

# Groton Daily Independent

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Memories remind us that nothing lasts forever and that time is precious and should not be wasted. Enjoy life and remember, don't count the days, make the days count.



## Monday, Aug. 4

Senior Menu: Meatballs, Normandy blend, grapes, whole wheat bread.

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

State Legion Tourney n Milbank: 4 p.m. Groton vs. Parkston

## Tuesday, Aug. 5

Senior Menu: Chicken alfredo, broccoli, pears, breadstick.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Storybook Land Theater, Groton Area High School Gym, 10 a.m.

## Wednesday, Aug. 6

Senior Menu: Breaded pork cutlet, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrots, apple sauce, whole wheat bread.

Groton Chamber Meeting, Noon, City Hall.

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

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Sara Circle, 5 p.m.

## Thursday, Aug. 7

Senior Menu: Beef noodle stroganoff, broccoli, apricots, whole wheat bread.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 7 p.m.

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

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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.**

## Senate Recess Begins

Senators began their August recess over the weekend without a deal to confirm nominees to dozens of government positions. Republicans said they will pursue rule changes in September, enabling them to speed up the process.

At issue was the approach to confirming lower-level appointees like assistant secretaries. Democrats this year required roll call votes on almost all nominees, a process that can take days—and the first known time a minority party has refused to fast-track any confirmations. The decision continues a yearslong trend; confirmations took an average of 192 days in the Biden administration, up from 69 days in the Reagan administration.

Democrats had agreed to fast-track some confirmations in exchange for restoring foreign aid and science research funding, but the deal fell through. Before breaking for recess, the Senate confirmed several nominees, including former New York judge and Fox News host Jeanine Pirro for US attorney for DC.

## Autopilot Crash Award

Electric vehicle maker Tesla is liable for \$243M in damages after a jury found Friday that the company's driver assistance technology was partly responsible for a fatal 2019 crash. Legal experts say the judgment, likely to be appealed, may set a significant precedent in cases involving self-driving technology.

In the accident in question, a Tesla Model S struck and killed 22-year-old Naibel Benavides Leon and injured her boyfriend after running through a stop sign in Key Largo, Florida, at night. The driver said he had Tesla's Autopilot—a slimmed-down version of its full self-driving software, typically used on highways—engaged when he dropped his cellphone. The plaintiffs argued Tesla's claims about the feature's capabilities encouraged inattentive driving and that the company allows it to be used in areas the system is not designed for, such as rural roads.

## Return of the Mile Run

The Presidential Fitness Test is returning to schools after a 12-year hiatus, with President Donald Trump signing an executive order to restore and revamp the program late last week.

The test has its roots in the 1950s, when the so-called "father of sports medicine," Dr. Hans Kraus, coauthored a study finding American kids were 49.2% weaker than European counterparts on a series of physical fitness tests. For decades, public school students were regularly tested on drills like a timed mile run, pushups, pullups, and situps. Top scorers received the Presidential Physical Fitness Award.

Then-President Barack Obama phased out the system in the 2012-13 academic year, replacing it with a less competitive, opt-in system testing a student's fitness over time. Trump says he will reinstate the standardized approach following a May report highlighting concerns about children's physical inactivity.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

US track and field star Sha'Carri Richardson arrested for allegedly assaulting boyfriend and fellow Olympian Christian Coleman.

Flaco Jiménez, six-time Grammy-winning Tejano music legend, dies at age 86.

Jeannie Seely, Grammy-winning country musician, dies at age 85.

The 2025 World Swimming Championships wrap with Team USA leading all countries with 29 medals.

WNBA's Connecticut Sun reportedly to be sold for \$325M; would be highest price ever for a professional women's sports franchise.

## Science & Technology

Google unveils Gemini Deep Think AI, a reasoning platform the company says can process multiple ideas at once.

Anthropic revokes OpenAI's license to the Claude large language model, claiming OpenAI engineers were using its coding tools to develop its next product.

Sugar molecules used by cancer cells to evade the immune system may provide new treatment for type 1 diabetes; coating helps insulin-producing pancreatic beta cells evade autoimmune responses.

Scientists build digital library of pollen from more than 18,000 plant species; archive will allow quick identification of pollen species, a task that typically takes hundreds of hours.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower Friday (S&P 500 -1.6%, Dow -1.2%, Nasdaq -2.2%) amid weaker-than-expected jobs report and downward revisions to past months' data, new tariff announcements.

OPEC+ countries agree to raise oil production by over 547,000 barrels per day next month.

Berkshire Hathaway's operating earnings drop 4% in Q2 to \$11.2B; holds \$344B in cash.

Delta tells lawmakers it will not use AI and customers' personalized data to set custom airfare.

## Politics & World Affairs

Special counsel's office launches investigation into former special counsel Jack Smith over alleged violations of the Hatch Act, which restricts federal employees' political activity; Smith led investigations into President Donald Trump's handling of the 2020 election, classified documents.

Dozens of Texas Democrats leave the state to block Republican-led redistricting effort.

Search continues for 45-year-old suspected gunman who killed four people at The Owl Bar in Anaconda, Montana, Friday.

Israel's national security minister prays on Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, known to Jews as the Temple Mount, on Jewish holiday of Tisha B'Av, violating decades-old arrangement with Jordanian religious foundation.

Hamas releases video of hostage Evyatar David saying he is digging his own grave.

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As the 2025 NFL season draws closer, the Minnesota Vikings find themselves in a rare position: built to win now, yet still developing key young talent across the roster. With training camp on the horizon and a deep, competitive team in place, I'll be breaking down each position group over the next seven weeks to get a clearer picture of who's locked in, who's on the bubble, and who could surprise us this summer. We'll start at quarterback and work our way through the entire roster, ending with the secondary just before the first preseason game kicks off.

If you've stuck with this roster breakdown series, then I'll have you know today is a special day. No, I'm not just talking about the fact that we'll

be covering the safety position (even though this will be an interesting position to keep an eye on this season), and the special teams. No, today is a special day because it's the last offseason article of 2025! Next week, I'll have a recap of the Vikings' first preseason game, which they'll play this Saturday against the Houston Texans. But, before we get into that, let's finish the roster breakdown.

## Starting Safeties

**Harrison Smith** – Of course I'm going to start this article with Harrison Smith. Heading into his 14th season, the 36-year-old Smith is still playing at a high level. He's a six-time Pro Bowler and All-Pro who is one of only six defensive backs to record over 35 INTs and 20 sacks. He's one of the best safeties in the history of the NFL, and in my opinion, deserves a spot in the Hall of Fame.

**Joshua Metellus** – The jack-of-all-trades safety was given an extension last week that will keep him in purple and gold for the foreseeable future. Metellus lines up at nearly every position on defense and is a true wild card in Brian Flores' defense.

## Backup Safeties

**Theo Jackson** – A 6th-round pick by the Tennessee Titans in 2022, the Vikings plucked Jackson off their practice squad that same year. The coaching staff has raved about him this offseason and also rewarded him with a three-year contract extension. The Vikings play a lot of three-safety lineups, so Jackson should see the field plenty in 2025.

**Jay Ward** – A 4th-round pick by the Vikings in 2023, Ward is another young player the coaches have been impressed with this offseason. He'll be competing with Jackson for the primary backup role.

## On The Bubble

**Gervarius Owens** (a seventh-round pick by the Giants in 2023) and **Mishael Powell** (an undrafted rookie) are both competing for a spot on the Vikings' practice squad. The Vikings had five safeties on the opening day roster last season, so it's possible one of these two players makes the 53-man roster. However, if I had to guess, the Vikings will use that fifth spot on a different position.

## Special Teams

**Kicker** – Will Reichard is entering his second season as the Vikings' kicker. He was looking great before an injury derailed his promising rookie campaign, so hopefully he can regain his confidence and get back on track.

**Punter** – Ryan Wright had a great rookie season, averaging 42.3 net yards per punt and only allowing one of 73 punts to roll into the end zone for a touchback (1.4%). Unfortunately, those numbers have gotten worse every season since. I'm surprised the Vikings haven't brought in another punter this offseason to compete with Wright.

**Long Snapper** – Andrew DePaola is the best long snapper in the NFL. He's been to three straight Pro Bowls and made three straight All-Pro lists (1st team in 2022 and 2024, 2nd team in 2023).

Looking ahead, the Vikings' first preseason game is this Saturday at 3 p.m. (CT) as they host the Houston Texans. While this is only a preseason game, it will be the first time we can watch our favorite team this season as they embark on their journey to capture that ever-elusive Super Bowl trophy. Skol!



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## Highway Patrol Sturgis Rally Daily Information

Compiled from 6 a.m. Sat., Aug 02, 2025, to 6 a.m. Sun. August 03, 2025

Item	Sturgis	Rapid City District	District Total	Last Year to Date
DUI Arrests	17	4	21	30
Misd Drug Arrests	23	8	31	45
Felony Drug Arrests	14	0	14	25
Total Citations	133	119	252	254
Total Warnings	387	205	592	601
Cash Seized	0.00	0.00	0.00	\$0.00
Vehicles Seized	0	0	0	0
For Drug Poss.	0	0	0	0
For Serial No.	0	0	0	0
Non-Injury Accidents	2	2	4	4
Injury Accidents	5	8	13	8
Fatal Accidents	0	1	1	0
# of Fatalities	0	1	1	0

### Fatal Crashes:

At 09:34am, Saturday, US 16A, mile marker 56: A 2019 Harley Davidson motorcycle was traveling westbound in the passing lane of US 16A near mile marker 56. The driver was unable to negotiate a curve in the roadway and tipped onto its right side and slid into the eastbound lanes. The 2019 Harley Davidson collided with 3 motorcycles that were traveling east. The 58-year-old male driver of the 2019 Harley Davidson sustained fatal injuries. The east bound riders received serious non-life-threatening injuries. Helmet use for all 4 individuals is under investigation.

### Injury Crashes:

At 09:26am, Saturday, US 16, mile marker 61: A 2019 Harley Davidson motorcycle was turning North onto US 16 from the Happy Place Campground. The front brake locked up causing the rider to lay the motorcycle down. The driver and motorcycle fell onto the right side. The driver was not wearing a helmet. The rider of unit 1 was transported to Rapid City Monument hospital for minor injuries.

At 10:49am, Saturday, SD 44, mile marker 167: A 2013 Victory motorcycle was traveling west on South Dakota Highway 44. The motorcycle had a flat tire. As the driver was slowing down to pull over, he lost control and entered the ditch. The driver and passenger were separated from the motorcycle. They were not wearing helmets and received serious non-life-threatening injuries.

At 2:26 pm, Saturday, I-90 westbound, mile marker 131: A 2015 Harley Davidson was traveling west on Interstate 90. The driver struck the rumble strips as they were negotiating the curve in the roadway causing the Harley Davidson to enter the median. After entering the median, the driver became separated from the motorcycle and came to rest in the median. The driver received serious non-life-threatening injuries. The driver was not wearing a helmet.

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At 12:31pm, Saturday, SD 87, mile marker 62: A 2011 Harley Davidson motorcycle was traveling north on SD 87 near mile marker 62. The driver failed to negotiate a left turn and ran off the roadway to the right. The motorcycle traveled up an embankment. The driver became separated from the motorcycle. The motorcycle fell on top of the driver. The driver was transported to the hospital via LifeFlight. The driver received serious non-life-threatening injuries. The driver was not wearing a helmet.

At 01:01pm, Saturday, SD 87, mile marker 67: A 2024 Harley Davidson trike (unit 1) was traveling north on SD 87 near mile marker 67. A 2009 Harley Davidson motorcycle (unit 2) was traveling south. The 2009 Harley Davidson crossed into north bound traffic and made contact with the 2024 Harley Davidson. The passenger of the 2024 Harley became separated from the motorcycle. The driver of the 2009 Harley was also separated from their motorcycle. The driver of the 2024 Harley was not injured. The passenger of the 2024 and the driver of the 2009 were both taken to Monument Health in Custer for minor injuries.

All 3 individuals were wearing helmets.

At 04:55pm, Saturday, I- 90, mile marker 41: A 2023 Harley Davidson (unit 1) was traveling west on I- 90 in the right lane. A 2024 Harley Davidson (unit 2) was also traveling west on I-90 in the left lane. Unit 1 attempted to pass Unit 2 and made contact with Unit 2. After making contact with Unit 2 the driver of Unit 1 lost control and entered the north ditch. The driver of unit 1 received minor injuries. The driver of Unit 2 was not injured. Both drivers were wearing helmets.

At 05:13pm, Saturday, SD 34 and Fort Meade Way: Unit 1, A Ford Escape was rear ended by Unit 2, a motorcycle, while stopped at a stop light. The motorcycle rider sustained serious life-threatening injuries and was flown to Monument Health in Rapid City. The motorcycle driver was wearing a helmet. The driver of the Ford Escape did not receive any injuries.

At 05:44pm, Saturday, US 14A, mile marker 43: A 2012 Ford F150 was stopped in the west bound lane of US 14A while waiting for traffic to make a left turn onto 2 Bit Road. A 2025 Harley Davidson motorcycle was traveling west on US 14A. The 2025 Harley Davidson collided with the rear-end of the Ford F150. The driver of the Harley Davidson received minor injuries and was transported to the hospital. The driver of the Ford F150 was not injured. The F150 driver was wearing a seatbelt. The driver of the Harley was not wearing a helmet.

At 06:40pm, Saturday, I-90, mile marker 41: A 2013 Harley Davidson motorcycle was traveling east on Interstate 90 near mile marker 41. The Harley Davidson attempted to exit and realized that the road was closed. The driver laid the bike on its side and slid under the gate coming to a complete stop. The driver was transported to the hospital with serious non-life-threatening injuries. The driver was not wearing a helmet.

At 12:44am, Sunday, SD 79, mile marker 113: A 2005 Harley Davidson motorcycle (unit 1) was traveling south on SD 79 near mile marker 113. A 2022 Harley Davidson motorcycle (unit 2) was traveling north on SD 79. Both motorcycles were straddling the centerline and struck each other. Unit 1 came to rest in the south bound lane of SD 79. Unit 2 ran off the road and came to rest in the ditch. Both drivers were transported to the hospital. The driver of unit 1 received life threatening injuries. The driver of unit 2 received serious non-life-threatening injuries. Both drivers were transported to the hospital. The driver of unit 1 was wearing a helmet. Helmet use is under investigation for the driver of unit 2.

At 12:50am, Sunday, US 14A, mile marker 52: At 12:50am Sturgis Police attempted to stop a 2021 Harley Davidson motorcycle for exhibition driving. The motorcycle fled and Sturgis Police engaged in a pursuit. The motorcycle left the lane of travel at a high speed and entered the ditch at MM 52 on US 14A. The driver was transported by helicopter to Monument Health with serious life-threatening injuries. The driver was not wearing a helmet.

All information released so far is only preliminary.

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

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## Breaking the Silence: Ending the Stigma Around Addiction and Mental Health

In South Dakota and across the whole United States, addiction and mental health struggles touch every community. Yet far too often, people suffer in silence—not because help isn't available, but because stigma keeps them from reaching for it.

Stigma shows up in many forms. It's the harmful comments we hear about people who use substances. It's the judgment directed at those struggling with depression, anxiety or trauma. It's even the quiet self-blame people carry, believing they should be able to "snap out of it" or that asking for help makes them weak.

Social stigma is deeply embedded in our systems and culture. It can show up in the way medical professionals talk about patients, in media portrayals that dehumanize or in policies that punish rather than support. When people internalize these messages, they may avoid seeking care altogether—also known as label avoidance. They fear being labeled as "addicts" or "crazy," and would rather struggle alone than face the shame and judgment that too often follows disclosure.

This silence can be and is deadly. Addiction is a treatable health condition. Mental health challenges are human, not moral failings. But when stigma gets in the way, it cuts people off from connection, care and healing.

So how do we fight it?

We lead with compassion. We create spaces where people are met with dignity, not dismissal. We challenge our own biases and educate ourselves on the realities of addiction and mental health. We tell the truth: recovery is possible, and people are so much more than their struggles.

At the University of South Dakota, the Department of Addiction Counseling & Prevention is committed to changing the narrative. Our students and faculty work to educate, advocate and care for people across the region—whether in treatment settings, prevention programs or community outreach efforts.

To help make that shift, faculty members in the department are using a grant to provide prevention, harm reduction, treatment and recovery services for those individuals with substance use disorders who are involved with the courts. The \$2 million grant will integrate:

- Integrated Peer Support Services: The grant funds peer support specialists to work directly with Drug Court participants, offering lived experience guidance, accountability and recovery support.
- Wraparound Care Model: Emphasizes coordinated care—connecting participants to medical, behavioral health, housing and employment resources.
- Focus on Sustainability: Aims to increase the number of billable services and set up systems for long-term sustainability beyond the grant period.
- Data-Driven Outcomes: Includes metrics for reducing recidivism, increasing treatment engagement and improving participant stability.

We believe that no one should be ashamed to ask for help. Everyone deserves access to care, and everyone deserves to be treated with humanity.

Ending stigma won't happen overnight, but it starts with all of us. We can speak up when we hear harmful language. We can be a listening ear. We can make room for people to show up exactly as they are—and meet them with respect.

Let's be a community where no one has to hide their pain. Let's create a South Dakota where people feel safe to heal.

