

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 1 of 84

[1- Upcoming Events](#)

[2- 1440 News Headlines](#)

[4- Adult Mosquito Control](#)

[5- Today on GDILIVE.COM](#)

[5- Conde National League](#)

[5- Flags at Half-Staff Statewide in Honor of Charlie Kirk](#)

[6- SD Mosquito Report](#)

[7- SD SearchLight: Advocates plead with state officials to preserve funds for disability services provider LifeScape](#)

[8- SD SearchLight: Tariffs, trade policy at top of mind for Democratic congressional candidate](#)

[10- SD SearchLight: Legislative board approves rules for challenging voting rights based on residency, voting history](#)

[12- SD SearchLight: Charlie Kirk killed at Utah Valley University, person of interest being questioned](#)

[14- SD SearchLight: In D.C., a moped on the ground, an SUV full of US marshals and a mystery](#)

[16- SD SearchLight: Trump appeals ruling that keeps Fed member he tried to fire on board for now](#)

[18- Weather Pages](#)

[24- Daily Devotional](#)

[25- Subscription Form](#)

[26- Lottery Numbers](#)

[27- Upcoming Groton Events](#)

[28- News from the Associated Press](#)

Thursday, Sept 11

School Breakfast: Cereal

School Lunch: Chicken tacos.

Groton Lions Club Meeting, 6 p.m., 104 N Main St.

Boys Golf at Olive Grove Golf Course, 10 a.m.

Volleyball at Roncalli ((7th-5, 8th-6; C-5, JV-6, V-7:30))

Friday, Sept. 12

School Breakfast: Egg wraps.

School Lunch: Garlic cheese bread, green beans.

Football hosts Milbank, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 13

Soccer at Vermillion (Girls at 1 p.m., Boys at 2:30 p.m.)



Sunday, Sept. 14

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir 6 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m., and Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

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

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

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

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

GHS FCS Kickoff meeting, 2 p.m.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 2 of 84

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.

Charlie Kirk Assassinated

Conservative activist and influencer Charlie Kirk was killed yesterday after being shot in the neck while speaking at an outdoor event at Utah Valley University. Authorities are searching for the suspect as of this writing; at least two people were taken into custody and later released. The campus is closed, and classes have been canceled.

The 31-year-old Kirk cofounded the conservative student organization Turning Point USA and had amassed over 3 million followers on his YouTube channel. A university spokesperson said Kirk was struck from roughly 200 yards away—about the length of two football fields—20 minutes into the event, where at least 3,000 people had gathered. According to videos posted to social media, Kirk had been answering audience questions about mass shootings and gun violence before being shot.

The incident is among recent attacks on political figures in the US and follows last summer's assassination attempt on President Donald Trump and June's assassination of Minnesota state Rep. Melissa Hortman (D) and her husband.

Mars Rock Hints at Life

NASA's Perseverance rover has found rocks pointing to signs of past life on Mars, according to a new study. The discovery marks the clearest signs yet of life, although researchers stress further analysis is needed.

Since landing on Mars in February 2021, Perseverance has been exploring the Jezero Crater, which billions of years ago was believed to be a lake bed. Last July, the rover discovered a rock formation nearby speckled with dots resembling poppy seeds and leopard spots. The colorful patterns indicate the presence of vivianite and greigite—two minerals rich in iron, phosphate, and sulfide that, on Earth, have been produced through biological activity. Researchers found no evidence that the minerals were produced through heat, an alternative theory.

NASA's effort to retrieve and further study the samples is stalled until at least the 2040s due to cost, now estimated at \$11B.

France Faces Unrest

France deployed 80,000 police yesterday to quell nationwide protests against President Emmanuel Macron amid debates over the country's growing debt. The demonstration coincided with Sébastien Lecornu's first day as prime minister, after parliament ousted his predecessor, François Bayrou, Monday.

The "Block Everything" protest was conceived online this summer out of frustration across the political spectrum with Bayrou's proposal to cut \$51B in public spending. Bayrou's dismissal appeared to have minimal impact on confidence in Macron's administration. Critics noted Macron selected the new prime minister from his inner circle; Lecornu has served on the president's team since 2017, most recently as defense minister. France's Interior Ministry recorded over 800 demonstrations nationwide involving 175,000 people and over 450 arrests.

"Block Everything" has been compared to France's "Yellow Vest" movement, which began online among the rural working class, led to months of demonstrations, and resulted in Macron introducing over \$10B in reforms.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 3 of 84

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

WNBA regular season wraps up tonight with the playoffs set to begin Sunday; see complete postseason bracket and schedule.

Eight Detroit Tigers employees accused of sexual misconduct in the past two years, report reveals.

NCAA permanently bans three men's basketball players for betting on their own games.

Joaquin Phoenix, Emma Stone, and Ava DuVernay among 3,900 people from the film and TV industry to sign pledge to boycott Israeli film institutions they deem complicit in alleged war crimes.

Science & Technology

Amazon launches electric robotaxi Zoox with free rides in Las Vegas; the Waymo and Tesla rival plans to enter the Austin and Miami markets next.

Advanced instruments enable clearest-ever detection of gravitational waves emitted by black hole merger, confirming Stephen Hawking's black hole area theorem.

Neuroscientists link rare gene variant to the development of Alzheimer's and find treating mutated neurons with choline—an essential nutrient found in foods like eggs, meat, and legumes—reduces disease risk.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 +0.3%, Dow -0.5%, Nasdaq +0.0%).

Oracle, OpenAI sign \$300B, five-year cloud computing deal; Oracle shares rise nearly 36% in best day since 1992, founder Larry Ellison tops Elon Musk as world's richest person.

Fintech startup Klarna shares close up over 14% after debuting at \$52 per share on the New York Stock Exchange, valuing the Swedish firm at roughly \$17B.

Ozempic maker Novo Nordisk to cut 9,000 jobs, or about 11% of global workforce, as part of restructuring.

Politics & World Affairs

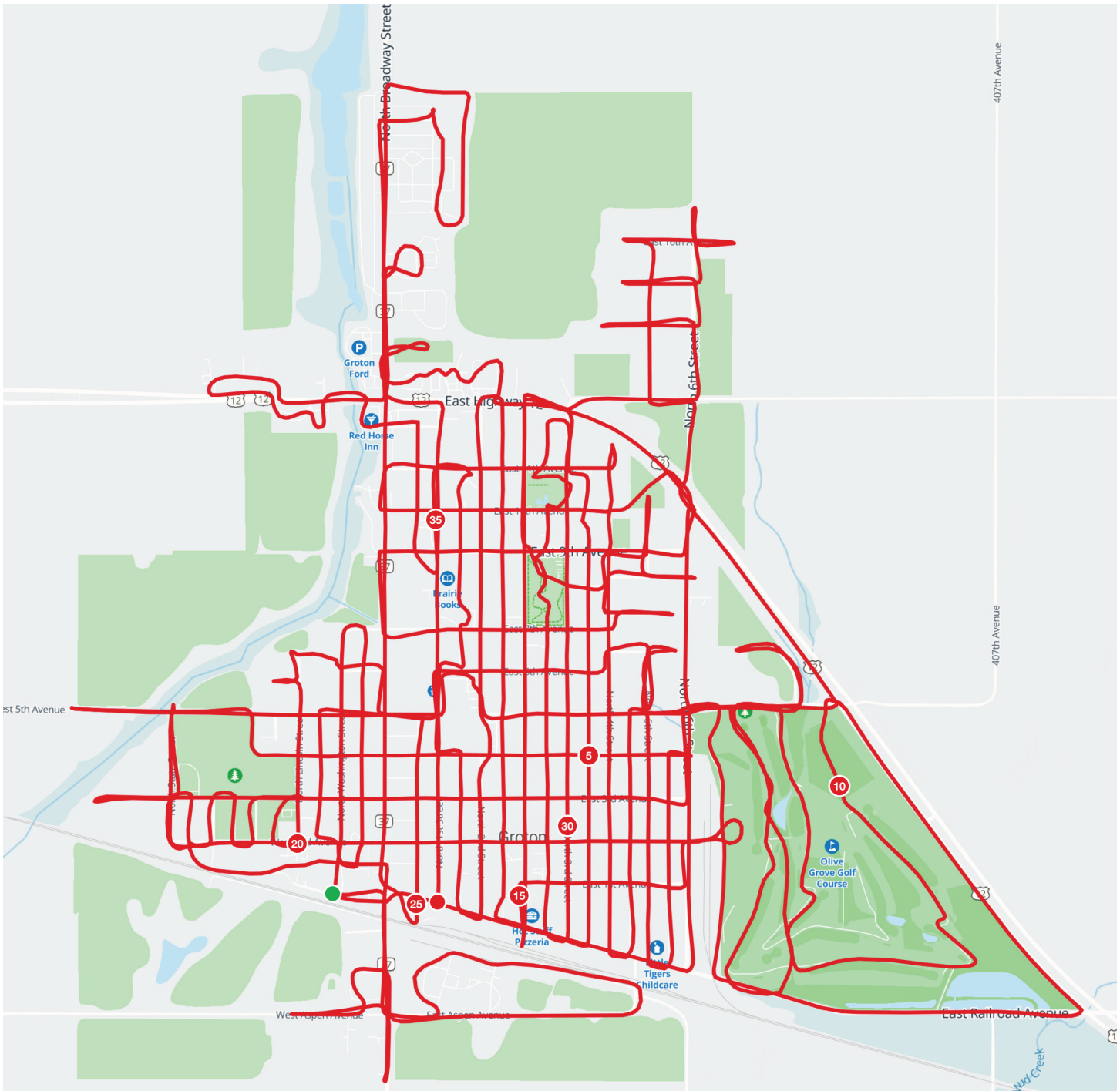
Former FBI leaders sue Director Kash Patel and Attorney General Pam Bondi, alleging their firings were motivated by their involvement in investigations into President Donald Trump.

