two-month period, as well.

He'd been sent to the penitentiary's Special Housing Unit for fighting with another inmate, court documents say. But he alleged he was held there longer than intended because he'd gone on hunger strike to protest over his meals. He'd lost weight during his first 11 days in confinement, his lawsuit said.

U.S. District Judge Lawrence Piersol dismissed many of Christians' claims and released multiple defendants from liability in the years after the inmate filed his lawsuits. Christians represented himself for most of those years.

Piersol appointed Christians two lawyers this spring to handle the trial — stretched across four days this month in Sioux Falls, with a break for the weekend — on his claims about inadequate nutrition and punishment claims.

The remaining defendants included Brent Fluke, the former warden at the Springfield prison, and Darin Young, the former penitentiary warden.

Jurors were instructed, according to court documents, that the U.S. Constitution's Eighth Amendment "requires prison officials to provide prisoners with humane conditions of confinement, including nutritionally adequate meals to maintain health." The Eighth Amendment bars cruel and unusual punishment.

Another jury instruction asked the panel to decide if Christians' meals were "nutritionally inadequate," if the defendants knew he'd likely be harmed as a result, that they showed "deliberate indifference" to that harm, and that Christians actually experienced that harm.

Jurors answered "yes" to each of those questions for both Fluke and Young. Fluke was ordered to pay \$1 in "nominal" damages, meaning those directly related to Christians' claims about his nutrition in Springfield.



The federal courthouse in Sioux Falls. (John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

Fluke was not ordered to pay punitive damages, which are levied as a punishment. Young was ordered to pay \$5,000 in nominal damages and \$100,000 in punitive damages. None of the other defendants were found liable for Christians' weight loss.

Unclear who might pay damages

The former state employees were represented by lawyers from Attorney General Marty Jackley's office. A spokesman for that office said the decision on whether to appeal or otherwise challenge the validity of the verdict lies with the Department of Corrections. That department's spokesman, meanwhile, said it cannot comment on ongoing litigation.

Tyler Haigh of Sioux Falls, one of two lawyers who represented Christians, also declined to comment, citing the ongoing legal case.

Neither Haigh, nor lawyers for the state, have commented on who might ultimately be responsible to pay damages to Christians if the verdict stands.

South Dakota has an insurance pool called the Public Entity Pool for Liability that covers certain expenses related to lawsuits involving current or former employees. Under South Dakota law, though, that fund cannot be used to pay punitive damages in civil court cases.

The state also has an Extraordinary Litigation Fund, designed to cover "plaintiff attorney fee awards, retention of outside counsel, settlement costs, or other litigation expenses not otherwise eligible to be paid" by the pool.

Both funds are managed by the Bureau of Administration, whose commissioner, Darin Seeley, did not respond to a request for comment.

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.

Trump framework for compensating college athletes limits some payments

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA - JULY 24, 2025 6:15 PM

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump signed an executive order Thursday that bars payments from university boosters and some other private-sector donors to college athletes.

The NCAA changed its rules in 2021 to allow athletes to profit from their own name, image and likeness, or NIL. A White House fact sheet Thursday said third-party payments from boosters and other private donors "created a chaotic environment that threatens the financial and structural viability of college athletics."

"Waves of recent litigation against collegiate athletics governing rules have eliminated limits on athlete compensation, pay-for-play recruiting inducements, and transfers between universities, unleashing a sea change that threatens the viability of college sports,"



Rice-Eccles Stadium on the University of Utah campus in Salt Lake City is pictured on Monday, Jan. 15, 2024. (Photo by Spenser Heaps for Utah News Dispatch)

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the order said.

A patchwork of laws exists across states, with no federal NIL law in place. A federal judge in June approved the terms of a nearly \$2.8 billion antitrust settlement, which paved the way for schools to directly pay athletes.

"While changes providing some increased benefits and flexibility to student-athletes were overdue and should be maintained, the inability to maintain reasonable rules and guardrails is a mortal threat to most college sports," the executive order said.

According to the White House fact sheet, the order's prohibition of "third-party, pay-for-play payments" does not apply to "legitimate, fair-market-value compensation that a third party provides to an athlete, such as for a brand endorsement."

The order also seeks to preserve and expand "opportunities for scholarships and collegiate athletic competition in women's and non-revenue sports" and calls on the secretary of Labor and the National Labor Relations Board to clarify the "status" of college-athletes.

A day before the order, two U.S. House panels advanced a measure that would set a national framework for college athletes' compensation and bar them from being recognized as employees.

That bill, the Student Compensation and Opportunity through Rights and Endorsements Act, or "SCORE Act," was approved in the House Energy and Commerce and Education and Workforce committees, which both have jurisdiction.

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

Tumult over Epstein files dogs Trump in both DC and Florida

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY AND CHRISTINE SEXTON - JULY 24, 2025 5:14 PM

WASHINGTON — The fallout over President Donald Trump's handling of financier and Florida sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's case files permeated business on Capitol Hill Thursday, as Senate Democrats urged release of the information.

Meanwhile, in Tallahassee, Florida, a top Department of Justice official interviewed Ghislaine Maxwell, Epstein's former girlfriend and a key figure in the growing controversy.

Members of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary accused their Republican counterparts on the panel of "concealing the Epstein files" after they voted to quash an amendment from New Jersey's Sen. Cory Booker, who proposed tying the start date of an opioid data collection bill to the release of Epstein case material.

The committee's tumult came a day after U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson sent his members home early for their six-week August break to avoid voting on efforts by both House Democrats and Republicans to make the files public.

Before heading back to their districts, three House Republicans voted Wednesday with Democrats on a House Committee on Oversight panel to subpoena the Department of Justice to turn over all Epstein investigation records. GOP Reps. Nancy Mace of South Carolina, Scott Perry of Pennsylvania and Brian Jack of Georgia voted in favor of the push led by Pennsylvania Democrat Summer Lee.

Earlier, House Oversight Chair James Comer of Kentucky issued a subpoena for an Aug. 11 deposition with Maxwell, who is serving a 20-year prison sentence in Florida for conspiring with the financier to sexually abuse girls.

'Lies and obfuscation'

Epstein died in his New York City jail cell in 2019 while awaiting trial on federal charges for sex trafficking minors. He pleaded guilty in 2008 in Florida for procuring and soliciting minors for sex.

The wealthy broker was surrounded by a powerful circle of friends, including Trump. Attorney General Pam Bondi informed the president in May that his name appeared among many others in the case files,

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The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday. The context in which Trump's name appears is unclear.

"We had the power today, the possibility today, to force out the truth regarding the Epstein files and the lies and the obfuscation that is happening by this administration," Booker said after the GOP-led panel advanced an amendment offered by Republican Sen. John Cornyn of Texas that rendered Booker's effort moot.

Booker eventually withdrew his amendment after roughly 40 minutes of back-and-forth in the middle of a vote, and after Sen. Lindsey Graham vowed to help him with a separate funding issue related to the underlying bill to address opioid overdose deaths.

"What we're trying to do with this bill is really good, and there's no end to this (Epstein debate). If this is a headline about 'Cornyn blocks transparency of Epstein,' then that would be sad because he's responding to your amendment that would make the bill, quite frankly, fail," said the South Carolina Republican. "I don't think it's helpful."



The Federal Corrections Institution in Tallahassee, Florida, photographed on Thursday, July 24, 2025. Ghislaine Maxwell, former girlfriend of the late financier and Florida sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, is serving a 20-year sentence at the low-security prison for conspiring with Epstein to sexually abuse girls. (Photo

by Christine Sexton/Florida Phoenix)

Schumer calls for private Senate briefing

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer also put a spotlight on the Epstein case in his floor remarks Thursday, calling for the Trump administration to provide a closed-door briefing for all senators on details uncovered during the Epstein investigation, including whose names appeared in relation to the sex offender.

"The Senate deserves to hear directly from senior administration officials about Donald Trump's name appearing in these files and the complete lack of transparency shown to date," Schumer said.

Trump and his supporters, including some now working in his administration, dealt in conspiracy theories for years on the information surrounding the Epstein case, including whose names turned up during the investigation and the circumstances of his death.

A July 7 Department of Justice memo poured cold water on the fervor, declaring no incriminating "client list" exists and that officials would not be releasing any materials because of the risk of revealing victim identities. The department concluded Epstein harmed over 1,000 victims.

Trump answered swift and sharp criticism from his voter base by calling them "weaklings" for falling for a "Jeffrey Epstein hoax" in several social media posts.

In lieu of releasing the files, he ordered the unsealing of grand jury testimony in the case, which a Florida federal judge blocked Wednesday.

The president also told reporters that it was "appropriate" for Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche, his former criminal defense lawyer, to interview Maxwell.

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Interview at Florida federal courthouse

Blanche traveled to Florida, where reporters Thursday waited at the Joseph Woodrow Hatchett United States Courthouse and Federal Building in downtown Tallahassee, where the U.S. attorney's office is located. The courthouse is about 4 miles from the city's Federal Correctional Institution, where Maxwell is serving time.

Blanche arrived around 9 a.m. Eastern at the courthouse, according to media reports. Maxwell's appellate lawyer, David O. Markus, told ABC News, "We're looking forward to a productive day" and declined further comment.

Markus, a Miami-based attorney with the firm Markus/Moss PLLC, emerged just before 4 p.m. Eastern and told news media outside the courthouse, including the Florida Phoenix, that Blanche "took a full day and asked a lot of questions, and Ms. Maxwell answered every single question."

"She never invoked a privilege, she never declined to answer. She answered all the questions truthfully, honestly and to the best of her ability, and that's all the comment we're going to have about the meeting. We don't want to comment on the substance of the meeting for obvious reasons," Markus said.

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

Christine Sexton has spent more than 30 years reporting on Florida health care, insurance policy, and state politics and has covered the state's last six governors. She lives in Tallahassee.

USDA in sweeping reorganization to ship some DC workers to 5 regional centers

BY: JACOB FISCHLER - JULY 24, 2025 1:47 PM

The U.S. Department of Agriculture plans to slash its presence in the Washington, D.C., area by sending employees to five regional hubs, Secretary Brooke Rollins said Thursday.

The department wants to reduce its workforce in the District of Columbia, Maryland and Virginia from 4,600 to less than 2,000 and add workers to regional offices in Raleigh, North Carolina; Kansas City, Missouri; Indianapolis; Fort Collins, Colorado; and Salt Lake City.

The department will also maintain administrative support locations in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Minneapolis and agency service centers in St. Louis; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Missoula, Montana, according to a memorandum signed by Rollins.



The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building in Washington, D.C., pictured on Dec. 18, 2017. (USDA

photo by Preston Keres)

The effort, which the memo said is expected to take years, will move the USDA geographically closer to

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its constituents of farmers, ranchers and foresters, Rollins said in a press release.

"American agriculture feeds, clothes, and fuels this nation and the world, and it is long past time the Department better serve the great and patriotic farmers, ranchers, and producers we are mandated to support," Rollins said.

"President Trump was elected to make real change in Washington, and we are doing just that by moving our key services outside the beltway and into great American cities across the country. We will do so through a transparent and common-sense process that preserves USDA's critical health and public safety services the American public relies on."

U.S. Sen. Todd Young, an Indiana Republican, called the announcement "very exciting news for Hoosiers."

"Great to see these services move outside of DC and into places like Indiana that feed our nation," he wrote on X.

Top Ag Democrat critical

U.S. Rep. Angie Craig, the top Democrat on the House Agriculture Committee, slammed the plan, saying it would diminish the department's workforce and that Rollins should have consulted with Congress first before putting it in place.

The move by President Donald Trump's first administration to move USDA's Economic Research Service and National Institute of Food and Agriculture out of Washington, D.C., resulted in a "brain drain" in the agencies, as 75% of affected employees quit, Craig said.

"To expect different results for the rest of USDA is foolish and naive," she said Thursday. "Sadly, farmers will pay the price through a reduction in the quality and quantity of service they already receive from the department."

She called on the committee's chairman, Pennsylvania Republican Glenn "G.T." Thompson, to hold a hearing on the issue.

"That the Administration did not consult with Congress on a planned reorganization of this magnitude is unacceptable," Craig added. "I call on Chairman Thompson to hold a hearing on this issue as soon as possible to get answers. We need to hear from affected stakeholders and know what data and analysis USDA decisionmakers used to plan this reorganization."

Pay rates

The USDA release also appealed to the plan's cost efficiencies. By moving workers out of the expensive Washington, D.C. area, the department would avoid the extra pay workers in the region are entitled to, the department said.

Federal workers are eligible for increased pay based on the cost of living in the city in which they're employed.

Washington has among the highest rates, boosting pay for workers in that region by 33%. Other than Fort Collins, whose workers also earn more than 30% more than their base pay, the other hub cities range from 17% in Salt Lake City to 22% in Raleigh, according to the release.

The plan includes vacating several D.C.-area office buildings that are overdue for large maintenance projects, the department said.

The department plans to retain its presence at the Jamie L. Whitten Federal Building and Yates Building, both in D.C., and the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland.

It will vacate the South Building in D.C., Braddock Place in Alexandria, Virginia, and Beltsville Agricultural Research Center in Maryland. The George Washington Carver Center in Beltsville will serve as an additional office location during the reorganization, but will also be sold or transferred once the reorganization is complete, the memo said.

Each of USDA's mission areas will still have a presence in the nation's capital, according to the release.

But the plan includes consolidating several functions into regional offices in an effort to "eliminate management layers and bureaucracy," according to the memo.

Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service, a key USDA agency, will phase out its nine regional offices primarily into a single location in Fort Collins. The agency will retain a small state office in Alaska and an Eastern office in Athens, Georgia, according to the memo.

The Agriculture Research Service will also consolidate from 12 offices to the five regional hubs.

And a series of support functions would be centralized, according to the memo.

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.

'Big, beautiful' law draws mostly skeptical reaction in new nonpartisan poll

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT - JULY 24, 2025 10:55 AM

WASHINGTON — A majority of Americans believe Republicans' "big, beautiful" law will either hurt them or not make much of a difference, according to a poll released Thursday by the nonpartisan health research organization KFF.

The survey shows 46% of people expect the new tax and spending cuts law will generally hurt them or their family, while 28% said it likely won't make much difference and 26% said it will help them.

Those beliefs were skewed by political parties, with 54% of Republicans saying the law will help them or their family, compared to 19% of independents and 7% of Democrats.

People enrolled in Medicaid, the state-federal health program for lower income individuals and people with disabilities, have significant concerns about how changes to the program will impact them.

Sixty-five percent of Medicaid patients under the age of 65 said they expect the law to hurt them or their family. Another 17% said it won't make much of a difference for them and 18% expect the policy changes to help.

The law makes more than a dozen changes to how Medicaid is run, resulting in a \$1.058 trillion spending cut to the program during the next decade, according to an analysis released earlier this week by the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

The report projects that 10 million people will lose access to health insurance before 2034.

The law made permanent the 2017 tax cuts from President Donald Trump's first term and provided billions to carry out his plans of mass deportations, an immigration crackdown and increased defense spending.



The U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C., is pictured on Sunday, June 29, 2025, as the reconciliation package was under debate. (Photo by Jennifer Shutt/States Newsroom)

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Some know little about new law

KFF's survey shows most Americans know at least something about the new law, though 9% of those polled said they know nothing at all and 23% said they know just a little.

Democrats had the highest percent of respondents who said they knew either a lot, 35%, or some, 45%, about the law. Twenty-two percent of Republicans said they knew a lot about their party's top legislative achievement this year, with 44% saying they knew something, 27% saying they knew a little and 7% saying they knew nothing.

Social media

The vast majority of those polled, 78%, said they saw information about Republicans' new law on social media during the last month.

Facebook and YouTube were the more popular social media platforms for people to see information about the tax and spending cuts law, followed by Instagram, TikTok, X and Reddit.

Forty-seven percent of those surveyed said the content they saw on social media opposed the policy changes included in the law, while 41% said it was mixed and 11% said it supported the GOP's work.

Republicans said 26% of what they viewed on social media was in support of the law, with 53% mixed and 21% opposed. Democrats polled said 76% of what they saw was opposed, 21% mixed and 3% was supportive.

Most of those surveyed said the social media content helped them understand what the new law actually does. Sixteen percent said it was very helpful, 46% said it was somewhat helpful, 27% said it was not too helpful and 11% said it wasn't helpful at all.

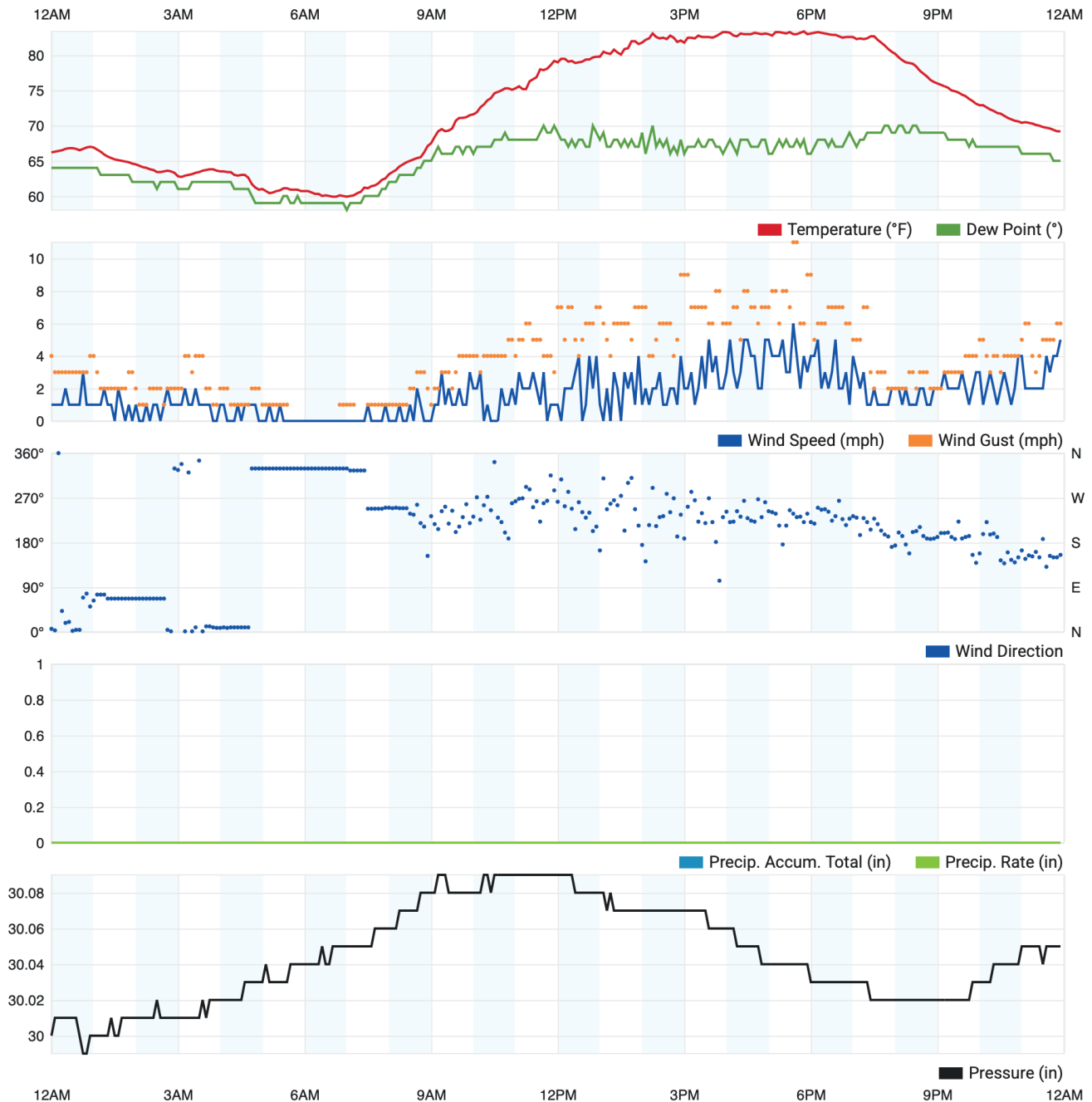
Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

July 24, 2025



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Today



High: 86 °F

Partly Sunny
then Partly
Sunny and
Breezy

Tonight



Low: 68 °F

Chance
T-storms

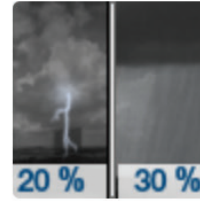
Saturday



High: 92 °F

Hot

Saturday Night



Low: 67 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Chance
Showers

Sunday



High: 90 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Slight
Chance
T-storms

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
ISOLATED severe storms
possible

TIMING

5pm to midnight

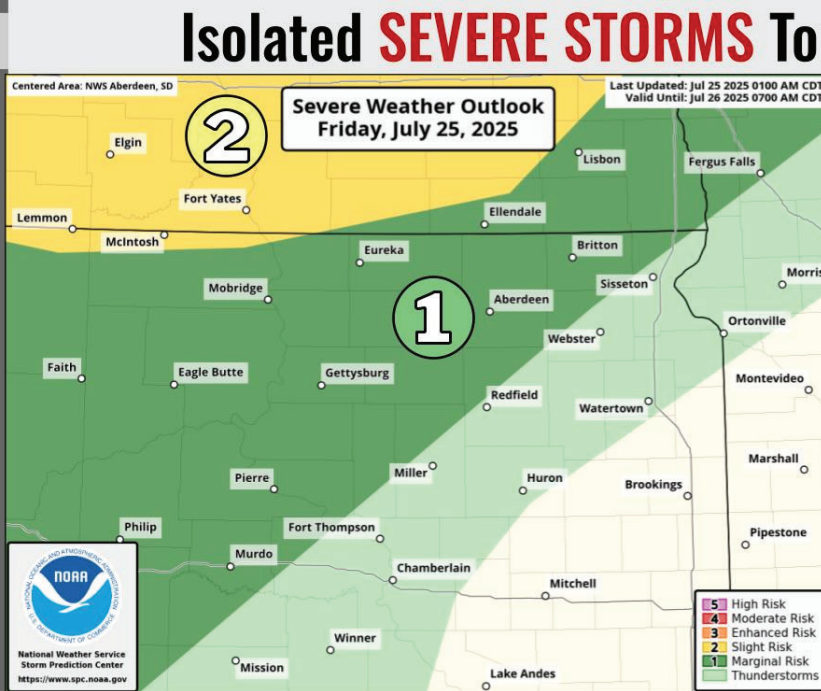
PRIMARY THREATS



LARGE
HAIL to 1
inch
diameter



DAMAGING
WIND GUSTS to
60 mph



What to Expect:

- If storms move into central SD, winds to 60 mph and hail up to 1 inch in diameter would be possible

Timing:

- Storms may develop in western SD late this afternoon. They will move east through the night but there is low confidence on the storms moving into northern SD

How to be
Prepared:



INDOOR SHELTER



OUTDOOR PLANS?
STAY WEATHER
AWARE



MULTIPLE WAYS TO
RECEIVE WARNINGS



There is a 30% chance of showers and thunderstorms late this afternoon through tonight, mainly over central SD. The area is in a Marginal risk (level 1 out of 5) for severe storms. If storms develop, wind gusts of 60 mph and hail 1 inch in diameter will be possible.