Melissa Dittberner, or "Dr. Mo" as she is known to her students, is a professor in the Addiction Counseling & Prevention Department at the University of South Dakota. She has a Ph.D. in counseling and psychology in education, master's degree in addiction studies and a bachelor's degree in health sciences. She does research on college students' substance use, pedagogy, addiction and harm reduction. Not only is she very passionate about drug and alcohol prevention, helping skills and Telehealth technology, she has also worked on many grants surrounding substance use disorders. Dr. Mo is also a certified prevention specialist. In addition to her work at USD, she's also worked with communities across the state to create addiction prevention programs like Straight Up Care Telehealth and Midwest Street Medicine. Follow The Prairie Doc® at [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org), Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Threads. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB), providing health information based on science, built on trust.



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## Groton Jr. Teeners 14U Walk It Off Against Flandreau 14U

By GameChanger Media

It came down to the wire on Sunday at Salem, as Groton Jr. Teeners 14U grabbed the victory in walk-off fashion, 3-2, over Flandreau 14U in region competition. The game was tied at two in the bottom of the ninth when a dropped third strike scored one run.

The pitching was strong on both sides. Groton Jr. Teeners 14U pitchers struck out seven, while Flandreau 14U sat down four.

Flandreau 14U got on the board in the third inning after Estephan Nelson grounded out, scoring one run.

Zach Fliehs singled down the right field line on an 0-2 count, which helped Groton Jr. Teeners 14U tie the game at two in the bottom of the seventh.

Wesley Borg earned the win for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. The starter gave up two hits and two runs over seven and one-third innings, striking out five and walking three. Landon Preheim took the loss for Flandreau 14U. The righty went eight and one-third innings, allowing three runs (zero earned) on eight hits, striking out four and walking none. Kolton Antonsen collected the save.

Fliehs led Groton Jr. Teeners 14U with one run batted in. The third baseman went 1-for-4 on the day. Antonsen and Jordan Schwan each collected two hits for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. Schwan stole two bases. Groton Jr. Teeners 14U turned one double play in the game.

Trevor Peters and Preheim each collected one hit for Flandreau 14U. Brody Johnson and Nelson each drove in one run for Flandreau 14U. Peters stole two bases.

## Groton Jr. Teeners 14U Fall To Salem Cubs 14U Despite Strong Effort From Trayce Schelle

By GameChanger Media

Trayce Schelle collected three hits in three at bats, but Groton Jr. Teeners 14U lost to Salem Cubs 14U 9-6 on Sunday at Salem. Salem advances to the state tournament with the win. Schelle doubled in the sixth inning, singled in the first inning, and singled in the third inning.

Salem Cubs 14U got on the board in the top of the first inning after Noah Durfee singled down the right field line, and Groton Jr. Teeners 14U committed an error, each scoring one run.

Salem Cubs 14U extended their early lead with two runs in the top of the second thanks to RBI singles by Derek Durfee and Caleb Hoffman.

Groton Jr. Teeners 14U flipped the game on its head in the bottom of the sixth, scoring six runs on four hits to take the lead, 6-5. The biggest blow in the inning was a double by Schelle that drove in two.

Salem Cubs 14U took the lead in the top of the seventh inning after Bennett Graff laid down a sacrifice bunt, , Groton Jr. Teeners 14U committed an error, and Jacob Wiebersick singled down the right field line, each scoring one run.

Graff earned the win for Salem Cubs 14U. The pitcher surrendered one hit and zero runs over two innings, striking out one and walking one. Kolton Antonsen took the loss for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. The pitcher went six innings, surrendering six runs (five earned) on eight hits, striking out two and walking two. Easton Meyer opened the game for Salem Cubs 14U. The starting pitcher surrendered eight hits and six runs (five earned) over five innings, striking out three and walking three.

Antonsen and Schelle each drove in two runs for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U. Jordan Schwan collected two hits for Groton Jr. Teeners 14U in four at bats. Schelle stole two bases. Groton Jr. Teeners 14U stole seven bases in the game.

Salem Cubs 14U piled up 10 hits in the game. Salem Cubs 14U's Wiebersick, the number nine hitter, led Salem Cubs 14U with three hits in four at bats. Durfee led Salem Cubs 14U with two runs batted in. The right-handed hitter went 1-for-4 on the day. Durfee collected two hits for Salem Cubs 14U in four at bats. Bridger Erickson stole two bases.

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## Carter Simon Drives In 4 To Lead Groton Legion Post 39 Past SMFC Sr. Legion Post 152 79ers

By GameChanger Media

Carter Simon drove in four runs on four hits to lead Groton Legion Post 39 past Scotland/Menno/Freeman Canistota Post 152, 16-11 on Sunday in the State American Legion Baseball Tournament being played in Milbank. In the sixth inning, Simon hit a grand slam to left field.

Groton Legion Post 39 collected 15 hits and SMFC Sr. Legion Post 152 79ers had seven in the high-scoring affair.

Groton Legion Post 39 got on the board in the top of the first inning after Korbin Kucker tripled to left field, and Brevin Fliehs singled to center field, each scoring one run.

Groton Legion Post 39 scored six runs on six hits in the top of the second inning. Karsten Fliehs hit a sacrifice fly, scoring one run, Kucker doubled, scoring one run, Fliehs singled, scoring two runs, and Gavin Englund doubled, scoring two runs.

SMFC Sr. Legion Post 152 79ers scored six runs on four hits in the bottom of the second inning. Rocky Ammann doubled, scoring one run, Trent Guthmiller drew a walk, scoring one run, Bryce Sattler singled, scoring one run, and Kory Keppen singled, scoring three runs.

Groton Legion Post 39 added one run in the third after Kucker hit a sacrifice fly.

SMFC Sr. Legion Post 152 79ers flipped the game on its head in the bottom of the third, scoring five runs on three hits to take the lead, 11-9. The biggest blow in the inning was a single by Keppen that drove in two.

An error gave Groton Legion Post 39 the lead, 12-11, in the top of the fifth.

Alex Abeln pitched five and two-thirds innings in relief for Groton Legion Post 39. The reliever gave up three hits and five runs (zero earned) while, striking out seven and walking one. Englund stepped on the mound first for Groton Legion Post 39. The pitcher gave up four hits and six runs (five earned) over one and one-third innings, striking out two and walking two. Tannen Auch led things off on the mound for SMFC Sr. Legion Post 152 79ers. The righty surrendered four hits and four runs over one inning, striking out none and walking one.

Groton Legion Post 39 amassed 15 hits in the game. Braxton Imrie, Fliehs, and Kucker each collected multiple hits for Groton Legion Post 39. Groton Legion Post 39 had a strong eye at the plate, amassing nine walks for the game. Imrie, Fliehs, and Teylor Diegel led the team with two bases on balls each.

Keppen led SMFC Sr. Legion Post 152 79ers with four runs batted in. The first baseman went 2-for-4 on the day. SMFC Sr. Legion Post 152 79ers turned one double play in the game.

In other games, Dakota Valley eliminated Winner/Colome, 4-2; and Dell Rapids edged Parkston, 9-8. Parkston remains the only undefeated team left with Dakota Valley and Groton both having one loss. Groton will play Parkston at 4 p.m. today.

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**Help Lead a Cause that  
Gives Back!**



## **COMMON CENTS THRIFT STORE**

**is Seeking a Volunteer  
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Are you passionate about community, organizing, and helping others? Common Cents is looking for **A Volunteer Manager and Volunteer Assistants** to help lead our team and keep the store running smoothly.

### **Positions Available:**



**Volunteer Store Manager** – Help coordinate volunteers, organize donations, and oversee daily operations.



**Volunteer Assistants** – Help sort items, stock shelves, greet shoppers, and create a welcoming space!

**209 N MAIN STREET, GROTON, SD**  
**Need more info? Call 605-216-2350**



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**Walking Taco and a drink**  
Free Will Donation  
Proceeds go to Groton's Angel Tree  
15 N Main, St. #103  
Groton Daily Independent  
Suggested Donation: \$5

**Family Fun Fest -Thursday, Aug. 7 ~ 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.**

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## EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: Is it true the northern lights will be more intense over the next 50 years, and if so, why? Will this have any negative effect on our environment? -- H. Binger, via e-mail

The northern lights are considered one of nature's most spectacular displays. These lights are mainly seen from high-latitude areas near the Arctic and occur when the Sun releases charged particles during solar winds. These particles move closer to Earth, and are drawn toward its magnetic poles and collide with oxygen and nitrogen atoms. When these atoms return to their regular state, they create these lights.



**People across the Northern Hemisphere as far south as the southern U.S. have been able to see the northern lights in recent years due to increase solar storms.** Credit: Pexels.com.

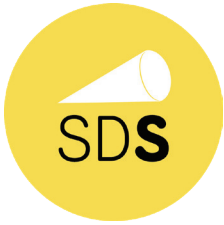
Scientific observations have pointed to more intense northern lights occurring in the next several decades, due to increased solar activity. In its 11-year cycle, the Sun transitions between low and high activity periods, or solar minimum and maximum. Because the sun is currently nearing its solar maximum, the efflux of solar energy leads to more recurring, stronger flares that interact with Earth's atmosphere and create heightened auroras. "During solar geomagnetic storms, there's a lot more of these energetic charged particles in the space around Earth, so we see a brightening of the northern lights and the region over which you can see them spreads out to include places like the lower 48 states that usually don't see this display," says Scott England, a professor at Virginia Tech.

Through geomagnetic storms, auroras can also heat the Earth's upper atmosphere, causing it to expand and potentially increase atmospheric drag on satellites. The influx of energized particles can also cause disturbances in the ionosphere that lead to signal loss and issues in radio communication and GPS systems. Moreover, as a result of climate change, increasing cloud cover and weather changes, auroras may also decrease in visibility, even if they occur more frequently. Geomagnetic storms can induce electrical currents that damage power lines and have implications for the power grid, including blackouts. Increased aural activity may also cause decreased efficiency in long-distance and emergency communications because of its disruptive effects on high-frequency radio signals.

The U.S. Geological Survey reports that a severe solar storm could disrupt the nation's power grid for months, potentially leading to widespread blackouts. The resulting damage and disruption from such an event could cost upwards of \$1 trillion, with a full recovery taking months if not years.

To combat the implications of intense northern lights, government agencies can improve protections in power grids and warning systems that caution against solar storms. Infrastructure companies can also build radiation-resistant satellites that remain in orbit and avoid polar routes during high solar activity.





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Governor hopefuls should be careful what they wish for in the Trump era

**Support for president's federal funding cuts makes state budget more difficult to balance**  
by Dana Hess

There is early, bipartisan interest in serving as the next governor of South Dakota.

Republicans already have three announced candidates for the primary in 2026, with one more likely contestant waiting in the wings. Democrats have signed up a 19-year-old college student with hints that an adult or two may also seek that party's nomination.

So much early interest in the job is baffling because being governor of South Dakota is a task that is getting tougher by the day. So far, the U.S. House and Senate have acquiesced to the Trump administration's attempts to cancel federal funding that has already been approved by Congress. Those actions will mean profound changes for state budgets.

The irony is that the Republican candidates applying for such a tough job have all, to some degree, offered their loyalty to Donald Trump. According to a South Dakota Searchlight story, Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden has already spent \$187,000 to build his name recognition in the state. In his commercials and mailings, the name that often appears next to Doeden's is Trump's.

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson doesn't have to run ads claiming loyalty to Trump as he has been in Washington, D.C., doing the president's bidding. Johnson voted for a "big, beautiful bill" that is estimated to add \$3.4 trillion to the deficit over the next 10 years. He also gave his approval to the president's plan to claw back money that had been allocated for South Dakota Public Broadcasting, financially hamstringing a state institution.

Not much is heard yet from state Speaker of the House Jon Hansen who doesn't have Doeden's money or Johnson's name recognition. Since Hansen is from the same MAGA/"patriot" wing of the state Republican Party as Doeden, it's unlikely he would break with Trump on any issue. Undeclared as a candidate so far is Gov. Larry Rhoden, who has had nothing but praise for the president.

Yet, as Trump and his minions continue to take a machete to the federal budget, he only serves to make life tougher for the next governor of South Dakota.

An easy reference for this can be found on South Dakota Searchlight's "Federal Fallout" page, containing stories detailing the impact of federal budget cuts in this state. A scroll through the stories shows some of the challenges that the next governor will face as federal funding starts to disappear:

- \$5 million of extra costs for the state to manage the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- \$2.2 million cut from South Dakota Public Broadcasting.
- \$5.6 million cut from efforts to expand digital access.
- \$2.8 million for teacher training.



**From left, U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, Gov. Larry Rhoden, Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden, and state House Speaker Jon Hansen.** (South Dakota Searchlight images)

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Remember, in South Dakota, a million dollars still goes a long way. Consequently, replacing a million dollars in the state budget will be hard work. The state budget is \$7.3 billion. Of that, \$3.1 billion comes from the federal government.

Ultimately, there's no telling how much the federal government's share of the state budget will shrink. Cutting foreign aid and funding for public broadcasting were just the first of Trump's rescission efforts to erase federal spending that has already been approved by Congress.

All of this is happening at a time when South Dakotans are upset about the continual rise in property taxes. The next governor will be faced with the task of figuring out how to moderate or cut those taxes while also finding a way to replace federal funds that have gone missing.

Some of these federal cuts will be felt in the next session of the Legislature. A South Dakota Searchlight story about a meeting of state fiscal experts included a projection that lagging revenue could result in as much as \$24.5 million less for the next state budget.

These candidates who want to be governor should pay close attention to the funding problems faced by Gov. Rhoden and legislators in the next session. There is still plenty of time between now and January for Trump and the Republican majorities in Congress to make more cuts. The struggles in Pierre will serve as a harbinger of the challenges the next governor will face.

Fear of Trump's wrath sparks an almost blind loyalty within the Republican Party. These GOP candidates for governor must ask themselves if they really want the job of running South Dakota government while the party leader they praise is working overtime to make the job more difficult.

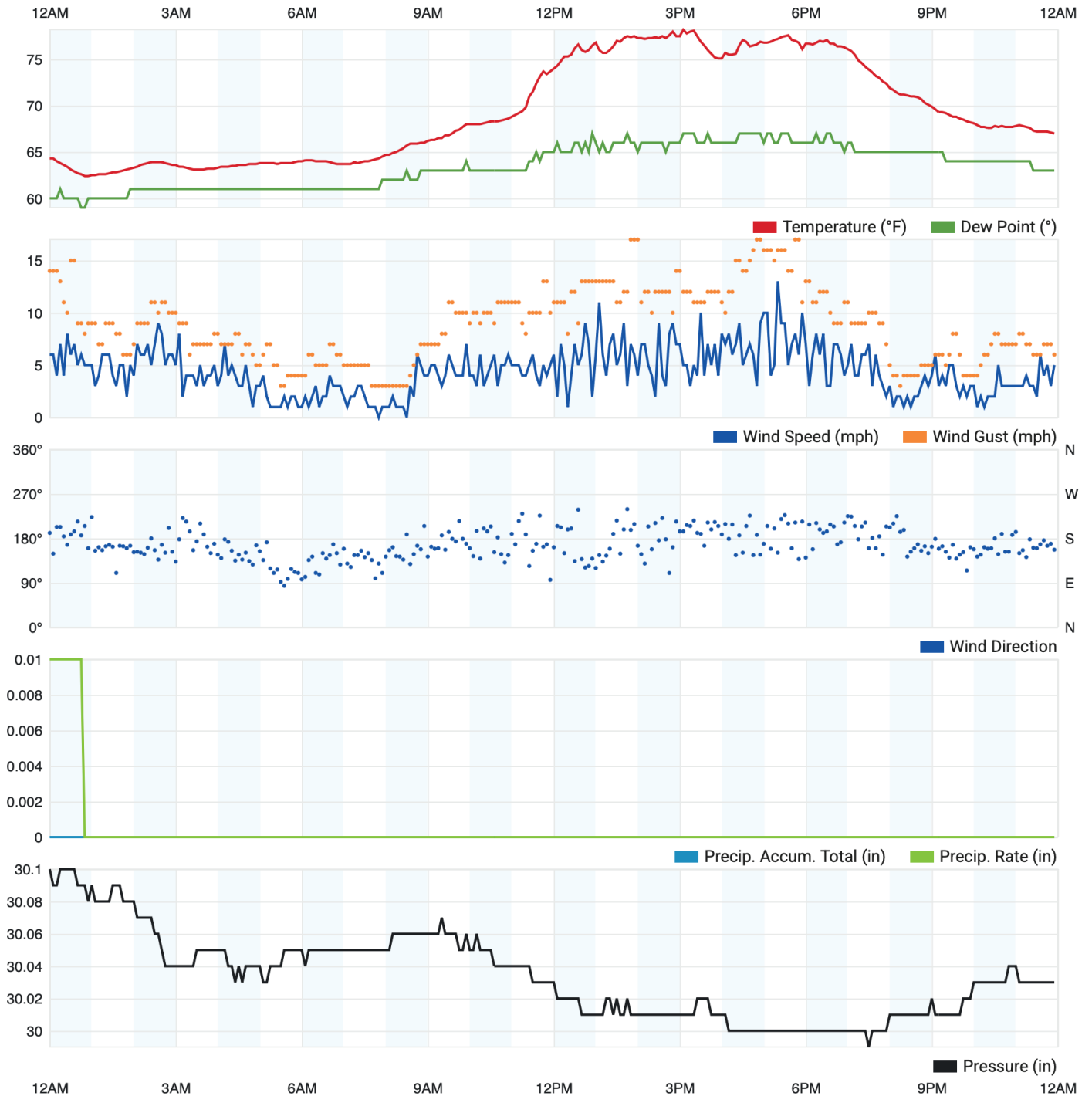
*Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