NATO holds talks after Poland and allies shoot down suspected Russian drones that entered Polish airspace; incident marks first time NATO planes have engaged potential threats in allied airspace.

Cuba's electrical grid collapses for the fourth time in less than a year, leading to second nationwide blackout this year; outages reportedly caused by aging infrastructure and fuel shortages .

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 4 of 84



Adult Mosquito Control

The City of Groton conducted adult mosquito control last night. The temperature was 64-70 degrees . The wind was ESE from 4-5 mph. 11.1 gallons of MasterLine Kontrol 4-4 (with 4.6% Permethrin). Travel time was 2 hours and 55 minutes with a distance of 36.04 miles. Total cost of the application was around \$653.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 5 of 84



Volleyball at Roncalli
Varsity Match
around 7:15 p.m.



Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE



A production of the

Groton Daily Independent



For more info: GDILIVE.COM

Conde National League

Sept. 9 Team Standings: Stooges 3, Giants 3, Braves 3, Cubs 1, Pirates 1, Mets 1

Men's High Games: Skip Kettering 185, Chad Furney 173, Dion Bahr 164

Men's High Series: Chad Furney 461, Skip Furney 447, Dion Bahr 400

Women's High Games: Suzi Easthouse 185, Sam Bahr 175, Vickie Kramp 169

Women's High Series: Sam Bahr 494, Suzi Easthouse 480, Vickie Kramp 463

Flags at Half-Staff Statewide in Honor of Charlie Kirk

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Larry Rhoden ordered that flags be flown at half-staff statewide effective immediately until sunset on Sunday, September 14, 2025, as a mark of respect for the memory of Charlie Kirk.

"Charlie Kirk was a good man, a great American, and a true voice for Freedom," said Governor Larry Rhoden. "Please join Sandy and me in praying for his family."

This announcement is consistent with President Trump's order.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 6 of 84

South Dakota Mosquito



SD WNV (as of September 10):

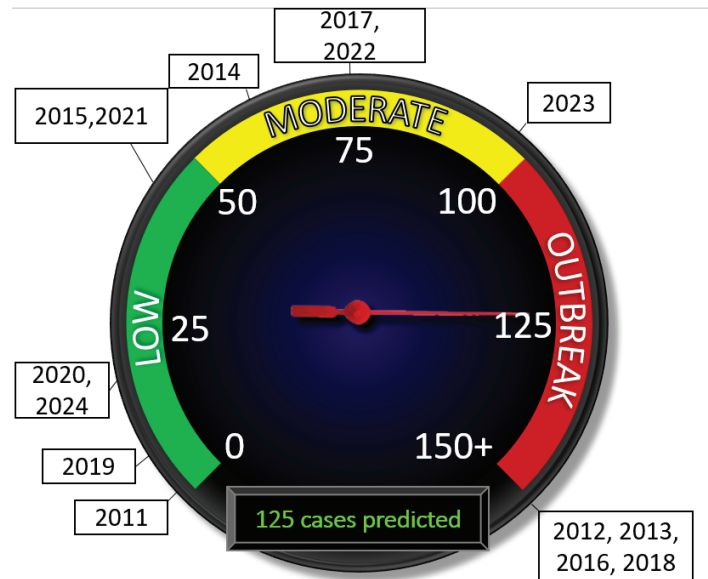
59 human cases (Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Brown, Corson, Codington, Charles Mix, Grant, Hamlin, Hand, Hughes, Hutchinson, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marshall, Meade, Miner, Minnehaha, Pennington, Sanborn, Spink, Walworth) and 2 deaths

8 human viremic blood donors (Brookings, Brown, Codington, Meade, Minnehaha, Pennington)

7 counties with positive mosquito pools (Beadle, Brown, Brookings, Codington, Hughes, Lincoln, Minnehaha)

US WNV (as of September 9): 771 cases (AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WI, WY)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2025, South Dakota (as of September 10)



Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2025

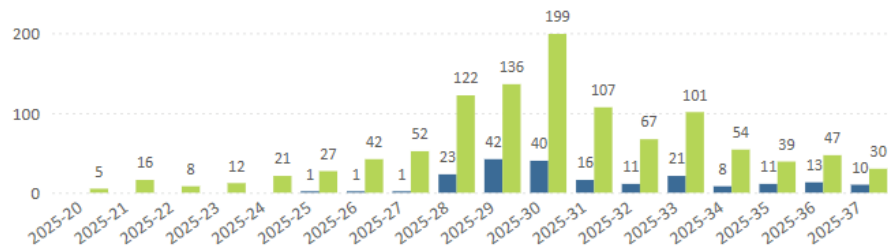
Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 57

Total mosquito pools tested: 1,283

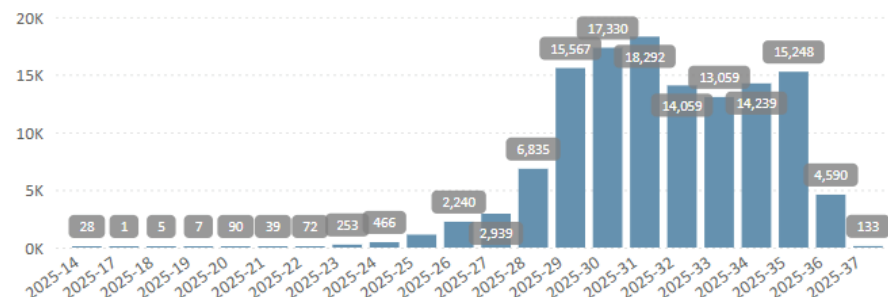
% positivity: 15.43%

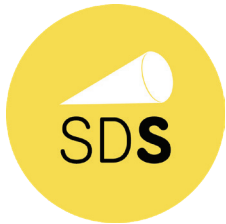
Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative



Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week





SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Advocates plead with state officials to preserve funds for disability services provider LifeScape

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

SIOUX FALLS — Emotional testimony spilled out Wednesday as about 75 people pleaded with South Dakota social services officials to halt a proposed rule change that testifiers said could drastically slash Medicaid reimbursements for LifeScape, the state's primary caretaker for people with complex disabilities.

"You cannot change this funding and ask us to 'hope' that it's OK," said Erin Horstmeyer, whose disabled son received care from LifeScape before he died.

"Families like mine, the people in this room, have lived on hope every single day of our lives," she said. "All we do is hope, because we don't know what the future holds for kids that have multiple disabilities."

At issue is the state Department of Social Services' plan to revise the methodology it uses to reimburse providers through Medicaid, the joint federal-state program providing low-income health insurance and disability assistance.

A rule dating to the 1980s allows LifeScape to be exempt from the state's typical Medicaid reimbursement rates, according to LifeScape's Leah Orsack, resulting in more funding for the unique care the organization provides. According to Kristin Tuttle, also of LifeScape, the proposed rule change would reduce LifeScape's annual funding by about \$9.7 million. LifeScape's locations in Sioux Falls and Rapid City serve more than 3,300 children and 500 adults in South Dakota.

At the outset of the public hearing at the state's One Stop building in Sioux Falls, however, Department Secretary Matt Althoff said the initial proposal that sparked the outcry would no longer be pursued — news that surprised both the organization and those in attendance.