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THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
ISOLATED severe storms
possible

Evening into the
overnight

PRIMARY THREATS



LARGE
HAIL to 1
inch in
diameter

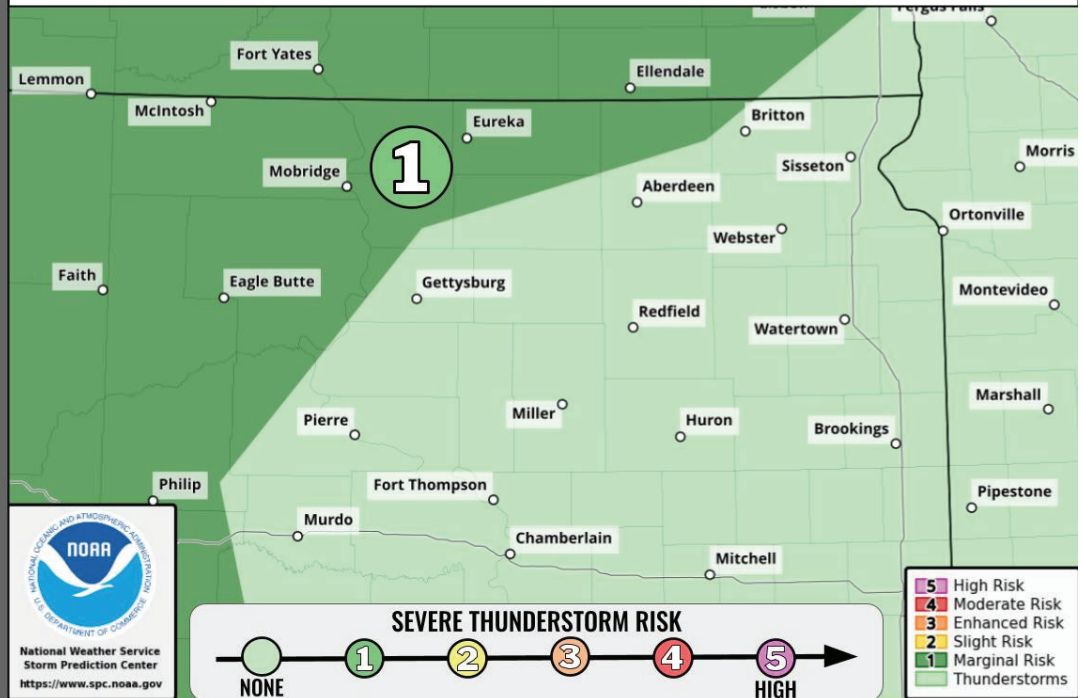


DAMAGING
WIND GUSTS to
60 mph



National Weather Service
Storm Prediction Center
<https://www.spc.noaa.gov>

Isolated **SEVERE STORMS** Saturday Evening



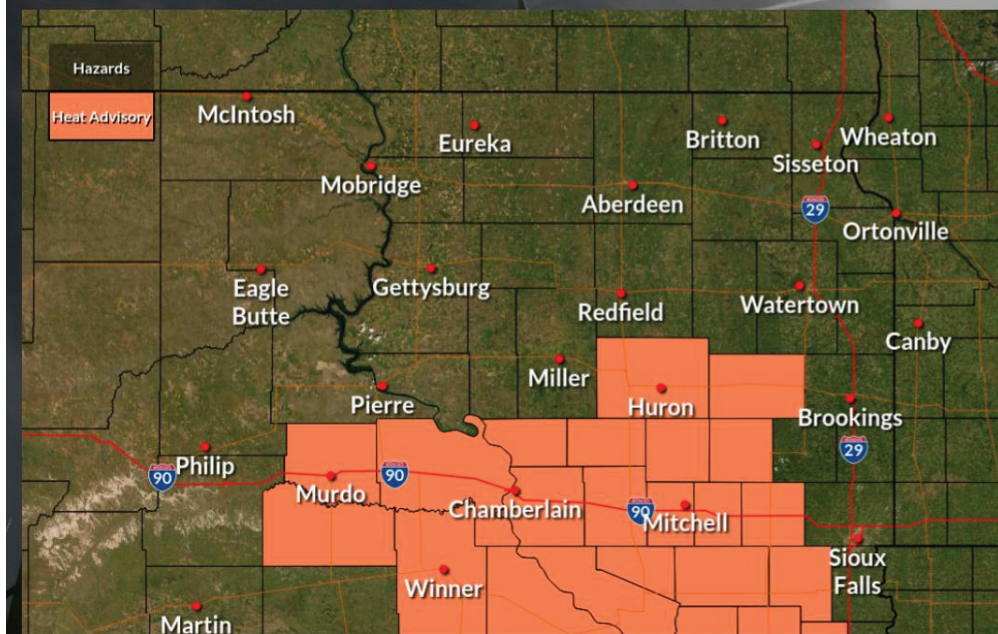
Portions of north central SD are in a Marginal risk (level 1 out of 5) for severe storms. This will be mainly in the evening into the overnight hours. If storms form, hail of 1 inch in diameter and 60 mph wind gusts will be possible.



Max Heat Index:
95°F – 103°F



1 PM - 8 PM
CDT Saturday



Heat Advisory

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
weather.gov/aberned

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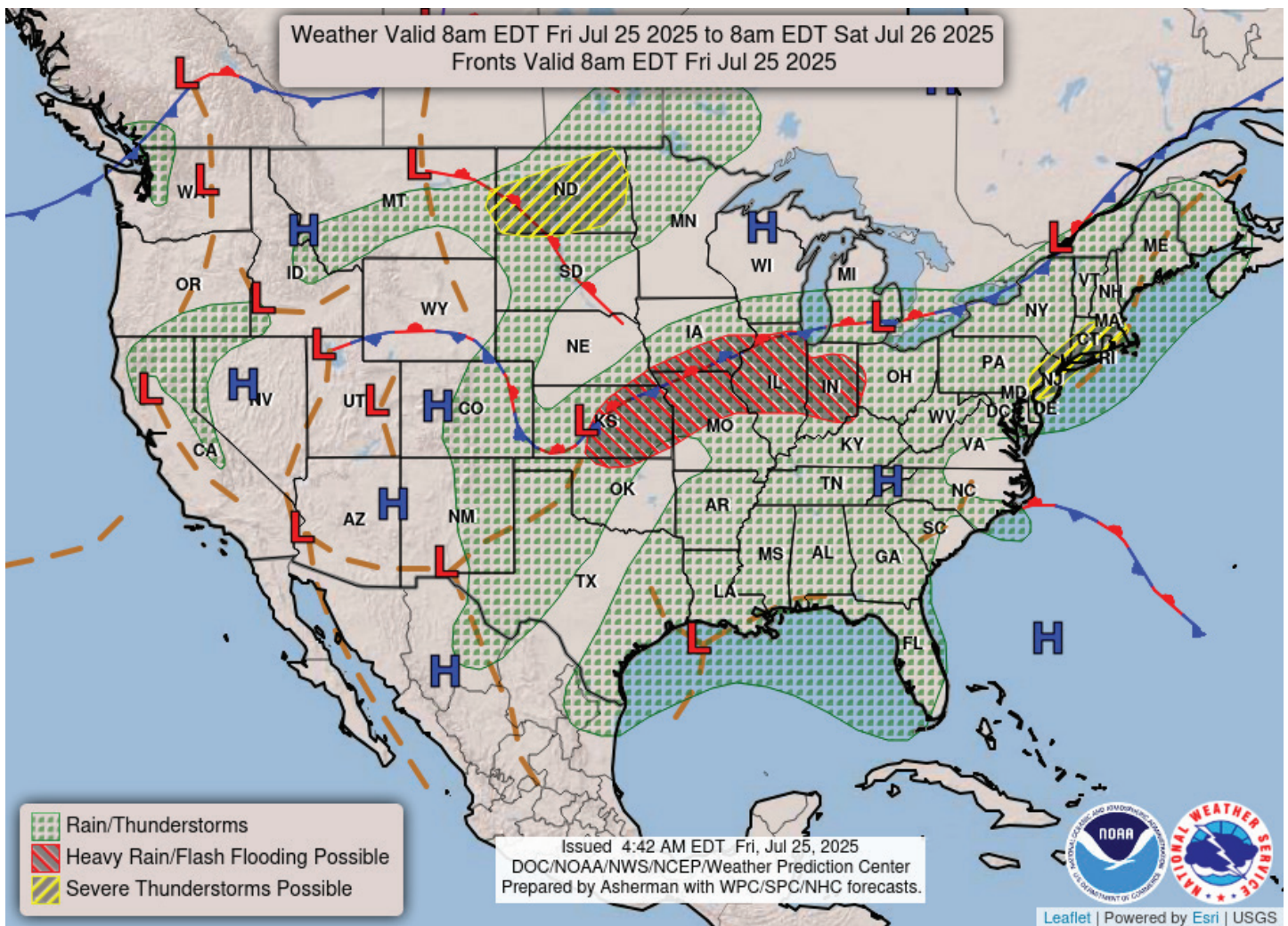
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 83 °F at 5:49 PM
Heat Index: 88 °F at 2:15 PM
Low Temp: 60 °F at 6:40 AM
Wind: 12 mph at 5:34 PM
Precip: : 0.00 Total

Day length: 15 hours, 2 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 111 in 1931
Record Low: 44 in 1911
Average High: 85
Average Low: 60
Average Precip in July.: 2.60
Precip to date in July: 6.65
Average Precip to date: 13.61
Precip Year to Date: 14.81
Sunset Tonight: 9:10:16 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:08:44 am



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Today in Weather History

July 25, 1961: A thunderstorm started late in the evening on the 25th and went into the early morning hours of the 26th. A sizeable area suffered 50 to 100 percent loss of crops resulting from hail over the following counties, Bison, Perkins, Faulk, Sully, and western Hand. Corn was stripped of leaves and broken off. Oats and wheat were flattened. High winds with recorded gusts of 75 to 80 miles per hour cause numerous power failures and damaged trees in Pierre.

July 25, 1972: Unofficial rainfall amounts of 8 inches caused flash flooding in Ferney and surrounding area in Brown County. Water, over two feet depth was reported in a parking area. Basements were flooded, and foundations were damaged. The torrential rains caused extensive damage to crops in the area.

July 25, 1984: Severe thunderstorms caused considerable damage to the Pierre area. Winds were gusting to 83 mph at the Pierre airport, where thirteen planes, as well as several hangars, were destroyed. In town, a home and three businesses lost their roofs, and a trailer home was destroyed. Rains of four inches in thirty minutes produced flash flooding with some streets closed for some time. Some basements were reported to have 6 to 8 inches of water in them. At Dupree, high winds caused extensive damage to the grandstand roof at the fairgrounds. Along the entire path of the thunderstorms, hail and high winds broke windows, damaged cars, downed trees, damaged crops, and caused power outages.

July 25, 1993: Lake Kampeska, near Watertown, reached near record level at 37 inches over full mark due to runoff from heavy rains in previous days. Dozens of homes and two businesses were flooded out. About 100,000 sandbags were distributed to help prevent more flood damage to lakeside property owners.

July 25, 2000: A powerful F4 tornado hit the city of Granite Falls in Minnesota. The tornado first touched down in rural parts of the county west-northwest of Granite Falls. The tornado struck the city at 6:10 pm. After tearing through the residential sections of town, the tornado lifted at approximately 6:25 PM after being on the ground for over nine miles. The tornado caused one fatality and injured more than a dozen.

1891 - The mercury hit 109 degrees at Los Angeles, CA, marking the peak of a torrid heat wave. (David Ludlum)

1936: Lincoln, Nebraska saw an all-time high temperature of 115 degrees. The low only dropped to 91 degrees and the average temperature was 103. Many people spent the night sleeping outside to escape the heat.

1956: The Andrea Doria sank in dense fog near Nantucket Lightship, Massachusetts. The Swedish-American liner, Stockholm, hit the ship forty-five miles off the coast of Massachusetts. Fifty-two persons drowned or were killed by the impact.

1986 - Tremendous hailstones pounded parts of South Dakota damaging crops, buildings and vehicles. Hail piled two feet deep at Black Hawk and northern Rapid City. Hail an inch and a quarter in diameter fell for 85 minutes near Miller and Huron, piling up to depths of two feet. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Sixteen cities in the eastern U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Beckley, WV, equalled their all-time record high of 91 degrees, established just the previous day. It marked their fourth day in a row of 90 degree heat, after hitting 90 degrees just twice in the previous 25 years of records. The water temperature of Lake Erie at Buffalo, NY, reached 79 degrees, the warmest reading in 52 years of records. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from central Kansas to western Kentucky and southern Illinois during the day. Thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Union, MO, and winds gusts to 65 mph at Sedalia, MO. Five cities in Washington and Oregon reported record high temperatures for the date. Medford, OR, hit 107 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Early afternoon thunderstorms over west central Missouri drenched the town of Ferguson with four inches of rain. Early evening thunderstorms in Pennsylvania produced more than two inches of rain north of Avella in one hour. (The National Weather Summary)

2005: The citizens of Sand Point, Alaska saw a rare tornado touchdown on two uninhabited islands. Sand Point is part of the Aleutian Chain and is located about 570 miles southwest of Anchorage.

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*"A **soft gentle answer** turns away wrath, but a **harsh word stirs up anger.**"*

"Try it! I promise you it will work," said Mrs. Ron.
"No, it won't. They'll just yell louder and louder," I responded with certainty.

"How do you know? Have you ever tried it? If you did try it, what happened? Did the shouting stop?" she asked.

"I don't know because I've never had anyone tell me that before," I replied as I gave up. I knew that she had an advantage over me from her years of experience as a teacher.

Her theory was simple and seemed senseless. "When children, either individually or in a group, raise their

voices, if you speak in a hushed tone, they will quiet down. They want to hear what you are saying. Their curiosity will get the best of them," she explained.

After thinking about it, I decided to follow her recommendation since nothing I tried had worked. To my surprise, it worked. And it does make sense when you think about it.

Solomon may not have known much about anger management, but he gave some great advice when he wrote, "A soft gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

We see that all too often when mobs gather to protest. Both sides believe they can gain the advantage with volume.

A harsh word does not suggest that a person is using words that are irrational or abrasive — though they may be part of the "conversation." Rather, it refers to one who intends to use words to destroy another by design.

We are once again reminded of the power of the tongue!

Softness can represent power if we follow the Word and teachings of Scripture.

Today's Prayer: Lord, how wonderful is Your Word that informs us of the power of our words. May we always speak gently and confidently as we follow Your teachings. -In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Scripture: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Proverbs 15:1

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.22.25

22 41 42 59 69 17

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$120,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 57 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.23.25

4 32 36 39 52 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$3,310,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 12 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.24.25

1 11 22 26 29 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 27 Mins 29 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.23.25

9 10 11 14 19

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$67,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 27 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.23.25

4 21 35 60 69 23

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 56 Mins 28 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 07.23.25

2 18 19 25 35 25

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$350,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 56 Mins 29 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

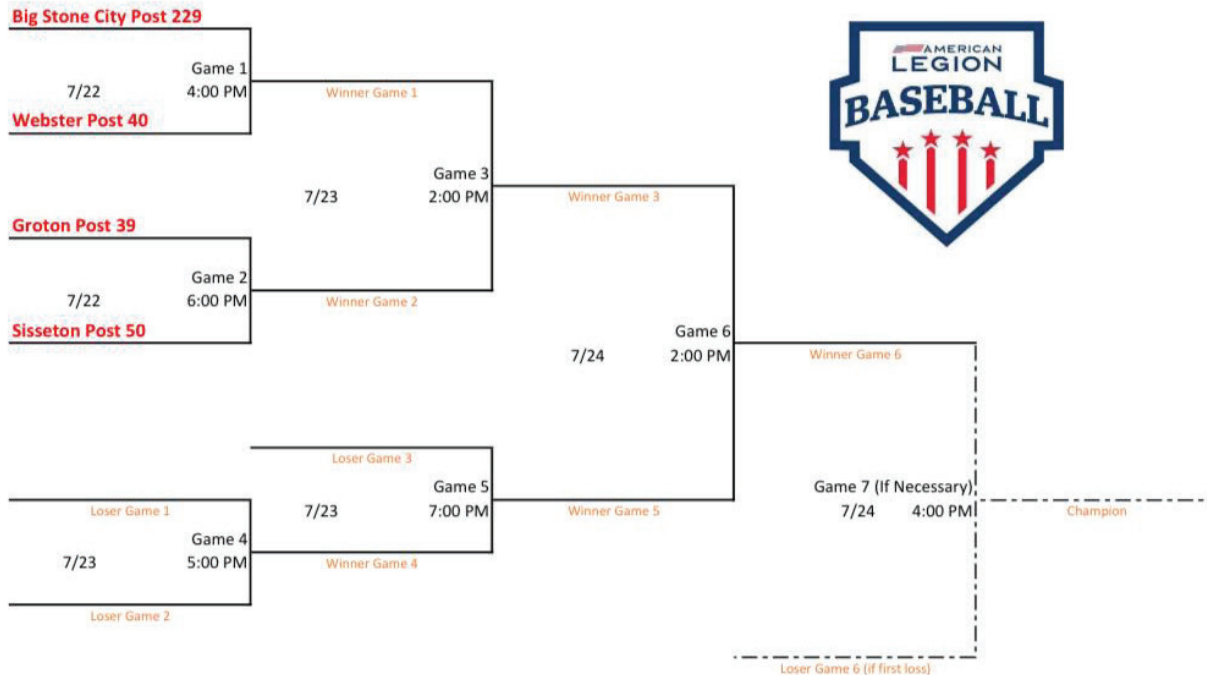
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SOUTH DAKOTA AMERICAN LEGION REGION 1B SR BRACKET

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

3 workers rescued from Canadian mine after 60 hours underground

ISKUT, British Columbia (AP) — Three workers who were trapped at a gold and copper mine in Western Canada have been rescued after more than 60 hours underground.

Red Chris mine operator Newmont Corp. said the three men were safely brought to the surface late Thursday after being trapped underground by two rockfalls Tuesday morning.

Kevin Coumbs, Darien Maduke and Jesse Chubaty, contractors for Canada based Hy-Tech Drilling, were in good health and spirits, it added.

"This was a carefully planned and meticulously executed rescue plan," Newmont said in a statement.

The company, based in Denver, said the rescue operation involved drones and a remote-controlled scoop that dug away a massive rockfall, estimated to be 20 to 30 meters (65 to 100 feet) long and seven to eight meters (22 to 26 feet) high.

Once the fallen debris was cleared from the access tunnel, an emergency response team was able to reach the refuge chamber where the men were trapped and bring them to the surface.

It said the workers were being supported by medical and wellness teams and their families had been notified.

Newmont said that the men had consistent access to food, water and air while in the refuge chamber of the mine. The mine is in remote northern British Columbia, about 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) north of Vancouver.

British Columbia's Mining and Critical Minerals Minister Jagrup Brar said in a social media post that he "can't describe the relief we all feel knowing that these three workers are going to be able to go home to their families."

The rescue came hours after Newmont's global safety chief, Bernard Wessels, expressed confidence in the rescue.

He said that drones had flown over the debris blockage at the mine and found a stable route to the steel safety refuge where the men were sheltering.