August 3, 2025



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Today



**High: 79 °F**

Patchy Fog  
then Slight  
Chance  
T-storms

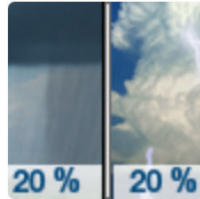
Tonight



**Low: 63 °F**

Mostly Cloudy

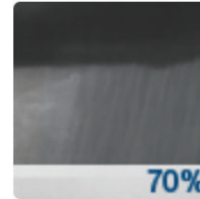
Tuesday



**High: 81 °F**

Slight Chance  
Showers then  
Slight Chance  
T-storms and  
Breezy

Tuesday Night



**Low: 66 °F**

Showers  
Likely

Wednesday



**High: 85 °F**

Slight Chance  
T-storms then  
Sunny

## What's Ahead



### MONDAY

Partly to mostly cloudy skies  
with a 20-40% chance for  
storms in the evening and  
overnight

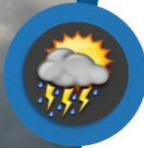
**Highs: 74-88°**



### TUESDAY

40-70% chance for showers and  
storms

**Highs: 77-91°**



### WEDNESDAY

Partly cloudy skies with a 20-40%  
showers and storms

**Highs: 81-92°**



### THURSDAY

20-30% chance for showers  
and storms

**Highs: 85-97°**



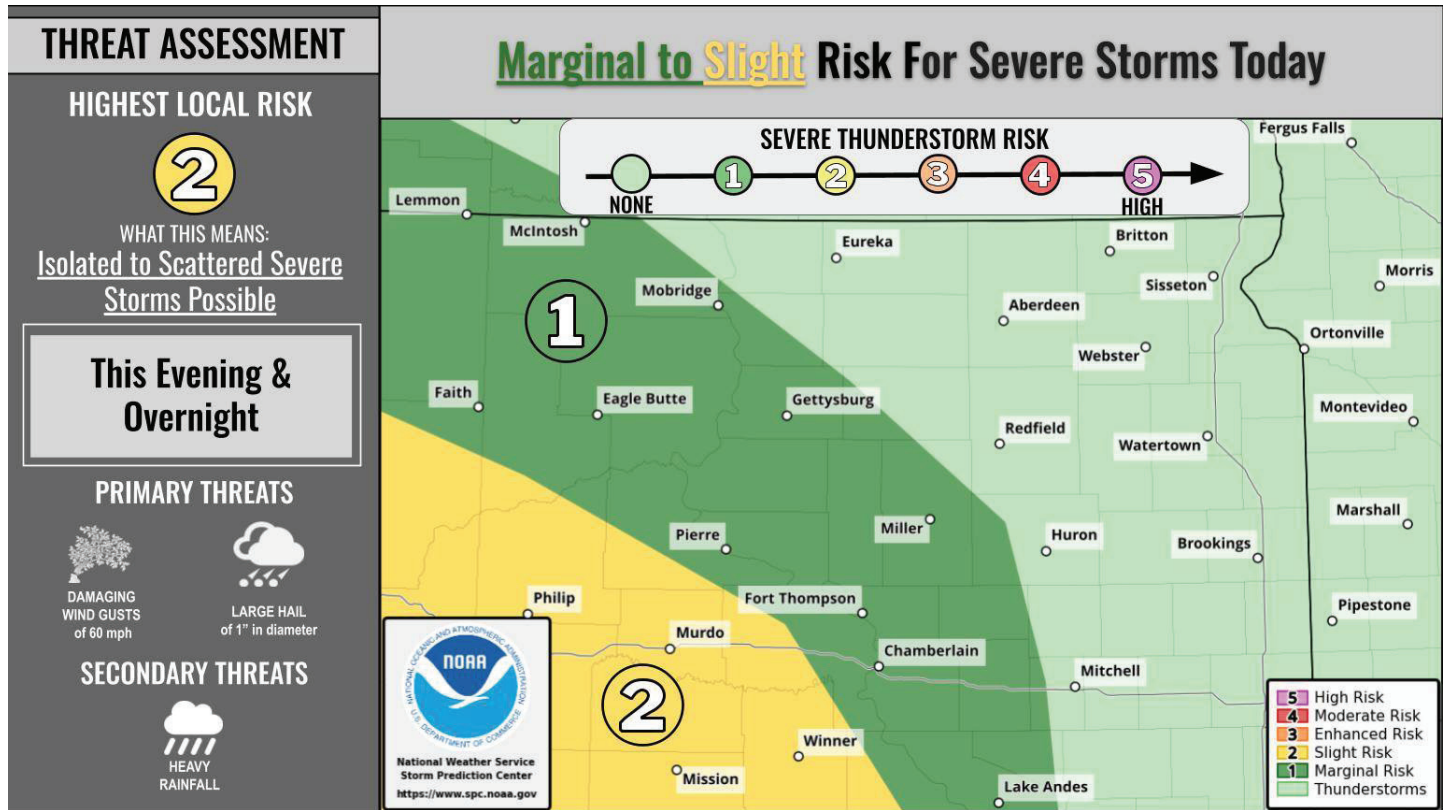
**NWS Aberdeen, SD**  
Mon Aug 04, 2025 4:36 AM

Daily chances for showers and thunderstorms will remain possible most of this week. Some storms could be severe with large hail and damaging winds and locally heavy rainfall. Temperatures will gradually warm during the week with rather hot conditions returning by Wednesday and Thursday.



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Another round of thunderstorms will be possible across portions of central South Dakota later today. Scattered storms are expected to develop across parts of western South Dakota late this afternoon. This would put the timing of these storms across the central part of the state this evening and into the overnight hours. The main threats will be damaging wind gusts and large hail. The more intense storms could also produce locally heavy rainfall.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 78 °F at 3:04 PM**

**Heat Index: 80 °F at 2:00 PM**

**Low Temp: 62 °F at 12:50 AM**

**Wind: 18 mph at 4:47 PM**

**Precip: : 0.01**

Day length: 14 hours, 38 minutes

## Today's Info

Record High: 107 in 1934

Record Low: 42 in 2017

Average High: 85

Average Low: 59

Average Precip in August.: 0.30

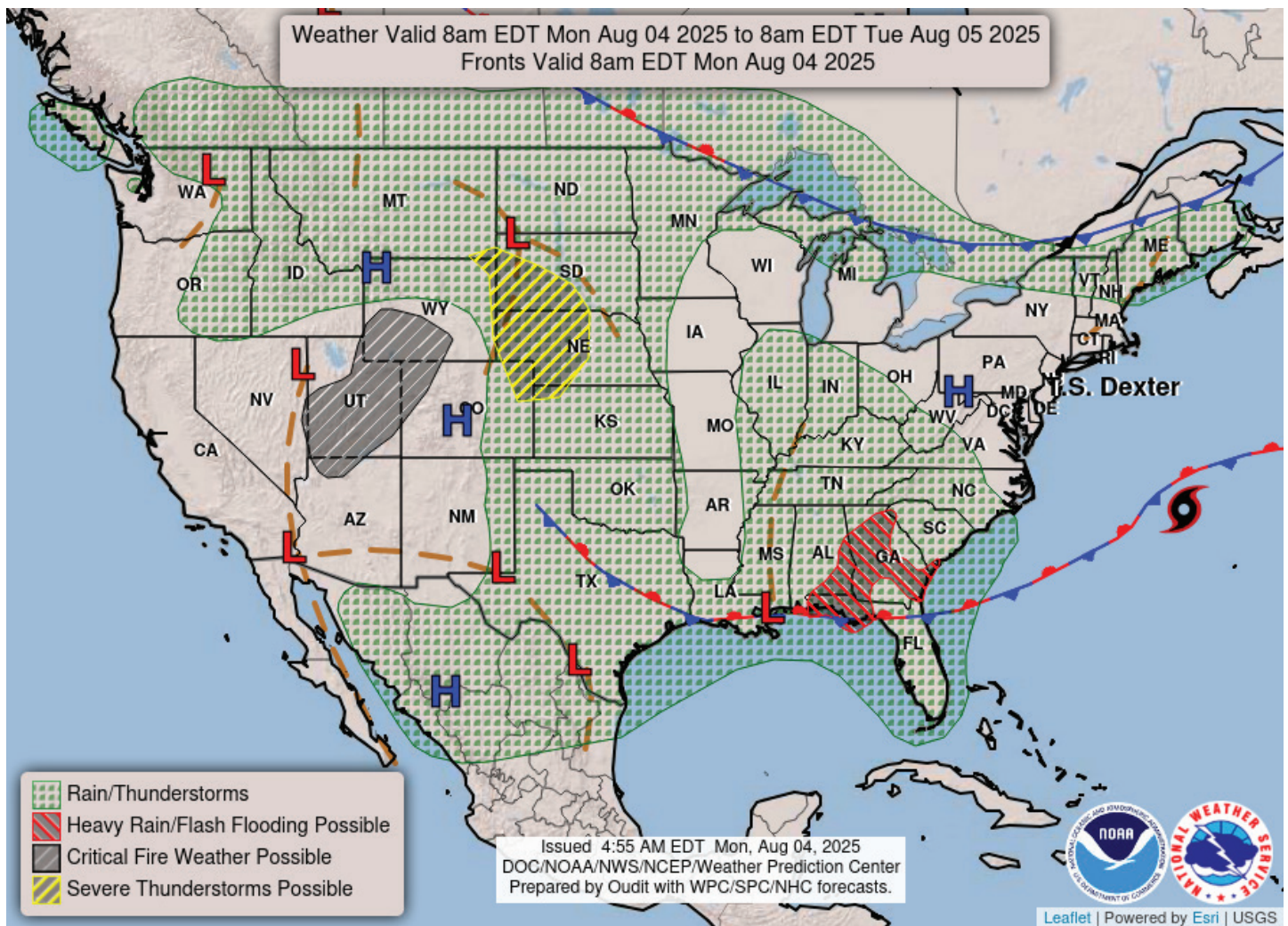
Precip to date in August: 0.01

Average Precip to date: 14.40

Precip Year to Date: 15.07

Sunset Tonight: 8:57:48 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:20:18 am



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## **Today in Weather History**

August 4, 1960: At Draper in Jones County, three-inch hail caused substantial damage to roofs, building windows and automobiles. Losses estimated at 100,000 dollars. About 1,000 chickens and turkeys killed on nearby farms.

August 4, 2000: Tennis ball size hail along with high winds caused a lot of damage throughout Selby. Many east and north windows were broken along with many vehicle's windshields. Also, many cars were dented, house siding was damaged, gardens were destroyed, and many acres of crops around Selby were destroyed. Softball hail broke windows and caused extensive damage to a few vehicles and homes west of Faulkton. Baseball size hail and high winds had broken out about every window on all of the buildings at the Brentwood Colony in Edmunds County. The large hail and strong winds also damaged many of the buildings.

1882 - A vivid aurora was visible from Oregon to Maine, down the east coast as far as Mayport FL, and inland as far as Wellington KS. Observers at Louisville KY noted merry dancers across the sky, and observers at Saint Vincent, MN, noted it was probably the most brilliant ever seen at that location. (The Weather Channel)

1930 - The temperature at Moorefield, WV, soared to 112 degrees to establish a state record, having reached 110 degrees the previous day. Widespread drought after April of that year caused some towns to haul water for domestic use, and many manufacturing plants were barely operational. (The Weather Channel)

1961 - Spokane, WA, reached an all-time record high of 108 degrees. Kalispell, MT, set an all-time record with a reading of 105 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - A record forty-two consecutive days of 100 degree heat finally came to an end at the Dallas-Fort Worth Airport. July 1980 proved to be the hottest month of record with a mean temperature of 92 degrees. There was just one day of rain in July, and there was no measurable rain in August. There were 18 more days of 100 degree heat in August, and four in September. Hot weather that summer contributed to the deaths of 1200 people nationally, and losses from the heat across the country were estimated at twenty billion dollars. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A cold front brought relief from the heat to a large part of the Midwest, while hot weather continued in the south central and eastern U.S. Morning thunderstorms in Nebraska deluged the town of Dalton with 8.71 inches of rain, along with hail three inches in diameter, which accumulated up to four feet deep near the town of Dix. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Iowa to Lower Michigan during the afternoon and evening hours, producing golf ball size hail and spawning several tornadoes. A thunderstorm at Maquoketa, IA, produced wind gusts to 75 mph. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from eastern Nebraska and northeastern Kansas to the Great Lakes Region, with 150 reports of large hail or damaging winds during the afternoon, evening, and nighttime hours. Thunderstorms produced tennis ball size hail at Claremont, MN, and wind gusts to 75 mph at Milwaukee, WI. Thunderstorms representing what once was Hurricane Chantal produced five inches of rain at Grant, MI, and deluged Chicago, IL, with more than three inches of rain in three hours. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2008: Severe storms moved across northern Illinois and Indiana with tornadoes and stiff winds reported. With tornado sirens blaring, the game at Wrigley Field between Cubs and Astros was stopped as fans were told to evacuate to the lower concourse. Passengers at O'Hare International Airport were evacuated to lower levels of buildings as well. An estimated 350 flights were canceled.

2009: The strongest tornado to hit Quebec since the same date in 1994 ripped through Mont-Laurier. The F2 tornado tore through the small western Quebec town severely damaging about 40 homes. Two men were taken to the hospital with minor injuries.



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## SELAH!

The word Selah appears seventy-one times in the Psalms and three times in the book of Habakkuk. Its specific meaning is not known but it implies that the reader, or the one listening to one who is reading the psalm, should pause or rest or stop and think of "this" or "that" – or whatever the writer was addressing. It is illuminating and inspiring when we actually apply it.

David was driven from his palace and people by his rebellious son, Absalom. When he saw his army and his advisors turn against him and follow his son, he wrote the third Psalm.

In desperation and despair, he wrote, "O Lord, how many are my foes! How many rise up against me. Many are saying of me, 'God will not deliver him.'" He felt abandoned, betrayed.

Then he paused, thought for a moment, and said "Selah!" Which must have meant, "Wait a minute, David, and think of this." Think of what, we might ask. Being betrayed? Being pursued? Being driven from family and friends? Being driven from your throne?

Of course not. If he is not to think of those things, then, what is he to think of?

And then he answers his own question: "You, Oh Lord, are a shield around me, You are my glory, and the one who lifts my head high!"

David ran away from his son, Absalom. But in so doing he ran into the arms of the Almighty God. He found his protection from persecution and his source of salvation. There is no one like the Lord! He is our comfort in times of conflict and our protector when others pursue us.

Prayer: May we realize, O Lord, Your eternal power and presence over anything that could or would hurt or harm us. Give us courage to trust in You. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But you, O Lord, are a shield around me; you are my glory, the one who holds my head high. Psalm 3:3

*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: 08.01.25

18 27 29 33 70 22

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$150,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 14 Mins  
0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.02.25

7 16 22 31 39 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$3,840,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 29 Mins 0  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.03.25

4 9 25 33 43 6

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 43 Mins 59  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.02.25

10 14 15 16 21

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$79,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 44  
Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.02.25

10 20 36 58 59 5

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 13 Mins 0  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 08.02.25

6 18 34 35 36 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$426,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 13 Mins 0  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## **Upcoming Groton Events**

08/07/2025 Family Fun Fest, Downtown Main Street 5:30-7:30pm  
08/23/2025 Glacial Tournament at Olive Grove  
09/05/2025 Homecoming Parade 1pm  
09/6-7/25 Fly in/Drive in at Groton Municipal Airport  
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm  
09/07/2025 Sunflower Classic Couples Scramble at Olive Grove  
10/10/2025 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am  
10/11/2025 Pumpkin Fest 10am-3pm City Park  
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm  
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1:30pm  
11/30/2025 Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m.  
12/06/2025 Olive Grove Holiday Party and Silent Live Auction Fundraiser

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

### **Texas governor threatens to remove Democrats who left state over Trump-backed redistricting**

Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott says he will begin trying to remove Democratic lawmakers from office Monday if they don't return after dozens of them left the state in a last-resort attempt to block redrawn U.S. House maps that President Donald Trump wants before the 2026 midterm elections.

The revolt by the state House Democrats, many of whom went to Illinois or New York on Sunday, and Abbott giving them less than 24 hours to come home ratcheted up a widening fight over congressional maps that began in Texas but has drawn in Democratic governors who have floated the possibility of rushing to redraw their own state's maps in retaliation. Their options, however, are limited.

At the center of the escalating impasse is Trump's pursuit of adding five more GOP-leaning congressional seats in Texas before next year that would bolster his party's chances of preserving its slim U.S. House majority.

The new congressional maps drawn by Texas Republicans would create five new Republican-leaning seats. Republicans currently hold 25 of the state's 38 seats.