He said the proposal came about due to the department needing to modernize its decades-old reimbursement system in alignment with federal guidance. He said the methodology for reimbursing LifeScape will still need an update, but did not offer specifics on a new plan.



South Dakota Department of Social Services Secretary Matt Althoff fields questions from advocates for people with disabilities on Sept. 10, 2025, during a public hearing at the Sioux Falls One Stop building. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 8 of 84

"We have to modernize the methodology," Althoff said. But when pressed on whether LifeScape's bottom line would hold steady, he conceded, "We don't know that."

Althoff also acknowledged, "South Dakota is a lot worse off without LifeScape. We need LifeScape to be there."

The two-hour hearing was filled with tearful testimony from parents and advocates describing how LifeScape's outpatient therapies and specialized programs helped their children walk, talk and participate in daily life. Many stressed there are no comparable providers in the state, particularly after Althoff suggested others exist.

Some attendees bristled at Althoff responding to speakers during the testimony period of the public hearing, saying it gave the impression the department was dominating a forum meant for public input. One attendee attempted to seize the microphone from Althoff and spoke over him when he declined.

The advocates urged the department to delay any changes until the real-world impacts are better understood.

"At first, I thought this proposal must have been the work of some detached politician, cause we have plenty of those. But no, it's you, the Department of Social Services. The man in the tan suit," said parent Semehar Ghebrekidan, pointing to Althoff.

A panel of state lawmakers, the Legislative Rules Review Committee, is scheduled to consider the rules package on Oct. 7. Until then, Althoff said the department would continue negotiations with LifeScape.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Tariffs, trade policy at top of mind for Democratic congressional candidate

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

Nikki Gronli was a bureaucrat, but in a political atmosphere where that label can be an insult, she wants to benefit from it.

"There's bureaucracy that gets in the way at times, but that bureaucracy is often put in place by Congress," Gronli said in a speech officially announcing her campaign for Congress on Wednesday in downtown Sioux Falls. "What if someone who understands the roadblocks goes to D.C. to eliminate the bureaucracy?"

The Democratic former Biden administration U.S. Department of Agriculture appointee said that experience — helping rural communities address infrastructure, public safety, housing and broadband needs — prepared her with skills and knowledge to "cut the red tape" if she's elected next year to South Dakota's lone U.S. House seat.

That includes adjusting federal program requirements and processes to streamline projects or ensure a safety net for small communities relying on federal programs, Gronli told South Dakota Searchlight after the announcement, citing her history with the USDA.

She also worked with current congressional delegates in her role as well as state leaders, nonprofits, private businesses and other federal agencies to find solutions during her tenure as state director of USDA Rural Development for three years. Before that, she worked in marketing and advertising.

"Too often I think people don't ask, 'Can we do this? Can we change this? Can we find some people in Congress who are willing to work on this?'" Gronli said. "I would like to go there and do that."

Gronli, who lives in rural Dell Rapids, promised the crowd that she'll continue to host public town halls throughout the state, which she began leading this spring.

One of the Aurora native's biggest issues to address, if elected, will be representing South Dakota farmers, she said. She blamed the Trump administration tariffs and trade policies for "damages already taking effect" on farmers because of stalled trade markets and low commodity prices.

"It'll take around 60 new countries and deals to replace the Chinese soybean market that disappeared

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 9 of 84

overnight and may never be the same again," Gronli said.

China is boycotting U.S. soybean purchases this fall in response to President Trump's tariffs. Farmers may get help from the federal government, Gronli said, but it could be too late for some.

Congress needs to "take back its responsibility" regarding tariff policy, she said, while working with the executive branch to compromise, rather than "give over their power" to the current administration.

"As I've traveled the state, never once have I been told by a farmer or a rancher that all they want is a bailout," she said. "They want markets. They want a system that leaves some money in their pocket at the end of the season for all of their hard work, and that is not too much to ask."

Trade policies have an impact in South Dakota beyond the agricultural economy, Gronli added, including tourism and small businesses.

"This is the place where I can say that trickle-down economics actually does work," Gronli told the crowd. "If our top industries in South Dakota are financially damaged, that trickles down to Main Street. That impacts our businesses, it impacts our workers and it impacts our families. I cannot sit back and watch Washington fail South Dakota."

Gronli is the second Democrat to announce her candidacy for Congress. Bill Mawhiney, of Sioux Falls, announced his candidacy last month. Scott Schlagel of Dell Rapids filed a statement of candidacy with the Federal Election Commission as well, setting the stage for the state's first Democratic U.S. House primary since 2012.

State Senate Minority Leader Liz Larson introduced Gronli at the event, highlighting her dedication to the Democratic Party and her work to connect South Dakotans with federal decision makers during her time with the USDA.

Larson told South Dakota Searchlight that she supports Mawhiney and Gronli and is excited about the prospect of a Democratic primary.

Among Republicans, Gronli said, the primary race will be a "fight."

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, is running for governor next year. South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley is the only Republican candidate so far to formally announce his campaign for the U.S. House seat. State Sen. Casey Crabtree, R-Madison, filed a statement of candidacy to potentially join the race.



Nikki Gronli speaks in downtown Sioux Falls on Sept. 10, 2025, during the formal launch of her campaign for South Dakota's lone U.S. House seat. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

"That fight is going to be about who more closely aligns with the very policies Washington is using to harm South Dakota — policies that harm our top industries, our workers and our people," Gronli said. "On this side of the aisle you're going to see issues elevated and, I guarantee, good conversations about how we best solve them."

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

Legislative board approves rules for challenging voting rights based on residency, voting history

Voting rights advocate worries state is putting 'undue burden' on voters

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

Legislators finalized rules this week allowing additional grounds for challenging a person's right to vote in South Dakota.

The rules, approved Tuesday by the Interim Rules Review Committee, are a result of Senate Bill 185, which was signed into law in March. It expanded the justifications for challenging voter rights to include claims that a registered voter has died, is not a legal resident of the state or has voted or registered in another state.

Previously, state law allowed challenges based on a person's identity, a felony conviction or mental incompetency. Those challenges are still allowed.

The new rules were part of a larger package presented by the Secretary of State's Office and the Board of Elections to align with several "election integrity" bills approved by lawmakers earlier this year. Activists who favor the hand-counting of ballots, oppose the use of vote-counting machines and deny the legitimacy of the 2020 presidential election were among those who supported the legislation.



Sioux Falls residents vote in the general election on Nov. 5, 2024, at St. Lambert's Catholic Church. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Rules not 'perfect,' voting official says

Deputy Secretary of State Tom Deadrick told committee members it was "challenging" to "keep the due process in line" for people who are being challenged.

"I'm not going to tell you it's a perfect package, because I doubt if it's perfect," Deadrick said, "but I think it's a pretty good package that takes care of the legislative intent."

State Sen. Amber Hulse, R-Hot Springs, sponsored the legislation. She told South Dakota Searchlight that the rules are largely aligned with her bill's intentions, but she's concerned that requiring challengers to provide personal information for voters in question could lead to privacy risks for South Dakotans.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 11 of 84

There are people on South Dakota's voter registration list who should not be registered to vote in the state, Hulse said. But the challenge process should be a balance.

"You have to ensure that you're protecting people's private information and protecting their right to vote, due process rights and other really big rights that go into these processes," Hulse said. "It makes it feel clunky or difficult, but that's purposeful so we're protecting arguably more important rights than cleaning voter rolls."

The American Civil Liberties Union-South Dakota's Samantha Chapman originally opposed the legislation, but worked with Hulse in an attempt to make it less onerous to voters. Chapman said the rules create "stronger protections against indiscriminate challenges" because the documentation "should be hard to track down," but she said they could be stronger for voters.

"We are putting potentially an undue burden on voters to hang on to their ability to vote," Chapman said.

Chapman's greatest concern is about challenges based on voting histories in other states. Sometimes a person's voter registration in their former state isn't canceled due to administrative oversight or miscommunication between states.

"It assumes the voter intends to vote twice when in reality it could be an administrative error outside of their control," Chapman said.

How challenges work

Based on the new rules, challengers must be registered to vote in the same county as the person they're challenging on residency or out-of-state registration grounds, and must submit the challenge at least 90 days before an election. Challenges based on a person dying ahead of an election, being mentally incompetent or being imprisoned must be submitted by a South Dakota registered voter at least 30 days before an election.