Rep. Ralph Norman, among House's most conservative, set to enter South Carolina governor's race

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

CHAPIN, S.C. (AP) — Rep. Ralph Norman, among the most conservative Republicans in the U.S. House, is entering South Carolina's 2026 governor's race.

The wealthy real estate developer and longtime ally of former Gov. Nikki Haley is expected to file his candidacy paperwork with state officials on Friday, his campaign told The Associated Press.

Norman has long been mulling a campaign for the state's highest office. But unlike several of his fellow candidates, he's not expected to seek the endorsement of the Republican whose backing in South Carolina GOP politics matters most: President Donald Trump.

Norman, 72, joins several other announced candidates, including Attorney General Alan Wilson and Lt. Gov. Pamela Evette, in the race for next June's GOP primary, and Rep. Nancy Mace of South Carolina's 1st District is soon expected to announce her campaign. All three have touted their ties to Trump, who has maintained popularity in the state since his 2016 primary win there helped cement his status as the GOP presidential nominee.

Representing South Carolina's 5th District, Norman stridently backed Trump during his first term, voting against both House impeachments of the president. During the Jan. 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol by a mob of Trump supporters, he urged the then-president to declare "Marshall Law" in a text to White

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House chief of staff Mark Meadows — misstating the term martial law even as he called for upending the peaceful transfer of power.

But in the 2024 presidential campaign, Norman was one of only two House members nationwide to endorse Haley's candidacy. The former South Carolina governor, who served as Trump's United Nations ambassador, was his last primary challenger to depart the race, and Norman frequently appeared with her along the campaign trail.

Both elected to the state House in 2004, Norman and Haley became legislative allies, and Norman was among few elected officials who backed Haley's insurgent, and ultimately successful, 2010 gubernatorial bid. In the 2024 presidential campaign, Norman in part argued that Haley could serve two full terms, while Trump could only go on to serve one.

Norman has frequently operated outside the mainstream even among his home state's GOP circles. In 2018, as Gov. Henry McMaster — with Trump's backing — faced several primary challengers as he sought his first full term in office after succeeding Haley as governor, Norman endorsed Catherine Templeton, an attorney who had served Haley's gubernatorial administration in several capacities.

Norman has long been a member of the House Freedom Caucus, comprised of the chamber's most conservative members. According to GovTrack.us, the deficit hawk has traditionally ranked as the state's most conservative U.S. House member and among the top most conservative members nationwide, based on his legislative activity.

He has been in the U.S. House since winning a 2017 special election to replace Mick Mulvaney, whom Trump appointed to lead the Office of Management and Budget.

In 2018, South Carolina Democrats called for felony charges after Norman pulled out his own loaded handgun during a meeting with constituents to make a point about gun safety. Attorney General Alan Wilson — who is also seeking next year's GOP gubernatorial nomination — declined to press charges.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Norman, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky were fined \$500 apiece for not wearing face coverings on the House floor, which was a requirement at the time. They sued Democratic then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, subsequently losing an appeal over the incident.

Tens of thousands flee their homes as Thailand and Cambodia clash

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI and SOPHENG CHEANG Associated Press

SURIN, Thailand (AP) — Tens of thousands of people sought refuge on Friday as border fighting between Thailand and Cambodia entered a second day, heightening fears of a broader conflict.

The U.N. Security Council is scheduled to hold an emergency meeting on the crisis later Friday in New York, while Malaysia, which chairs a regional bloc that includes both countries, called for an end to hostilities and offered to mediate.

The Thai Health Ministry on Friday said more than 58,000 have fled from villages to temporary shelters in four affected border provinces, while Cambodian authorities said more than 4,000 people have evacuated from areas near the border.

The fighting has killed at least 14 people in Thailand, while Cambodia confirmed its first fatality on Friday.

Tensions over a disputed border area erupted into fighting after a land mine explosion along the border on wounded five Thai soldiers on Wednesday.

Clashes break out across border areas

The Thai military reported clashes early Friday in multiple areas, including along the border at Chong Bok and Phu Makhuea in Thailand's Ubon Ratchathani province, at Phanom Dong Rak in Surin province, and near the ancient Ta Muen Thom temple. Associated Press reporters near the border could hear sounds of artillery from early morning hours.

The Thai army said Cambodian forces had used heavy artillery and Russian-made BM-21 rocket launchers, prompting what Thai officials described as "appropriate supporting fire" in return.

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Thailand said one soldier and 13 civilians were killed, including children, while 15 soldiers and 30 civilians were wounded.

Cambodia's chief official in Oddar Meanchey province, Gen. Khov Ly, said a man died Thursday after a Thai rocket hit a Buddhist pagoda where he was hiding. At least four civilians in the province were also wounded Thursday.

The Thai army denied it targeted civilian sites in Cambodia, and accused Cambodia of using "human shields" by positioning their weapons near residential areas.

Cambodia also claimed Thai airstrikes had landed near the Preah Vihear temple, a UNESCO World Heritage site that has been at the center of past disputes. Authorities in Phnom Penh released photos they said showed damage to the site and pledged to seek international justice.

The Thai military said the temple wasn't in its line of fire and accused Cambodia of distorting facts.

Thousands flee villages near the border

As the fighting intensified, villagers on both sides have been caught in the crossfire, leading many to flee.

Around 600 people took shelter at a gymnasium in a university in Surin, Thailand, about 80 kilometers (50 miles) from the border. Evacuees sat in groups, on mats and blankets, and queued for food and drinks.

Seamstress Pornpan Sooksai was accompanied by four cats in two fabric cages. She said she was doing laundry at her home near Ta Muen Thom temple when shelling began Thursday.

"I just heard, boom, boom. We already prepared the cages, clothes and everything, so we ran and carried our things to the car. I was frightened, scared," she recalled.

Rattana Meeying, another evacuee, said she had also lived through the 2011 clashes between the two countries but described this flare-up as worse.

"Children, old people, were hit out of the blue," she said. "I never imagined it would be this violent."

At the nearby Phnom Dong Rak hospital, periodic explosions could be heard Friday, and a military truck arrived with three injured Thai soldiers, including one who had both legs severed. Thursday's shelling shattered windows at one of the hospital's buildings and damaged its roof.

In the neighboring Sisaket province, more villagers took their belongings and left homes in a stream of cars, trucks and motorbikes after they received an evacuation order on Friday.

Across the border in Cambodia, villages on the outskirts of Oddar Meanchey province were largely deserted. Homes stood locked, while chickens and dogs roamed outside.

Some villagers earlier dug holes to create makeshift underground bunkers, covering them with wood, tarpaulin and zinc sheets to shield themselves from shelling. Families with children were seen packing their belongings on home-made tractors to evacuate, though a few men refused to leave.

A remote Buddhist temple surrounded by rice fields accommodated several hundred evacuated villagers. Women rested in hammocks, some cradling babies, while children ran about. Makeshift plastic tents were being set up under the trees.

Veng Chin, 74, pleaded with both governments to negotiate a settlement "so that I can return to my home and work on the farm."

ASEAN chair calls for calm

The conflict marks a rare instance of armed confrontation between member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, though Thailand has tangled with Cambodia before over the border and has had sporadic skirmishes with western neighbor Myanmar.

Malaysia, the current ASEAN chair, expressed concern.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said Thursday he spoke to both Cambodian leader Hun Manet and Thai Acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai and urged them to open space for "peaceful dialogue and diplomatic resolution." Malaysia is willing to facilitate talks, he said.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has also called for restraint and urged both countries to resolve disputes through dialogue, according to U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq.

It's the latest flareup in longstanding border tensions

The 800-kilometer (500-mile) frontier between Thailand and Cambodia has been disputed for decades,

but past confrontations have been limited and brief. The last major flare-up in 2011 left 20 dead.

The current tensions broke out in May when a Cambodian soldier was killed in a confrontation that created a diplomatic rift and roiled Thailand's domestic politics.

Things got worse when a land mine wounded five Thai soldiers on Wednesday, leading Bangkok to close the border and expel the Cambodian ambassador. The next day, clashes broke out along the border.

Ukraine's Zelenskyy says defenses are holding firm against Russia's summer push

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian forces are holding back Russia's concerted summer push to break through defenses along parts of the front line, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says.

"They are not advancing. It's very tough for our guys out there. And it's tough everywhere," Zelenskyy told reporters on Thursday, in comments embargoed till Friday. "It's also very hard for the Russians — and that's good for us," he said.

With the war now in its fourth year after Russia's February 2022 invasion of its neighbor, the effort is draining resources on both sides, although Russia has more resources and people to sustain its fight. Ukraine is seeking further support from Western partners.

Russia has claimed the capture of some villages and hamlets, but no defensively stronger urban areas have fallen to its troops.

Russian sabotage and reconnaissance groups have repeatedly attempted to stage minor incursions near the eastern Donetsk city of Pokrovsk to film symbolic footage, such as raising a Russian flag, but Ukrainian forces have repelled those efforts, Zelenskyy said.

"It happened five to seven times recently, sometimes with only two or six people. Once they tried to hold a position with 12 people — and all of them were eliminated by our defenders," Zelenskyy said.

Zelenskyy described the situation in the northeastern Sumy border region as "much better" than in recent months, noting progress by Ukrainian forces over the past six weeks.

Russia has also intensified its bombardment of Ukrainian cities, and Zelenskyy said Ukraine is working with international partners to secure 10 U.S.-made Patriot air defense systems, with three already confirmed from Germany and Norway.

The Trump administration will sell the systems, he said, but Ukraine's task is to find funding for all 10. Each system costs more than \$1 billion.

Ukraine is also seeking to obtain a license to manufacture the Patriot systems itself.

The Ukrainian leader expressed little hope for progress in direct talks between delegations from Russia and Ukraine, though he said the Kremlin envoys have begun discussing the possibility of a leaders' summit with Ukraine.

"We need an end to the war, which probably begins with a meeting of leaders. It won't work any other way with (the Russians)," Zelenskyy said.

In domestic politics, Zelenskyy said public protests against changes earlier this week to Ukraine's anti-corruption law were "legitimate." The changes threatened the independence of anti-graft watchdogs and also drew rebukes from European Union officials and international rights groups, prompting Zelenskyy to propose new legislation to restore the independence of the anti-graft agencies.

"It's very important that society speaks. I respect the opinion of society," Zelenskyy said. "People asked for changes. We responded."

Demonstrators gathered for the third day on Thursday evening, but drew a smaller crowd.

He said those agencies must be "truly independent," adding that "the most important thing in this war is the unity of our state. It is critical not to lose unity."

However, the risk now remains that the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's Parliament, will fail to approve the new bill, which could bring even larger crowds to the streets. Zelenskyy expressed confidence that it would pass. "The most important thing right now is that the bill exists. It has been registered. I believe it will

receive enough votes. I want that to happen," he said.

World shares retreat after Alphabet and AI stocks nudge Wall Street to more records

By TERESA CEROJANO Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — World shares retreated on Friday after Wall Street inched to more records as gains for Alphabet and artificial-intelligence stocks helped offset a steep tumble for EV-maker Tesla.

In early European trading, Germany's DAX shed 0.6% to 24,152.20, while Britain's FTSE 100 slid 0.4% to 9,101.41. In Paris, the CAC 40 slipped 0.3% to 7,793.33.

The futures for S&P 500 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average both were up 0.1%

In Asian trading, Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 0.9% to 41,456.23 after two days of gains following President Donald Trump's announcement of a trade deal that would place a 15% tax on imports from Japan. That's lower than the 25% rate that Trump had earlier said would kick in on Aug. 1.

Data released on Friday showed the inflation rate in Japan's capital Tokyo rose 2.9% year-on-year in July, down from 3.1% in June. Japanese government efforts to moderate inflation are working, though underlying Tokyo price pressures remain elevated, ING Economics said in a commentary. It expects the Bank of Japan to hold interest rates steady at its July 30-31 meeting, but said the central bank would likely raise its forecast for inflation.

In Chinese markets, Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 1.1% to 25,388.35 and the Shanghai Composite index slid 0.3% to 3,593.66.

Next week, U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has said he will meet with Chinese officials in Stockholm, Sweden, to work toward a trade deal with Beijing ahead of an Aug. 12 deadline. Trump has said a China trip "is not too distant" as trade tensions ease.

"One big question for markets is whether the tariff ceasefire is extended. We expect that an agreement will be attainable, but, in the interim, markets will watch closely to see if there are adjustments to current tariff rates in either direction," ING Economics said.

In South Korea, the Kospi picked up 0.2% to 3,196.05, while Australia's S&P/ASX 200 shed 0.5% to 8,666.90.

Taiwan's Taiex edged less than 0.1% lower, and in India, the Sensex fell 0.9%.

On Thursday, the S&P 500 added 0.1% to its all-time high set the day before, closing at 6,363.35. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.7% to 44,693.91, while the Nasdaq composite rose 0.2% to a record 21,057.96.

Alphabet climbed 1% after the company behind Google and YouTube delivered a fatter profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. It's leaning more into artificial-intelligence technology and said it's increasing its budget for AI chips and other investments this year by \$10 billion to \$85 billion.

That helped push up other stocks in the AI industry, including a 1.7% rise for Nvidia. The chip company was the strongest single force lifting the S&P 500 because it's the largest on Wall Street in terms of value.

But an 8.2% drop for Tesla kept the market in check. Elon Musk's electric-vehicle company reported results for the spring that were roughly in line with or above analysts' expectations, and Musk is trying to highlight Tesla's moves into AI and robotaxis.

The focus, though, remains on how Musk's foray into politics is turning off potential customers, and he said several rough quarters may be ahead as "we're in this weird transition period where we'll lose a lot of incentives in the U.S."

Stocks have broadly been rallying for weeks on hopes that President Donald Trump will reach trade deals with other countries that will lower his stiff proposed tariffs, along with the risk that they could cause a recession and drive up inflation.

In other dealings on Friday, U.S. benchmark crude oil added 21 cents to \$66.24 per barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, rose 18 cents to \$68.54 per barrel.

The U.S. dollar rose to 147.88 Japanese yen from 147.00 yen. The euro fell to \$1.1736 from \$1.1750.

Europeans and Iran meet in Istanbul as the return of sanctions looms over nuclear deadlock

By ANDREW WILKS and AMIR VAHDAT Associated Press

ISTANBUL (AP) — Iranian and European diplomats met Friday in Istanbul to embark on the latest drive to unpick the deadlock over Tehran's nuclear program.

Representatives from Britain, France and Germany, known as the E3 nations, gathered at the Iranian consulate building for the first talks since Iran's 12-day war with Israel in June, which involved U.S. bombers striking nuclear-related facilities.

The talks are centered on the possibility of reimposing sanctions on Iran that were lifted in 2015 in exchange for Iran accepting restrictions and monitoring of its nuclear program.

The return of sanctions, known as a "snapback" mechanism, "remains on the table," according to a European diplomat speaking on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the talks.

"A possible delay in triggering snapback has been floated to the Iranians on the condition that there is credible diplomatic engagement by Iran, that they resume full cooperation with the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), and that they address concerns about their highly-enriched uranium stockpile," the diplomat said.

European leaders have said sanctions will resume by the end of August if there is no progress on containing Iran's nuclear program.

Tehran, meanwhile, has said the U.S., which withdrew from the 2015 deal during President Donald Trump's first term, needs to rebuild faith in its role in negotiations.

Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said Iran's engagement was dependent on "several key principles" that included "rebuilding Iran's trust – as Iran has absolutely no trust in the United States."

In a social media post Thursday, he also said the talks shouldn't be used "as a platform for hidden agendas such as military action." Gharibabadi insisted that Iran's right to enrich uranium "in line with its legitimate needs" be respected and sanctions removed.

Iran has repeatedly threatened to leave the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which commits it to refrain from developing nuclear weapons, if sanctions return.

Friday's talks were being held at the deputy ministerial level, with Iran sending Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-e Ravanchi. A similar meeting was held in Istanbul in May. The identity of the E3 representatives were not immediately clear but the European Union's deputy foreign policy commissioner was thought to be attending.

The U.K., France and Germany were signatories to the 2015 deal, alongside the U.S., Russia and China. When the U.S. withdrew in 2018, Trump insisted the agreement wasn't tough enough. Under the original deal, neither Russia nor China can veto reimposed sanctions.

Since the Israeli and U.S. strikes on Iran, which saw American B-52 bombers hit three nuclear sites, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has accused the E3 of hypocrisy, saying they failed to uphold their obligations while supporting Israel's attacks.

Against the backdrop of the conflict, which saw Iran respond with missile attacks on Israel and a strike on a U.S. base in Qatar, the road ahead remains uncertain.

While European officials have said they want to avoid further conflict and are open to a negotiated solution, they have warned that time is running out.

Tehran maintains it is open to diplomacy, though it recently suspended cooperation with the IAEA.

A central concern for Western powers was highlighted when the IAEA reported in May that Iran's stockpile of uranium enriched to 60% – just below weapons-grade level – had grown to over 400 kilograms (882 pounds).

In an interview with Al Jazeera that aired Wednesday, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Iran is prepared for another war and reiterated that its nuclear program will continue within the framework of

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international law while adding the country had no intention of pursuing nuclear weapons.

A spokesman for Iran's Atomic Energy Organization said Thursday the country's nuclear industry would "grow back and thrive again" after the recent attacks by Israel and the U.S.

What's behind the fighting between Thailand and Cambodia

BANGKOK (AP) — Armed clashes have broken out between Thailand and Cambodia in long-disputed border areas, rapidly escalating months-long tensions.

The fighting included gunfire exchanges, shelling and rocket fire, which have killed at least 14 people in Thailand and one in Cambodia and wounded dozens, while driving tens of thousands of people to flee homes near the border. Thailand also hit Cambodia with air strikes.

It was the second armed confrontation since a Cambodian soldier was shot dead in May and a major escalation that came hours after the two countries downgraded diplomatic relations following a land mine explosion that injured Thai soldiers.

The Thai military reported clashes at locations along the border near four Thai provinces on Friday.

Here's what to know about the dispute between the two Southeast Asian neighbors.

How the dispute began

The dispute flared in May after armed forces of Thailand and Cambodia briefly fired at each other in a relatively small, contested border area that each country claims as its own.

Both sides said they acted in self-defense. One Cambodian soldier was killed.

While the countries said afterwards they agreed to de-escalate the situation, Cambodian and Thai authorities continued to implement or threaten measures short of armed force, keeping tensions high.

Thailand added tight restrictions at the border with Cambodia that stopped almost all crossings except for students, medical patients and others with essential needs. On Thursday, Thai authorities announced they were sealing the border entirely.

Cambodia also banned Thai movies and TV shows, stopped the import of Thai fuel, fruits and vegetables and boycotted some of its neighbor's international internet links and power supply.

Fighting sparks political turmoil in Thailand

Nationalist passions on both sides have inflamed the situation.

Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra was suspended from office July 1 to be investigated for possible ethics violations over her handling of the border dispute following a leaked phone call with a senior Cambodian leader.

In the June call, Paetongtarn referred to Cambodian former Prime Minister Hun Sen as "uncle" and criticized Thai military leadership, remarks framed by critics as disrespectful to national sovereignty.

Hun Sen was succeeded by his son Hun Manet in 2023 but remains influential as Senate president. He was a longtime friend of her father, Thaksin Shinawatra, a popular but divisive former prime minister, but they became estranged over the border dispute.

The leaked call sparked widespread outrage and protests. Paetongtarn's Pheu Thai party-led coalition also weakened when its second-largest partner, the Bhumjaithai Party, withdrew support, citing her perceived softness toward Cambodia.

Paetongtarn has apologized and argued her comments were a negotiating tactic. Her ally, former Defense Minister Phumtham Wechayachai, was appointed acting prime minister.

Border claims cause periodic tensions

Border disputes are long-standing issues that have caused periodic tensions between the two neighbors. Thailand and Cambodia share more than 800 kilometers (500 miles) of land border.

The contesting claims stem largely from a 1907 map drawn under French colonial rule that was used to separate Cambodia from Thailand. Cambodia has been using the map as a reference to claim territory, while Thailand has argued the map is inaccurate.

The most prominent and violent conflicts have been around the 1,000-year-old Preah Vihear temple.

In 1962, the International Court of Justice awarded sovereignty over the temple area to Cambodia. The

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ruling became a major irritant in bilateral relations.

Cambodia went back to the court in 2011, following several clashes between its army and Thai forces that killed about 20 people and displaced thousands. The court reaffirmed the ruling in Cambodia's favor in 2013.

Cambodia has again turned to the international court to resolve the border disputes but Thailand has rejected the court's jurisdiction.

A man is halted climbing the US-Mexico border wall. Under new Trump rules, US troops sound the alarm

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

NOGALES, Ariz. (AP) — Inside an armored vehicle, an Army scout uses a joystick to direct a long-range optical scope toward a man perched atop the U.S.-Mexico border wall cutting across the hills of this Arizona frontier community.

The man lowers himself toward U.S. soil between coils of concertina wire. Shouts ring out, an alert is sounded and a U.S. Border Patrol SUV races toward the wall — warning enough to send the man scrambling back over it, disappearing into Mexico.

The sighting Tuesday was one of only two for the Army infantry unit patrolling this sector of the southern border, where an emergency declaration by President Donald Trump has thrust the military into a central role in deterring migrant crossings between U.S. ports of entry.