A vote on the proposed maps had been set for Monday in the Texas House of Representatives, but it cannot proceed if the majority of Democratic members deny a quorum by not showing up. After one group of Democrats landed in Chicago on Sunday, they were welcomed by Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, but declined to say how long they were prepared to stay out of Texas.

"We will do whatever it takes. What that looks like, we don't know," said state Rep. Gene Wu, the Texas House Democratic Caucus leader.

But legislative walkouts often only delay passage of a bill, including in 2021 when many of the same Texas House Democrats left the state for 38 days in protest of new voting restrictions. Once they returned, Republicans still wound up passing that measure.

Four years later, Abbott is taking a far more aggressive stance and swiftly warning Democrats that he will seek to remove them from office if they are not back when the House reconvenes Monday afternoon. He cited a non-binding 2021 legal opinion issued by Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton, which suggested a court could determine that a legislator had forfeited their office.

He also suggested the lawmakers may have committed felonies by raising money to help pay for fines they'd face.

"This truancy ends now," Abbott said.

In response, House Democrats issued a four-word statement: "Come and take it."

The state of the vote

Lawmakers can't pass bills in the 150-member Texas House without at least two-thirds of them present. Democrats hold 62 of the seats in the majority-Republican chamber and at least 51 left the state, said Josh Rush Nisenson, spokesperson for the House Democratic Caucus.

Republican House Speaker Dustin Burrows said the chamber would still meet as planned on Monday afternoon.

"If a quorum is not present then, to borrow the recent talking points from some of my Democrat colleagues, all options will be on the table. . .," he posted on X.

Paxton, who is running for U.S. Senate, said on X that Democrats who "try and run away like cowards should be found, arrested, and brought back to the Capitol immediately."

Fines for not showing up

A refusal by Texas lawmakers to show up is a civil violation of legislative rules. The Texas Supreme Court held in 2021 that House leaders had the authority to "physically compel the attendance" of missing members, but no Democrats were forcibly brought back to the state after warrants were served that year. Two years later, Republicans pushed through new rules that allow daily fines of \$500 for lawmakers who



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don't show up for work as punishment.

The quorum break will also delay votes on flood relief and new warning systems in the wake of last month's catastrophic floods in Texas that killed at least 136 people. Democrats had called for votes on the flooding response before taking up redistricting and have criticized Republicans for not doing so.

Illinois hosts Texas lawmakers

Pritzker, a potential 2028 presidential contender who has been one of Trump's most outspoken critics during his second term, had been in quiet talks with Texas Democrats for weeks about offering support if they chose to leave the state to break quorum.

Last week, the governor hosted several Texas Democrats in Illinois to publicly oppose the redistricting effort, and California Gov. Gavin Newsom held a similar event in his own state.

Pritzker also met privately with Texas Democratic Chair Kendall Scudder in June to begin planning for the possibility that lawmakers would depart for Illinois if they did decide to break quorum to block the map, according to a source with direct knowledge who requested anonymity to discuss private conversations.

"This is not just rigging the system in Texas, it's about rigging the system against the rights of all Americans for years to come," Pritzker said Sunday night.

Trump is looking to avoid a repeat of his first term, when Democrats flipped the House just two years into his presidency, and hopes the new Texas map will aid that effort. Trump officials have also looked at redrawing lines in other states.

## South Korea begins removing border propaganda speakers in conciliatory gesture toward North

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's military said Monday it had begun removing loudspeakers along its border with rival North Korea in a move aimed at reducing tensions.

The speakers had previously been used to blast anti-North Korean propaganda across the border, but the South's new liberal government halted the broadcasts in June in a conciliatory gesture as it looks to rebuild trust and revive dialogue with Pyongyang, which has largely cut off cooperation with the South in recent years.

South Korea's Defense Ministry said the physical removal of the loudspeakers from the border was another "practical measure" aimed at easing tensions between the war-divided Koreas and that it does not affect the South's military readiness.

Lee Kyung-ho, a spokesperson for the ministry, didn't share specific details on how the removed loudspeakers will be stored or whether they could be quickly redeployed to the border if tensions flare again between the Koreas. There were no discussions between the two militaries ahead of the South's decision to remove the speakers, Lee said during a briefing.

North Korea, which is extremely sensitive to any outside criticism of its authoritarian leadership and its third-generation ruler, Kim Jong Un, didn't immediately comment on the South Korean step.

The South's previous conservative government resumed the daily loudspeaker broadcasts in June last year following a yearslong pause in retaliation for North Korea flying trash-laden balloons toward the South in a psychological warfare campaign.

The speakers blasted propaganda messages and K-pop songs, a playlist clearly designed to strike a nerve in Pyongyang, where Kim's government has been intensifying a campaign to eliminate the influence of South Korean pop culture and language among the population in a bid to strengthen his family's dynastic rule.

The Cold War-style psychological warfare campaigns further heightened tensions already inflamed by North Korea's advancing nuclear program and South Korean efforts to expand joint military exercises with the United States and their trilateral security cooperation with Japan.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung, a liberal who took office in June after winning an early election to replace ousted conservative Yoon Suk Yeol, has vowed to improve relations with Pyongyang, which reacted furiously to Yoon's hard-line policies and shunned dialogue.

But Kim Yo Jong, the influential sister of the North Korean leader, rebuffed overtures by Lee's govern-

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ment last week, saying that Seoul's "blind trust" in the country's alliance with the U.S. and hostility toward North Korea make it no different from its conservative predecessor. Her comments implied that North Korea — now preoccupied with its expanding cooperation with Russia over the war in Ukraine — feels no urgency to resume diplomacy with Seoul and Washington anytime soon.

## **Boeing workers who build fighter jets go on strike**

NEW YORK (AP) — Boeing workers who build fighter jets went on strike Monday at midnight Central Daylight Time.

About 3,200 workers at Boeing facilities in St. Louis; St. Charles, Missouri; and Mascoutah, Illinois, voted to reject a modified four-year labor agreement with Boeing, the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers union said Sunday.

In a post on X, the union said: "3,200 highly-skilled IAM Union members at Boeing went on strike at midnight because enough is enough."

The vote followed members' rejection last week of an earlier proposal from the troubled aerospace giant, which had included a 20% wage increase over four years.

"IAM District 837 members build the aircraft and defense systems that keep our country safe," said Sam Cicinelli, Midwest territory general vice president for the union, in a statement. "They deserve nothing less than a contract that keeps their families secure and recognizes their unmatched expertise."

At the time of the earlier vote, union leaders had recommended approving the offer, calling it a "landmark agreement" and saying it would improve medical, pension and overtime benefits.

The union members rejected the latest proposal after a weeklong cooling-off period.

"We're disappointed our employees rejected an offer that featured 40% average wage growth and resolved their primary issue on alternative work schedules," said Dan Gillian, Boeing Air Dominance vice president and general manager, and senior St. Louis site executive. "We are prepared for a strike and have fully implemented our contingency plan to ensure our non-striking workforce can continue supporting our customers."

Boeing has been struggling after two of its Boeing 737 Max airplanes crashed, one in Indonesia in 2018 and the other in Ethiopia in 2019, killing 346 people. In June, one of Boeing's Dreamliner planes, operated by Air India, crashed, killing at least 260 people.

Last week, Boeing reported that its second-quarter revenue had improved and losses had narrowed. The company lost \$611 million in the second quarter, compared to a loss of \$1.44 billion during the same period last year.

## **Texas Democrats arrive in Illinois to block vote back home on redrawn House maps sought by Trump**

A standoff in Texas over redrawn U.S. House maps sought by President Donald Trump sharply escalated Sunday when dozens of Democratic legislators left the state to block a vote, followed by Republican Gov. Greg Abbott warning them that he will seek their removal from office if they don't return.

The revolt by Democrats, and Abbott giving them until Monday to come home or face efforts to strip them of their elected positions, pushed a widening fight over congressional maps ahead of the 2026 midterm elections into new territory. At the center of the deepening impasse is Trump's pursuit of five more winnable congressional seats that will help bolster the GOP's chances of preserving their slim U.S. House majority.

In response to Texas' rare mid-decade political gerrymander, Democratic governors have floated the possibility of redrawing their own state's maps in retaliation, but their options are limited.

Many of the Texas Democrats were bound for Illinois and a welcoming from Gov. JB Pritzker, a potential 2028 presidential contender, who in recent weeks has offered them support.

House Democratic Caucus Chair Rep. Gene Wu declined to say how long lawmakers were prepared to stay out of Texas, and it was unclear whether the gambit would succeed. Four years ago, House Democrats left

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Texas for 38 days in protest of new voting restrictions that still wound up passing once the holdout ended. "We will do whatever it takes. What that looks like, we don't know," Wu said at a Sunday night news conference.

The state of the vote now

Lawmakers can't pass bills in the 150-member Texas House without at least two-thirds of them present. Democrats hold 62 of the seats in the majority-Republican chamber and at least 51 left the state, said Josh Rush Nisenson, spokesperson for the House Democratic Caucus. In addition to those in Illinois, delegations of Democratic lawmakers left Texas for Boston and Albany, New York, among other places, Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer said.

Abbott threatened to seek the lawmakers' removal, saying they were not meeting under the state's constitution.

"This truancy ends now," Abbott said in a statement released by his office Sunday night. Abbott also suggested the lawmakers may have committed felonies by raising money to help pay for fines they'd face.

Republican House Speaker Dustin Burrows said the chamber would still meet as planned on Monday afternoon.

"If a quorum is not present then, to borrow the recent talking points from some of my Democrat colleagues, all options will be on the table. . .," he posted on X.

Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton, who is running for U.S. Senate, said on X that Democrats who "try and run away like cowards should be found, arrested, and brought back to the Capitol immediately."

A refusal by Texas lawmakers to show up is a civil violation of legislative rules. The Texas Supreme Court held in 2021 that House leaders had the authority to "physically compel the attendance" of missing members, but no Democrats were forcibly brought back to the state after warrants were served that year. Two years later, Republicans pushed through new rules that allow daily fines of \$500 for lawmakers who don't show up for work as punishment.

In calling for the lawmakers' removal, Abbott cited a non-binding legal opinion that was issued by Paxton's office after the 2021 revolt by Democratic lawmakers.

The quorum break will also delay votes on flood relief and new warning systems in the wake of last month's catastrophic floods in Texas that killed at least 136 people. Democrats had called for votes on the flooding response before taking up redistricting and have criticized Republicans for not doing so.

Texas Republicans last week unveiled their planned new U.S. House map that would create five new Republican-leaning seats. Republicans currently hold 25 of the state's 38 seats.

Illinois hosts fleeing Texas lawmakers

Pritzker, who has been one of Trump's most outspoken critics during his second term, had been in quiet talks with Texas Democrats for weeks about offering support if they chose to leave the state to break quorum.

Last week, the governor hosted several Texas Democrats in Illinois to publicly oppose the redistricting effort, and California Gov. Gavin Newsom held a similar event in his own state.

Pritzker also met privately with Texas Democratic Chair Kendall Scudder in June to begin planning for the possibility that lawmakers would depart for Illinois if they did decide to break quorum to block the map, according to a source with direct knowledge who requested anonymity to discuss private conversations.

"This is not just rigging the system in Texas, it's about rigging the system against the rights of all Americans for years to come," Pritzker said Sunday night.

Now, with Texas Democrats holed up in Illinois and blocking the Trump-backed congressional map, the stage may be set for a high-profile showdown between Pritzker and the president.

Trump is looking to avoid a repeat of his first term, when Democrats flipped the House just two years into his presidency, and hopes the new Texas map will aid that effort. Trump officials have also looked at redrawing lines in other states, such as Missouri, according to a person familiar with conversations but unauthorized to speak publicly about them.

## Popular 1980s actor Loni Anderson of the hit TV series 'WKRP in Cincinnati' has died

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Loni Anderson, who played a struggling radio station's empowered receptionist on the hit TV comedy "WKRP in Cincinnati," died Sunday, just days before her 80th birthday.

Anderson died at a Los Angeles hospital following a prolonged illness, said her longtime publicist, Cheryl J. Kagan.

"We are heartbroken to announce the passing of our dear wife, mother and grandmother," Anderson's family said in a statement.

"WKRP in Cincinnati" aired from 1978 to 1982 and was set in a flagging Ohio radio station trying to reinvent itself with rock music. The cast included Gary Sandy, Tim Reid, Howard Hesseman, Frank Bonner and Jan Smithers, alongside Anderson as Jennifer Marlowe, whose good looks were matched by her intelligence.

As the station's receptionist, the blonde and high-heeled Jennifer routinely deflected unwanted business calls for her boss, Mr. Carlson. Her efficiency often kept the station running in the face of others' incompetence.

The role earned Anderson two Emmy Award nominations and three Golden Globe nominations.

Anderson starred on the big screen alongside Burt Reynolds in the 1983 comedy "Stroker Ace," and the two later married and became tabloid fixtures before their messy breakup in 1994.

Their son, Quinton Reynolds, was "the best decision that we ever made in our entire relationship," she said during the unveiling of a bronze bust at Reynolds' Hollywood grave site in 2021.

"I think back to the beginning of our relationship, it was so, oh, gosh, tabloidy. We were just a spectacle all the time. And it was hard to have a relationship in that atmosphere. And somehow, we did it through many ups and downs," Anderson told The Associated Press.

Anderson detailed their tumultuous marriage in the 1995 autobiography, "My Life in High Heels," which she said was about "the growth of a woman, a woman who survives."

"I think if you're going to write about yourself, you have to do it warts and all," Anderson told the AP while promoting the book. "You may not even tell the nicest things about yourself, because you're telling the truth."

She married four times, most recently to Bob Flick in 2008.

Anderson was born Aug. 5, 1945, in St. Paul, Minnesota. Her father was an environmental chemist, and her mother was a model.

Her first role as an actress was a small part in the 1966 film "Nevada Smith," starring Steve McQueen. Most of her career was spent on the small screen with early guest parts in the 1970s on "S.W.A.T." and "Police Woman." After "WKRP," Anderson starred in the short-lived comedy series "Easy Street" and appeared in made-for-TV movies including "A Letter to Three Wives" and "White Hot: The Mysterious Murder of Thelma Todd."

In 2023 she co-starred in Lifetime's "Ladies Of The 80s: A Divas Christmas" with Linda Gray, Donna Mills, Morgan Fairchild and Nicollette Sheridan.

"I am heartbroken to hear of the passing of the wonderful Loni Anderson!" Fairchild wrote on X. "The sweetest, most gracious lady! I'm just devastated to hear this."

Anderson is survived by Flick, her daughter Deidra and son-in law Charlie Hoffman, son Quinton Anderson Reynolds, grandchildren McKenzie and Megan Hoffman, stepson Adam Flick and wife Helene, and step-grandchildren Felix and Maximilian.

A private family service is planned at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery, Kagan said.



## **Ukrainian drone attack sets Russian oil depot on fire as Zelenskyy announces prisoner exchange**

An overnight Ukrainian drone attack on an oil depot near Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi sparked a major fire, Russian officials said Sunday, as the two countries traded strikes and the Ukrainian president announced a prisoner exchange.

More than 120 firefighters attempted to extinguish the blaze, which was caused by debris from a downed drone striking a fuel tank, Krasnodar regional Gov. Veniamin Kondratyev said on Telegram. Videos on social media appeared to show huge pillars of smoke billowing above the oil depot.

Russia's civil aviation authority, Rosaviatsia, temporarily stopped flights at Sochi's airport.

Farther north, authorities in the Voronezh region reported that four people were wounded in another Ukrainian drone strike.

Russia's Defense Ministry said its air defenses shot down 93 Ukrainian drones over Russia and the Black Sea overnight into Sunday.

Meanwhile, in southern Ukraine, a Russian missile strike hit a residential area in the city of Mykolaiv, according to the State Emergency Services, wounding seven people.

The Ukrainian air force said Sunday Russia launched 76 drones and seven missiles against Ukraine. It said 60 drones and one missile were intercepted, but 16 others and six missiles hit targets across eight locations.

The reciprocal attacks came at the end of one of the deadliest weeks in Ukraine in recent months, after a Russian drone and missile attack on Thursday killed 31 people, including five children, and wounded over 150.

The continued attacks come after U.S. President Donald Trump last week gave Russian President Vladimir Putin a shorter deadline — Aug. 8 — for peace efforts to make progress. Trump has threatened to impose new economic sanctions on Russia if progress is not made, while expressing doubt about how effective they would be.

"You know, they're wily characters, and they're pretty good at avoiding sanctions, so we'll see what happens," Trump said Sunday evening of the Russians.

He said his special envoy Steve Witkoff may travel to Russia on Wednesday or Thursday, the final days before his new deadline.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Sunday that Ukraine and Russia have agreed to exchange 1,200 prisoners following their latest round of negotiations in Istanbul in July.

"There is an agreement to exchange 1,200 people," he wrote on X, saying that the lists of individuals to be swapped were being worked on and that they were working to "unblock the return of our civilians."

There was no immediate comment from Russia.

Zelenskyy also said he discussed with top Ukrainian officials "the negotiation track – specifically, the implementation of the agreements reached during the meetings with the Russian side in Istanbul, as well as preparations for a new meeting."

Each of the three rounds of talks between the countries this year has resulted in prisoner exchanges but yielded no breakthrough in reaching a ceasefire.