A challenge to a voter's residency must include evidence that the voter is not a South Dakota resident, based on state election law. The challenger must provide, under a sworn oath in front of a notary, one of the following:

- A driver's license or ID card issued by another state.

- A resident hunting, fishing or trapping license issued by another state.

- A postal change of address indicating the voter moved to another state.

- State or county property records indicating ownership of a primary residence in another state.

- Tax documents indicating the voter is a resident of another state.

- A residency affidavit or certificate from another state.

A challenge to a voter's out-of-state registration or voting history must include a voter file from an election official in that state documenting the claim. There is not a time parameter set for voting history evidence.

The challenged voter must fill out a "verification request" mailed to them by their county auditor within 30 days of the challenge, with evidence documenting their qualifications as a registered voter.

Challenged voters can request a hearing and appeal decisions to the board of county commissioners or circuit court, but there is no appeals process for the challenger spelled out in the rules.

The county auditor must cancel the voter's registration if the voter doesn't respond with sufficient evidence. But the removal can't happen within 90 days prior to an election, and only challenged voters who don't cast a vote in the time between the challenge and the next general election can be removed. Auditors will notify the challenger and challenged voter of their decision.

If someone votes who is later determined to be ineligible, that can be challenged through the courts rather than the new challenge process, according to Hulse. She said the new process is designed to remove registered voters who are both ineligible and inactive.

"This process is more for folks who claim residency but aren't participating in elections," Hulse said, adding that such people can influence election district boundaries when they're counted as registered voters.

All of the committee members present approved the rules for voter registration challenges.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the

title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

Charlie Kirk killed at Utah Valley University, person of interest being questioned

BY: KATIE MCKELLAR, ALIXEL CABRERA AND KYLE DUNPHEY



Founder and executive director of Turning Point USA Charlie Kirk speaks at the opening of the Turning Point Action conference on July 15, 2023 in West Palm Beach, Florida. (Photo by Joe Raedle/

Getty Images)

Conservative activist Charlie Kirk has died after he was shot at an event at Utah Valley University in Orem on Wednesday, President Donald Trump announced.

"The Great, and even Legendary, Charlie Kirk, is dead," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "No one understood or had the Heart of the Youth in the United States of America better than Charlie. He was loved and admired by ALL, especially me, and now, he is no longer with us. Melania and my Sympathies go out to his beautiful wife Erika, and family. Charlie, we love you!"

Utah Gov. Spencer Cox said in a news conference Wednesday afternoon that a person of interest was in custody, but that he could not elaborate. Officials say the investigation is ongoing.

Cox called the shooting a "political assassination" and called

for anyone who had celebrated Kirk's death to "look in the mirror."

"The investigation is ongoing, but I want to make it crystal clear right now to whoever did this, we will find you, we will try you, and we will hold you accountable to the furthest extent of the law," Cox said. "And I just want to remind people that we still have the death penalty here."

The person of interest was dressed in all dark clothing, but other than that, officials couldn't provide much detail Wednesday. Utah Department of Public Safety Commissioner Beau Mason said the "only information we have on the suspect, the possible shooter, is taken from closed circuit TV here on campus."

Mason said that footage is currently being analyzed.

Officials also said there is no information that suggests there was a second person involved in the shooting. One shot was fired, Kirk was the only victim and police confirmed it was a targeted attack.

Videos circulating on social media show students scattering after a popping sound is heard, Kirk appears to be impacted by something, and begins bleeding from his neck. Witnesses say he was answering a question about mass shootings in the moment he was shot.

In a statement, Utah Valley University confirmed Kirk had been shot at about 12:20 p.m. while speaking to the crowd.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 13 of 84

Police are investigating and the campus has been closed for the rest of the day. For hours after the shooting occurred, dozens of police vehicles and some armored vehicles swarmed the university campus and blocked off roadways. SWAT teams and military personnel carrying long guns — some with K-9s — could be seen searching buildings.

Several students told Utah News Dispatch they were told to wait outside, unable to retrieve their belongings from classrooms or access their dorms, until after law enforcement completed their searches.

Adelaide Condie, an 18-year-old Utah Valley University student, was standing on a trash can trying to see Kirk as he answered a question about gun violence when he was hit.

"All of a sudden he got shot ... It looked like it was to the chest from where I was, but people are saying it was to the neck ... then he went down," said Condie as she was leaving campus. "Everyone started running, then we all got on lockdown."

The university initially reported a suspect was in custody, but officers determined he didn't match the shooter's description. Law enforcement officials identified him as George Zinn, a local political gadfly known for his disruptive behavior. While not suspected in the shooting, Mason said Zinn was booked into Utah County Jail for investigation of obstruction of justice.

Shooting follows No Kings protest shooting, national political violence

The shooting on the college campus in Orem, about 45 minutes south of Salt Lake City, follows violence this summer in Utah and beyond. In July, shots rang out as more than 10,000 people marched in Salt Lake City as part of the "No Kings" protest of the Trump administration and its policies.

A self-designated "volunteer peacekeeper" fired with a handgun after seeing a man with an AR-15-style rifle, wounding him in the side and striking a protester walking by in the head. Arthur "Afa" Ah Loo, a fashion designer and fixture of the Polynesian community in Utah, died from the wound.

On the same day in Minnesota, House Democratic leader Melissa Hortman was assassinated in her home, along with her husband, Mark Hortman. Police say the accused gunman, Vance Boelter, disguised himself as a police officer. Boelter is also charged with shooting Democratic Sen. John Hoffman and his wife, both of whom survived, in their Champlin home.

Kirk's visit to Utah drew criticism

Kirk is the founder of Turning Point USA, an organization that advocates for conservative politics in educational institutions, and a close ally of the president. He is a widely known internet personality who takes his signature "prove me wrong" debates to college campuses.

His Utah visit wasn't without controversy. In a Change.org petition, students at Utah State University, where Kirk was scheduled to make a second appearance in the state on Sept. 30, said Kirk's polarizing rhetoric is at odds with the inclusive atmosphere they want to preserve on campus. The petition had more than 6,800 signatures.

Trump orders flags lowered

Trump ordered U.S. flags throughout the country to be lowered in the wake of Kirk's killing, describing him as "a truly Great American Patriot" on Truth Social.

Cox echoed that order, requiring U.S. and Utah flags to be flown at half staff at all state facilities in acknowledgement of Kirk until Sunday.

In a statement posted to social media, Cox said he had spoken on the phone with Trump about Kirk's death and is now working with the FBI and state law enforcement to "bring to justice the individual responsible for this tragedy."

"Abby and I are heartbroken. We are praying for Charlie's wife, daughter, and son," Cox said.

In an earlier statement, Cox warned those involved in the shooting would be held accountable and that "violence has no place in our public life," he wrote.

Before it was announced that Kirk had died in the shooting, dozens of congressional Republicans on Capitol Hill offered prayers for Kirk, with whom many GOP members have personal relationships.

U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform Chairman James Comer, a Kentucky Republican, paused the panel's consideration of a bill and held a moment of silence after Georgia Republican Marjorie Taylor

Greene informed the committee of the shooting.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said in a statement the news of Kirk's death is "utterly devastating."

"Charlie was a close friend and confidant. He will be sorely missed by so many. Every political leader must loudly and clearly decry this violence," Johnson said. "Our prayers go out to his wife and young children. May he rest in peace."

Utah News Dispatch editor McKenzie Romero and States Newsroom reporter Jacob Fischler contributed to this story.

This story was originally produced by Utah News Dispatch, which is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit news network which includes South Dakota Searchlight, and is supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity.

Katie McKellar covers Utah government as a senior reporter for Utah News Dispatch. She specializes in political reporting, covering the governor and the Utah Legislature, with expertise in beats including growth, housing and homelessness. Utah News Dispatch is part of States Newsroom, the nation's largest state-focused nonprofit news organization.