"Deterrence is actually boring," said 24-year-old Army Sgt. Ana Harker-Molina, voicing the tedium felt by some fellow soldiers over the sporadic sightings.

Still, she said she takes pride in the work, knowing that troops discourage crossings by their mere presence.

"Just if we're sitting here watching the border, it's helping our country," said Harker-Molina, an immigrant herself who came from Panama at age 12 and became a U.S. citizen two years ago while serving in the Army.

U.S. troop deployments at the border have tripled to 7,600 and include every branch of the military — even as the number of attempted illegal crossings plummet and Trump has authorized funding for an additional 3,000 Border Patrol agents, offering \$10,000 signing and retention bonuses.

The military mission is guided from a new command center at a remote Army intelligence training base alongside southern Arizona's Huachuca Mountains. There, a community hall has been transformed into a bustling war room of battalion commanders and staff with digital maps pinpointing military camps and movements along the nearly 2,000-mile border.

Until now border enforcement had been the domain of civilian law enforcement, with the military only intermittently stepping in. But in April, large swaths of border were designated militarized zones, empowering U.S. troops to apprehend immigrants and others accused of trespassing on Army, Air Force or Navy bases, and authorizing additional criminal charges that can mean prison time.

The two-star general leading the mission says troops are being untethered from maintenance and warehouse tasks to work closely with U.S. Border Patrol agents in high-traffic areas for illegal crossings — and to deploy rapidly to remote, unguarded terrain.

"We don't have a (labor) union, there's no limit on how many hours we can work in a day, how many shifts we can man," said Army Maj. Gen. Scott Naumann.

"I can put soldiers out whenever we need to in order to get after the problem and we can put them out for days at a time, we can fly people into incredibly remote areas now that we see the cartels shifting" course.

Patrols aimed at stopping 'got-aways'

At Nogales, Army scouts patrolled the border in full battle gear — helmet, M5 service rifle, bullet-resistant vest — with the right to use deadly force if attacked under standing military rules integrated into the border mission. Underfoot, smugglers for decades routinely attempted to tunnel into stormwater drains

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to ferry contraband into the U.S.

Naumann's command post oversees an armada of 117 armored Stryker vehicles, more than 35 helicopters and a half-dozen long-distance drones that can survey the border day and night with sensors to pinpoint people wandering the desert. Marine Corps engineers are adding concertina wire to slow crossings, as the Trump administration reboots border wall construction.

Naumann said the focus is on stopping "got-aways" who evade authorities to disappear into the U.S. in a race against the clock that can last seconds in urban areas as people vanish into smuggling vehicles, or several days in the dense wetland thickets of the Rio Grande or the vast desert and mountainous wilderness of Arizona.

Meanwhile, the rate of apprehensions at the border has fallen to a 60-year low.

Naumann says the fall-off in illegal entries is the "elephant in the room" as the military increases pressure and resources aimed at starving smuggling cartels — including Latin American gangs recently designated as foreign terrorist organizations.

He says it would be wrong to let up, though, and that crossings may rebound with the end of scorching summer weather.

"We've got to keep going after it, we're having some successes, we are trending positively," he said of the mission with no fixed end-date.

Militarized zones are 'a gray area'

The Trump administration is using the military broadly to boost its immigration operations, from guarding federal buildings in Los Angeles against protests over ICE detentions, to assisting Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Florida to plans to hold detained immigrants on military bases in New Jersey, Indiana and Texas.

"It's all part of the same strategy that is a very muscular, robust, intimidating, aggressive response to this — to show his base that he was serious about a campaign promise to fix immigration," said Dan Maurer, a law professor at Ohio Northern University and a retired U.S. Army judge advocate officer.

"It's both norm-breaking and unusual. It puts the military in a very awkward position."

The militarized zones at the border sidestep the Posse Comitatus Act, an 1878 law that prohibits the military from conducting civilian law enforcement on U.S. soil.

"It's in that gray area, it may be a violation — it may not be. The military's always had the authority to arrest people and detain them on military bases," said Joshua Kastenberger, a professor at the University of New Mexico School of Law and a former Air Force judge.

Michael Fisher, a security consultant and former chief of the Border Patrol from 2010-2016, calls the military expansion at the border a "force multiplier" as Border Patrol agents increasingly turn up far from the border.

"The military allows Border Patrol to be able to flex into other areas where they typically would not be able to do so," he said.

The strategy carries inherent moral challenges and political risks.

In 1997, an 18-year-old U.S. citizen was shot to death while herding goats by a Marine Corps unit on a border anti-drug patrol in the remote Big Bend Region of western Texas. Authorities say Esequiel Hernandez had no connection to the drug trade and was an honor student.

The shooting stoked anger along the border and prompted an end to then-President Bill Clinton's military deployment to the border.

In New Mexico, the latest restrictions barring access to militarized zones have made popular areas for hunting, hiking and offroad motorsports off-limits for recreation, leading to an outcry from some residents.

Naumann said adults can apply for access online, and by agreeing to undergo a criminal background check that he calls a standard requirement for access to military bases.

"We're not out to stop Americans from recreating in America. That's not what this is about," he said.

Military-grade equipment

At daybreak Wednesday, Border Patrol vehicles climbed the largely unfenced slopes of Mt. Cristo Rey, an

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iconic peak topped by a crucifix that juts into the sky above the urban outskirts of El Paso and Mexico's Ciudad Juárez — without another soul in sight.

The peak is at the conflux of two new militarized zones designated as extensions of Army stations at Fort Bliss in Texas and Fort Huachuca in Arizona. The Defense Department has added an additional 250-mile (400-kilometer) zone in Texas' Rio Grande Valley linked to an Air Force base.

The Navy will oversee the border near Yuma, Arizona, where the Department of Interior on Wednesday ceded a 32-mile (50-kilometer) portion of the border to the military.

At Mt. Cristo Rey, the Homeland Security Department has issued plans to close a 1.3-mile (2-kilometer) gap in the border wall over the objections of a Roman Catholic diocese that owns much of the land and says a wall would obstruct a sacred refuge for religious pilgrimages.

From a nearby mesa top, Army Spc. Luisangel Nito scanned the valley below Mt. Cristo Rey with an infrared scope that highlights body heat, spotting three people as they crossed illegally into the U.S. for the Border Patrol to apprehend. Nito's unit also has equipment that can ground small drones used by smugglers to plot entry routes.

Nito is the U.S.-born son of Mexican immigrants who entered the country in the 1990s through the same valleys he now patrols.

"They crossed right here," he said. "They told me to just be careful because back when they crossed they said it was dangerous."

Nito's parents returned to Mexico in 2008 amid the financial crisis, but the soldier saw brighter opportunities in the U.S., returned and enlisted. He expressed no reservations about his role in detaining illegal immigrants.

"Obviously it's a job, right, and then I signed up for it and I'm going to do it," he said.

At Mt. Cristo Rey and elsewhere, troops utilize marked Border Patrol vehicles as Naumann champions the "integration" of civilian law enforcement and military forces.

"If there's a kind of a secret sauce, if you will, it's integrating at every echelon," Neumann said.

Maui panel passes bill to curb vacation rentals and boost housing supply after Lahaina wildfire

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Lawmakers on Maui passed legislation Thursday aimed at eliminating a large percentage of the Hawaiian island's vacation rentals to address a housing shortage exacerbated by the wildfire that destroyed most of Lahaina two years ago.

It's the latest action by a top global tourist destination to push back against the infiltration of vacationers into residential neighborhoods and tourism overwhelming their communities. In May, Spain ordered Airbnb to block more than 65,000 holiday listings on its platform for having violated rules. Last month, thousands of protesters in European cities like Barcelona and Venice, Italy, marched against the ills of overtourism.

The Maui County Council's housing committee voted 6-3 to pass the bill, which would close a loophole that has allowed owners of condos in apartment zones to rent their units for days or weeks at a time instead of a minimum of 180 days. The mandate would take effect in the West Maui district that includes Lahaina in 2028. The rest of the county would have until 2030 to comply.

The council still needs to vote on the bill, but the committee's result is a strong indication of the final outcome because all nine council members sit on the housing panel. The mayor is expected to sign the bill, which he proposed.

"Bill 9 is a critical first step in restoring our commitment to prioritize housing for local residents — and securing a future where our keiki can live, grow, and thrive in the place they call home," Maui Mayor Richard Bissen said in a statement, using the Hawaiian word for children.

Vacation rentals take up one-fifth of Maui's housing

Vacation rentals currently account for 21% of all housing in the county, which has a population of about 165,000 people.

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An analysis by University of Hawaii economists predicted the measure would add 6,127 units to Maui's long-term housing stock, increasing supply by 13%.

Opponents questioned whether local residents could afford the condos in question, noting that many of the buildings they are in are aging and their units come with high mortgages, insurance payments, maintenance and special assessment costs.

Alicia Humiston said her condo is in a hotel zone so it won't be affected. But she predicted the measure will hurt housekeepers, plumbers, electricians and other small business owners who help maintain vacation rentals.

"It's not what's best for the the community," said Humiston, who is president of the Rentals by Owner Awareness Association.

Bissen proposed the legislation last year after wildfire survivors and activists camped out on a beach popular with tourists to demand change.

Mayor says tourism will continue but must not 'hollow out our neighborhoods'

The University of Hawaii study said only about 600 new housing units are built in the county each year so converting the vacation rentals would be equivalent to a decade's worth of new housing development. Condo prices would drop 20-40%, the study estimated.

The report also predicted one-quarter of Maui County's visitor accommodations would vanish and visitor spending would sink 15%. It estimated gross domestic product would contract by 4%.

The mayor said such economic analysis failed to tell a full story, noting families are torn apart when high housing costs drive out relatives and that cultural knowledge disappears when generations leave Maui.

The mayor told the council the bill was one part of a broader housing strategy that would include building new housing, investing in infrastructure and stopping illegally operated vacation rentals. He said there were limits to how much new housing could be built because of constraints on water supplies and sewer infrastructure.

Tourism would continue on Maui but must do so in a way "that doesn't hollow out our neighborhoods," the mayor said.

The mayor's staff told council members that visitor spending would decline with the measure but most of the drop would be on lodging. Because 94% of those who own vacation rentals in apartment zones don't live on Maui, they said much of this income already flows off-island. They predicted the county budget could withstand an estimated \$61 million decline in annual tax revenue resulting from the measure.

US cuts short Gaza ceasefire talks and accuses Hamas of lacking 'good faith'

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and JOSEPH KRAUSS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States is cutting short Gaza ceasefire talks and bringing its negotiating team home from Qatar to discuss next steps after Hamas' latest response "shows a lack of desire" to reach a truce, President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff said Thursday.

"While the mediators have made a great effort, Hamas does not appear to be coordinated or acting in good faith," Witkoff said in a statement. "We will now consider alternative options to bring the hostages home and try to create a more stable environment for the people of Gaza."

State Department spokesperson Tommy Pigott would not offer details on what "alternative options" the U.S. is considering to free hostages held by the militant group.

Hamas said in a statement that it was surprised by Witkoff's "negative remarks" and said it has shown responsibility and flexibility in the negotiating track. It added that it was "keen to reach an agreement that ends the aggression and the suffering of our people in Gaza."

A breakthrough on a ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas following 21 months of war has eluded the Trump administration as humanitarian conditions worsen in Gaza. Thursday's move is the latest setback as Trump has tried to position himself as peacemaker and vowed to broker agreements in conflicts

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from Ukraine to Gaza.

Talks for a Gaza ceasefire have dragged on

When pressed on whether and how the U.S. would proceed on seeking a truce in Gaza, Pigott did not offer clarity and told reporters that "this is a very dynamic situation."

He said there's never been a question of the U.S. commitment to reaching a ceasefire and faulted Hamas.

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.

Witkoff said the U.S. is "resolute" in seeking an end to the conflict in Gaza and it was "a shame that Hamas has acted in this selfish way."

The White House had no comment.

Hamas, in the statement it released early Friday, said it had offered its final answer following wide consultations with Palestinian factions, mediators and countries in the region. It said it has dealt positively with all remarks it received reflecting a "true commitment" to making the efforts of the mediators successful and to "deal constructively" with the presented initiatives.

Hamas said it reaffirmed its "keenness to continue the negotiations and to engage in a way that would ease obstacles and ensure reaching a permanent ceasefire."

Israel also calls back its negotiators

Earlier Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office recalled his negotiating team in light of Hamas' response. In a brief statement, Netanyahu's office expressed appreciation for the efforts of Witkoff and other mediators Qatar and Egypt but gave no further details.

The deal under discussion was expected to include an initial 60-day ceasefire in which Hamas would release 10 living hostages and the remains of 18 others in phases in exchange for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Aid supplies would be ramped up, and the two sides would hold negotiations on a lasting ceasefire.

The talks have been bogged down over competing demands for ending the war. Hamas says it will only release all hostages in exchange for a full Israeli withdrawal and end to the war. Israel says it will not agree to end the conflict until Hamas gives up power and disarms. The militant group says it is prepared to leave power but not surrender its weapons.

Hamas is believed to be holding the hostages in different locations, including tunnels, and says it has ordered its guards to kill them if Israeli forces approach.

Trump has been pushing for peace

Trump has made little secret of the fact he wants to receive a Nobel Peace Prize. For instance, he has promised to quickly negotiate an end to Russia's war in Ukraine, but little progress has been made.

On the war in Gaza, Trump met with Netanyahu at the White House this month, putting his weight behind a push to reach a deal.

But despite a partnership further solidified by their countries' joint strikes on Iran, the Israeli leader left Washington without any breakthrough.

The State Department had said earlier in the week that Witkoff would be traveling to the Middle East for talks, but U.S. officials later said that Witkoff would instead travel to Europe. It was unclear if he held meetings there Thursday.

The apparent derailing of the talks comes as Israel's blockade and military offensive have driven Gaza to the brink of famine, according to aid groups. The U.N. food agency says nearly 100,000 women and children are suffering from severe, acute malnutrition, and the Gaza Health Ministry has reported a rise in hunger-related deaths.

Israel is criticized for its role in Gaza

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he would hold an emergency call Friday with officials from Germany and France to discuss how to urgently get food to people in need and launch steps to build a lasting peace.

"The suffering and starvation unfolding in Gaza is unspeakable and indefensible," he said in a statement. The three European countries "all agree on the pressing need for Israel to change course and allow the aid that is desperately needed to enter Gaza without delay."

French President Emmanuel Macron announced Thursday that France would recognize Palestine as a

state, saying, "The urgent thing today is that the war in Gaza stops and the civilian population is saved."

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said in a social media post late Thursday, "Canada condemns the Israeli government's failure to prevent the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian disaster in Gaza." He called for "a two-state solution which guarantees peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians."

Israel has come under mounting pressure, with 28 Western-aligned countries calling for an end to the war and harshly criticizing Israel's blockade and a new aid delivery model it has rolled out. More than 100 charity and human rights groups released a similar letter, saying even their own staff are struggling to get enough food.

The U.S. and Israel rejected the allegations and blamed Hamas for prolonging the war by not accepting their terms for a ceasefire.

Israel says it is allowing in enough aid and blames U.N. agencies for not distributing it. But those agencies say it is nearly impossible to safely deliver it because of Israeli restrictions and a breakdown of law and order, with crowds of thousands unloading food trucks as soon as they move into Gaza.

A separate Israeli- and U.S.-backed system run by an American contractor has also been marred by chaos.

"Of course, we want to see the end of devastation that is taking place in Gaza," Pigott said. "That is why we have supported the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. That is why we've seen those 90 million meals being distributed."

Zelenskyy moves to restore independence of Ukraine anti-graft agencies after protests, EU criticism

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday submitted a new bill that would restore the independence of Ukraine's anti-corruption agencies in an effort to defuse tensions following his approval earlier this week of a controversial law that weakened their autonomy.

The previous bill was seen as undermining the agencies' independence and sparked a public outcry and protests, the first major demonstrations since the war began, as well as sharp criticism from the European Union.

Zelenskyy said parliament would review the new bill, which "guarantees real strengthening of Ukraine's law enforcement system, the independence of anti-corruption bodies, and reliable protection of the legal system from any Russian interference."

First reactions

Ukraine's two main anti-graft agencies — the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office — quickly welcomed Zelenskyy's new proposal, saying it restores all their procedural powers and guarantees their independence.

The agencies said they helped draft the new bill, and urged lawmakers to adopt it "as soon as possible" to prevent threats to ongoing criminal cases.

The bill would replace the contentious law passed by lawmakers and approved by Zelenskyy earlier this week. Critics said it stripped Ukraine's anti-corruption agencies of their independence by granting the government more oversight of their work.

A controversial law

Zelenskyy initially argued the law was needed to speed up investigations, ensure more convictions and remove Russian meddling.

After Thursday's U-turn, Zelenskyy said the new bill reverses the earlier changes and also introduced additional measures aimed at "combating Russian influence," including mandatory polygraph tests for law enforcement officers.

"The text is balanced," Zelenskyy said. "The most important thing is real tools, no Russian ties and the independence" of the anti-graft agencies.

The new draft underlines that the prosecutor general and his deputies cannot give orders to anti-graft

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agencies or interfere in their work.

Bowing to pressure and protests

The controversy surrounding the initial bill has threatened to undermine public trust in Ukraine's leadership after more than three years of fighting Russia's full-scale invasion. The protests haven't called for Zelenskyy's ouster, but they are the first major anti-government demonstrations since the war started in February 2022.

"It is important that we maintain unity," Zelenskyy said in his post.

It was not immediately clear when the new bill will be voted on in the parliament, and the protests are likely to continue until the law is passed. At the protests on Thursday evening, the crowd was smaller than on previous days.

The unrest has come at a difficult time in the all-out war. Russia's bigger army is accelerating its efforts to pierce Ukraine's front-line defenses and is escalating its bombardment of Ukrainian cities.

The bigger picture

Ukraine is also facing a question mark over whether the United States will provide more military aid and whether European commitments can take up the slack, with no end in sight to the war.

Delegations from Russia and Ukraine met in Istanbul for a third round of talks in as many months Wednesday. But once again, the talks were brief and delivered no major breakthrough.

Fighting entrenched corruption is crucial for Ukraine's aspirations to join the EU and maintain access to billions of dollars in Western aid in the war. It is also an effort that enjoys broad public support.

EU Enlargement Commissioner Marta Kos expressed concern Wednesday over the law approved earlier this week, calling it "a serious step back."

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.

Deadly fighting grinds on

On Thursday, two women, aged 48 and 59, were killed and 14 other people were injured when Russian forces dropped four powerful glide bombs on Kostiantynivka, an industrial city in eastern Ukraine, and shelled it with artillery, Donetsk regional Gov. Vadym Filashkin said.

Russian planes also dropped two glide bombs on the center of Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, on Thursday morning, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said. At least 42 people were wounded, including two babies, a 10-year-old girl and two 17 year olds, authorities said.

The southern city of Odesa, and Cherkasy in central Ukraine, were also hit overnight, authorities said. The drone and missile strikes on the cities wounded 11 people, including a 9-year-old, and damaged historic landmarks and residential buildings, officials said.

Ukraine has sought to step up its own long-range drone attacks on Russia, using domestic technology and manufacturing.

An overnight Ukrainian drone attack on the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi killed two women and wounded 11 other people, local authorities said Thursday.

An oil depot was hit, officials said, without offering details.

Federal regulators approve Paramount's \$8 billion deal with Skydance, capping months of turmoil

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS and MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Business Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — Federal regulators on Thursday approved Paramount's \$8 billion merger with Skydance, clearing the way to close a deal that combined Hollywood glitz with political intrigue.

The stamp of approval from the Federal Communications Commission comes after months of turmoil revolving around President Donald Trump's legal battle with "60 Minutes," the crown jewel of Paramount-owned broadcast network CBS. With the specter of the Trump administration potentially blocking the

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hard-fought deal with Skydance, Paramount earlier this month agreed to pay a \$16 million settlement with the president.

Critics of the settlement lambasted it as a veiled bribe to appease Trump, amid rising alarm over editorial independence overall. Further outrage also emerged after CBS said it was canceling Stephen Colbert's "Late Show" just days after the comedian sharply criticized the parent company's settlement on air. Paramount cited financial reasons, but big names both within and outside the company have questioned those motives.

In a statement accompanying the deal's approval, FCC Chairman Brendan Carr hailed the merger as an opportunity to bring more balance to "once-storied" CBS.

"Americans no longer trust the legacy national news media to report fully, accurately, and fairly. It is time for a change," Carr said.

While seeking approval, Skydance management assured regulators that it will carefully watch for any perceived bias at CBS News and hire an ombudsman to review any complaints about fairness. In a Tuesday filing, the company's general counsel maintained that New Paramount will embody "a diversity of viewpoints across the political and ideological spectrum" — and also noted that it plans to take a "comprehensive review" of CBS to make "any necessary changes."

The FCC approved the merger by a 2-1 vote, and the regulator who opposed it expressed disdain for how it all came together.

"After months of cowardly capitulation to this administration, Paramount finally got what it wanted," FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez said in a statement. "Unfortunately, it is the American public who will ultimately pay the price for its actions." Gomez was appointed by former President Joe Biden.

Paramount and Skydance have said they wanted to seal the deal by this September, and now appear to be on a path to make it happen by then, if not sooner.