## **Former US soldier suspected of killing 4 in Montana remains at large**

The former U.S. soldier suspected of killing four people at a Montana bar was still at large early Sunday and may be armed after escaping in a stolen vehicle containing clothes and camping gear, officials said.

Authorities believe 45-year-old Michael Paul Brown killed four people on Friday morning at The Owl Bar in Anaconda, Montana, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) southeast of Missoula in a valley hemmed in by mountains.

Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen said at a news conference Sunday that Brown committed the

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shooting with a rifle that law enforcement believes was his personal weapon.

The victims ranged in age from 59 to 74 and were a female bartender and three male patrons.

Knudsen warned residents in the town of just over 9,000 people that Brown, who lived next door to the bar where he was a regular, could come back to the area.

"This is an unstable individual who walked in and murdered four people in cold blood for no reason whatsoever. So there absolutely is concern for the public," Knudsen said.

A good neighbor

The four victims were identified on Sunday morning as Daniel Edwin Baillie, 59, Nancy Lauretta Kelley, 64, David Allen Leach, 70, and Tony Wayne Palm, 74. All four lived in Anaconda.

Robert Wyatt, 70, said he was neighbors with Leach at a public housing complex for elderly people and people with disabilities.

"Everybody is nervous" since Friday, Wyatt said.

Leach was deaf and kept mostly to himself, Wyatt said, and he only recalls Leach having a family visit once almost a year ago. But Leach was always happy to help his neighbors with chores like moving furniture.

"If you needed help, Dave would help," Wyatt said. "He was a good neighbor."

Everybody in town knows each other

Numerous public events were canceled over the weekend as the search entered its third day, according to local Facebook pages. As law enforcement scours the wild terrain, the woods southwest of Anaconda have been closed to the public by the National Forest System.

David Jabarek, 70, said that a mass shooting in a place as small as Anaconda is baffling to many. He said that he regularly saw both the shooter and the victims over the course of the 20 years that he has lived in Anaconda.

"We only have 9,000 people, so it's like, what the hell just happened? Everybody knows everybody here," he said.

Jabarek was headed to Owl Bar less than 30 minutes before the shooting happened, at around 10:15 a.m. On an impulse, he went to run an errand nearby instead. When he came back to the area, he saw the bar was surrounded by police.

"If I'd have been in there when I was supposed to be, you wouldn't be talking to me. Somebody be talking to you about me," he said.

The close call is now keeping Jabarek up at night. But he said that he isn't afraid of the prospect of Brown returning.

"Everybody around here has two dozen firearms in their house, and right now they're within hands reach," Jabarek said.

The suspected shooter's past

Investigators are considering all possible options for Brown's whereabouts, the attorney general said. That includes searching the woods where Brown hunted and camped while he was a kid. But Knudsen noted that during peak tourist season in western Montana some law enforcement officials would have to return to their local jurisdictions for their regular responsibilities.

Brown served in the Army as an armor crewman from 2001 to 2005 and deployed to Iraq from early 2004 until March 2005, said Lt. Col. Ruth Castro, an Army spokesperson. Brown was in the Montana National Guard from 2006 to March 2009, Castro said, and left military service at the rank of sergeant.

Brown's niece, Clare Boyle, told The Associated Press that her uncle has struggled with mental illness for years, and she and other family members repeatedly sought help.

"This isn't just a drunk/high man going wild," she said in a Facebook message. "It's a sick man who doesn't know who he is sometimes and frequently doesn't know where or when he is either."

Appeals to the public for help

Knudsen said on Sunday that Brown was known to local law enforcement before the shooting. It was widely believed that he knew at least some of the victims, given how close he lived to the bar.

Law enforcement released a photograph of Brown from surveillance footage taken shortly after the fatal

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shootings. He appeared to be barefoot and in minimal clothing.

But law enforcement now believes Brown ditched the vehicle he escaped in and stole a different one that had camping gear, shoes and clothes in it — leaving open the possibility that Brown is now clothed.

The last time that law enforcement saw Brown was on Friday afternoon, but there was “some confusion” because there were multiple white vehicles involved, Knudsen said.

There is a \$7,500 reward for any information that leads to Brown’s capture.

“This is still Montana. Montanans know how to take care of themselves. But please, if you have any sightings, call 911,” Knudsen said. \_\_\_\_

Riddle is a corps member for The Associated Press/Report for America Statehouse News Initiative. Report for America is a nonprofit national service program that places journalists in local newsrooms to report on undercover issues.

## **Texas Democrats fleeing state to block redistricting vote follows strategy that’s had mixed results**

Texas Democrats fled the state Sunday in an effort to hinder Republicans from approving a new U.S. House map that could boost their slim congressional majority in 2026.

The walkout lets the minority party keep Republicans in charge from having enough votes for maps that would add five new Republican-leaning congressional districts. The proposed boundaries slice up Democratic-leaning urban centers where most of the state’s 30 million people live.

Though such theatrics are uncommon, both parties have used walkouts to deny quorum in state Legislatures from Oregon to New Hampshire. In some places, walking off the job, whether for a day or months at a time, has led to punishments like fines, arrest threats or being booted from the ballot.

“We’re leaving Texas to fight for Texans,” Gene Wu, chair of the House Democratic Caucus, said in a statement Sunday. “We’re not walking out on our responsibilities; we’re walking out on a rigged system that refuses to listen to the people we represent.”

Here’s a closer look at how lawmakers around the country have used walkouts.

### **Texas**

Four years ago, Texas Democrats walked off the job over a proposal for voting restrictions and fled to Washington D.C.

While initially successful in killing the measure, they couldn’t block the plan again during a special session when Republicans had law enforcement issue civil arrest warrants to bring Democrats back. The stalemate lasted more than a month. The bill prohibited 24-hour polling sites, banned drive-through voting and gave more access to partisan poll watchers.

Democrats in the state used the same tactic in 2003, when House members went to Oklahoma and senators traveled to New Mexico. They failed to thwart a Republican congressional redistricting plan.

### **Oregon**

Oregon legislators in both parties have boycotted daily sessions to halt work in one or both chambers since the 1970s. After several GOP walkouts, voters in 2022 approved an amendment to the state constitution barring lawmakers from seeking reelection if they have more than 10 unexcused absences in a single annual legislative session.

In 2023, Republicans staged a six-week boycott — the longest in the Oregon Legislature’s history — over measures protecting abortion rights and gender-affirming care for transgender people. Ten lawmakers were barred from seeking reelection the following year.

### **New Hampshire**

In 2021, New Hampshire Democrats walked out when an anti-abortion bill came up for a vote, protesting what they saw as a partisan manipulation of the calendar. That prompted the Republican House speaker to lock the doors to maintain a quorum.

“I’m locking the doors right now so everybody in the chamber will stay in the chamber!” shouted House Speaker Sherman Packard, who later refused to let Democrats back in to vote on the bill.

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Wisconsin

Democratic state senators from Wisconsin fled to neighboring Illinois in 2011, blocking a vote on GOP Gov. Scott Walker's plan to strip most public workers of their union rights. At the same time, pro-union protesters descended on the state Capitol.

The stalemate ended several weeks later after Republicans weakened their legislation.

Indiana

Indiana Democrats left the state for Illinois in 2011 to prevent a Republican bill prohibiting mandatory labor union fees. The absence of Democrats left the House short of the two-thirds needed for a quorum.

Democrats threatened to stay in Illinois until they received assurances from top leaders that the bills would not be called, while Republican leaders said they wouldn't negotiate with legislators who didn't show up to their jobs.

Republicans successfully passed the bill the following year.

## **The bodies of all 5 miners are found and identified in Chile's El Teniente mine after collapse**

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — The bodies of all five miners trapped in a collapsed shaft in the world's biggest underground copper mine for three days have been found and identified, an official said Sunday.

Aquiles Cubillos, the lead prosecutor in Chile's O'Higgins region, said the body of Moises Pavez, the last miner to remain missing, was found at 3:30 p.m. local time by rescue teams. They had drilled through dozens of meters (feet) of rock to reach the stranded workers.

"We deeply regret this outcome" Cubillos said.

The five miners were trapped deep inside Chile's El Teniente mine on Thursday after a section of the mine collapsed following a 4.2 magnitude earthquake that instantly killed another miner and injured nine other workers.

The trapped miners were located by using GPS devices but rescue teams were not able to communicate with them.

Authorities are investigating whether it was a naturally occurring earthquake or whether mining activity at El Teniente caused the tremor. Chilean prosecutors also launched a criminal investigation to determine whether any safety standards were violated.

El Teniente, located in the Andes mountains in central Chile, is the world's largest underground copper mine and is owned by Chilean state company Codelco.

Shortly after Thursday's collapse, Codelco halted operations in the affected section of the mine and evacuated 3,000 people from the broader site to safe areas.

The company canceled a presentation of its first-half financial results, set for Friday morning, due to the rescue efforts.

Chile, the world's biggest copper producer, lies in the seismically active "Ring of Fire" that surrounds the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

In 2010, Chile's government rescued 33 miners trapped in a copper mine in the country's north for two months in a dramatic operation that made global headlines and was later depicted in a Hollywood movie.

## **Israeli minister prays at flashpoint holy site as officials say 33 aid-seekers killed in Gaza**

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — A far-right Israeli minister visited and prayed at Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site on Sunday, triggering regional condemnation and fears that the provocative move could further escalate tensions. The visit came as hospitals in Gaza said 33 more Palestinians seeking food aid were killed by Israeli fire.

With Israel facing global criticism over famine-like conditions in the besieged strip, Itamar Ben-Gvir's visit



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to the hillside compound threatened to further set back efforts by international mediators to halt Israel's nearly two-year military offensive in Gaza.

The area, which Jews call the Temple Mount, is the holiest site in Judaism and was home to the ancient biblical temples. Muslims call the site the Noble Sanctuary. Today it is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam.

Visits to the site by Israeli officials are considered a provocation across the Muslim world and openly praying violates a longstanding status quo. Jews have been allowed to tour it but are barred from praying, with Israeli police and troops providing security. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said after Ben-Gvir's visit that Israel would not change the norms governing the site.

Ben-Gvir visited following Hamas' release of videos showing two emaciated Israeli hostages. The videos caused an uproar in Israel and raised pressure on the government to reach a deal to bring home the remaining 50 hostages who were captured on Oct. 7, 2023, in the Hamas-led attack that triggered the war.

Ben-Gvir called for Israel to annex the Gaza Strip and encourage Palestinians to leave, reviving rhetoric that has complicated negotiations to end the war. He raged against a video that Hamas released Saturday of 24-year-old hostage Evyatar David showing him emaciated in a dimly lit Gaza tunnel, and called it an attempt to pressure Israel.

Ben-Gvir's previous visits to the site have prompted threats from Palestinian militant groups. Clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinian demonstrators in and around the site fueled an 11-day war with Hamas in 2021.

Sunday's visit was swiftly condemned as an incitement by Palestinian leaders as well as Jordan, the Al-Aqsa Mosque's custodian, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Houthi rebels in Yemen said they fired three drones at Israel; Israel's military said a "suspicious aerial target launched from Yemen" was intercepted.

Videos of hungry and suffering Israeli hostages

The videos — released by Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the second-largest militant group in Gaza — triggered outrage across the Israeli political spectrum after the hostages, speaking under duress, described grim conditions and an urgent lack of food. Tens of thousands rallied in Tel Aviv on Saturday, calling on Israel and the United States to urgently pursue the hostages' release after suspending ceasefire talks.

Israel's mission to the U.N. said it requested an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council on the hostages, which will take place Tuesday.

"They do not want a deal," Netanyahu said of Hamas. "They want to break us using these videos of horror."

His office said it spoke with the Red Cross to seek help in providing the hostages with food and medical care. The International Committee of the Red Cross said it was "appalled by the harrowing videos" and called for access to the hostages.

Hamas' military wing said it was ready to respond positively to Red Cross requests to deliver food to hostages, if humanitarian corridors are opened in a "regular and permanent manner" in Gaza.

Right-wing politicians who oppose deals with Hamas said the videos reinforced their conviction that Hamas must be obliterated.

Deadly chaos around food distribution points

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said a staff member was killed when Israeli forces shelled its office. Israel's military said it was reviewing the claim. The Red Cross called it an "outrage" that so many first responders have been killed in the war.

Hospital officials said Israeli forces killed at least 33 Palestinians seeking food Sunday, and witnesses described facing gunfire as hungry crowds surged toward aid sites.

Desperation has gripped the Palestinian territory of more than 2 million, which experts warn faces "a worst-case scenario of famine" because of Israel's blockade. No aid entered Gaza between March 2 and May 19, and aid has been limited since then.

Witness Yousef Abed described coming under indiscriminate fire and seeing at least three people bleeding on the ground.

"I couldn't stop and help them because of the bullets," he said.

Two hospitals in southern and central Gaza reported receiving bodies from routes leading to the Israeli-

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backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation aid sites, including 11 killed in the Teina area while trying to reach a distribution point in Khan Younis.

Three Palestinian eyewitnesses, including one traveling through Teina, told The Associated Press they saw soldiers open fire on the routes, which are in military zones. Israel's military said it was not aware of casualties as a result of its gunfire near aid sites. GHF's media office said there was no gunfire "near or at our sites."

The United Nations says 859 people were killed near GHF sites from May 27 to July 31 and hundreds of others have been killed along the routes of U.N.-led food convoys.

GHF says its armed contractors have only used pepper spray or fired warning shots to prevent deadly crowding. Israel's military has said it only fires warning shots. Both claim the death tolls have been exaggerated.

More deaths from hunger

Gaza's Health Ministry said six Palestinian adults died of malnutrition-related causes over the past 24 hours, bringing the death toll among adults to 82 over the five weeks that such deaths have been counted. Ninety-three children have died of malnutrition-related causes since the war began, the ministry said.

Malnutrition-related deaths are not included in the ministry's war casualty count.

Israel has taken steps in the past week to increase the flow of food into Gaza, saying 1,200 aid trucks have entered while hundreds of pallets have been airdropped, but U.N. and relief groups say conditions have not improved. The U.N. has said 500 to 600 trucks a day are needed.

About 1,200 people were killed in the 2023 attack that sparked the war and another 251 were abducted. Israel's retaliatory military offensive has killed more than 60,800 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry.

The ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants in its count, is staffed by medical professionals. The U.N. and other independent experts view its figures as the most reliable casualty count. Israel has disputed the figures but hasn't provided its own.

## **The UN says 68 African migrants were killed when a boat capsized off Yemen**

CAIRO (AP) — A boat capsized Sunday in waters off Yemen's coast leaving 68 African migrants dead and 74 others missing, the U.N.'s migration agency said.

The tragedy was the latest in a series of shipwrecks off Yemen that have killed hundreds of African migrants fleeing conflict and poverty in hopes of reaching the wealthy Gulf Arab countries.

The vessel, with 154 Ethiopian migrants on board, sank in the Gulf of Aden off the southern Yemeni province of Abyan early Sunday, Abdusattor Esoev, head of the International Organization for Migration in Yemen told The Associated Press.

He said the bodies of 54 migrants washed ashore in the district of Khanfar, and 14 others were found dead and taken to a hospital morgue in Zinjibar, the provincial capital of Abyan on Yemen's southern coast.

Only 12 migrants survived the shipwreck, and the rest were missing and presumed dead, Esoev said.

In a statement, the Abyan security directorate described a massive search-and-rescue operation given the large number of dead and missing migrants. It said many dead bodies were found scattered across a wide area of the shore.

Despite more than a decade of civil war, Yemen is a major route for migrants from East Africa and the Horn of Africa trying to reach the Gulf Arab countries for work. Migrants are taken by smugglers on often dangerous, overcrowded boats across the Red Sea or Gulf of Aden.

Hundreds of migrants have died or gone missing in shipwrecks off Yemen in recent months, including in March when two migrants died and 186 others were missing after four boats capsized off Yemen and Djibouti, according to the IOM.

More than 60,000 migrants arrived in Yemen in 2024, down from 97,200 in 2023, probably because of

greater patrolling of the waters, according to an IOM report in March.

## Israel minister who led prayers at a controversial holy site has a record of provocative actions

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Israel's far-right national security minister led prayers on Sunday at Jerusalem's most sensitive holy site, drawing international condemnation and escalating tensions as Israel faces strong criticism over the war in Gaza.

Itamar Ben-Gvir has frequently visited the contested Jerusalem hilltop compound during the war in Gaza. Jews revere the site as the Temple Mount, where the biblical temples once stood. It is the holiest site in Judaism. Today, it is home to the Al Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam. Tensions at the compound have frequently spilled over into violence over the years.

It was the latest act of defiance by the 49-year-old ultranationalist settler leader who transformed himself over the decades from an outlaw and provocateur into one of Israel's most influential politicians.

Here is a closer look at Ben-Gvir:

Why was the visit considered a provocation?

Since Israel captured the site in 1967, Jews have been allowed to visit but not pray there. Palestinians consider the mosque a national symbol and view visits by Jewish leaders as provocative and as a potential precursor to Israel seizing control over the compound. Most rabbis forbid Jews from praying on the site, but there has been a growing movement in recent years of Jews who support worship there. Ben-Gvir has long called for greater Jewish access to the holy site.