In D.C., a moped on the ground, an SUV full of US marshals and a mystery

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

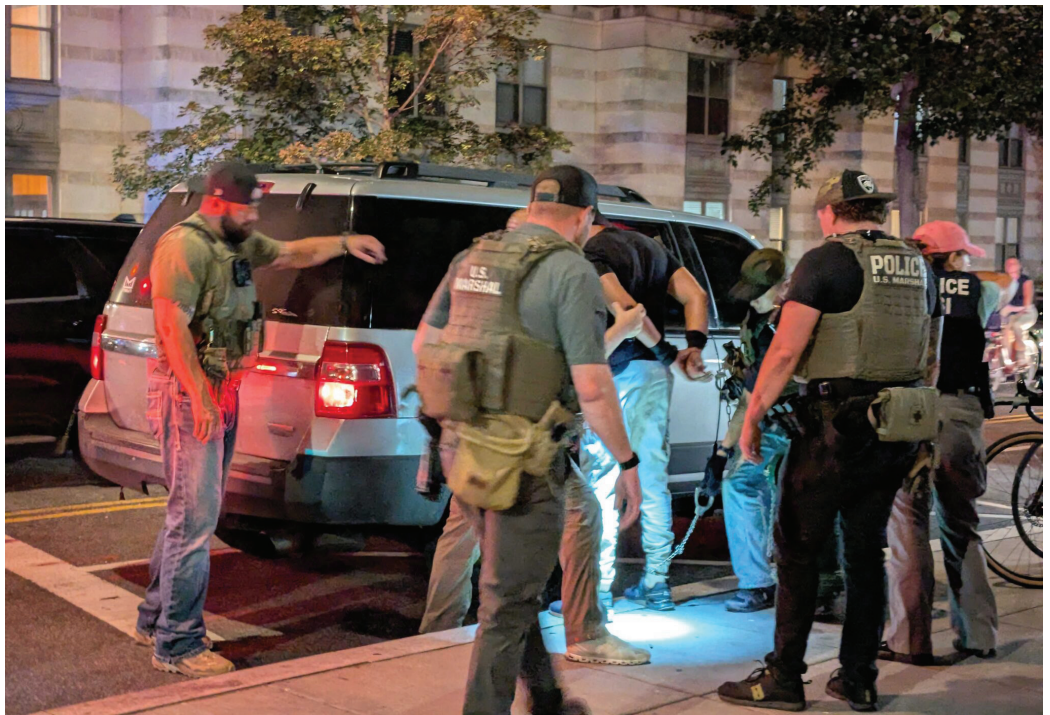
WASHINGTON — A siren blared down one of Washington, D.C.'s busiest thoroughfares. And then, a loud noise.

Residents in nearby apartment buildings peered through windows and from balconies to find a dark-colored SUV bumped up against a moped lying on the ground. A dog walker called 911 to report the incident before it became apparent that the unmarked vehicle belonged to federal law enforcement, when men in U.S. Marshals Service flak vests exited.

The rear driver-side tire on the Chevy Tahoe had completely blown and the marshals struggled to find a jack and spare while a uniformed Washington Metropolitan Police Department officer stood guard.

Bystanders pulled out phones to record and heckled. "Shame, shame, shame," one repeatedly yelled. Another from a nearby apartment balcony screamed "Nazis!" Eyewitnesses began exchanging bits and pieces of what they said they saw, that the driver of the moped fled the scene.

"He didn't get away though, did he? He's down there in custody," a U.S. marshal responded, gesturing



U.S. Marshals and Homeland Security Investigations agents take a man into custody at the intersection of 14th and N streets NW in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 3, 2025. (Photo by Ashley Murray/States Newsroom)

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 15 of 84

to where the driver ran.

The incident was like so many that have played out on the streets of Washington since Aug. 11, when President Donald Trump declared a federal crime emergency in the District of Columbia: A detainee is taken away by federal agents, often with local law enforcement standing by, and with little information provided to the public.

On the night of Sept. 3, a States Newsroom reporter witnessed and recorded most of the incident at 14th and N streets NW.

Earlier this summer, Trump ordered National Guard troops and Marines to the streets of Los Angeles as his administration launched an immigration crackdown, muddling the messages on violent crime and immigration status.

In recent days Trump has threatened to send National Guard troops to Chicago, Boston, Baltimore, New Orleans, Portland and other Democratic-led cities. As of Monday, the administration announced a wave of federal immigration agents were headed to Chicago.

"This is a big issue," said Mike Fox, legal fellow for the Cato Institute's Project on Criminal Justice.

Fox, whose think tank advocates for limited federal government, told States Newsroom in an interview about Trump's federalization of law enforcement in cities that he believes the strategy breaks down trust.

"You have unidentified federal agents coming in, seizing people's property, but more importantly, seizing people. It undermines the very premise upon which community policing is supposed to work," Fox said.

Despite multiple inquiries, States Newsroom was not able to get any additional information on the man taken into custody.

Moped drivers

On the night of Sept. 3, as U.S. marshals continued to struggle with the tire, Homeland Security Investigations agents arrived a short time later with a detainee in the back of a separate unmarked SUV.

Eight marshals and Homeland Security Investigations agents surrounded the man to switch his restraints to a new set with chains around his waist and between his ankles. HSI is a law enforcement agency within U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, under the Department of Homeland Security.

News outlets including The New York Times, The Washington Post and Bellingcat have reported on the detainments of moped drivers in the district, and publicly crowd-sourced alerts from online monitor "Stop ICE Alerts" have included sightings of federal agents stopping mopeds.

The 30-day federal crackdown has drawn widespread criticism and protests from district residents. District Mayor Muriel Bowser, however, has agreed to keep federal law enforcement on the streets beyond Trump's emergency, which ends Wednesday.

Moped drivers who run food deliveries are a routine sight on D.C. streets, and many are from Latin America. Until recently, it wasn't uncommon to see groups of moped food delivery drivers along 14th Street NW before a day's work or on breaks between orders.

Law enforcement mum

A States Newsroom reporter saw the man being taken into custody but his name and his citizenship or immigration status could not be determined, nor the reason why police chased him. Officers on the scene did not respond to shouted questions.

The U.S. Marshals Service and Homeland Security Investigations have not provided information requested by States Newsroom regarding the incident, including whether the detainee was wanted on criminal charges or what happened to the moped that was left behind at the scene on a nearby sidewalk.

U.S. marshals are officers of the federal courts who usually apprehend fugitives and manage or sell seized assets. In January, Trump directed numerous federal law enforcement agencies, including the Marshals Service, to "investigate and apprehend illegal aliens."

States Newsroom has filed Freedom of Information Act requests with both agencies for body camera footage and reports about the incident and apparent impact between the SUV and moped, among other records.

Similarly, the Washington Metropolitan Police Department did not provide information on the incident,

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 16 of 84

despite its presence on the scene.

When asked by States Newsroom if the agency made any records of assisting federal agents that night, MPD spokesperson Tom Lynch responded, "There is no publicly available document for this matter."

'It should scare people across the country'

Cato's Fox said information on the federal crackdown in the district is scarce.

"And that should scare everyone in D.C. It should scare Congress. It should scare people across the country. This is not a D.C.-specific issue," Fox said.

The American Civil Liberties Union's D.C. Director Monica Hopkins told States Newsroom in a statement that "there are huge gaps and limitations in the accountability that is available to people" when it comes to federal law enforcement.

"Despite the Trump administration's attempts at fear and intimidation, everyone in D.C. has rights, regardless of who they are and their immigration status," Hopkins said.

The ACLU-DC is urging Congress to pass legislation barring federal immigration authorities from wearing face coverings and obscuring their agencies or identification when engaged in enforcement actions.

The Homeland Security Investigations agents and U.S. marshals at the incident witnessed by States Newsroom did not have their faces covered and were wearing vests identifying their respective agencies.

However, agents carrying out detainments in balaclava-style face coverings or bandanas and plain clothes, donning vests that only say "police," have been witnessed and recorded by members of the public and journalists.

Later that night

As the scene wrapped up in Northwest D.C. on Sept. 3, immigrant advocates on bicycles arrived.

The volunteers said they were with the Migrant Solidarity Mutual Aid group, a network in the D.C., Maryland and Virginia area collecting information on immigration arrests and raids. The group runs a hotline for arrest reports and for family members seeking relatives who may have been detained.

States Newsroom contacted the mutual aid organization but could not obtain any details about the Sept. 3 incident.

Roughly an hour after police cleared that night, a States Newsroom reporter witnessed a small group of people surrounding the moped. A few tried to start the engine and removed at least one item from the under-seat storage compartment.

The moped was no longer there the following morning.

U.S. Marshals and the Department of Homeland Security have not responded to questions about the whereabouts of the moped.

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

Trump appeals ruling that keeps Fed member he tried to fire on board for now

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY AND JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration made public Wednesday its plans to appeal a lower court ruling that keeps Federal Reserve governor Lisa Cook on the independent central bank's board, for now.

In a 49-page opinion released late Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Jia M. Cobb wrote that President Donald Trump "violated the Federal Reserve Act because (Cook's) purported removal did not comply with the statute's 'for cause' requirement" and that his attempts to remove Cook from the board "deprived her of procedural rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution."