Over the past year the merger has periodically looked like it might fall apart as the two sides haggled over terms. But the two companies finally struck an accord that valued the combined company at \$28 billion, with a consortium led by the family of Skydance founder David Ellison and RedBird Capital agreeing to invest \$8 billion.

Signaling a shakeup would accompany the changing of the guard, Ellison stressed the need to transition into a "tech hybrid" to stay competitive in today's entertainment landscape. That includes plans to "rebuild" the Paramount+ streaming service, among wider efforts to expand direct-to-consumer offerings in a world with more entertainment options and shorter attention spans.

Ellison, who is poised to become CEO of the restructured Paramount, is the son of Larry Ellison, technology titan and co-founder of Oracle. Besides possessing an estimated \$288 billion fortune, Larry Ellison has been described as a friend by Trump.

While Paramount sweated out regulatory approval of the merger, one of TV's best-known and longest-running programs turned into a political hot potato when Trump sued CBS over the handling of a "60 Minutes" interview with his Democratic Party opponent in last year's presidential election, Kamala Harris. Trump accused "60 Minutes" of editing the interview in a deceptive way designed to help Harris win the election. After initially demanding \$10 billion in damages, Trump upped the ante to \$20 billion while asserting he had suffered "mental anguish."

The case quickly became a closely-watched test of whether a corporation would back its journalists and stand up to Trump. Editing for brevity's sake is commonplace in TV journalism and CBS argued Trump's claims had no merit. But reports of company executives exploring a potential settlement with Trump later piled up, particularly after Carr — appointed to lead the FCC by Trump — launched an investigation earlier this year.

By the start of July, Paramount agreed to pay Trump \$16 million. The company said the money would go to Trump's future presidential library and to pay his legal fees, but maintained that it was not apologizing or expressing regret for the story.

The settlement triggered an outcry among critics who pilloried Paramount for backing down from the legal fight to increase the chances of closing the Skydance deal. U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass, said that the deal "could be bribery in plain sight" — and called for an investigation and new rules to restrict

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donations to presidential libraries.

Concerns about editorial independence at CBS had piled up even in the months before the deal was announced — with Paramount overseeing “60 Minutes” stories in new ways, as well as journalists at the network expressing frustrations about the changes on an award-winning program that has been a weekly staple for nearly 57 years

In April, then-executive producer of “60 Minutes” Bill Owens resigned — noting that it had “become clear that I would not be allowed to run the show as I have always run it.” Another domino fell in May when CBS News CEO Wendy McMahon also stepped down, citing disagreements with the company “on the path forward,” amid speculation of Paramount nearing a settlement with Trump. CBS has since appointed Tanya Simon as the top producer at “60 Minutes” — elevating a respected insider in a move that could be viewed as a way to calm nerves leading up to the changes that Skydance’s Ellison is expected to make.

Dozens of kids and adults in Gaza have starved to death in July as hunger surges

By WAFAA SHURAF, SARAH EL DEEB and LEE KEATH Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Five starving children at a Gaza City hospital were wasting away, and nothing the doctors tried was working. The basic treatments for malnourishment that could save them had run out under Israel’s blockade. The alternatives were ineffective. One after another, the babies and toddlers died over four days.

In greater numbers than ever, children hollowed up by hunger are overwhelming the Patient’s Friends Hospital, the main emergency center for malnourished kids in northern Gaza.

The deaths last weekend also marked a change: the first seen by the center in children who had no preexisting conditions. Symptoms are getting worse, with children too weak to cry or move, said Dr. Rana Soboh, a nutritionist. In past months, most improved, despite supply shortages, but now patients stay longer and don’t get better, she said.

“There are no words in the face of the disaster we are in. Kids are dying before the world ... There is no uglier and more horrible phase than this,” said Soboh, who works with the U.S.-based aid organization Medglobal, which supports the hospital.

This month, the hunger that has been building among Gaza’s more than 2 million Palestinians passed a tipping point into accelerating death, aid workers and health staff say. Not only children — usually the most vulnerable — are falling victim under Israel’s blockade since March, but also adults.

In the past three weeks, at least 48 people died of causes related to malnutrition, including 28 adults and 20 children, the Gaza Health Ministry said Thursday. That’s up from 10 children who died in the five previous months of 2025, according to the ministry.

The U.N. reports similar numbers. The World Health Organization said Wednesday it has documented 21 children under 5 who died of causes related to malnutrition in 2025. The U.N. humanitarian office, OCHA, said Thursday at least 13 children’s deaths were reported in July, with the number growing daily.

“Humans are well developed to live with caloric deficits, but only so far,” said Dr. John Kahler, Medglobal’s co-founder and a pediatrician who volunteered twice in Gaza during the war. “It appears that we have crossed the line where a segment of the population has reached their limits”

“This is the beginning of a population death spiral,” he said.

The U.N.’s World Food Program says nearly 100,000 women and children urgently need treatment for malnutrition. Medical workers say they have run out of many key treatments and medicines.

Israel, which began letting in only a trickle of supplies the past two months, has blamed Hamas for disrupting food distribution. The U.N. counters that Israel, which has restricted aid since the war began, simply has to allow it to enter freely.

Hundreds of malnourished kids brought daily

The Patient’s Friends Hospital overflows with parents bringing in scrawny children – 200 to 300 cases a day, said Soboh.

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On Wednesday, staff laid toddlers on a desk to measure the circumference of their upper arms — the quickest way to determine malnutrition. In the summer heat, mothers huddled around specialists, asking for supplements. Babies with emaciated limbs screamed in agony. Others lay totally silent.

The worst cases are kept for up to two weeks at the center's 10-bed ward, which this month has had up to 19 children at a time. It usually treats only children under 5, but began taking some as old as 11 or 12 because of worsening starvation among older children.

Hunger gnaws at staff as well. Soboh said two nurses put themselves on IV drips to keep themselves going. "We are exhausted. We are dead in the shape of the living," she said.

The five children died in succession last Thursday, Saturday and Sunday.

Four of them, aged 4 months to 2 years, had suffered gastric arrest: Their stomachs shut down. The hospital no longer had the right nutrition supplies for them.

The fifth — 4 1/2-year-old Siwar — had alarmingly low potassium levels, a growing problem. She was so weak she could barely move her body. Medicine for potassium deficiency has largely run out across Gaza, Soboh said. The center had only a low-concentration potassium drip.

The little girl didn't respond. After three days in the ICU, she died Saturday.

"If we don't have potassium (supplies), we will see more deaths," she said.

A 2-year-old is wasting away

In the Shati Refugee Camp in Gaza city, 2-year-old Yazan Abu Ful's mother, Naima, pulled off his clothes to show his emaciated body. His vertebrae, ribs and shoulder-blades jutted out. His buttocks were shriveled. His face was expressionless.

His father Mahmoud, who was also skinny, said they took him to the hospital several times. Doctors just say they should feed him. "I tell the doctors, 'You see for yourself, there is no food,'" he said,

Naima, who is pregnant, prepared a meal: Two eggplants they bought for \$9 cut up and boiled in water. They will stretch out the pot of eggplant-water — not even a real soup — to last them a few days, they said. Several of Yazan's four older siblings also looked thin and drained.

Holding him in his lap, Mahmoud Abu Ful lifted Yazan's limp arms. The boy lies on the floor most of the day, too weak to play with his brothers. "If we leave him, he might just slip away from between our fingers, and we can't do anything."

Adults, too, are dying

Starvation takes the vulnerable first, experts say: children and adults with health conditions.

On Thursday, the bodies of an adult man and woman with signs of starvation were brought to Gaza City's Shifa Hospital, hospital director Mohammed Abu Selmia said. One suffered from diabetes, the other from a heart condition, but they showed severe deficiencies of nutrients, gastric arrest and anemia from malnutrition.

Many of the adults who have died had some sort of preexisting condition, like diabetes or heart or kidney trouble, worsened by malnutrition, Abu Selmia said. "These diseases don't kill if they have food and medicine," he said.

Deaths come after months of Israeli siege

Israel cut off entry of food, medicine, fuel and other supplies completely to Gaza for 2 1/2 months starting in March, saying it aimed to pressure Hamas to release hostages. During that time, food largely ran out for aid groups and in marketplaces, and experts warned Gaza was headed for an outright famine.

In late May, Israel slightly eased the blockade. Since then, it has allowed in around 4,500 trucks for the U.N. and other aid groups to distribute, including 2,500 tons of baby food and high-calorie special food for children, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said Wednesday.

That is an average of 69 trucks a day, far below the 500-600 trucks a day the U.N. says are needed. The U.N. has been unable to distribute much of the aid because hungry crowds and gangs take most of it from its trucks. Separately, Israel has also backed the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which opened four centers distributing boxes of food supplies. Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed trying to reach the sites.

On Tuesday, David Mencer, spokesman for the Israeli Prime Minister's office, denied there is a "famine

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created by Israel" in Gaza and blamed Hamas for creating "man-made shortages" by looting aid trucks. The U.N. denies Hamas siphons off significant quantities of aid. Humanitarian workers say Israel just needs to allow aid to flow in freely, saying looting stops whenever aid enters in large quantities.

Trump and Powell bicker over Fed building renovations as president ratchets up pressure campaign

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER, JOSH BOAK and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After months of criticizing Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, President Donald Trump took the fight to the Fed's front door on Thursday, publicly scolding the central bank chief over the ballooning costs of a long-planned building project. Powell pushed back, challenging the president's latest price tag as incorrect.

Wearing hard hats and grim faces, standing in the middle of the construction project, Trump and Powell addressed the assembled TV cameras. Trump charged that the renovation would cost \$3.1 billion, much higher than the Fed's \$2.5 billion figure. Powell, standing next to him, shook his head.

The Fed chair, after looking at a paper presented to him by Trump, said the president was including the cost of renovating a separate Fed building, known as the Martin building, that was finished five years ago.

The visit represented a significant ratcheting up of the president's pressure on Powell to lower borrowing costs, which Trump says would accelerate economic growth and reduce the government's interest payments. Presidents rarely visit the Fed's offices, though they are just a few blocks from the White House, an example of the central bank's independence from day-to-day politics.

"We have to get the interest rates down," Trump said later after a short tour, addressing the cameras this time without Powell. "People are pretty much unable to buy houses."

Trump is likely to be disappointed next week, however, when Fed officials will meet to decide its next steps on interest rates. Powell and other officials have signaled they will likely keep their key rate unchanged at about 4.3%. However, economists and Wall Street investors expect the Fed may start cutting rates in September.

The Federal Reserve sets a short-term interest rate that influences other borrowing costs, such as mortgages, auto loans and credit card rates. Yet the Fed doesn't directly control those other rates, which are ultimately set in financial markets. Last September, when the Fed cut its rate a half-point, mortgage rates actually rose in response.

Trump did step back a bit from some of his recent threats to fire Powell before his term ends May 26. Asked if the rising costs of the Fed's renovation, estimated in 2022 to cost \$1.9 billion, was a "fireable offense," Trump said, "I don't want to put this in that category."

"To do that is a big move, and I don't think that's necessary," Trump added. "I just want to see one thing happen, very simple: Interest rates come down."

And on his Truth Social site, Trump said, "The cost overruns are substantial but, on the positive side, our Country is doing very well and can afford just about anything — Even the cost of this building!"

The Fed allowed reporters to tour the building before the visit by Trump, who, in his real estate career, bragged about his own lavish spending on architectural accoutrements that gave a Versailles-like golden flair to his buildings.

Journalists get rare tour of Fed renovation

On Thursday, reporters wound through cement mixers, front loaders and plastic pipes as they got a close-up view of the active construction site that encompasses the Fed's historic headquarters, known as the Marriner S. Eccles building, and a second building across 20th Street in Washington.

Fed staff, who declined to be identified, said that greater security requirements, rising materials costs and tariffs, and the need to comply with historic preservation measures drove up the cost of the project, which was budgeted in 2022 at \$1.9 billion.

Trump in 2018 imposed a 25% duty on steel and 10% on aluminum. He increased them this year to 50%. Steel prices are up about 60% since the plans were approved, while construction materials costs

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overall are up about 50%, according to government data.

The staff pointed out new blast-resistant windows and seismic walls that were needed to comply with modern building codes and security standards set out by the Department of Homeland Security. The Fed has to build with the highest level of security in mind, Fed staff said, including something called “progressive collapse,” in which only parts of the building would fall if hit with explosives.

Sensitivity to the president’s pending visit among Fed staff was high during the tour. Reporters were ushered into a small room outside the Fed’s boardroom, where 19 officials meet eight times a year to decide whether to change short-term interest rates. The room, which will have a security booth, is oval-shaped, and someone had written “oval office” on plywood walls.

The Fed staff downplayed the inscription as a joke. When reporters returned to the room later, it had been painted over.

During the tour, Fed staff also showed the elevator shaft that congressional critics have said is for “VIPs” only. Powell has since said it will be open to all Fed staff. The renovation includes an 18-inch (45-cm) extension so the elevator reaches a slightly elevated area that is now accessible only by steps or a ramp. A planning document that said the elevator will only be for the Fed’s seven governors was erroneous and later amended, staff said.

Renovations have been in the works for a while

Plans for the renovation were first approved by the Fed’s governing board in 2017. The project then wended its way through several local commissions for approval, at least one of which, the Commission for Fine Arts, included several Trump appointees. The commission pushed for more marble in the second of the two buildings the Fed is renovating, known as 1951 Constitution Avenue, specifically in a mostly glass extension that some of Trump’s appointees derided as a “glass box.”

Fed staff also pointed to the complication of historic renovations — both buildings have significant preservation needs. Constructing a new building on an empty site would have been cheaper, they said.

As one example, the staff pointed reporters to where they had excavated beneath the Eccles building to add a floor of mechanical rooms, storage space and some offices. The Fed staff acknowledged such structural additions underground are expensive, but said it was done to avoid adding HVAC equipment and other mechanics on the roof, which is historic.

Trump, who said after his tour that “it feels very good to be back on a construction site,” added that opening up a basement is “the most expensive place to build.”

The Fed has previously attributed much of the project’s cost to underground construction. It is also adding three underground levels of parking for its second building. Initially the central bank proposed building more above ground, but ran into Washington, D.C.’s height restrictions, forcing more underground construction.

Judge acquits 5 former Canadian junior hockey players in sexual assault case that rattled the nation

LONDON, Ontario (AP) — An Ontario judge acquitted five former members of Canada’s world junior hockey team on Thursday in their sexual assault case, saying the complainant’s allegations lacked the credibility needed to justify the charges.

Superior Court Justice Maria Carroccia said prosecutors could not meet the onus of proof for the charges against Michael McLeod, Carter Hart, Alex Formenton, Dillon Dube and Callan Foote.

All five players had pleaded not guilty to sexual assault in an encounter that took place in a London, Ontario, hotel room in the early hours of June 19, 2018. Years of speculation regarding the allegations — fueled by a lawsuit settlement, parliamentary hearings and revived investigations by the police and Hockey Canada, along with an NHL investigation — all preceded a complex trial earlier this year that included a mistrial and the dismissal of the jury, leaving the verdict to Carroccia.

Carroccia explained her reasoning for the acquittals in detail over the course of about five hours, highlighting the complainant’s “tendency to blame others” for inconsistencies in her allegations. She also said

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the woman went to “great lengths” to point out that she was really drunk through the course of the night, but that is not supported by surveillance video from a bar and hotel that night and the testimony of others.

McLeod was also acquitted — and pleaded not guilty — on a separate count of being a party to the offense, an unusual application of a charge that is more typically seen in murder cases.

The players, who are now between the ages of 25 and 27, were in London at the time for a gala and golf tournament marking their championship victory. They walked out of the courthouse surrounded by family members following the verdict.

Their lawyers called the result a “resounding vindication.”

Karen Bellehumeur, the woman’s lawyer, told reporters outside the courthouse that her client was devastated.

“She’s really never experienced not being believed like this before,” Bellehumeur said. “She agreed to do everything asked of her by the criminal justice system. She spoke to the police whenever requested, she reviewed her evidence, she prepared her testimony, she answered every question, she spoke with intelligence and from her heart, yet it was not enough.”

The NHL said the players — none of whom is currently on an NHL roster or has an active contract — remained ineligible to play in the league while it reviews the judge’s findings, adding in a statement that the allegations in the case were disturbing, even if not determined to be criminal.

The NHL Players Association said the five should have the opportunity to return to the ice, adding that the league’s eligibility ruling was “inconsistent” with discipline procedures in the collective bargaining agreement.

Prosecutor Meaghan Cunningham thanked the complainant for coming forward, adding that her team will “carefully review” the judge’s decision while it’s still within the 30-day appeal period.

The woman testified in May that she was naked, drunk and scared when four of the men showed up unexpectedly in her room at the Delta Hotel London Armouries and felt the only “safe” option was to do what they wanted. Prosecutors argued the players did what they wanted without taking steps to ensure she was voluntarily consenting to sexual acts.

“I made the choice to dance with them and drink at the bar, I did not make the choice to have them do what they did back at the hotel,” she testified.

Defense attorneys cross-examined her for days and suggested she actively participated in or initiated sexual activity because she wanted a “wild night.” Two short videos of the complainant taken by McLeod the night of the encounter were played in court. In one, the woman says it was “all consensual,” though she told the court that wasn’t how she truly felt.

Protesters gathered outside a packed London courthouse on Thursday morning, holding signs that signaled support for the complainant, whose identity was not disclosed throughout the trial under Canadian law.

The public didn’t learn of the allegations for years. Police closed their initial investigation without charges in early 2019, but the complainant sued Hockey Canada in 2022. The organization settled the lawsuit amid intense scrutiny that cost it sponsors, but police reopened their investigation.

The players’ identities were made public when they were charged in early 2024. At the time, four of them played in the NHL — Dube for the Calgary Flames, Hart for the Philadelphia Flyers, and McLeod and Foote for the New Jersey Devils. Formenton had previously played for the Ottawa Senators before joining a Swiss team. All went on indefinite leave.

The NHL launched its own investigation in 2022. Officials pledged to release the findings, though Commissioner Gary Bettman said in February that would depend on what the league can say given legal proceedings.

Thailand launches airstrikes on Cambodia as border clashes leave at least 14 dead

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI and SOPHENG CHEANG Associated Press

SURIN, Thailand (AP) — Thai and Cambodian soldiers have clashed along the border between their countries in a major escalation that left at least 14 people dead, mostly civilians. The two sides fired small arms, artillery and rockets, and Thailand also launched airstrikes.

Fighting took place in at least six areas on Thursday, according to Thai Defense Ministry spokesperson Surasant Kongsiri, a day after a land mine explosion along the border wounded five Thai soldiers and led Bangkok to withdraw its ambassador from Cambodia and expel Cambodia's envoy to Thailand.

On Friday, Cambodia's chief official in Oddar Meanchey province, Gen. Khov Ly, said clashes resumed early in the morning near the ancient Ta Muen Thom temple. Associated Press reporters near the border could hear sounds of artillery from early morning hours.

The official also said that at least four civilians were wounded in Thursday's fighting there and that more than 4,000 people have been displaced from their villages along the border to evacuation centers. It was the first account of any casualties from the Cambodian side.

The escalation represents a rare instance of military conflict between member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nation, though Thailand has tangled with Cambodia before over the border and has had sporadic skirmishes with western neighbor Myanmar.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged both sides "to exercise maximum restraint and address any issues through dialogue," according to U.N. deputy spokesman Farhan Haq.

Each side blames the other

Thailand and Cambodia have blamed each other for the clashes, alleging that civilians were being targeted.

In Bangkok, the Public Health Ministry said a Thai soldier and 13 civilians, including children, were killed while 14 soldiers and 32 other civilians were injured. Public Health Minister Somsak Thepsuthin condemned what he said were the attacks on civilians and a hospital as violations of international humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions.

"We urge the Cambodian government to immediately halt these war criminal actions, and return to respecting the principles of peaceful coexistence," he said.

Thailand's Acting Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai said the fighting affected four provinces. The Interior Ministry was ordered to evacuate people at least 50 kilometers (30 miles) from the border.

In Cambodia, several hundred villagers moved from their homes near the border to about 30 kilometers (18 miles) deeper inside Oddar Meanchey province. Many made the journey with entire families and most of their possessions on home-made tractors, before settling down with hammocks and makeshift shelters.

From the encampment near the town of Samrong, a 45-year-old mother of four, Tep Savouen, said it all started about 8 a.m.

"Suddenly I heard a loud noise," she told the AP. "My son told me it might be thunder and I thought 'Is it thunder or is it loud, more like a gun?' At that time I was very scared."

Thai Foreign Ministry spokesperson Nikorndej Balankura said the government was "prepared to intensify our self-defense measures if Cambodia persists in its armed aggression and violations upon Thailand's sovereignty."

In the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, Defense Ministry spokesperson Lt. Gen. Maly Socheata said his country deployed armed force because "it has no choice but to defend its territory against Thai threats." The spokesperson insisted the Cambodian "attacks are focused on the military places, not on any other place."

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet wrote to the U.N. Security Council asking for an urgent meeting "to stop Thailand's aggression." The council scheduled an emergency closed meeting at 3 p.m. in New York on Friday.

Thailand also sealed all land border crossings while urging its citizens to leave Cambodia. Officials said all seven Thai airlines expressed willingness to help bring back any Thai nationals seeking to return home.