Ben-Gvir was visiting to mark the Jewish holiday of Tisha B'Av, a day of mourning and repentance when Jews reflect on the destruction of the First and Second Temples, key events in Jewish history.

Visits like Ben-Gvir's are legal. Israeli media said the visit was the first time that a sitting minister actively and vocally led prayers. Ben-Gvir also called for Israel to conquer and declare sovereignty over all of the Gaza Strip and encourage "voluntary" migration from Gaza in order to end the war and bring the hostages back. Palestinians say the migration plan is a disguise for forced expulsions.

In response to Ben-Gvir's visit, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the status quo at the site had not changed and would not change to allow Jewish prayer.

Run-ins with the law

Ben-Gvir has been convicted eight times for offenses that include racism and supporting a terrorist organization. The army banned him from compulsory military service when he was a teen, deeming his views too extreme.

Ben-Gvir gained notoriety in his youth as a follower of the late radical rabbi Meir Kahane. He first became a national figure when he broke a hood ornament off then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's car in 1995.

"We got to his car, and we'll get to him too," he said, just weeks before Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish extremist opposed to his peace efforts with the Palestinians.

Two years later, Ben-Gvir took responsibility for orchestrating a campaign of protests, including death threats, that forced Irish singer Sinéad O'Connor to cancel a concert for peace in Jerusalem.

Moving to the mainstream

The political rise of Ben-Gvir was the culmination of years of efforts by the media-savvy lawmaker to gain legitimacy. But it also reflected a rightward shift in the Israeli electorate that brought his religious, ultranationalist ideology into the mainstream and diminished hopes for Palestinian independence.

Ben-Gvir is trained as a lawyer and gained recognition as a successful defense attorney for extremist Jews accused of violence against Palestinians.

With a quick wit and cheerful demeanor, the outspoken Ben-Gvir also became a popular fixture in the media, paving his way to enter politics. He was first elected to parliament in 2021.

Ben-Gvir has called for deporting his political opponents. In an episode in 2022, he brandished a pistol and encouraged police to open fire on Palestinian stone-throwers in a tense Jerusalem neighborhood. In his Cabinet post, Ben-Gvir oversaw the country's police force. He used his influence to encourage Netan-

yahu to press ahead with the war in Gaza and recently boasted that he had blocked past efforts to reach a ceasefire.

As national security minister, he has encouraged police to take a tough line against anti-government protesters.

Controversial minister

Ben-Gvir secured his Cabinet post after 2022 elections that put Netanyahu and his far-right partners, including Ben-Gvir's Jewish Power party, into power.

"Over the last year I've been on a mission to save Israel," Ben-Gvir told reporters before that election. "Millions of citizens are waiting for a real right-wing government. The time has come to give them one."

Ben-Gvir has been a magnet of controversy throughout his tenure — encouraging the mass distribution of handguns to Jewish citizens, backing Netanyahu's contentious attempt to overhaul the country's legal system and frequently lashing out at U.S. leaders for perceived slights against Israel.

Resignation and return to Netanyahu's cabinet

Ben-Gvir temporarily resigned from Prime Minister Netanyahu's cabinet earlier this year to express his disapproval of the Gaza ceasefire deal.

The ceasefire ran from Jan. 19 to March 1. Hamas released 25 Israeli hostages and the bodies of eight others in return for nearly 1,800 Palestinian prisoners, including senior militants serving life sentences for deadly attacks. Israeli forces pulled back to a buffer zone, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians returned to what remained of their homes, and there was a surge of humanitarian aid.

Ben-Gvir's resignation did not stop the ceasefire, but it did weaken Netanyahu's governing coalition. Ben-Gvir rejoined the cabinet when Israel ended the ceasefire and returned to active combat in Gaza in March 2025.

Last week, the Netherlands banned Ben-Gvir and far-right Finance Minister Betzalel Smotrich from entering the country. Britain, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Norway imposed financial sanctions on the two men last month.

## **Men charged in Tennessee case involving 4 dead family members of abandoned infant**

TIPTONVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Authorities searching for a man wanted in the murders of the parents, grandmother and uncle of an infant found alone and alive in Tennessee have charged two other men in connection with the killings.

The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation charged Tanaka Brown, 29, and Giovonte Thomas, 29, with accessory after the fact to first-degree murder. Investigators allege both men "assisted" 28-year-old Austin Robert Drummond in the murders.

Authorities have left many questions unanswered, including how the men allegedly helped Drummond, the manner in which the relatives were killed and how the baby ended up in a car seat in the Tigrett area, roughly 40 miles (64.37 kilometers) from the bodies.

Law enforcement officers were still searching for Drummond.

"He should be considered armed and dangerous," the bureau said in a Saturday news release announcing charges against Thomas. Brown, who also faces one count of tampering with evidence, was arrested a day earlier.

Thomas was in custody at the Madison County Jail on an unrelated charge and was set to be transferred to the Lake County Jail to be arraigned on the new charges, authorities said.

Brown was booked into Lake County Jail, according to authorities. Telephone numbers for Thomas and Brown could not be located Sunday. Email messages seeking comment were sent to Brown.

On Friday, authorities said they found the car they believe Drummond had been driving. It was located in Jackson, Tennessee, about 70 miles (113 kilometers) from where the bodies were discovered and some 40 miles from where the baby was left.



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Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Director David Rausch said authorities believe the family murders were a targeted attack by Drummond, who had a relationship with the victims. The baby is safe and being cared for, authorities have said.

Officials obtained warrants for Drummond that charge him with four counts of first-degree murder, one count of aggravated kidnapping and weapons offenses. His criminal history includes prison time for robbing a convenience store and threatening to go after jurors. He was also charged with attempted murder while behind bars.

No listed for number for Drummond could be found. An attorney who represented him as a teenager has not returned messages from The Associated Press.

Authorities have identified the four people found dead in Tiptonville as James M. Wilson, 21; Adrianna Williams, 20; Courtney Rose, 38; and Braydon Williams, 15.

Wilson and Adrianna Williams were the parents of the infant who was found abandoned. Rose was Adrianna and Braydon Williams' mother.

## What to know about the earthquake that shook the New York area Saturday night

A relatively mild, 3.0 magnitude earthquake shook the New York metropolitan area Saturday night. Here's what to know.

What happened?

The earthquake hit in the New Jersey suburb of Hasbrouck Heights at about 10:18 p.m. Eastern time at a depth of about 6.2 miles (10 kilometers). It was felt fairly widely in northern parts of the state, southern New York and even in southern Connecticut.

There were no initial reports of serious injuries or significant damage in New Jersey or across the Hudson River in New York City. City officials said that as of late Sunday morning they had not been called to respond to any building-related issues. The Big Apple has more than 1 million buildings.

Many posts on social media reported the ground rumbling, and the U.S. Geological Survey reported more than 10,000 responses to its 'Did You Feel It?' website.

Though people in the United States might associate earthquakes more often with the West Coast, scientists say these types of incidents on the East Coast are not unlikely.

How frequent are earthquakes in the New York area?

The area feels an earthquake about once every couple of years.

"The northeast part of the United States does not see large earthquakes very often," said Jessica Turner, a geophysicist with the National Earthquake Information Center, which is a part of the USGS.

Since 1950, only 43 other quakes of this magnitude and larger have occurred within 155 miles (250 kilometers) of Saturday's event, according to the USGS.

A much larger, 4.8-magnitude quake that struck in Tewksbury, New Jersey, a little farther west of the city, in April 2024 was felt as far away as Boston and Baltimore. Some flights were diverted or delayed after that quake, and Amtrak slowed trains throughout the busy Northeast corridor.

A smaller, 1.7 magnitude earthquake that hit the Astoria section of Queens, New York, in January 2024 stirred residents.

The region sees a more damaging one only a couple times a century, if that. New York was damaged in 1737 and 1884 by earthquakes, according to USGS data.

How do East Coast earthquakes compare with West Coast ones?

The difference between East Coast and West Coast quakes lies in the "mechanism," said seismologist Lucy Jones.

California is at the edge of the San Andreas fault system, which has two tectonic plates: the Pacific Ocean plate and the North American plate. Two plates move and push to build up stress, meaning earthquakes happen relatively frequently.

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New York falls in the middle of a plate, far from the nearest boundaries in the center of the Atlantic Ocean and in the Caribbean Sea — resulting in residual stresses and making it difficult to predict where earthquakes will occur.

The area is also home to the well-known Ramapo Fault line. Geologists have not seen evidence that would suggest it has had a large earthquake in some time, but there have been smaller ones. Saturday's quake cannot necessarily be associated with this fault, experts say.

The same size earthquake is felt over a much larger area in New York than it would be in California.

"The rocks on the East Coast are particularly cold and hard and therefore, do a better job of transmitting the energy," said Jones. In California, the various faults are more akin to a broken bell, which doesn't transmit energy as well.

Does this signal more to come?

Every earthquake makes another one more likely, but within a range, scientists say.

"At just 3.0, the chances are there will not be another felt event," Jones said, estimating about a 50-50 chance there will be no activity that can be recorded. "Most likely is an unfelt, magnitude 1 or 2 aftershock."

## "The Fantastic Four: First Steps" holds its lead atop the box office

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Marvel's first family stumbled in theaters in its second weekend, but still held on to the top spot at the box office.

"The Fantastic Four: First Steps" earned \$40 million from 4,125 North American theaters, a 66% drop from a healthy \$117.6 million debut. The film was accompanied by comedies "The Bad Guys 2" and "The Naked Gun" in the top three box office rankings.

The superhero movie dipped significantly more than Marvel's previous film, "Thunderbolts," which took a 55% dive in its second weekend.

"First Steps" is the last major blockbuster of the summer. It added nearly \$40 million internationally in its second weekend, bringing the film's global total to \$369 million. The movie's box office drop off was surprising given its strong reviews, said Paul Dergarabedian, senior media analyst for the data firm Comscore.

Though the movie's debut weekend may have given box office results a strong push toward the \$4 billion summer benchmark, August is off to a slow start, he said.

"It's a tough lift, but we might be able to get there. It really means that all the films are gonna have to stand on their own," Dergarabedian said. "It's gonna be about getting great reviews, having that staying power, that longevity in the marketplace."

Newcomer comedy "The Bad Guys 2" earned second place at the box office this weekend, with \$22 million from 3,852 North American theaters. That was on par with projections and also in line with the first movie in the series, which brought in \$23 million in 2022. Paramount's slapstick comedy, "The Naked Gun," also in its debut weekend, snagged the third box office spot, earning \$17 million from 3,344 locations.

Jim Orr, president of domestic distribution for Universal Pictures, said the solid debut for "The Bad Guys 2," coupled with strong audience reaction scores, "should point to a very long, very successful run through not only the rest of the summer, but really, I think into the fall."

James Gunn's "Superman," which opened four weekends ago and already crossed \$550 million globally, earned \$13.8 million domestically this weekend, taking the fourth spot. "Jurassic World Rebirth" followed with \$8.7 million.

The horror movie "Together" had a strong debut weekend, coming in at sixth place and earning \$6.8 million domestically, proof that August is a month for edgier and off-beat films, Dergarabedian said.

"That's what this month is about. It's not just about box office," Dergarabedian said. "It's also about providing really interesting, rewarding movie-going experiences for audiences."

Dergarabedian said he expects highly-anticipated movies hitting theaters in the next few weeks — including "Freakier Friday," and Zach Cregger's horror movie "Weapons" — to give August a needed boost.

The box office is currently up 9.5% from last year.

Top 10 movies by domestic box office

With final domestic figures being released Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore:

1. "The Fantastic Four: First Steps," \$40 million.
2. "The Bad Guys 2," \$22.2 million.
3. "The Naked Gun," \$17 million.
4. "Superman," \$13.8 million.
5. "Jurassic World Rebirth," \$8.7 million.
6. "Together," \$6.8 million.
7. "F1: The Movie," \$4.1 million.
8. "I Know What You Did Last Summer," \$2.7 million.
9. "Smurfs," \$1.8 million.
10. "How to Train Your Dragon," \$1.4 million.

## **Brutal arrest of Black student in Florida shows benefits of recording police from new vantage point**

A video that captured the brutal arrest of a Black college student pulled from his car and beaten by officers in Florida has led to an investigation and calls for motorists to consider protecting themselves by placing a camera inside their vehicles.

William McNeil Jr. captured his February traffic stop on his cellphone camera, which was mounted above his dashboard. It offered a unique view, providing the only clear footage of the violence by officers, including punches to his head that can't clearly be seen in officer body camera footage released by the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

Since McNeil had the foresight to record the encounter from inside the vehicle, "we got to see firsthand and hear firsthand and put it all in context what driving while Black is in America," said civil rights attorney Ben Crump, one of several lawyers advising McNeil.

"All the young people should be recording these interactions with law enforcement," Crump said. Because what it tells us, just like with George Floyd, if we don't record the video, we can see what they put in the police report with George Floyd before they realized the video existed."

McNeil was pulled over that day because officers said his headlights should have been on due to bad weather, his lawyers said. His camera shows him asking the officers what he did wrong. Seconds later, an officer smashes his window, strikes him as he sat in the driver's seat and then pulls him from the car and punches him in the head. After being knocked to the ground, McNeil was punched six more times in his right thigh, a police report states.

The incident reports don't describe the officer punching McNeil in the head. The officer, who pulled McNeil over and then struck him, described the force this way in his report: "Physical force was applied to the suspect and he was taken to the ground."

But after McNeil posted his video online last month and it went viral, the sheriff's office launched an internal investigation, which is ongoing. A sheriff's office spokesperson declined to comment about the case this week, citing pending litigation, though no lawsuit has been filed over the arrest.

McNeil said the ordeal left him traumatized, with a brain injury, a broken tooth and several stitches in his lip. His attorneys accused the sheriff's office of trying to cover up what really happened.

"On Feb. 19, 2025, Americans saw what America is," said another of McNeil's lawyers, Harry Daniels. "We saw injustice. You saw abuse of police power. But most importantly we saw a young man that had a temperament to control himself in the face of brutality."

The traffic stop, he said, was not only racially motivated but "it was unlawful, and everything that stemmed from that stop was unlawful."

McNeil is hardly the first Black motorist to record video during a traffic stop that turned violent — Philando Castile's girlfriend livestreamed the bloody aftermath of his death during a 2016 traffic stop near Minneapolis. But McNeil's arrest serves as a reminder of how cellphone video can show a different version

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of events than what is described in police reports, his lawyers said.

Christopher Mercado, who retired as a lieutenant from the New York Police Department, agreed with McNeil's legal team's suggestion that drivers should record their police interactions and that a camera mounted inside a driver's car could offer a unique point of view.

"Use technology to your advantage," said Mercado, an adjunct assistant professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York. "There's nothing nefarious about it. It's actually a smart thing in my opinion."

Rod Brunson, chairman of the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Maryland, said he thinks it's a good idea for citizens to film encounters with police — as long as doing so doesn't make the situation worse.

"I think that's a form of protection — it's safeguarding them against false claims of criminal behavior or interfering with officers, etc.," Brunson said.

Although the sheriff's office declined to speak to The Associated Press this week, Sheriff T.K. Waters has spoken publicly about McNeil's arrest since video of the encounter went viral. He pushed back against some of the allegations made by McNeil's lawyers, noting that McNeil was told more than a half-dozen times to exit the vehicle.

At a news conference last month, Waters also highlighted images of a knife in McNeil's car. The officer who punched him claimed in his police report that McNeil reached toward the floor of the car, where deputies later found the knife.

Crump, though, said McNeil's video shows that he "never reaches for anything," and a second officer wrote in his report that McNeil kept his hands up as the other officer smashed the car window.

A camera inside a motorist's vehicle could make up for some shortcomings of police bodycams, which can have a narrow field of view that becomes more limited the closer an officer gets to the person being filmed, Mercado said.

However, after the police murder of Floyd, some states and cities debated how and when citizens should be able to capture video of police. The Constitution guarantees the right to record police in public, but a point of contention in some states has been whether a civilian's recording might interfere with the ability of officers to do their job. In Louisiana, for example, a new law makes it a crime to approach within 25 feet (7.6 meters) of a police officer in certain situations.

Waters acknowledged those limitations at a news conference last year, as he narrated video of a wild brawl between officers and a fan in the stands at EverBank Stadium during a football game last year between the universities of Georgia and Florida.

The sheriff showed the officers' bodycam videos during the start of the confrontation near the top of the stadium. But when the officers subdued the suspect and were pressing against him, the bodycam footage didn't capture much, so the sheriff switched to stadium security video shot from a longer distance away.

In McNeil's case, the bodycam video didn't clearly capture the punches thrown. If it had, the case would have been investigated right away, the sheriff said.

For the past 20 years, Brunson has been interviewing young Black men in several U.S. cities about their encounters with law enforcement. When he first began submitting research papers for academic review, many readers didn't believe the men's stories of being brutalized by officers.

"People who live in a civil society don't expect to be treated this way by the police. For them, their police interactions are mostly pleasant, mostly cordial," Brunson said.

"So it's hard for people who don't have a tenuous relationship with the police to fathom that something like this happens," he said. "And that's where video does play a big part because people can't deny what they see."



## At this summer camp run by grandmas, kids learn cooking skills and life advice

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The smell of frying garlic and ginger is inescapable as it wafts through the room, while a row of fidgety kids watches an older woman in a blue plaid apron cooking in front of them.