Trump said in late August that he wanted to remove Cook, the first Black woman to serve on the Federal Reserve Board, alleging she falsified some information in a mortgage application.

Cook's attorneys filed a lawsuit in federal court a few days later, arguing that Trump's attempts were political and violated her due process rights.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 17 of 84

Trump's targeting of Cook comes amid his pressure campaign on Federal Reserve Board Chair Jerome Powell to lower interest rates.

Trump, who has been angling for more influence over the central bank, swiftly nominated his adviser Stephen Miran to fill a separate vacancy on the board ahead of the Fed's meeting next week where members are widely expected to lower rates.

U.S. Senate Republicans advanced Miran's nomination out of committee Wednesday morning. Miran is the chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers.

Ruling seen as affirming Fed independence

Cobb said the case marks the first time in the Federal Reserve's 111-year history that a president has sought to remove one of its members "for cause."

The Federal Reserve Act doesn't actually define what "for cause" entails, but Cobb wrote that reasons for firing under the law "are limited to grounds concerning an official's behavior in office and whether they have been faithfully and effectively executing statutory duties.

"The 'for cause' standard thus does not contemplate removing an individual purely for conduct that occurred before they assumed the position."

Cook's attorney's Abbe David Lowell, of Lowell and Associates, and Norm Eisen, head of the advocacy organization Democracy Defenders Fund, hailed the district court injunction.

"The court's ruling recognizes and reaffirms the importance of safeguarding the independence of the Federal Reserve from illegal political interference," Lowell and Eisen said in a statement Wednesday morning.

"Allowing the president to unlawfully remove Governor Cook on unsubstantiated and vague allegations would endanger the stability of our financial system and undermine the rule of law. Governor Cook will continue to carry out her sworn duties as a Senate-confirmed Board Governor member."

Judge Cobb agreed with their assessment that the president seeking to remove Cook represented irreparable harm and that "the public interest in Federal Reserve independence weighs in favor of Cook's reinstatement."

Cobb wrote that she "likely cannot directly 'enjoin the President in the performance of his official duties' to require him to reappoint Cook." So she instead issued a preliminary injunction directing Powell "and the Board of Governors to allow Cook to continue to operate as a member of the Board for the pendency of this litigation."

Attorneys for the Trump administration notified the district court they plan to appeal Cobb's preliminary injunction to the the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia.

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

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



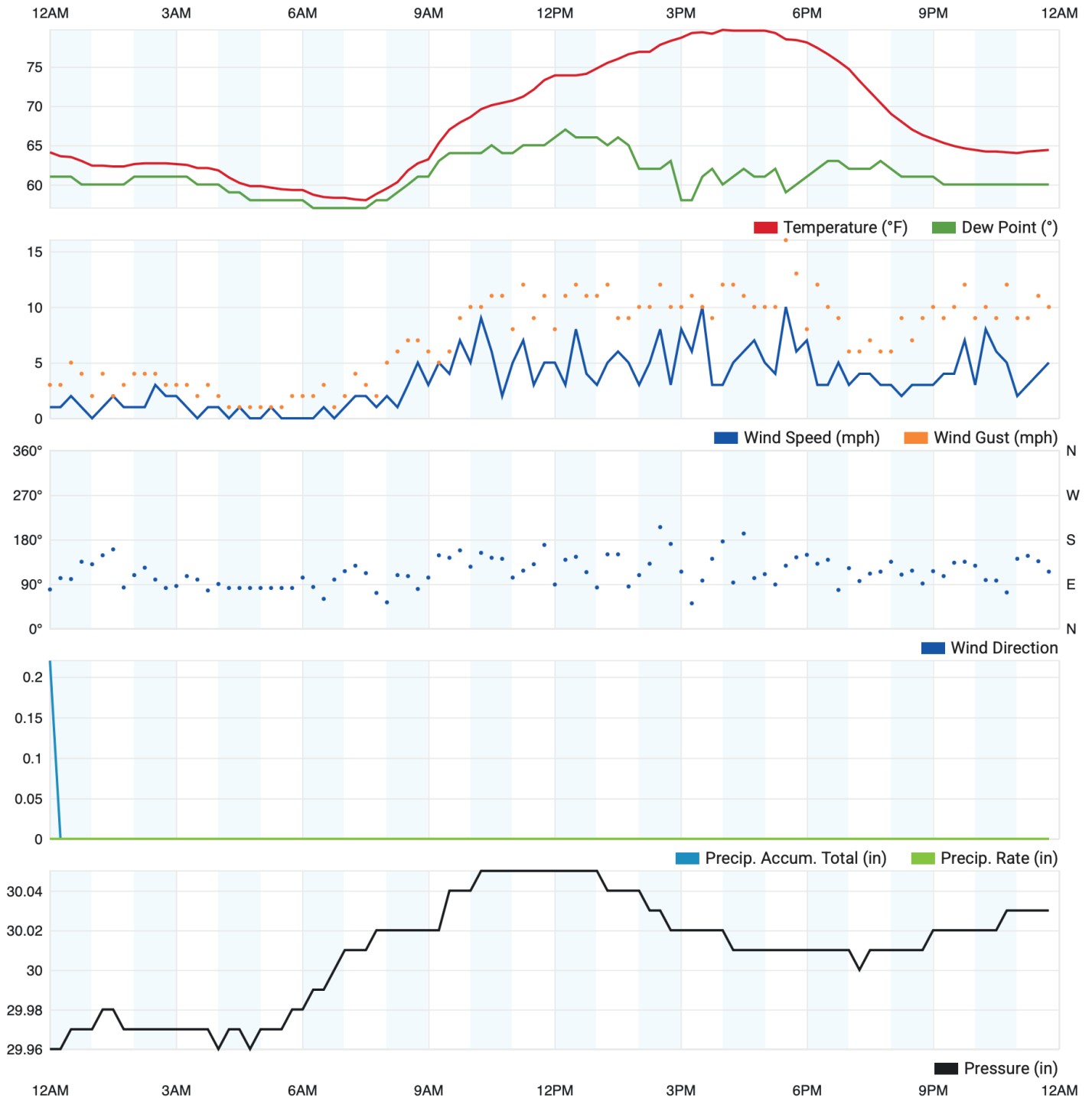
Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell administers the oath of office to Lisa Cook to serve as a member of the Board of Governors at the Federal Reserve System during a ceremony at the William McChesney Martin Jr. Building of the Federal Reserve May 23, 2022, in Washington, D.C. (Photo by Drew Angerer/Getty Images)