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from Cambodia.

A long-standing border problem

The two Southeast Asian neighbors have long had border disputes, which periodically flare along their 800-kilometer (500-mile) frontier and usually result in brief confrontations, only rarely involving the use of weapons. The last major combat over the issue was in 2011, leaving 20 dead.

However, relations sharply deteriorated since a May confrontation killed a Cambodian soldier. Thursday's clashes were unusually big in intensity.

The first clash on Thursday morning happened near the Ta Muen Thom temple along the border of Thailand's Surin province and Cambodia's Oddar Meanchey, prompting villagers to scurry to shelter in concrete bunkers.

The Thai army and Cambodia's Defense Ministry each said the other side deployed drones before advancing on the other's positions and opening fire. The two sides later used heavier weaponry such as artillery, causing greater damage and casualties, and Thailand said it responded with airstrikes to truck-mounted rockets launched by Cambodia.

Thailand's air force said it deployed F-16 fighter jets in two attacks on Cambodia. Nikorndej, the Thai spokesperson, called it "an act of self-defense" in response to Cambodian rockets.

Cambodia's Defense Ministry said the Thai jets dropped bombs on a road near the ancient Preah Vihear temple, which has been a site of past conflicts between the two countries.

Cambodian authorities distributed photos they claimed showed damage caused there, and the country's Culture Ministry said it would pursue justice under international law, since the temple was declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO, the U.N.'s cultural organization, and is a "historical legacy of the Cambodian people."

A diplomatic uproar

Relations frayed badly even before the clashes began. On Wednesday, Thailand withdrew its ambassador to Cambodia and expelled the Cambodian ambassador to protest the mine blast that wounded its soldiers.

Thai authorities alleged the mines were newly laid along paths that both sides had agreed were supposed to be safe. They said the mines were Russian-made and not of a type employed by Thailand's military.

Cambodia rejected Thailand's account as "baseless accusations," pointing out that many unexploded mines and other ordnance are a legacy of 20th century wars and unrest.

Cambodia also downgraded diplomatic relations, recalling all Cambodian staff on Thursday from its embassy in Bangkok.

The border dispute has also roiled Thailand's domestic politics. Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra came under fire earlier this month over a phone call with Cambodia's former Prime Minister Hun Sen, still a power broker in his country, when she tried to defuse the situation. She then was suspended from office on July 1 pending an investigation into possible ethics violations over the matter.

Trump's order to block 'woke' AI in government encourages tech giants to censor their chatbots

By MATT O'BRIEN AP Technology Writer

Tech companies looking to sell their artificial intelligence technology to the federal government must now contend with a new regulatory hurdle: proving their chatbots aren't "woke."

President Donald Trump's sweeping new plan to counter China in achieving "global dominance" in AI promises to cut regulations and cement American values into the AI tools increasingly used at work and home.

But one of Trump's three AI executive orders signed Wednesday — the one "preventing woke AI in the federal government" — marks the first time the U.S. government has explicitly tried to shape the ideological behavior of AI.

Several leading providers of the AI language models targeted by the order — products like Google's Gemini and Microsoft's Copilot — have so far been silent on Trump's anti-woke directive, which still faces

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a study period before it gets into official procurement rules.

While the tech industry has largely welcomed Trump's broader AI plans, the anti-woke order forces the industry to leap into a culture war battle — or try their best to quietly avoid it.

"It will have massive influence in the industry right now," especially as tech companies are already capitulating to other Trump administration directives, said civil rights advocate Alejandra Montoya-Boyer, senior director of The Leadership Conference's Center for Civil Rights and Technology.

The move also pushes the tech industry to abandon years of work to combat the pervasive forms of racial and gender bias that studies and real-world examples have shown to be baked into AI systems.

"First off, there's no such thing as woke AI," Montoya-Boyer said. "There's AI technology that discriminates and then there's AI technology that actually works for all people."

Molding the behaviors of AI large language models is challenging because of the way they're built and the inherent randomness of what they produce. They've been trained on most of what's on the internet, reflecting the biases of all the people who've posted commentary, edited a Wikipedia entry or shared images online.

"This will be extremely difficult for tech companies to comply with," said former Biden administration official Jim Secreto, who was deputy chief of staff to U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, an architect of many of President Joe Biden's AI industry initiatives. "Large language models reflect the data they're trained on, including all the contradictions and biases in human language."

Tech workers also have a say in how they're designed, from the global workforce of annotators who check their responses to the Silicon Valley engineers who craft the instructions for how they interact with people.

Trump's order targets those "top-down" efforts at tech companies to incorporate what it calls the "destructive" ideology of diversity, equity and inclusion into AI models, including "concepts like critical race theory, transgenderism, unconscious bias, intersectionality, and systemic racism."

The directive has invited comparison to China's heavier-handed efforts to ensure that generative AI tools reflect the core values of the ruling Communist Party. Secreto said the order resembles China's playbook in "using the power of the state to stamp out what it sees as disfavored viewpoints."

The method is different, with China relying on direct regulation by auditing AI models, approving them before they are deployed and requiring them to filter out banned content such as the bloody Tiananmen Square crackdown on pro-democracy protests in 1989.

Trump's order doesn't call for any such filters, relying on tech companies to instead show that their technology is ideologically neutral by disclosing some of the internal policies that guide the chatbots.

"The Trump administration is taking a softer but still coercive route by using federal contracts as leverage," Secreto said. "That creates strong pressure for companies to self-censor in order to stay in the government's good graces and keep the money flowing."

The order's call for "truth-seeking" AI echoes the language of the president's one-time ally and adviser Elon Musk, who has made it the mission of the Grok chatbot made by his company xAI.

But whether Grok or its rivals will be favored under the new policy remains to be seen.

Despite a "rhetorically pointed" introduction laying out the Trump administration's problems with DEI, the actual language of the order's directives shouldn't be hard for tech companies to comply with, said Neil Chilson, a Republican former chief technologist for the Federal Trade Commission.

"It doesn't even prohibit an ideological agenda," just that any intentional methods to guide the model be disclosed, said Chilson, head of AI policy at the nonprofit Abundance Institute. "Which is pretty light touch, frankly."

Chilson disputes comparisons to China's cruder modes of AI censorship.

"There is nothing in this order that says that companies have to produce or cannot produce certain types of output," he said. "It says developers shall not intentionally encode partisan or ideological judgments."

With their AI tools already widely used in the federal government, tech companies have reacted cautiously. OpenAI on Thursday said it is awaiting more detailed guidance but believes its work to make ChatGPT objective already makes the technology consistent with Trump's directive.

Microsoft, a major supplier of online services to the government, declined to comment.

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Musk's xAI, through spokesperson Katie Miller, a former Trump official, pointed to a company comment praising Trump's AI announcements but didn't address the procurement order. xAI recently announced it was awarded a U.S. defense contract for up to \$200 million, just days after Grok publicly posted a barrage of antisemitic commentary that praised Adolf Hitler.

Anthropic, Google, Meta, and Palantir didn't respond to emailed requests for comment Thursday.

The ideas behind the order have bubbled up for more than a year on the podcasts and social media feeds of Trump's top AI adviser David Sacks and other influential Silicon Valley venture capitalists, many of whom endorsed Trump's presidential campaign last year. Their ire centered on Google's February 2024 release of an AI image-generating tool that produced historically inaccurate images before the tech giant took down and fixed the product.

Google later explained that the errors — including generating portraits of Black, Asian and Native American men when asked to show American Founding Fathers — were the result of an overcompensation for technology that, left to its own devices, was prone to favoring lighter-skinned people because of pervasive bias in the systems.

Trump allies alleged that Google engineers were hard-coding their own social agenda into the product.

"It's 100% intentional," said prominent venture capitalist and Trump adviser Marc Andreessen on a podcast in December. "That's how you get Black George Washington at Google. There's override in the system that basically says, literally, 'Everybody has to be Black.' Boom. There's squads, large sets of people, at these companies who determine these policies and write them down and encode them into these systems."

Sacks credited a conservative strategist who has fought DEI initiatives at colleges and workplaces for helping to draft the order.

"When they asked me how to define 'woke,' I said there's only one person to call: Chris Rufo. And now it's law: the federal government will not be buying WokeAI," Sacks wrote on X.

Rufo responded that he helped "identify DEI ideologies within the operating constitutions of these systems."

But some who agreed that Biden went too far promoting DEI also worry that Trump's new order sets a bad precedent for future government efforts to shape AI's politics.

"The whole idea of achieving ideological neutrality with AI models is really just unworkable," said Ryan Hauser of the Mercatus Center, a free-market think tank. "And what do we get? We get these frontier labs just changing their speech to meet the political requirements of the moment."

Justice Dept. official meets with Ghislaine Maxwell, Jeffrey Epstein's imprisoned former girlfriend

By ERIC TUCKER, KATE PAYNE and COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department's No. 2 official met Thursday with Ghislaine Maxwell, the imprisoned former girlfriend of financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

The meeting in Florida, which Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said he worked to arrange, is part of an ongoing Justice Department effort to cast itself as transparent following fierce backlash from parts of President Donald Trump's base over an earlier refusal to release additional records in the Epstein investigation.

"Ms. Maxwell answered every single question. She never stopped, she never invoked a privilege, she never declined to answer. She answered all the questions truthfully, honestly and to the best of her ability," attorney David Oscar Markus told reporters outside the federal courthouse in Tallahassee, where Maxwell met with Blanche.

In a social media post Tuesday, Blanche said that Trump "has told us to release all credible evidence" and that if Maxwell has information about anyone who has committed crimes against victims, the FBI and the Justice Department "will hear what she has to say."

Markus said his team was "thankful" the deputy attorney general came to question Maxwell, calling it a "good day."

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Asked if his client could potentially receive a pardon or see her prison term reduced, Markus said: "There's no promises yet. So she's just answering questions for now."

Blanche said Thursday in a social media post that he met with Maxwell and the interview will continue on Friday.

"The Department of Justice will share additional information about what we learned at the appropriate time," he said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

The House Committee on Oversight issued a subpoena Wednesday for Maxwell to testify before committee officials in August.

Maxwell is serving a 20-year sentence and is housed at a low-security federal prison in Tallahassee, Florida. She was sentenced three years ago after being convicted of helping Epstein sexually abuse underage girls.

Officials have said Epstein killed himself in his New York jail cell 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.

Earlier this month, the Justice Department said it would not release more files related to the Epstein investigation, despite promises that claimed otherwise from Attorney General Pam Bondi. The department also said an Epstein client list does not exist.

The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday that Bondi told Trump in May that his name was among high-profile people mentioned in government files of Epstein, though the mention does not imply wrongdoing.

Trump, a Republican, has said that he once thought Epstein was a "terrific guy" but that they later had a falling out.

A subcommittee on Wednesday also voted to subpoena the Justice Department for documents related to Epstein. And senators in both major political parties have expressed openness to holding hearings on the matter after Congress' August recess.

Rep. Thomas Massie, a Kentucky Republican, has introduced legislation with bipartisan support that would require the Justice Department to "make publicly available in a searchable and downloadable format all unclassified records, documents, communications, and investigative materials" related to Epstein and his associates.

House Speaker Mike Johnson and the Republican majority leader, Rep. Steve Scalise, both of Louisiana, have said they will address whatever outstanding Epstein-related issues are in Congress when they return from recess.

Epstein, under a 2008 non-prosecution agreement, pleaded guilty in Florida to state charges of soliciting and procuring a minor for prostitution. That allowed him to avert a possible life sentence, instead serving 13 months in a work release program. He was required to make payments to victims and register as a sex offender.

In 2019, Epstein was charged by federal prosecutors in Manhattan for nearly identical allegations.

Jazz legend Chuck Mangione, known for 'Feels So Good,' dies at 84

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Two-time Grammy Award-winning musician Chuck Mangione, who achieved international success in 1977 with his jazz-flavored single "Feels So Good" and later became a voice actor on the animated TV comedy "King of the Hill," has died. He was 84.

Mangione died at his home in Rochester, New York, on Tuesday in his sleep, said his attorney, Peter S. Matorin of Beldock Levine & Hoffman LLP. The musician had been retired since 2015.

Perhaps his biggest hit — "Feels So Good" — is a staple on most smooth-jazz radio stations and has been called one of the most recognized melodies since "Michelle" by the Beatles. It hit No. 4 on the Billboard Hot 100 and the top of the Billboard adult contemporary chart.

"It identified for a lot of people a song with an artist, even though I had a pretty strong base audience that kept us out there touring as often as we wanted to, that song just topped out there and took it to a whole other level," Mangione told the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette in 2008.

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He followed that hit with "Give It All You Got," commissioned for the 1980 Winter Olympics at Lake Placid, and he performed it at the closing ceremony.

Mangione, a flugelhorn and trumpet player and jazz composer, released more than 30 albums during a career in which he built a sizable following after recording several albums, doing all the writing.

He won his first Grammy Award in 1977 for his album "Bellavia," which was named in honor of his mother. Another album, "Friends and Love," was also Grammy-nominated, and he earned a best original score Golden Globe nomination and a second Grammy for the movie "The Children of Sanchez."

Mangione introduced himself to a new audience when he appeared on the first several seasons of "King of the Hill," appearing as a commercial spokesman for Mega Lo Mart, where "shopping feels so good."

Mangione, brother of jazz pianist Gap Mangione, with whom he partnered in The Jazz Brothers, started his career as a bebop jazz musician heavily inspired by Dizzy Gillespie.

"He also was one of the first musicians I saw who had a rapport with the audience by just telling the audience what he was going to play and who was in his band," Mangione told the Post-Gazette.

Mangione earned a bachelor's degree from the Eastman School of Music — where he would eventually return as director of the school's jazz ensemble — and left home to play with Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers.

He donated his signature brown felt hat and the score of his Grammy-winning single "Feels So Good," as well as albums, songbooks and other ephemera from his long and illustrious career to the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in 2009.

Hulk Hogan, icon in professional wrestling, dies at age 71

By CURT ANDERSON and ED WHITE Associated Press

CLEARWATER, Fla. (AP) — Hulk Hogan, the mustachioed, headscarf-wearing, bicep-busting icon of professional wrestling who turned the sport into a massive business and stretched his influence into TV, pop culture and conservative politics during a long and scandal-plagued second act, died Thursday in Florida at age 71.

Hogan was pronounced dead at a hospital less than 90 minutes after medics in Clearwater arrived at his home to answer a morning call about a cardiac arrest, police said.

"There were no signs of foul play or suspicious activity," Maj. Nate Burnside told reporters.

Hogan, whose real name was Terry Bollea, was perhaps the biggest star in WWE's long history. He was the main draw for the first WrestleMania in 1985 and was a fixture for years, facing everyone from Andre The Giant and Randy Savage to The Rock and even WWE co-founder Vince McMahon.

But outside the ring, Hogan also found trouble. WWE in 2015 cut ties with him for three years, even removing him from its Hall of Fame, after it was reported that he was recorded using racial slurs about Blacks. He apologized and said his words were "unacceptable."

Hogan won at least six WWE championships and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2005 and reinstated there in 2018. WWE matches are now held in professional sports stadiums, and millions of fans have watched the company's weekly live television program, "Raw," which debuted in January on Netflix.

"He was a trailblazer, the first performer who transitioned from being a wrestling star into a global phenomenon," McMahon said of Hogan.

Hogan's own brand of passion

"Hulkamania," as the energy he created was called, started running wild in the mid-1980s and pushed professional wrestling into the mainstream. He was a flag-waving American hero with the horseshoe mustache, red and yellow gear and massive arms he called his "24-inch pythons." Crowds were hysterical when he ripped off his T-shirt in the ring — a trademark move — revealing a tan, sculpted body.

Hogan was also a celebrity outside the wrestling world, appearing in numerous movies and television shows, including a reality show about his life on VH1, "Hogan Knows Best."

In recent years, Hogan added his celebrity to politics. At the 2024 Republican National Convention, he merged classic WWE maneuvers with then-candidate Donald Trump's rhetoric to passionately endorse

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him for president.

"Let Trumpamania run wild brother! Let Trumpamania rule again! Let Trumpamania make America great again!" Hogan shouted into the raucous crowd.

He ripped off a T-shirt emblazoned with a picture of himself on a motorcycle to reveal a bright red Trump-Vance campaign shirt underneath. Trump stood to applaud the move.

"We lost a great friend today, the "Hulkster,"" Trump said Thursday on Truth Social. "Hulk Hogan was MAGA all the way — Strong, tough, smart, but with the biggest heart."

Hogan lately began to invest in alternatives to theatrical, professional wrestling, announcing plans in April to serve as the first commissioner for the Real American Freestyle organization, which describes itself as the "first unscripted pro wrestling" league in the world. The first event is Aug. 30 at Cleveland State University.

"The idea was so exciting that I get a chance to be involved with all these young people and help guide them in any way, especially to make them huge stars and create a future for them," Hogan said. "People might be surprised, but wrestling is wrestling, brother."

The league released a statement, saying it is now part of Hogan's legacy "and we intend to honor it."

Broken leg and a new attitude

Hogan was born in Georgia but lived much of his life in the Tampa, Florida, area. He recalled skipping school to watch wrestlers at the Sportatorium, a professional wrestling studio in Tampa.

"I had been running my mouth, telling everybody I'm going to be a wrestler, and in a small town, the word gets out," Hogan told the Tampa Bay Times in 2021. "And so when I went down there, they were laying low for me. They exercised me till I was ready to faint."

The result: a broken leg and a subsequent warning from his dad.

"Don't you ever let anybody hurt you again," Hogan recalled his father saying. "So I went back four or five months later with a whole new attitude. The rest is history."

Hogan first became champion in what was then the World Wrestling Federation in 1984, and pro wrestling took off from there. His popularity helped lead to the creation of the annual WrestleMania event in 1985, when he teamed up with Mr. T to beat "Rowdy" Roddy Piper and "Mr. Wonderful" Paul Orndorff in the main event.

He slammed and beat Andre the Giant at WrestleMania III in 1987, and the WWF gained momentum. His feud with the late "Macho Man" Randy Savage — perhaps his greatest rival — carried pro wrestling even further.

Hogan was a central figure in what is known as the Monday Night Wars. The WWE and World Championship Wrestling were battling for ratings supremacy in 1996. Hogan tilted things in WCW's favor with the birth of the Hollywood Hogan character and the formation of the New World Order, a villainous stable that put WCW ahead in the ratings.

He returned to the WWE in 2002 and became a champion again. His match with The Rock at WrestleMania X8, a loss during which fans cheered for his "bad guy" character, was seen as a passing of the torch.

Hogan was perhaps as well known for his larger-than-life personality as he was his in-ring exploits. He was beloved for his "promos" — hype sessions he used to draw fans into matches. He often would play off his interviewer, "Mean" Gene Okerlund, starting his interviews off with, "Well, lemme tell ya something, Mean Gene!"

Outside the ring

He crossed over into movies and television as well. He was Thunderlips in the movie "Rocky III" in 1982.

In 2016, a Florida jury awarded Hogan \$115 million in a lawsuit against Gawker Media and then added \$25 million in punitive damages. Hogan sued after Gawker in 2012 obtained and posted video of him having sex with his former best friend's wife. He said the post violated his privacy.

Hogan ended up settling the case for millions less after Gawker filed for bankruptcy.

There was other fallout. The litigation led to the discovery that Hogan had used racial slurs on the tape.

"It was unacceptable for me to have used that offensive language; there is no excuse for it; and I apologize for having done it," Hogan said.

After Hogan was booed at the premiere of Netflix's new WWE show in January, former WWE wrestler Mark Henry, who is Black, said that the scandal was a "dark cloud" over Hogan's career.

Henry said he believes in second chances but that Hogan "never wanted to go forward and fix it."

Outside Hogan's Hangout, his restaurant in Clearwater Beach, people talked about their admiration for Hogan as news of his death spread. Rich Null of St. Louis said the two men worked out together.

"Thirty minutes into our workout in the gym, he said, 'cut the Hulk Hogan crap, call me Terry,'" Null said. "He was a really super nice guy, and we're gonna miss him."

How US adults feel about legal abortion 3 years after Roe was overturned, according to AP-NORC poll

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

Three years after the Supreme Court opened the door to state abortion bans, most U.S. adults say abortion should be legal — views that look similar to before the landmark ruling.

The new findings from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll show that about two-thirds of U.S. adults think abortion should be legal in all or most cases.

About half believe abortion should be available in their state if someone does not want to be pregnant for any reason.

That level of support for abortion is down slightly from what an AP-NORC poll showed last year, when it seemed that support for legal abortion might be rising.

Laws and opinions changed when Roe was overturned

The June 2022 Supreme Court ruling that overturned Roe v. Wade and opened the door to state bans on abortion led to major policy changes.

Most states have either moved to protect abortion access or restrict it. Twelve are now enforcing bans on abortion at every stage of pregnancy, and four more do so after about six weeks' gestation, which is often before women realize they're pregnant.

In the aftermath of the ruling, AP-NORC polling suggested that support for legal abortion access might be increasing.

Last year, an AP-NORC poll conducted in June found that 7 in 10 U.S. adults said it should be available in all or most cases, up slightly from 65% in May 2022, just before the decision that overruled the constitutional right to abortion, and 57% in June 2021.