"When I was growing up my mom used to make this a lot," she says, showing a chicken stir fry recipe.

At this "Intergenerational Summer Camp" in a Southern California suburb, the grandmas are in charge. Every week, they taught a group of 8-to-14-year-olds how to cook a new dish and do a handicraft such as sewing, embroidering, clay jewelry and card marking.

"Isolation and loneliness is something that seniors are challenged with, and they love having younger people around them," said Zainab Hussain, a program manager at Olive Community Services, a nonprofit aimed at bringing older adults together that hosted the camp.

The camp was held at a community center in Fullerton, a city in Orange County that's home to a large Arab population, and many of the campers and grandmas come from those communities. In between activities, the small room bustled with energy as the girls chatted and munched on snacks. Some of the volunteer grandmas milled around and watched, content to just be around the youngsters.

In July, during the final week of camp, Janna Moten and her friends were learning how to use a sewing machine and make pouches.

"Slowly, slowly," one grandma chided as Moten stomped on the machine's pedal, causing the needle to rapidly jerk up and down.

She pressed her foot down again, gingerly, and managed to sew a straight line.

"Honestly, I'm just here for the food," the 9 year old quipped. Still, she beamed as she showed the two pieces of fabric she sewed together and turned inside out, forming a rectangular pocket.

Moten said she's been practicing hand-stitching at home after learning embroidery a previous week.

"Sewing's pretty easy, it's just hard keeping the lines straight," she said. She added that her own grandma was stricter than the ones at summer camp.

Haqiqah Abdul Rahim, the instructor for sewing, said many kids don't learn these skills at school anymore through home economics classes, so they're "filling in a gap."

She stood in front of the room at the start of the activity, holding up various tools and explaining what they were: seam roller, thread snipper, rotary fabric cutter.

Rahim also doesn't get to spend a lot of time with her grandchildren because they don't live close.

"It is heartwarming to be able to interact with those who love being around you," Rahim said.

The kids have learned about kitchen safety and how to cook with a grandma's touch — such as mixing spices with water before adding them to a dish so they don't burn, or using fresh turmeric.

The summer camp was held in partnership with the Golden Connections Club, started by high school student Leena Albinali last year to foster interactions between teens and elders.

The 14-year-old lives with her grandma but realized other students didn't have the same opportunity to spend as much time with their grandparents. She also learned about ageism and other challenges faced by senior adults in one of her classes.

At monthly lunches, they invite seniors to the school and discuss topics where both groups can learn from each other, Albinali said.

"They treat us like we're their grandchildren," she said. The teens share what they know about artificial intelligence and its impact on their lives, and the elders share life stories and advice.

One of the most important things they've shared with her is to live in the moment, something that's taken on new meaning for her.

"The people we have right now, they're not going to be with us forever," she said.

## Americans finish strong with a relay world record in the swim worlds to top medal tables

SINGAPORE (AP) — The United States, which had a frustrating swim world championships, ended on a high note Sunday with a world record in the women's 4x100 medley relay in the last event of the eight-day championships.

The Americans swam a time of 3 minutes, 49.34 seconds, breaking their own old mark of 3:49.63 set a year ago in the Paris Olympics.

The United States finished with nine gold medals and 29 overall, ahead of Australia with eight gold and 20 overall. France and Canada were next in the gold-medal count with four gold medals. The 18-year-old Canadian star Summer McIntosh won all four golds.

The Americans battled a case of "acute gastroenteritis" picked up at a training camp in Thailand. The malady clearly affected the team's up-and-down performances in Singapore.

"This is the best way to end the meet," Gretchen Walsh said. "And I feel like we have such a good opportunity when you have this stacked group of women closing it out on a relay like this.

"We're going to leave Singapore with a smile on our faces," she added.

Regan Smith, Kate Douglass and Walsh swam the first three legs with Torri Huske taking the anchor.

The Americans had only five gold medals through six days, but won four in the last two as team health clearly improved.

Finke defends his team

American Bobby Finke, the Paris Olympic champion at 1,500 meters, took a bronze in that event on Sunday. But he also had a message for critics back home.

They included former American swimmers Michael Phelps and Ryan Lochte in a critical social media post.

Three-time Olympic gold-medalist Rowdy Gaines called for changes at USA Swimming, in an interview with The Associated Press. The governing body has been without a CEO for a year.

"I'm proud of the USA team and what we've been able to accomplish despite all the people back at home saying whatever they want to say," Finke said. "But you know, I'm proud of these boys. If someone's angry, my DMs are open."

"Do whatever you want," he added. "But you know, I'm proud of the team and what we've been able to do here. It's a big stepping point for the 2028 LA Olympics."

Sunday's closing day featured eight finals and victories for seven different teams.

But there were two clear stars throughout the week.

Leon Marchand of France left the worlds on Sunday with what he came for – two individual gold medals.

McIntosh came away with four individual golds – one shy of her quest to win five. Still, she is only the second woman at a world championships to win four individual golds.

Her only blip was finishing third to American Katie Ledecky in the 800 freestyle on Saturday.

And 12-year-old Chinese Yu Zidi, in an astounding performance, finished fourth in all three of her individual races. She, however, did pick up a bronze medal in a relay, where she swam in the prelims but not in the final. She swam the 200 fly, and both IM races.

Sunday's results

Kliment Kolesnikov of the Neutral Athletes won the men's 50 backstroke in 23.68. Kolesnikov holds the world record (23.55). Pieter Coetzee of South Africa and Pavel Samusenko of the Neutral Athletes tied for silver (24.17).

Ruta Meilutyte of Lithuania, the world record holder, claimed the 50 breaststroke (29.55) with silver for Tang Qianting of China (30.03) and bronze to Benedetta Pilato of Italy (30.14).

Meg Harris of Australia took the women's 50 free (24.02). Harris was also the silver medalist in the same event in the Paris Olympics. China claimed the next two places with Wu Qingfeng (24.26) taking silver and bronze for Cheng Yujie (24.28).

Ahmed Jaouadi of Tunisia, winner of the 800 free, added the 1,500 title on Sunday (14:34.41) with silver for Sven Schwarz of Germany (14:35.69) and bronze for American Finke (14:36.60).

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Marchand won the 400 IM but didn't break his own world record. Marchand won in 4:04.73, just off the world mark he set two years ago in Fukuoka, Japan (4:02.50). Tomoyuki Matsushita of Japan took silver (4:08.32) with bronze for Ilia Borodin of the Neutral Athletes (4:09.16).

Marchand, earlier in the championships, shattered the 200 IM mark in 1:52.69. The old mark was 1:54.00 set 14 years ago by Lochte.

McIntosh picked up her fourth gold medal, winning the 400 IM in 4:25.78. It was just off her world record of 4:23.65 set in June. Jenna Forrester of Australia and Mio Narita of Japan tied for silver (4:33.26).

Although she won gold, McIntosh came up just short earlier in the meet in an attempt to break the 200-meter butterfly mark, perhaps the record she had been most intent on claiming.

McIntosh also won gold in the 200 IM and the 400 freestyle. And she took bronze Saturday in the 800 freestyle, which went to Ledecy.

The Neutral Athletes won the men's 4x100 medley relay (3:26.93), followed by France (3:27.96) and the United States (3:28.62). It was the second gold of the night for the Neutral Athletes.

## 'They roll right over': Many Democrats call their party weak and ineffective, AP-NORC poll finds

WASHINGTON (AP) — Many Democrats see their political party as "weak" or "ineffective," according to a poll that finds considerable pessimism within Democratic ranks. Republicans are more complimentary of their party, although a small but significant share describe the GOP as "greedy" or say it is generally "bad."

The poll conducted by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research in July reveals warning signs for both major U.S. parties as the political focus shifts to elections in New Jersey and Virginia this fall and the midterm contests next year.

Respondents were asked to share the first word or phrase that came to mind when they thought of the Republican and Democratic parties. Answers were then sorted into broad categories, including negative and positive attributes. Overall, U.S. adults held a dim view of both parties, with about 4 in 10 using negative attributes, including words such as "dishonest" or "stupid."

But nearly nine months after Republican Donald Trump won a second presidential term, Democrats appear to be harboring more resentment about the state of their party than do Republicans. Democrats were likelier to describe their own party negatively than Republicans. Republicans were about twice as likely to describe their own party positively.

"They're spineless," Cathia Krehbiel, a 48-year-old Democrat from Indianola, Iowa, said of her party.

She believes the party's response to the Trump administration has been "scattershot."

"I just feel like there's so much recently that's just going abhorrently wrong," Krehbiel said. "And they speak up a little bit and they roll right over."

Democrats speak out against their own party

Overall, roughly one-third of Democrats described their party negatively in the open-ended question.

About 15% described it using words like "weak," or "apathetic," while an additional 10% believe it is broadly "ineffective" or "disorganized."

Only about 2 in 10 Democrats described their party positively, with roughly 1 in 10 saying it is "empathetic," or "inclusive." An additional 1 in 10 used more general positive descriptors.

It is unclear what impact the Democrats' angst may have on upcoming elections or the political debate in Washington, but no political organization wants to be plagued by internal divisions.

Still, the Democrats' frustration appears to reflect their concern that party leaders are not doing enough to stop Trump's GOP, which controls Washington.

There is little sign that such voters would abandon their party in favor of Trump's allies in upcoming elections, and the vast majority of Democrats described the GOP negatively. But disaffected Democrats might decide not to vote at all. That could undermine their party's push to reclaim at least one chamber of Congress in 2026.

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Jim Williams, a 78-year-old retiree from Harper Woods, Michigan said he typically supports Democrats, but he is "disappointed" with the party and its murky message. He feels much worse about the Republican Party, which he said "has lost it" under Trump's leadership.

"All he does is bully and call names. They've got no morals, no ethics. And the more they back him, the less I like them," the self-described independent, said of Trump.

What do Republicans say about their party?

Republicans are about twice as likely as Democrats to describe their party positively, with many also using straightforward ideological descriptors like "conservative."

About 4 in 10 Republicans used positive attributes to characterize the GOP, making general mentions of words such as "patriotic" or "hardworking," or offering associations with the word "freedom."

Samuel Washington, 65, of Chicago, said he typically votes Republican. Washington praised Trump's leadership, even while acknowledging that the president's policies on trade and spending might be creating short-term economic hardship.

"There's a lot of pain, but the pain is the result of 12 years of misuse and misguided leadership from the Democratic Party," he said. "I'm feeling really good about Republicans and the direction that they're going."

But views were not uniformly good. About 2 in 10 Republicans said something negative about the party, including phrases such as "greedy," "for the rich" or "corrupt."

Republican Dick Grayson, an 83-year-old veteran from Trade, Tennessee, said he is "disappointed" by his party's fealty to Trump.

Among other things, he pointed to the price tag of Trump's tax-and-spend package, which will add nearly \$3.3 trillion to the nation's debt over the next decade, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

"I've always been a Republican, but I'm disillusioned about both parties," Grayson said.

How Americans view the parties overall

Among all Americans, the poll finds that the Republican Party is viewed slightly more negatively than the Democratic Party. The difference is not large: 43% used negative words to describe the Republicans, compared with 39% for the Democrats.

Much of the negativity is driven by the opposing party — and independents' distaste for both. Independents are much likelier to describe both parties with negative attributes rather than positive descriptors, though a significant share did not offer an opinion at all.

Curtis Musser, a 60-year-old unaffiliated voter from Beverly Hills, Florida, said both parties have shifted too far toward the extreme for his liking.

He said he is ready for a serious third party to emerge before the next presidential election, pointing to Elon Musk's new "America Party," which has been slow to launch.

"Maybe he would get us headed in the right direction," the retired schoolteacher said.

## **Pope Leo XIV tells 1 million Catholic youths that they are 'the sign a different world is possible'**

ROME (AP) — Pope Leo XIV on Sunday told more than a million Catholic youths at a closing Mass for a weeklong encounter with the next generation of faithful that they are "the sign that a different world is possible" where conflicts can be resolved with dialogue, not weapons.

In his closing blessing for the Jubilee of Youth, Leo remembered the young people of Gaza and Ukraine and other countries at war who could not join their celebration.

"We are closer than ever to young people who suffer the most serious evils, which are caused by other human beings," Leo said. "We are with the young people of Gaza. We are with the young people of Ukraine, with those of every land bloodied by war."

"My young brothers and sisters, you are the sign that a different world is possible. A world of fraternity and friendship, where conflicts are not resolved with weapons, but with dialogue."

The young people camped out in sprawling fields southeast of Rome overnight after attending a vigil



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service on Saturday, also presided by Leo who has been ferried from Vatican City by helicopter. The special Jubilee celebration is part of the Holy Year that is expected to draw 32 million people to the Vatican for the centuries-old pilgrimage to the seat of Catholicism.

The Vatican said more than 1 million young people were present, along with 7,000 priests and 450 bishops.

During the Sunday homily, Leo urged the participants to "spread your enthusiasm and the witness of your faith" when they return home to some 150 countries.

"Aspire to great things, to holiness, wherever you are," Leo urged the young faithful. "Do not settle for less. You will then see the light of the Gospel growing every day, in you and around you."

Leo reminded the crowd that their next encounter will be during World Youth Day, set for Aug. 3-8, 2027, in Seoul, South Korea.

The week has been a joyous gathering marked by bands of youths singing hymns as they move down cobblestoned streets, praying the Rosary in piazzas and standing for hours at the Circus Maximus to confess their sins to priests offering the sacrament in a dozen languages.

Leo also shared some tragic news on Saturday: two young people who had made the pilgrimage to Rome had died, one reportedly of cardiac arrest, while a third was hospitalized.

Rain overnight awakened the faithful but didn't dampen their spirits.

"At least we were a little covered, but we still got a bit wet. We lost our voices a little. It was cold, but we woke up to a beautiful sun and view," said Soemil Rios, 20, from Puerto Rico. "Despite the difficulties, it was very nice and very special to have been part of this historic moment."

Sister Giulia De Luca, from Rome, acknowledged that "waking up was a bit tough," but that she was looking forward to seeing the pope again.

"It will be very nice to conclude a very intense week together. Definitely a lot of fun, but also very challenging in many ways," she said.

## **'God understands us': Inside a Nigerian church where deaf people find faith and community**

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — It is like any other church in Nigeria's megacity of Lagos. A lectern faces rows of plastic chairs. A biblical quote is written on a beam above. There is a music section, with a set of drums. Sash-wearing church wardens move around to enforce order.

But it is also different. For hours, the only sounds are exclamations and thunderous bursts of drums, with their vibrations the cues for when to pray, kneel or respond to the preacher's calls for "Hallelujah."

This is a church for deaf people in Somolu, a mixed-income suburb, where about 50 to 60 people worship weekly.

Imoh Udoka, a father of two children, has attended the church for 36 years. He was 9 years old when he contracted meningitis, losing his hearing as well as access to his faith. Most churches in Nigeria do not have accommodation for deaf people.

Then Udoka, now a teacher of sign language, discovered the church via community outreach. "Here in this church, we have access to worship God in our sign language," he told The Associated Press.

'God also understands us'

Remi Akinrenmi is one of the pastors. Every Sunday, he mounts the pulpit with charismatic energy to preach in sign language. His big frame makes for a commanding presence.

On one Sunday, he preached about the sinister consequences of jealousy. On another, he preached the importance of faith. Attendees waved their hands above their heads in response to "Praise the Lord."

Most important for Akinrenmi is that members see the church as a community.

"There was no community for us before the deaf church started," he said. "Now, we see each other and say, 'Oh, you are deaf, too. I am also deaf.' And we are now together and have formed a community."

God understands every language, he said: "With sign language, God also understands us."

Disability advocates say that in the absence of inclusive churches and institutions, churches like this and a handful of affiliates in southern Nigeria are crucial, especially in African societies where the perception

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of people with disabilities is influenced by traditional beliefs. Some see a disability as a divine punishment. "An exclusive space like this church offers them an opportunity for a safe space to be able to connect and relate," said Treasures Uchegbu, founder of Speaking Fingers, a sign language advocacy group in Lagos. "They can say, 'I am not a deaf person just standing alone, I have other deaf people around.'"

How the church came to be

The church organizes evangelism outreach programs to other deaf communities in Lagos. It also runs a teaching unit for sign language, a vital tool for understanding the world better, according to Akinrenmi. Hearing children of church members also attend the classes to better relate to their parents and others, and some hearing students attend church services for immersion learning.

The church started in 1956 in colonial Nigeria as the Christian Mission for Deaf Africans. In today's Nigeria, an estimated 10 million people out of the population of 220 million are deaf or have difficulty hearing.

There is limited infrastructure in Nigeria for people with disabilities, and laws to improve their welfare and prevent discrimination are barely enforced. Efforts by advocates to push for more inclusive legislation have not materialized. They blame a lack of political will.

Oluwakemi Oluwatoke-Ogunjirin, a 49-year-old worker with the Lagos state government, was born deaf. She attended hearing churches with her family but always felt lost.

Depending solely on public infrastructure in other parts of life, she struggles to get by. But at the church, she said, she has found a community where she can feel safe and understood.

"The church goes beyond faith; we have people like ourselves that we can talk to as friends," Oluwatoke-Ogunjirin said.

With the church's help, she has improved her sign language and can communicate widely, breaking the isolation she grew up with.