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 18 of 84

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

September 10, 2025



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 19 of 84

Today

Tonight

Friday

Friday Night

Saturday



High: 84 °F

Mostly Sunny



Low: 66 °F

Mostly Cloudy



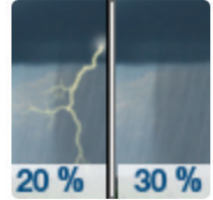
High: 87 °F

Mostly Sunny



Low: 63 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance
T-storms



High: 84 °F

Slight Chance
T-storms then
Chance
Showers

THREAT ASSESSMENT

HIGHEST LOCAL RISK

1

WHAT THIS MEANS:
Isolated Severe Storms
Possible

TIMING

4 PM - 7PM

PRIMARY THREAT

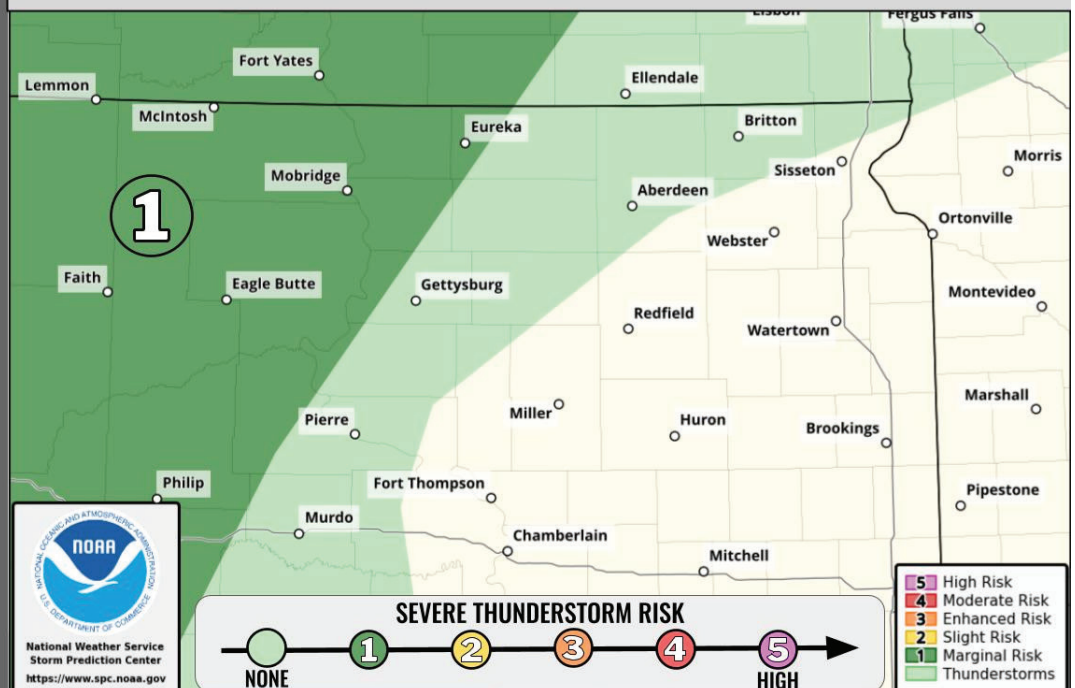
DAMAGING
WIND GUSTS OF
60+ MPH

LARGE HAIL
(QUARTER SIZE)

SECONDARY THREATS

HEAVY
RAIN

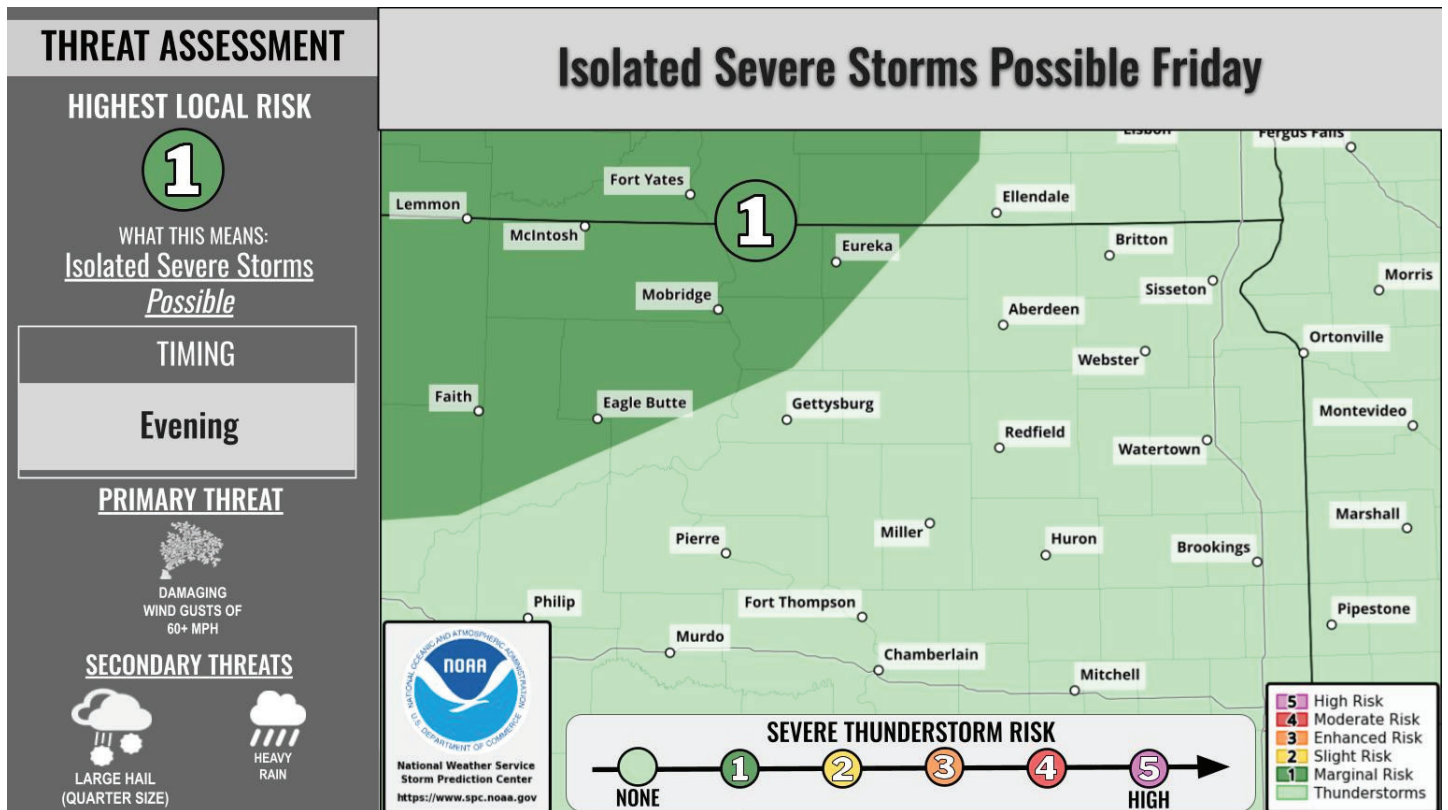
Isolated Severe Storms Possible This Afternoon



A Marginal Risk (level 1 out of 5) is in place over central SD for isolated severe storms this afternoon. The main threats are wind gusts of 60+ mph and 1 inch hail.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 20 of 84



A Marginal Risk (level 1 out of 5) is in place over north central SD for Friday evening. The main threat will be wind gusts of 60+ mph, but some 1 inch hail will also be possible.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 21 of 84

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 80 °F at 4:08 PM

Heat Index: 81 °F at 4:15 PM

Low Temp: 58 °F at 7:23 AM

Wind: 16 mph at 5:29 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 100 in 1927

Record Low: 28 in 1940

Average High: 77

Average Low: 49

Average Precip in Sept.: 0.75

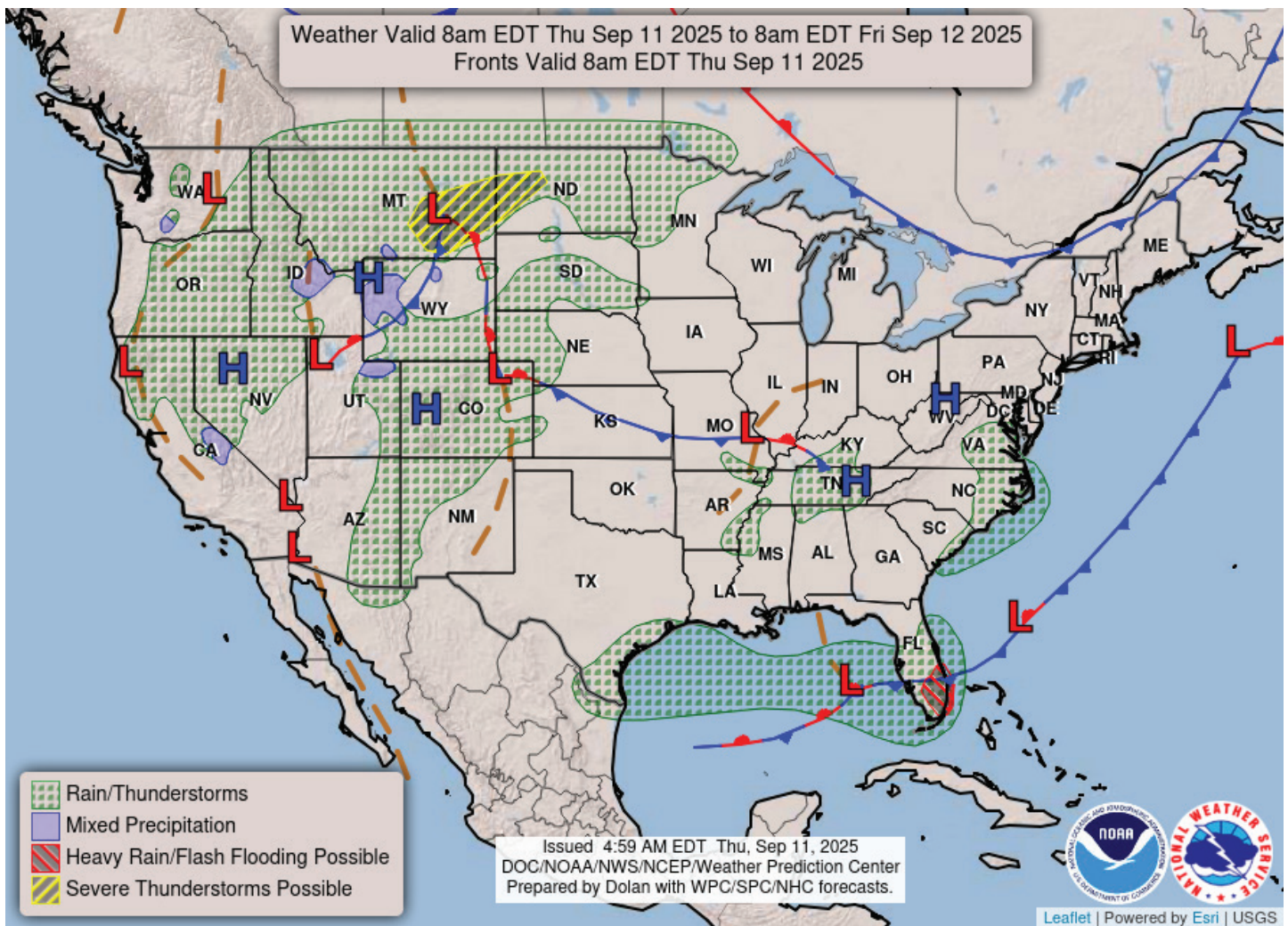
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.24