The new poll is closer to Americans' views before the Supreme Court ruled. Now, 64% of adults support legal abortion in most or all cases. More than half the adults in states with the most stringent bans are in that group.

Similarly, about half now say abortion should be available in their state when someone doesn't want to continue their pregnancy for any reason — about the same as in June 2021 but down from about 6 in 10 who said that in 2024.

Adults in the strictest states are just as likely as others to say abortion should be available in their state to women who want to end pregnancies for any reason.

Democrats support abortion access far more than Republicans do. Support for legal abortion has dropped slightly among members of both parties since June 2024, but nearly 9 in 10 Democrats and roughly 4 in 10 Republicans say abortion should be legal in at least most instances.

Fallout from state bans has influenced some people's positions — but not others

Seeing what's happened in the aftermath of the ruling has strengthened the abortion rights position of Wilaysha White, a 25-year-old Ohio mom.

She has some regrets about the abortion she had when she was homeless.

"I don't think you should be able to get an abortion anytime," said White, who calls herself a "semi-Republican."

But she said that hearing about situations — including when a Georgia woman was arrested after a miscarriage and initially charged with concealing a death — is a bigger concern.

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"Seeing women being sick and life or death, they're not being put first — that's just scary," she said. "I'd rather have it be legal across the board than have that."

Julie Reynolds' strong anti-abortion stance has been cemented for decades and hasn't shifted since Roe was overturned.

"It's a moral issue," said the 66-year-old Arizona woman, who works part-time as a bank teller.

She said her view is shaped partly by having obtained an abortion herself when she was in her 20s. "I would not want a woman to go through that," she said. "I live with that every day. I took a life."

Support remains high for legal abortion in certain situations

The vast majority of U.S. adults — at least 8 in 10 — continue to say their state should allow legal abortion if a fetal abnormality would prevent the child from surviving outside the womb, if the patient's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy, or if the person became pregnant as a result of rape or incest.

Consistent with AP-NORC's June 2024 poll, about 7 in 10 U.S. adults "strongly" or "somewhat" favor protecting access to abortions for patients who are experiencing miscarriages or other pregnancy-related emergencies.

In states that have banned or restricted abortion, such medical exceptions have been sharply in focus.

This is a major concern for Nicole Jones, a 32-year-old Florida resident.

Jones and her husband would like to have children soon. But she said she's worried about access to abortion if there's a fetal abnormality or a condition that would threaten her life in pregnancy, since they live in a state that bans most abortions after the first six weeks of gestation.

"What if we needed something?" she asked. "We'd have to travel out of state or risk my life because of this ban."

Florida's law has exceptions, including to save the life of a pregnant woman or prevent irreversible impairment of bodily functions. But some patients, advocates and health care providers across the country have often said that restrictions still limit access to emergency care.

Adults support protections for seeking abortions across state lines — but not as strongly

There's less consensus on whether states that allow abortion should protect access for women who live in places with bans.

Just over half support protecting a patient's right to obtain an abortion in another state and shielding those who provide abortions from fines or prison time. In both cases, relatively few adults — about 2 in 10 — oppose the measures and about 1 in 4 are neutral.

More Americans also favor than oppose legal protections for doctors who prescribe and mail abortion pills to patients in states with bans. About 4 in 10 "somewhat" or "strongly" favor those protections, and roughly 3 in 10 oppose them.

Such telehealth prescriptions are a key reason that the number of abortions nationally has risen even as travel for abortion has declined slightly.

There have been legal challenges to telehealth abortions, including a lawsuit filed this week by a Texas man claiming a California physician violated state and federal law by sending pills to the plaintiff's girlfriend.

Man accused of attempting to assassinate Trump can represent himself at trial, judge says

By DAVID FISCHER Associated Press

FORT PIERCE, Fla. (AP) — A man charged with trying to assassinate President Donald Trump last year in South Florida can represent himself during his trial, a federal judge ruled Thursday.

U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon signed off on Ryan Routh's request but said court-appointed attorneys need to remain as standby counsel. Earlier in the week, the federal public defenders had asked to be taken off the case, saying Routh had refused repeated attempts to meet with them.

Routh said during the hearing that his attorneys were diligent, but they didn't listen to him and were afraid of him.

"How are they supposed to represent me and say I'm not a dangerous person when they don't believe

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that?" Routh said.

Routh, 59, is scheduled to stand trial in September, a year after prosecutors say a U.S. Secret Service agent thwarted his attempt to shoot Trump as he played golf. Routh has pleaded not guilty to charges of attempting to assassinate a major presidential candidate, assaulting a federal officer and several firearm violations.

Reiterating her message from a July 10 hearing, Cannon told Routh that she doesn't intend to delay the Sept. 8 start date of his trial, even if she lets him represent himself. She also once again told Routh that she believes it's a bad idea for Routh to represent himself.

Routh, who said he completed two years of college after earning his GED certificate, told Cannon that he understands the potential challenges and would be ready for trial.

Cannon said Thursday that she decided to hold the second hearing after receiving a June 29 letter from Routh that did not arrive at the courthouse until after that hearing. In that letter, Routh said he and his attorneys were "a million miles apart" and that they were refusing to answer his questions. He also wrote that he could be used in a prisoner exchange with Iran, China, North Korea or Russia.

"I could die being of some use and save all this court mess, but no one acts; perhaps you have the power to trade me away," Routh wrote.

Cannon told Routh that she believed the federal public defenders assigned to Routh's case were excellent attorneys.

"I find no basis to believe that there has been ineffective assistance of counsel," Cannon said.

The judge also reminded Routh that she will not be able to assist Routh or provide legal advice during the trial.

Cannon also briefly addressed Routh's suggestion of a prisoner exchange, saying, "I have no power or any opinion of anything you've written there."

On Wednesday, the federal public defender's office filed a motion for termination of appointment of counsel, saying "the attorney-client relationship is irreconcilably broken." Attorneys said Routh has refused six attempts to meet with their team, including a scheduled in-person meeting Tuesday morning at the federal detention center in Miami.

"It is clear that Mr. Routh wishes to represent himself, and he is within his Constitutional rights to make such a demand," the motion said.

Cannon denied their motion on Thursday, explaining that their office was in the best position to prevent delays to the trial.

The U.S. Supreme Court has held that criminal defendants have a right to represent themselves in court proceedings, as long as they can show a judge they are competent to waive their right to be defended by an attorney.

Prosecutors have said Routh methodically plotted to kill Trump for weeks before aiming a rifle through the shrubbery as Trump played golf on Sept. 15 at his West Palm Beach country club. A Secret Service agent spotted Routh before Trump came into view. Officials said Routh aimed his rifle at the agent, who opened fire, causing Routh to drop his weapon and flee without firing a shot.

Law enforcement obtained help from a witness who prosecutors said informed officers that he saw a person fleeing. The witness was then flown in a police helicopter to a nearby interstate where Routh was arrested, and the witnesses confirmed it was the person he had seen, prosecutors have said.

Routh will have his first chance to represent himself on Friday during a scheduled hearing on whether certain evidence and testimony can be used at trial. His former attorneys are expected to be present as standby counsel.

In addition to the federal charges, Routh also has pleaded not guilty to state charges of terrorism and attempted murder.

UnitedHealth says it is under a federal investigation and cooperating

By TOM MURPHY AP Health Writer

UnitedHealth Group says it is cooperating with federal criminal and civil investigations involving its market-leading Medicare business.

The health care giant said Thursday that it had contacted the Department of Justice after reviewing media reports about investigations into certain elements of its business.

"(UnitedHealth) has a long record of responsible conduct and effective compliance," the company said in a Securities and Exchange Commission filing.

Earlier this year, The Wall Street Journal said federal officials had launched a civil fraud investigation into how the company records diagnoses that lead to extra payments for its Medicare Advantage, or MA, plans. Those are privately run versions of the government's Medicare coverage program mostly for people ages 65 and over.

The company's UnitedHealthcare business covers more than 8 million people as the nation's largest provider of Medicare Advantage plans. The business has been under pressure in recent quarters due to rising care use and rate cuts.

The Journal said in February, citing anonymous sources, that the probe focused on billing practices in recent months.

The paper has since said that a federal criminal health care-fraud unit was investigating how the company used doctors and nurses to gather diagnoses that bolster payments.

UnitedHealth said in the filing Thursday that it "has full confidence in its practices and is committed to working cooperatively with the Department throughout this process."

UnitedHealth Group Inc. runs one of the nation's largest health insurance and pharmacy benefits management businesses. It also operates a growing Optum business that provides care and technology support.

UnitedHealth raked in more than \$400 billion in revenue last year to come in third in the Fortune 500 list of biggest U.S. companies. Its share price topped \$630 last fall to reach a new all-time high.

But the stock has mostly shed value since December, when UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson was fatally shot in midtown Manhattan on his way to the company's annual investor meeting. A suspect, Luigi Mangione, has been charged in connection with the shooting.

In April, shares plunged some more after the company cut its forecast due to a spike in health care use. A month later, former CEO Andrew Witty resigned, and the company withdrew its forecast entirely, saying that medical costs from new Medicare Advantage members were higher than expected.

The stock price was down more than 3%, or \$10.73, to \$281.78 Thursday afternoon. That represents a 55% drop from the all-time high it hit in November. Broader indexes were mixed.

UnitedHealth will report its second-quarter results next Tuesday.

A replica Oval Office near the White House just got a Trump makeover

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A replica Oval Office on display near the White House now looks exactly like President Donald Trump's. But it is not the blingy version he is currently using.

Visitors starting Thursday will experience the mock Oval Office as it was in the Republican president's first term, until it is redecorated again next year to incorporate the golden touches and other flourishes Trump brought to the workspace after he returned to power in January.

"Just like the White House itself, our Oval Office is a living space, so it changes and evolves as the actual Oval Office changes," Stewart McLaurin, president of the White House Historical Association, said Wednesday as he led The Associated Press on a tour of the space as it was being revamped.

The mock-up is inside "The People's House: A White House Experience," an educational center the as-

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sociation opened last year one block west of the Executive Mansion.

Few regular people ever see, let alone step inside, the real Oval Office, for security and other reasons. But the true-to-life model offers visitors a chance to see and experience it. It will be updated to match the decor of every sitting president.

When the historical association opened the center last year, the replica Oval Office looked like Democrat Joe Biden's office because he was the president at the time.

The association has to get copies made of every item in the real Oval Office and that process takes time, McLaurin said. He also preferred to wait until there was a "critical mass" of items instead of doing a slow, piece-by-piece makeover.

Trump decorated his first-term Oval Office with a beige-patterned rug from the Ronald Reagan era, gold-colored draperies from Bill Clinton's tenure and a lighter, floral wallpaper that replaced a striped wall covering installed by his predecessor, Barack Obama. Trump kept these same designs for his second term.

Trump also kept the Resolute Desk, which has been used by nearly every president since it was gifted to President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1880 by Queen Victoria. It was built using wood from the British ship HMS Resolute.

Trump hung a large portrait of George Washington above the fireplace, flanked by portraits of Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. He also displayed portraits of Andrew Jackson and Benjamin Franklin and had busts of Martin Luther King Jr. and Winston Churchill on tables on either side of the fireplace.

The association is in the process of reproducing items in Trump's second-term office even as he continues to make changes by adding gilding, artwork and other objects.

"So probably in a year or a little more, we'll be able to make that transition when we have all of those items ready," McLaurin said.

The Biden items will be donated to his foundation for possible use in his future presidential library, and the same will be done in the future with the items reproduced for Trump's offices.

The White House Historical Association was created in 1961 by first lady Jacqueline Kennedy to help preserve the museum quality of the interior of the White House and educate the public. It is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that receives no government funding. It raises money mostly through private donations and merchandise sales, including an annual Christmas ornament.

Iran says it's ready for nuclear talks with the US but only if Washington rebuilds trust

By AMIR VAHDAT Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran is ready to engage in talks on its nuclear program with the United States, but only if Washington takes meaningful steps to rebuild trust, a senior Iranian diplomat said Thursday, ahead of a key meeting with European officials.

That meeting will be the first since a ceasefire was reached after a 12-day war waged by Israel against Iran in June, which also saw U.S. B-52 bombers strike nuclear-related facilities in the Islamic Republic.

The discussions will bring Iranian officials together with officials from Britain, France and Germany — known as the E3 nations — and will include the European Union's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas. A similar meeting had been held in the Turkish city in May.

Iran's conditions

In a social media post, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said Thursday that for talks with the United States, Tehran would seek that "several key principles" be upheld.

These include "rebuilding Iran's trust — as Iran has absolutely no trust in the United States," he said, adding there could be no room "for hidden agendas such as military action, though Iran remains fully prepared for any scenario."

Washington would have to respect and recognize Iran's rights under the international agreement known as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, including the right to enrich uranium "in line with its legitimate

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needs" and the lifting of crippling economic sanctions on Iran.

The talks in Istanbul will be held at the deputy ministerial level, with Iran sending Majid Takht-e Ravanchi, the other of Iran's two deputy foreign ministers.

A show of strength

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a televised interview Thursday that Tehran would not back down from uranium enrichment. Before the war in June, Iran was enriching uranium up to 60% — a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels.

"Our enrichment will continue, and we will not give up this right of the Iranian people," Araghchi said in a video posted on the state TV's Telegram channel.

Iran's top diplomat said the Istanbul talks with the European parties are necessary, especially after the 12-day war, to make them aware that Iran's positions remain strong.

"The world must know that there has been no change in our stance," he said. "We will continue to firmly defend the rights of the Iranian people to peaceful nuclear energy, especially regarding enrichment."

Araghchi also said that Iran has always been ready to advance its peaceful program within a reasonable and logical framework. "We have never hesitated to build trust with countries that may have concerns," he said, "but at the same time, Iran's demand is that its right to peaceful nuclear energy, including enrichment, be respected."

High stakes

European leaders have threatened to trigger a "snapback" mechanism included in a 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, which would reimpose sanctions that were lifted in exchange for Iran accepting restrictions and monitoring of its nuclear program.

The United Kingdom, France and Germany were signatories to the 2015 deal. The U.S. withdrew in 2018 during the first term of President Donald Trump, who insisted the agreement wasn't tough enough.

Iranian officials have warned that a move to reimpose sanctions would have consequences. Gharibabadi said earlier this week that it could force Tehran to withdraw from key non-proliferation agreements.

In a letter to U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres, Araghchi accused the E3 of hypocrisy, saying they failed to uphold their obligations under the 2015 deal while supporting Israel's recent strikes on Iran.

In last month's conflict, Iran responded to Israeli and U.S. strikes with missile attacks, including a strike on a U.S. base in Qatar, which Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian insisted was not directed at the Qatari state.

In an interview with Al Jazeera that aired on Wednesday, Pezeshkian said Iran is prepared for another war and accused Israel of attempting to assassinate him during a June 15 meeting of Iran's national security council in Tehran.

Pezeshkian reiterated that Iran's nuclear program will continue within the framework of international law and insisted the country has no intention of pursuing nuclear weapons.

"Our nuclear capabilities are in the minds of our scientists," he said, emphasizing Iran's position that future negotiations must be rooted in mutual respect, not threats.

The aftermath of war

According to Iran's official judicial news agency Mizan, at least 13 Iranian nuclear scientists were killed during the June Israel-Iran war.

The extent of the damage to Iran's nuclear sites from the war has not been publicly revealed but a spokesman for Iran's Atomic Energy Organization said Thursday the country's nuclear industry would recover.

"Our nuclear industry is deeply rooted. What has roots cannot be harmed by attack or pressure — it will grow back and thrive again," state TV quoted Behrouz Kamalvandi as saying.

The U.N. nuclear watchdog — the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA — reported in May that Iran's stockpile of uranium enriched to 60% had grown to over 400 kilograms (882 pounds). That material, just below weapons-grade level, remains a central concern for the West.

After the June war, Iran suspended cooperation with the IAEA, following legislation signed by Pezeshkian.

The road ahead remains uncertain. While European officials say they want to avoid further conflict and

are open to a negotiated solution, they have warned that time is running out.

Passenger plane crashes in Russia's Far East, killing all 48 people on board, officials say

MOSCOW (AP) — A passenger plane crashed Thursday in Russia's Far East, killing all 48 passengers and crew on board, officials said.

The Angara Airlines flight disappeared from radar, and searchers later found the burning wreckage of the plane on a hillside south of its planned destination in Tynda, more than 7,000 kilometers (4,350 miles) east of Moscow, Russia's Emergency Situations Ministry said.

Regional Gov. Vasily Orlov said in a statement that all 48 people aboard were dead, and announced three days of mourning in the Amur region over what he called a "terrible tragedy."

It wasn't immediately clear what caused the crash.

Russia's Interfax news agency said there were adverse weather conditions at the time of the crash, citing unnamed sources in the emergency services. Several Russian news outlets also reported that the aircraft was almost 50 years old, citing data taken from the plane's tail number.

The Soviet-designed twin turbo prop plane had initially departed from Khabarovsk before making its way to Blagoveshchensk on the Russian-Chinese border and onwards to Tynda.

Images of the reported crash site circulated by Russian state media show debris scattered among dense forest, surrounded by plumes of smoke.

Orlov said rescuers had struggled to reach the site due to its remote location, 15 kilometers (9 miles) south of Tynda.

An earlier statement from the governor said that 49 people had been onboard the flight, but that number later was updated to 48. The reason for the discrepancy was not immediately clear.

The transport prosecutor's office in the Far East said in an online statement that the plane was attempting to land for a second time when it lost contact with air traffic control and disappeared from radars.

The authorities launched a probe on the charge of flight safety violations that resulted in multiple deaths, a standard procedure in aviation accidents.

Aviation incidents have been frequent in Russia, especially in recent years as international sanctions have squeezed the country's aviation sector.

Trump's onetime friendship with Jeffrey Epstein is well-known — and also documented in records

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The revelation that Attorney General Pam Bondi told President Donald Trump that his name was in the Jeffrey Epstein files has focused fresh attention on the president's relationship with the wealthy financier and the Justice Department's announcement this month that it would not be releasing any additional documents from the case.

But at least some of the information in the briefing to Trump, which The Wall Street Journal said took place in May, should not have been a surprise.

The president's association with Epstein is well-established and his name was included in records that his own Justice Department released back in February as part of an effort to satisfy public interest in information from the sex-trafficking investigation.

Trump has never been accused of wrongdoing in connection with Epstein and the mere inclusion of someone's name in files from the investigation does not imply otherwise. Epstein, who killed himself in jail in 2019 while awaiting trial, also had many prominent friends in political and celebrity circles besides Trump.

Trump's ties to Epstein

It should have been no shock to Trump that his name would be found in records related to Epstein.

The February document dump from the Justice Department included references to Trump in Epstein's

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phone book and his name was also mentioned in flight logs for Epstein's private plane.

Over the years, thousands of pages of records have been released through lawsuits, Epstein's criminal dockets, public disclosures and Freedom of Information Act requests. In January 2024, a court unsealed the final batch of a trove of documents that had been collected as evidence in a lawsuit filed by Epstein victim Virginia Giuffre.

Records made public also include 2016 deposition in which an accuser recounted spending several hours with Epstein at Trump's Atlantic City casino but didn't say if she actually met Trump and did not accuse him of any wrongdoing. Trump has also said that he once thought Epstein was a "terrific guy," but that they later had a falling out.

"I knew him like everybody in Palm Beach knew him," Trump said in 2019 when video footage unearthed by NBC News following Epstein's federal indictment showed the two chatting at a party at Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in 1992, when the now president was newly divorced. "He was a fixture in Palm Beach. I had a falling-out with him a long time ago. I don't think I've spoken to him for 15 years."

The department's decision to not release additional files from the case

The Justice Department stunned conspiracy theorists, online sleuths and elements of Trump's base this month when it released a two-page letter saying that a so-called Epstein "client list" that Bondi had once intimated was on her desk did not exist and that officials did not plan to release any additional documents from its investigation despite an earlier commitment to provide transparency.

Whether Bondi's briefing to Trump in May influenced that decision is unclear.

The Justice Department did not comment directly on her meeting with Trump but Bondi and Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said in a joint statement that a review of the Epstein files showed that there was nothing warranting further investigation or prosecution.

"As part of our routine briefing," the statement said, "we made the President aware of our findings."

The US fertility rate reached a new low in 2024, CDC data shows

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The fertility rate in the U.S. dropped to an all-time low in 2024 with less than 1.6 kids per woman, new federal data released Thursday shows.

The U.S. was once among only a few developed countries with a rate that ensured each generation had enough children to replace itself — about 2.1 kids per woman. But it has been sliding in America for close to two decades as more women are waiting longer to have children or never taking that step at all.

The new statistic is on par with fertility rates in western European countries, according to World Bank data.

Alarmed by recent drops, the Trump administration has taken steps to increase falling birth rates, like issuing an executive order meant to expand access to and reduce costs of in vitro fertilization and backing the idea of "baby bonuses" that might encourage more couples to have kids.

But there's no reason to be alarmed, according to Leslie Root, a University of Colorado Boulder researcher focused on fertility and population policy.

"We're seeing this as part of an ongoing process of fertility delay. We know that the U.S. population is still growing, and we still have a natural increase — more births than deaths," she said.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released the statistic for the total fertility rate with updated birth data for 2024.