"The sign language makes life very easy for us," she said. "It helps us communicate beyond the church."

## Fresh clashes break out in Syria as the interim government struggles to ease tensions

BEIRUT (AP) — New outbreaks of violence overnight into Sunday rocked Syria at two distinct flashpoints, straining a fragile ceasefire and calling into question the ability of the transitional government to exert its authority across the whole country.

In the north, government-affiliated fighters confronted Kurdish-led forces who control much of the region, while in the southern province of Sweida, they clashed with Druze armed groups.

The outbreaks come at a time when Syria's interim authorities are trying to maintain a tense ceasefire in Sweida province after clashes with Druze factions last month, and to implement an agreement with the U.S.-backed, Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces that would reintegrate large swaths of northeastern Syria with the rest of the country.

The Syrian government under interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa has been struggling to consolidate control since he led a surprise insurgency that ousted former President Bashar Assad in December, ending the Assad family's decades-long autocratic rule. Political opponents and ethnic and religious minorities have been suspicious of Sharaa's de facto Islamist rule and cooperation with affiliated fighters that come from militant groups.

State television said clashes between government forces and militias belonging to the Druze religious minority rocked the southern province of Sweida on Saturday after Druze factions attacked Syrian security forces, killing at least one member. The state-run Alikhbaria channel cited an anonymous security official who said the ceasefire has been broken. The Defense Ministry has not issued any formal statement.

Meanwhile, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, said in addition to the member of the security forces killed, one Druze was killed and at least nine others were wounded in the clashes that took place in the western part of Sweida province. The Observatory said the clashes took place at the strategic Tal al-Hadeed heights that overlook Daraa province next door.

Difficult conditions in Sweida

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State media says that aid convoys continue to enter Sweida city as a part of a tense truce after over a week of violent clashes in July between Druze militias and armed Bedouin clans backed by government forces. However, humanitarian conditions remain dire, and residents of Sweida have called for the road into the city to be fully opened, saying the aid that has come in is not enough.

The clashes that displaced tens of thousands of people came after months of tensions between Damascus and Sweida. The fighting led to a series of targeted sectarian attacks against the Druze minority, who are now skeptical of peaceful coexistence. Druze militias retaliated against Bedouin communities who largely lived in western areas of Sweida province, displacing many to neighboring Daraa.

Elsewhere, in the northern Aleppo province, government-affiliated fighters clashed with the SDF. The Defense Ministry said three civilians and four soldiers were wounded after the SDF launched a barrage of rockets near the city of Manbij "in an irresponsible way and for unknown reasons."

SDF spokesperson Farhad Shami on the other hand said the group was responding to shelling by "undisciplined factions" within government forces on Deir Haffar, an eastern city in the same province.

The eastern part of Aleppo province straddles areas controlled by the government and by the SDF. Though the two are slowly trying to implement a ceasefire and agreement that would integrate the areas under Damascus, tensions remain.

"The Ministry of Defense's attempts to distort facts and mislead public opinion do not contribute to security or stability," Shami said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

Israeli forces carry out raids bordering annexed Golan Heights

In Quneitra province, in the south, the Israeli military announced it conducted another ground operation in the area that borders the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights. It said its troops questioned several suspects they accuse of involvement in weapons trafficking in the village of Hader, and raided four areas where they found weapons being trafficked.

Since Assad's ouster, Israel has conducted numerous strikes and military operations in southern Syria, saying its forces are taking out militant groups that they suspect could harm Israelis and residents in the Golan Heights.

Damascus has been critical of Israel's military activity, and the two sides have been trying to reach a security arrangement through U.S.-mediated talks. Syria has repeatedly said it does not intend to take military action against Israel.

Those talks intensified after Israel backed the Druze in Sweida during the earlier clashes. Israel struck military personnel near the southern city and most notably launched an airstrike targeting the Defense Ministry headquarters in the heart of Damascus.

## **The Justice Department seeks voter and election information from at least 19 states, AP finds**

NEW YORK (AP) — The requests have come in letters, emails and phone calls. The specifics vary, but the target is consistent: The U.S. Department of Justice is ramping up an effort to get voter data and other election information from the states.

Over the past three months, the department's voting section has requested copies of voter registration lists from state election administrators in at least 15 states, according to an Associated Press tally. Of those, nine are Democrats, five are Republicans and one is a bipartisan commission.

In Colorado, the department demanded "all records" relating to the 2024 election and any records the state retained from the 2020 election.

Department lawyers have contacted officials in at least seven states to propose a meeting about forging an information-sharing agreement related to instances of voting or election fraud. The idea, they say in the emails, is for states to help the department enforce the law.

The unusually expansive outreach has raised alarm among some election officials because states have the constitutional authority to run elections and federal law protects the sharing of individual data with the government.

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It also signals the transformation of the Justice Department's involvement in elections under President Donald Trump. The department historically has focused on protecting access to the ballot box. Today, it is taking steps to crack down on voter fraud and noncitizen voting, both of which are rare but have been the subject of years of false claims from Trump and his allies.

The department's actions come alongside a broader effort by the administration to investigate past elections and influence the 2026 midterms. The Republican president has called for a special prosecutor to investigate the 2020 election that he lost to Democrat Joe Biden and continues to falsely claim he won. Trump also has pushed Texas Republicans to redraw their congressional maps to create more House seats favorable to the GOP.

The Justice Department does not typically "engage in fishing expeditions" to find laws that may potentially have been broken and has traditionally been independent from the president, said David Becker, a former department lawyer who leads the nonprofit Center for Election Innovation and Research.

"Now it seems to be operating differently," he said.

The department responded with an emailed "no comment" to a list of questions submitted by the AP seeking details about the communications with state officials.

Requests to states vary and some are specific

Election offices in Alaska, Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, Utah, and Wisconsin confirmed to the AP that they received letters from the voting section requesting their statewide voter registration lists. At least one other, Oklahoma, received the request by phone.

Many requests included basic questions about the procedures states use to comply with federal voting laws, such as how states identify and remove duplicate voter registrations or deceased or otherwise ineligible voters.

Certain questions were more state-specific and referenced data points or perceived inconsistencies from a recent survey from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, an AP review of several of the letters showed.

The Justice Department already has filed suit against the state election board in North Carolina alleging it failed to comply with a part of the federal Help America Vote Act that relates to voter registration records.

More inquiries are likely on the way

There are signs the department's outreach isn't done. It told the National Association of Secretaries of State that "all states would be contacted eventually," said Maria Benson, a NASS spokeswoman.

The organization has asked the department to join a virtual meeting of its elections committee to answer questions about the letters, Benson said. Some officials have raised concerns about how the voter data will be used and protected.

Election officials in at least four California counties — Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego and San Francisco — said the Justice Department sent them letters asking for voter roll records. The letters asked for the number of people removed from the rolls for being noncitizens and for their voting records, dates of birth and ID numbers.

Officials in Arizona, Connecticut, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Rhode Island and Wisconsin confirmed to the AP that they received an email from two department lawyers requesting a call about a potential "information-sharing agreement."

The goal, according to several copies of the emails reviewed by the AP, was for states to provide the government with information about instances of election fraud to help the Justice Department "enforce Federal election laws and protect the integrity of Federal elections." One of those sending the emails was a senior counsel in the criminal division.

The emails referred to Trump's March executive order on elections, part of which directs the attorney general to enter information-sharing agreements with state election officials to the "maximum extent possible."

Skeptical state election officials assess how to reply

Election officials in several states that received requests for their voter registration information have not



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responded. Some said they were reviewing the inquiries.

Officials in some other states provided public versions of voter registration lists to the department, with certain personal information such as Social Security numbers blacked out. Elsewhere, state officials answered procedural questions from the Justice Department but refused to provide the voter lists.

In Minnesota, the office of Secretary of State Steve Simon, a Democrat, said the federal agency is not legally entitled to the information.

In a July 25 letter to the Justice Department's voting section, Simon's general counsel, Justin Erickson, said the list "contains sensitive personal identifying information on several million individuals." He said the office had obligations under federal and state law to not disclose any information from the statewide list unless expressly required by law.

In a recent letter, Republican lawmakers in the state called on Simon to comply with the federal request as a way "to protect the voting rights of the citizens of Minnesota."

Maine's secretary of state, Democrat Shenna Bellows, said the administration's request overstepped the federal government's bounds and that the state will not fulfill it. She said doing so would violate voter privacy.

The department "doesn't get to know everything about you just because they want to," Bellows said.

Some Justice Department requests are questionable, lawyers say

There is nothing inherently wrong with the Justice Department requesting information on state procedures or the states providing it, said Justin Levitt, a former deputy assistant attorney general who teaches at Loyola Law School.

But the department's requests for voter registration data are more problematic, he said. That is because of the Privacy Act of 1974, which put strict guidelines on data collection by the federal government. The government is required to issue a notice in the Federal Register and notify appropriate congressional committees when it seeks personally identifiable information about individuals.

Becker said there is nothing in federal law that compels states to comply with requests for sensitive personal data about their residents. He added that while the outreach about information-sharing agreements was largely innocuous, the involvement of a criminal attorney could be seen as intimidating.

"You can understand how people would be concerned," he said.

## Ex-Trump prosecutor Jack Smith faces investigation by independent political watchdog

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. (AP) — An independent watchdog agency responsible for enforcing a law against partisan political activity by federal employees has opened an investigation into Jack Smith, the Justice Department special counsel who brought two criminal cases against then-candidate Donald Trump before his election to the White House last year.

The Office of Special Counsel confirmed Saturday that it was investigating Smith on allegations he engaged in political activity through his inquiries into Trump. Smith was named special counsel by then-Attorney General Merrick Garland in November 2022 and his special counsel title is entirely distinct from the agency now investigating him. The office has no criminal enforcement power but does have the authority to impose fines and other sanctions for violations.

It was not clear what basis exists to contend that Smith's investigations were political in nature or that he violated the Hatch Act, a federal law that bans certain public officials from engaging in political activity. Sen. Tom Cotton, an Arkansas Republican, had earlier this week encouraged the office to scrutinize Smith's activities and had alleged that his conduct was designed to help then-President Joe Biden and his vice president Kamala Harris, both Democrats.

Smith brought two cases against Trump, one accusing him of conspiring to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election and the other of hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. Both were brought in 2023, well over a year before the 2024 presidential election, and indictments in the two cases cited what Smith and his team described as clear violations of well-established federal

law. Garland has repeatedly said politics played no part in the handling of the cases.

Both cases were abandoned by Smith after Trump's November win, with the prosecutor citing longstanding Justice Department policy prohibiting the indictment of a sitting president.

There was no immediate indication that the same office investigating Smith had opened investigations into the Justice Department special counsels who were appointed by Garland to investigate Biden and his son Hunter.

The White House had no immediate comment on the investigation into Smith, which was first reported by The New York Post.

The office has been riven by leadership tumult over the last year. An earlier chief, Hampton Dellinger, was abruptly fired by the Trump administration and initially sued to get his job back before abandoning the court fight.

Trump selected as his replacement Paul Ingrassia, a former right-wing podcast host who has praised criminally charged influencer Andrew Tate as a "extraordinary human being" and promoted the false claim that the 2020 election was rigged. A Senate panel was set to consider his nomination at a hearing last month, but it was pulled from the agenda.

Trump's trade representative, Jamieson Greer, is serving as acting head of the office.

## **Ukrainian anti-corruption agencies uncover drone procurement graft scheme**

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's anti-corruption agencies said they had uncovered a major graft scheme involving inflated military procurement contracts, just two days after Ukraine's parliament voted to restore the agencies' independence.

In a joint statement published Saturday on social media, the National Anti-Corruption Bureau (NABU) and the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office (SAPO) said the suspects had taken bribes in a scheme that used state funds to buy drones and other military equipment at inflated prices.

"The essence of the scheme was to conclude state contracts with supplier companies at deliberately inflated prices," the statement said, adding that offenders had received kickbacks of up to 30% of the contracts' value.

The anti-corruption bodies did not identify the detainees, but said a Ukrainian lawmaker, local district and city officials, and National Guard servicemen were involved. Four people have been arrested so far, they said. The Interior Ministry said the National Guard personnel implicated in the case were removed from their positions.

Drones have become a crucial asset in modern warfare for both Ukraine and Russia, enhancing military reconnaissance, precision strikes, and strategic flexibility on the battlefield. The majority of Russian military assets destroyed by Ukrainian forces, including manpower and heavy weaponry, have been targeted by drones. Drone production is also a key aspect of Kyiv's hopes to expand domestic military production and export markets.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the development in his nightly address on Saturday, calling the graft scheme "absolutely immoral" and thanking the anti-corruption agencies for their work.

"Unfortunately, these corruption schemes involved the procurement of electronic warfare systems and FPV drones ... There must be full and fair accountability for this," he said in his address, posted to X.

In an earlier post, which also included photos of him meeting with the agency heads, Zelenskyy said it is "important that anti-corruption institutions operate independently," adding that "the law passed on Thursday guarantees them all the tools necessary for a real fight against corruption."

The exposure of the graft scheme by NABU and SAPO came just two days after Ukraine's parliament voted to restore their independence.

Ukraine's Parliament on Thursday overwhelmingly approved the bill presented by Zelenskyy, reversing his earlier contentious move that curbed their power and sparked a backlash, including street protests, a rarity in wartime.

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Last week's measure to place the watchdogs under the oversight of the prosecutor-general prompted rebukes from Ukrainians, the European Union and international rights groups. It raised fears that the government could meddle in investigations and potentially shield its supporters from scrutiny.

Fighting entrenched corruption is crucial for Ukraine's aspirations to join the European Union and maintain access to billions of dollars of vital Western aid in the all-out war, now in its fourth year. It's also an effort that enjoys broad public support.

## **Today in History: August 4, massive explosion rocks Beirut**

Today is Monday, Aug. 4, the 216th day of 2025. There are 149 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 4, 2020, nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate that had been improperly stored for years in the port of Beirut, Lebanon, exploded, killing more than 200 people, injuring more than 7,000 and devastating nearby neighborhoods; it was one of the largest non-nuclear explosions ever recorded.

Also on this date:

In 1790, the U.S. Coast Guard had its beginnings as President George Washington signed a measure authorizing a group of revenue cutters to enforce tariff and trade laws and prevent smuggling.

In 1916, the United States reached agreement with Denmark to purchase the Danish Virgin Islands for \$25 million in gold.

In 1936, Jesse Owens of the United States won the second of his four gold medals at the Berlin Olympics as he prevailed in the long jump over German Luz Long, who was the first to congratulate him.

In 1944, 15-year-old diarist Anne Frank was arrested with her sister, parents and four others by the Gestapo after hiding for two years inside a building in Amsterdam. (Anne and her sister, Margot, died at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.)

In 1960, Burkina Faso (known then as Upper Volta) declared its independence from France after more than 60 years of colonial rule.

In 1964, 44 days after their murders, the bodies of missing civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner were found buried in an earthen dam in Mississippi.

In 1972, Arthur Bremer was convicted and sentenced in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, to 63 years in prison for his attempt on the life of Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace (the sentence was later reduced to 53 years; Bremer was released from prison in 2007).

In 1977, President Jimmy Carter signed a measure establishing the Department of Energy.

In 1984, the album "Purple Rain," by Prince and the New Power Generation, began its 24-week run at the top of the Billboard 200 record chart.

In 1987, the Federal Communications Commission voted 4-0 to abolish the Fairness Doctrine, which required radio and television stations to present balanced coverage of controversial issues.

In 1993, a federal judge sentenced Los Angeles police officers Stacey Koon and Laurence Powell to 2 1/2 years in prison for violating Rodney King's civil rights.

In 2009, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il pardoned American journalists Laura Ling and Euna Lee for entering the country illegally and ordered their release during a surprise visit by former U.S. President Bill Clinton.

In 2017, former pharmaceutical CEO Martin Shkreli, who became notorious for a price-gouging scandal, was convicted on federal charges that he deceived investors in a pair of failed hedge funds. (Shkreli was later sentenced to seven years in prison; he was released in 2022.)

In 2019, a masked gunman fired on revelers enjoying summer nightlife in a popular entertainment district of Dayton, Ohio, leaving nine people dead and 27 wounded; police said officers shot and killed the shooter within 30 seconds of the start of his rampage.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-singer Tina Cole is 82. Football Hall of Famer John Riggins is 76. Former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales is 70. Actor-screenwriter Billy Bob Thornton is 70. Actor Kym Karath (Film: "The Sound of Music") is 67. Hall of Fame track star Mary Decker Slaney is 67. Actor Lauren Tom is 64. Former

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President Barack Obama is 64. Retired MLB All-Star pitcher Roger Clemens is 63. Actor Crystal Chappell is 60. Author Dennis Lehane is 60. Actor Daniel Dae Kim is 57. Actor Michael DeLuise is 56. Former race car driver Jeff Gordon is 54. Rapper-actor Yo-Yo is 54. R&B singer-actor Marques Houston is 44. Britain's Duchess of Sussex, the former actor Meghan Markle, is 44. Actor Abigail Spencer is 44. Actor/director Greta Gerwig is 42. Country singer Crystal Bowersox (TV: "American Idol") is 40. Actors Dylan and Cole Sprouse are 33. Singer Jessica Sanchez (TV: "American Idol") is 30.