In the early 1960s, the U.S. total fertility rate was around 3.5, but plummeted to 1.7 by 1976 after the Baby Boom ended. It gradually rose to 2.1 in 2007 before falling again, aside from a 2014 uptick. The rate in 2023 was 1.621, and inched down in 2024 to 1.599, according to the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics.

Birth rates are generally declining for women in most age groups — and that doesn't seem likely to change in the near future, said Karen Guzzo, director of the Carolina Population Center at the University of North Carolina.

People are marrying later and also worried about their ability to have the money, health insurance and

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other resources needed to raise children in a stable environment.

"Worry is not a good moment to have kids," and that's why birth rates in most age groups are not improving, she said.

Asked about birth-promoting measures outlined by the Trump administration, Guzzo said they don't tackle larger needs like parental leave and affordable child care.

"The things that they are doing are really symbolic and not likely to budge things for real Americans," she said.

Increase in births in new data

The CDC's new report, which is based on a more complete review of birth certificates than provisional data released earlier this year, also showed a 1% increase in births — about 33,000 more — last year compared to the prior year.

That brought the yearly national total to just over 3.6 million babies born.

But this is different: The provisional data indicated birth rate increases last year for women in their late 20s and 30s. However, the new report found birth rate declines for women in their 20s and early 30s, and no change for women in their late 30s.

What happened? CDC officials said it was due to recalculations stemming from a change in the U.S. Census population estimates used to compute the birth rate.

That's plausible, Root said. As the total population of women of childbearing age grew due to immigration, it offset small increases in births to women in those age groups, she said.

For millions in US mobile home parks, clean and safe tap water isn't a given

By MICHAEL PHILLIS, TRAVIS LOLLER and M.K. WILDEMAN Associated Press

The worst water Colt Smith has seen in 14 years with Utah's Division of Drinking Water was at a mobile home park, where residents had been drinking it for years before state officials discovered the contamination.

The well water carried cancer-causing arsenic as much as 10 times the federal limit. Smith had to put the rural park under a do-not-drink order that lasted nearly 10 years.

"The Health Department refers it to us like ... 'Why aren't you guys regulating it?' We had no idea it existed," he said.

More than 50 years after the Safe Drinking Water Act was passed to ensure that Americans' water is free from harmful bacteria, lead and other dangerous substances, millions of people living in mobile home parks can't always count on those basic protections.

A review by The Associated Press found that nearly 70% of mobile home parks running their own water systems violated safe drinking water rules in the past five years, a higher rate than utilities that supply water for cities and towns, according to Environmental Protection Agency data. And the problems are likely even bigger because the EPA database doesn't catch all parks.

Even where parks get water from an outside source — such as a city — the clean water coming in can become contaminated if it passes through problematic infrastructure before reaching residents' taps. Because the EPA doesn't generally require this water to be tested and regulated, the problems may go unseen.

Utah is one of the few states to step in with their own rules, according to an AP survey of state policies.

"If you look back at the history of the Safe Drinking Water Act, like in the '70s when they were starting, it was, 'Well, as long as the source ... is protected, then by the time it gets to the tap, it'll be fine.' And that's just not how it works," Smith said.

The challenge of being 'halfway homeowners'

In one Colorado mobile home park, raw sewage backed up into a bathtub. In a Michigan park, the taps often ran dry and the water resembled tea; in Iowa, it looked like coffee — scaring residents off drinking it and ruining laundry they could hardly afford to replace. In California, boxes of bottled water crowd a family's kitchen over fears of arsenic.

Almost 17 million people in the U.S. live in mobile homes. Some are comfortable Sun Belt retirees. Many

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others have modest incomes and see mobile homes as a rare opportunity for home ownership.

To understand how water in the parks can be so troubled, it's useful to remember that residents often own their homes but rent the land they sit on. Despite the name, it's difficult and expensive to move a mobile home. That means they're "halfway homeowners," said Esther Sullivan, a professor of sociology at the University of Colorado in Denver who lived in several mobile home parks as she researched a book. Residents often put up with "really egregious" property maintenance by landlords because all their money is tied up in their home, she said.

Pamela Maxey, 51, of Kalamazoo, Michigan, said she had forgotten what it was like to have reliable, clean water until she traveled to her state Capitol last year to advocate for better mobile home park protections and stayed in a hotel. By then, she had spent eight years in a park where sewage backed up into homes and the flow of tap water was sometimes weak or discolored.

"It wasn't until I went into the bathroom to take a shower that I realized, 'I don't have to jump in here and squint my eyes closed the entire time and make sure water doesn't get in my mouth because I don't know what's in it,'" she said. "I went to brush my teeth, and I just turned the faucet on and I brushed my teeth from the water coming from the faucet. I haven't been able to do that for over a year."

Victoria Silva, a premed student in Fort Collins, Colorado, estimates the water in Harmony Village Mobile Home Park where Silva lives went out or lost pressure 20 to 30 times over roughly three years there.

"People don't realize how much water they need until the water is out for five minutes when they need to flush, when they need to rinse something off their hands, when they need to make some pasta," Silva said.

The park's owner says a licensed professional ensures water is maintained and tested, and outages are minimized.

Small water companies, serial problems

The U.S. has some 50,000 water utilities, most serving small towns and rural areas. Many struggle to find expert staff and funding, and they violate clean water rules more often than the handful of large utilities that serve cities. But even among the hard-pressed small utilities, mobile home parks stand out.

The AP analysis found that more than half these parks failed to perform a required test for at least one contaminant, or failed to properly report the results, in the past five years. And they are far more likely to be repeat offenders of safe drinking water rules overall.

But that's only part of the story. The true rates of mobile home park violations aren't knowable because the EPA doesn't track them well. The agency's tap water violation database depends on information from states that often don't properly categorize mobile home parks.

When Smith first searched Utah's database in response to an AP request for data from all 50 states, he found only four small water systems identified as belonging to mobile home parks. With some keyword searches, he identified 33 more.

Other parks aren't in the databases at all and may be completely unregulated.

One July day in 2021, officials with the EPA were out investigating sky-high arsenic levels in the tap water at Oasis Mobile Home Park in the Southern California desert when they realized the problem went way beyond just one place.

"It was literally us driving around and going, 'Wait a minute, there's a bunch of mobile home parks!'" said Amy Miller, who previously served as EPA's head of enforcement for the Pacific Southwest region.

The water in these other parks had been off their radar. At some, testing found high levels of cancer-causing arsenic in the water that had been provided to residents for years.

It's impossible to know how many unnoticed parks are out there. Most states aren't actively looking for them and say they find very few. In Colorado, after the state passed a new law to require water testing at all mobile home parks, officials uncovered 79 parks with their source of water unknown. That's about a tenth of the total parks in the state.

Pipes 'like spaghetti' in the ground

Many parks are decades old with aging pipes that can cause chronic water problems, even if the water that supplies the park is clean when it enters the system.

Jake Freeman, the engineering director at Central States Water Resources, a Missouri-based private util-

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ity company that specializes in taking over small water systems in 11 states, said substandard and poorly installed pipes are more common to see in mobile home parks.

"A lot of times, it's hard to find the piping in the mobile home parks because if there's any kind of obstruction, they just go around it," he said. "It's like spaghetti laying in the ground."

After a major winter storm devastated Texas in 2021, Freeman said, the company found pipes at parks it had taken over that "were barely buried. Some of them weren't buried."

When pipes break and leak, the pressure drops and contaminants can enter water lines. In addition, parks sometimes have stagnant water — where pipes dead-end or water sits unused — that increases the risk of bacterial growth.

Rebecca Sadosky is public water supply chief in North Carolina, where mobile home communities make up close to 40% of all water systems. She said owners don't always realize when they buy a park that they could also be running a mini utility.

"I think they don't know that they're getting into the water business," she said.

It doesn't have to be like this

Utah is a rare state that enforces safe drinking water standards even within mobile home parks that get their water from another provider, according to AP's survey of states. A small number of other states like New Hampshire have taken some steps to address water safety in these parks, but in most states frustrated residents may have no one to turn to for help beyond the park owner.

In Colorado, when Silva asked officials who enforces safe drinking water rules, "I just couldn't get clear answers."

Steve Via, director of federal regulations at the American Water Works Association utility group, argued against regulating mobile home parks that get their water from a municipality, saying that would further stretch an already taxed oversight system. And if those parks are regulated, what's to stop the rules from extending to the privately owned pipes in big apartment buildings — the line has to be drawn somewhere, he said.

Via said residents of parks where an owner refuses to fix water problems have options, including going to their local health departments, suing or complaining publicly.

Silva is among the advocates who fought for years to change Colorado's rules before they succeeded in passing a law in 2023 that requires water testing in every mobile home park. It gives health officials the ability to go beyond federal law to address taste, color and smell that can make people afraid to drink their water, even when it's not a health risk. The state is now a leader in protecting mobile home park tap water.

Smith, the Utah environmental scientist, said stopping the contaminated water flowing into the mobile home park and connecting it to a safe supply felt like a career highlight.

He said Utah's culture of making do with scarce water contributed to a willingness for stronger testing and regulations than the federal government requires.

"There's sort of the communal nature of like, everybody should have access to clean water," he said. "It seems to transcend political ideologies; it seems to transcend religious ideologies."

Trump's trip to Scotland highlights his complex relationship with his mother's homeland

By JILL LAWLESS and KWIYEON HA Associated Press

TURNBERRY, Scotland (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump's trip to Scotland this week will be a homecoming of sorts, but he's likely to get a mixed reception.

Trump has had a long and at times rocky relationship with the country where his mother grew up in a humble house on a windswept isle.

He will be met by both political leaders and protesters during the visit, which begins Friday and takes in his two Scottish golf resorts. It comes two months before King Charles III is due to welcome him on a formal state visit to the U.K.

"I'm not proud that he (has) Scottish heritage," said Patricia Sloan, who says she stopped visiting the

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Turnberry resort on Scotland's west coast after Trump bought it in 2014. "All countries have good and bad that come out of them, and if he's going to kind of wave the flag of having Scottish heritage, that's the bad part, I think."

A daughter of Scotland

Trump's mother was born Mary Anne MacLeod in 1912 near the town of Stornoway on the Isle of Lewis, one of the Outer Hebrides off Scotland's northwest coast.

"My mother was born in Scotland — Stornoway, which is serious Scotland," Trump said in 2017.

She was raised in a large Scots Gaelic-speaking family and left for New York in 1930, one of thousands of people from the islands to emigrate in the hardscrabble years after World War I.

MacLeod married the president's father, Fred C. Trump, the son of German immigrants, in New York in 1936. She died in August 2000 at the age of 88.

Trump still has relatives on Lewis and visited in 2008, spending a few minutes in the plain gray house where his mother grew up.

A long golf course battle

Trump's ties and troubles in Scotland are intertwined with golf.

He first proposed building a course on a wild and beautiful stretch of the North Sea coast north of Aberdeen in 2006.

The Trump International Scotland development was backed by the Scottish government. But it was fiercely opposed by some local residents and conservationists, who said the stretch of coastal sand dunes was home to some of the country's rarest wildlife, including skylarks, kittiwakes, badgers and otters.

Local fisherman Michael Forbes became an international cause celebre after he refused the Trump Organization's offer of 350,000 pounds (\$690,000 at the time) to sell his family's rundown farm in the center of the estate. Forbes still lives on his property, which Trump once called "a slum and a pigsty."

"If it weren't for my mother, would I have walked away from this site? I think probably I would have, yes," Trump said in 2008 during the planning battle over the course. "Possibly, had my mother not been born in Scotland, I probably wouldn't have started it."

The golf course was eventually approved and opened in 2012. Some of the grander aspects of the planned development, including 500 houses and a 450-room hotel, have not been realized, and the site has never made a profit.

A second 18-hole course at the resort is scheduled to open this summer. It's named the MacLeod Course in honor of Trump's mother.

There has been less controversy about Turnberry on the other side of Scotland, a long-established course that Trump bought in 2014.

"He did bring employment to the area," said local resident Louise Robertson. "I know that in terms of the hotel and the lighthouse, he spent a lot of money restoring it, so again, that was welcomed by the local people. But other than that, I can't really say positive things about it."

Trump has pushed for the British Open to be held at the course for the first time since 2009.

Turnberry is one of 10 courses on the rotation to host the Open. But organizers say there are logistical issues about "road, rail and accommodation infrastructure" that must be resolved before it can return.

Protests and politicians

Trump has had a rollercoaster relationship with Scottish and U.K. politicians.

More than a decade ago, the Scottish government enlisted Trump as an unpaid business adviser with the GlobalScot network, a group of business leaders, entrepreneurs and executives with a connection to Scotland. It dumped him in 2015 after he called for Muslims to be banned from the U.S. The remarks also prompted Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen to revoke an honorary doctorate in business administration it had awarded Trump in 2010.

This week Trump will meet left-leaning Scottish First Minister John Swinney, an erstwhile Trump critic who endorsed Kamala Harris before last year's election — a move branded an "insult" by a spokesperson for Trump's Scottish businesses.

Swinney said it's "in Scotland's interest" for him to meet the president.

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Some Scots disagree, and a major police operation is being mounted during the visit in anticipation of protests. The Stop Trump Scotland group has encouraged demonstrators to come to Aberdeen and "show Trump exactly what we think of him in Scotland."

U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer is also expected to travel to Scotland for talks with Trump. The British leader has forged a warm relationship with Trump, who said this month "I really like the prime minister a lot, even though he's a liberal." They are likely to talk trade, as Starmer seeks to nail down an exemption for U.K. steel from Trump's tariffs.

There is no word on whether Trump and Starmer — not a golfer

Columbia University agrees to pay more than \$220M in deal with Trump to restore federal funding

By CAROLYN THOMPSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Columbia University announced Wednesday it has reached a deal with the Trump administration to pay more than \$220 million to the federal government to restore federal research money that was canceled in the name of combating antisemitism on campus.

Under the agreement, the Ivy League school will pay a \$200 million settlement over three years, the university said. It will also pay \$21 million to resolve alleged civil rights violations against Jewish employees that occurred following the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel, the White House said.

"This agreement marks an important step forward after a period of sustained federal scrutiny and institutional uncertainty," acting University President Claire Shipman said.

The school had been threatened with the potential loss of billions of dollars in government support, including more than \$400 million in grants canceled earlier this year. The administration pulled the funding because of what it described as the university's failure to squelch antisemitism on campus during the Israel-Hamas war.

Columbia has since agreed to a series of demands laid out by the Republican administration, including overhauling the university's student disciplinary process and applying a contentious, federally endorsed definition of antisemitism not only to teaching but to a disciplinary committee that has been investigating students critical of Israel.

Wednesday's agreement — which does not include an admission of wrongdoing — codifies those reforms while preserving the university's autonomy, Shipman said.

'Columbia's reforms are a roadmap,' Trump administration says

Education Secretary Linda McMahon called the deal "a seismic shift in our nation's fight to hold institutions that accept American taxpayer dollars accountable for antisemitic discrimination and harassment."

"Columbia's reforms are a roadmap for elite universities that wish to regain the confidence of the American public by renewing their commitment to truth-seeking, merit, and civil debate," McMahon said in a statement.

As part of the agreement, Columbia agreed to a series of changes previously announced in March, including reviewing its Middle East curriculum to make sure it was "comprehensive and balanced" and appointing new faculty to its Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies. It also promised to end programs "that promote unlawful efforts to achieve race-based outcomes, quotas, diversity targets or similar efforts."

The university will also have to issue a report to a monitor assuring that its programs "do not promote unlawful DEI goals."

In a post Wednesday night on his Truth Social platform, President Donald Trump said Columbia had "committed to ending their ridiculous DEI policies, admitting students based ONLY on MERIT, and protecting the Civil Liberties of their students on campus."

He also warned, without being specific, "Numerous other Higher Education Institutions that have hurt so many, and been so unfair and unjust, and have wrongly spent federal money, much of it from our government, are upcoming."

Crackdown follows Columbia protests

The pact comes after months of uncertainty and fraught negotiations at the more than 270-year-old university. It was among the first targets of Trump's crackdown on pro-Palestinian campus protests and on colleges that he asserts have allowed Jewish students be threatened and harassed.

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Columbia's own antisemitism task force found last summer that Jewish students had faced verbal abuse, ostracism and classroom humiliation during the spring 2024 demonstrations.

Other Jewish students took part in the protests, however, and protest leaders maintain they aren't targeting Jews but rather criticizing the Israeli government and its war in Gaza.

Columbia's leadership — a revolving door of three interim presidents in the last year — has declared that the campus climate needs to change.

Columbia agrees to question international students

Also in the settlement is an agreement to ask prospective international students "questions designed to elicit their reasons for wishing to study in the United States," and establishes processes to make sure all students are committed to "civil discourse."

In a move that would potentially make it easier for the Trump administration to deport students who participate in protests, Columbia promised to provide the government with information, upon request, of disciplinary actions involving student-visa holders resulting in expulsions or suspensions.

Columbia on Tuesday announced it would suspend, expel or revoke degrees from more than 70 students who participated in a pro-Palestinian demonstration inside the main library in May and an encampment during alumni weekend last year.

The pressure on Columbia began with a series of funding cuts. Then Mahmoud Khalil, a former graduate student who had been a visible figure in the protests, became the first person detained in the Trump administration's push to deport pro-Palestinian activists who aren't U.S. citizens.

Next came searches of some university residences amid a federal Justice Department investigation into whether Columbia concealed "illegal aliens" on campus. The interim president at the time responded that the university was committed to upholding the law.

University oversight expands

Columbia was an early test case for the Trump administration as it sought closer oversight of universities that the Republican president views as bastions of liberalism. Yet it soon was overshadowed by Harvard University, which became the first higher education institution to defy Trump's demands and fight back in court.

The Trump administration has used federal research funding as its primary lever in its campaign to reshape higher education. More than \$2 billion in total has also been frozen at Cornell, Northwestern, Brown and Princeton universities.

Administration officials pulled \$175 million from the University of Pennsylvania in March over a dispute around women's sports. They restored it when school officials agreed to update records set by transgender swimmer Lia Thomas and change their policies.

The administration also is looking beyond private universities. University of Virginia President James Ryan agreed to resign in June under pressure from a U.S. Justice Department investigation into diversity, equity and inclusion practices. A similar investigation was opened this month at George Mason University.

Today in History: July 25, Tuskegee Syphilis Study exposed

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Friday, July 25, the 206th day of 2025. There are 159 days left in the year.

Today in History:

On July 25, 1972, the notorious Tuskegee syphilis experiment came to light as The Associated Press reported that for the previous four decades, the U.S. Public Health Service, in conjunction with the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, had been allowing poor, rural Black male patients with syphilis to go without treatment, even allowing more than 100 of them to die, as a way of studying the disease.

Also on this date:

In 1866, Ulysses S. Grant was named General of the Army of the United States, the first officer to hold the rank.

In 1943, Benito Mussolini was dismissed as premier of Italy by King Victor Emmanuel III, and placed

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under arrest. (He was later rescued by the Nazis and re-asserted his authority.)

In 1946, the United States detonated an atomic bomb near Bikini Atoll in the Pacific in the first underwater test of the device.

In 1956, the Italian liner SS Andrea Doria collided with the Swedish passenger ship Stockholm off the New England coast late at night and began sinking; 51 people — 46 from the Andrea Doria, five from the Stockholm — were killed. (The Andrea Doria capsized and sank the following morning.)

In 1960, a Woolworth's store in Greensboro, North Carolina, that had been the scene of nearly six months of sit-in protests against its whites-only lunch counter dropped its segregation policy.

In 1978, Louise Joy Brown, the first "test tube baby," was born in Oldham, England; she'd been conceived through the technique of in vitro fertilization.

In 1994, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Jordan's King Hussein signed a declaration at the White House ending their countries' 46-year-old formal state of war.

In 2000, a New York-bound Air France Concorde crashed outside Paris shortly after takeoff, killing all 109 people on board and four people on the ground; it was the first-ever crash of the supersonic jet.

In 2010, the online whistleblower Wikileaks posted some 90,000 leaked U.S. military records that amounted to a blow-by-blow account of the Afghanistan war, including unreported incidents of Afghan civilian killings as well as covert operations against Taliban figures.

In 2019, President Donald Trump had a second phone call with the new Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, during which he solicited Zelenskyy's help in gathering potentially damaging information about former Vice President Joe Biden; that night, a staff member at the White House Office of Management and Budget signed a document that officially put military aid for Ukraine on hold.

In 2022, on a visit to Canada, Pope Francis issued a historic apology for the Catholic Church's cooperation with the country's "catastrophic" policy of Indigenous residential schools, saying the forced assimilation of Native peoples into Christian society destroyed their cultures, severed families and marginalized generations.

Today's Birthdays: Folk-pop singer-musician Bruce Woodley (The Seekers) is 83. Rock musician Jim McCarty (The Yardbirds) is 82. Reggae singer Rita Marley is 79. Musician Verdine White (Earth, Wind & Fire) is 74. Model-actor Iman is 70. Rock musician Thurston Moore (Sonic Youth) is 67. Celebrity chef/TV personality Geoffrey Zakarian is 66. Actor Matt LeBlanc is 58. Actor Wendy Raquel Robinson is 58. Actor David Denman is 52. Actor Jay R. Ferguson is 51. Actor James Lafferty (TV: "One Tree Hill") is 40. Actor Meg Donnelly (TV: "American Housewife") is 25.