Average Precip to date: 17.09

Precip Year to Date: 20.54

Sunset Tonight: 7:51 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:07 am



Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 22 of 84

Today in Weather History

September 11, 1978: High winds to 65 mph damaged the roofs of several barns outside of Watertown during the early evening.

1900: The remnants of the Great Galveston Hurricane were located over central Iowa on this day. Eastern Nebraska, northwest Iowa, and southern Minnesota show four-plus inches of rain from this storm.

1949 - An early snowstorm brought 7.5 inches to Helena MT. In Maine, a storm drenched New Brunswick with 8.05 inches of rain in 24 hours, a state record. (The Weather Channel)

1961 - Very large and slow moving Hurricane Carla made landfall near Port Lavaca TX. Carla battered the central Texas coast with wind gusts to 175 mph, and up to 16 inches of rain, and spawned a vicious tornado which swept across Galveston Island killing eight persons. The hurricane claimed 45 lives, and caused 300 million dollars damage. The remnants of Carla produced heavy rain in the Lower Missouri Valley and southern sections of the Upper Great Lakes Region. (David Ludlum) (Storm Data)

1976 - Up to five inches of rain brought walls of water and millions of tons of debris into Bullhead City AZ via washes from elevations above 3000 feet. Flooding caused more than three million dollars damage. Chasms up to forty feet deep were cut across some roads. (The Weather Channel)

1986 - Thunderstorms caused flash flooding and subsequent river flooding in central Lower Michigan. Up to 14 inches of rain fell in a 72 hour period, and flooding caused 400 million dollars damage. (Storm Data)

1987 - Late afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in Texas, and spawned three tornadoes. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 70 mph at Goodnight TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Snow blanketed parts of the Central Rocky Mountain Region and the Central Plateau, with ten inches reported at Mount Evans in Colorado. Smoke from forest fires in the northwestern U.S. reached Pennsylvania and New York State. Hurricane Gilbert, moving westward over the Caribbean, was packing winds of 100 mph by the end of the day. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Nine cities in the north central U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Havre MT with a reading of 23 degrees. Livingston MT and West Yellowstone MT tied for honors as the cold spot in the nation with morning lows of 17 degrees. Thunderstorms produced hail over the Sierra Nevada Range of California, with two inches reported on the ground near Donner Summit. The hail made roads very slick, resulting in a twenty car accident. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992: Hurricane Iniki struck the island of Kaua'i with winds of 145 mph and a central pressure of 27.91 inches of mercury, making it a Category 4 hurricane. Iniki is the strongest hurricane to strike Hawaii Islands in recent history.

2011: Hurricane Erin was off the coast of New Jersey and New York on this day.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 23 of 84



SOMETHING TO "CROW" ABOUT!

Early each morning, often before the sun rises, a "rooster" who lives nearby sends a message announcing to his neighbors that "a new day has arrived - get up and go."

For some, this is unwelcomed news. But for others it is an announcement that a new day has dawned, and there are new opportunities to serve and honor God.

How "roosters" got their name is interesting. All birds - and chickens are considered birds - "roost" at night. So, the one that wakes up first and "leaves the roost" and begins to "crow" is considered "the" rooster. What makes a rooster crow is not known. But how a rooster crows, is.

A rooster never crows with his neck bent and his head down. Whenever he crows, he lifts up his head proudly as if he is thanking his Creator. Roosters never crow with their heads bent.

Psalm 111:1 reminds me of the cry of a rooster as a good way to begin each day. "Praise the Lord! I will extol the Lord with all my heart." Why? The Psalmist then gives thirteen reasons:

"Great are the works of the Lord."

"Glorious and majestic are His deeds."

"His righteousness endures forever."

"The Lord is gracious and compassionate."

"He provides food for those who fear - stand in awe - of Him."

"He has shown His people the power of His world."

"The words of the hands are faithful - trustworthy - steadfast - upright - just - and He provides redemption."

Prayer: How great You are, Heavenly Father, for Your great gifts. Without shame or hesitation, we shout of Your greatness every day! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly. Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them. Psalm 111:1-2

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

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 24 of 84

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 25 of 84



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.09.25

6 43 52 64 65 22

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$381,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 38 Mins
21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.10.25

14 24 38 49 50 5

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$2,750,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 14 Hrs 53
Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.10.25

11 12 35 37 45 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 8 Mins 21
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.10.25

7 25 29 31 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 8 Mins
21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.10.25

2 12 27 31 60 10

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 37
Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.10.25

2 24 45 53 64 5

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$50,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 37
Mins 21 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 26 of 84

Upcoming Groton Events

08/09/2025 Groton Legion 30th Anniversary Celebration
08/07/2025 Groton Firemen Summer Splash in the GHS Parking Lot 7:30-8:30pm
08/11/2025 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 3:30-6pm
08/23/2025 Glacial Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
09/05/2025 Homecoming Parade 1pm
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/06-07/25 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
09/07/2025 Couples Sunflower Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
09/07/2025 9th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm
10/10/2025 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/11/2025 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2025 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/15/2025 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving 11:30am-1:30pm Community Center (Thanksgiving)
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

Income inequality dipped and fewer people moved, according to largest survey of US life

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

Income inequality dipped, more people had college degrees, fewer people moved to a different home and the share of Asian and Hispanic residents increased in the United States last year, according to figures released Thursday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

These year-to-year changes, big and small, from 2023 to 2024 were captured in the bureau's data from the American Community Survey, the largest annual audit of American life. The survey of 3.5 million households asks about more than 40 topics, including income, housing costs, veterans status, computer use, commuting, and education.

Here's a look at how the United States changed last year.

Income inequality dips

Income inequality — or the gap between the highest and lowest earners — in the United States fell nationwide by nearly a half percent from 2023 to 2024, as median household income rose slightly, from \$80,002 to \$81,604.

Five Midwestern states — Iowa, Nebraska, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin — had statistically significant dips, along with Georgia, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Oregon and Puerto Rico.

North Carolina was the only state to see a statistically significant rise in inequality. North Carolina State economist Michael Walden said it reflected the state generating high-paying jobs in tech and other professional sectors, while the post-pandemic labor shortage which raised wages in lower-paying service jobs had ended.

In South Dakota, which had a leading 4% drop, the inequality dip "could reflect stronger growth in the household income among lower and middle income households (or smaller growth in the income of the highest brackets)," state demographer Weiwei Zhang said Wednesday in an email.

In Nebraska, it could be high employment rates across all demographic groups since "high employment leads to income, thus less income inequality," said Josie Schafer, director of the Center for Public Affairs Research at the University of Nebraska Omaha.

In Massachusetts, one of the traditional strengths of the state's economy — high-paying jobs in life science, high tech and research — has been sluggish in the past two years, said Mark Melnik, director of economic and public policy research at a University of Massachusetts Amherst institute.

"The typical jobs in this industry are the kind of thing that helps Massachusetts have the highest per capita (income) in the country but also exacerbates some elements of income inequality," Melnik said.

Greater diversity and fewer people married

The United States became more demographically diverse, and fewer people were married from 2023 to 2024.

The non-Hispanic white population, who identify with only a single race, dropped from 57.1% to 56.3%, while the share of the nation's Asian population rose from 6% to 6.3% and the Hispanic population rose from 19.4% to 20%. The rate of the Black population stayed the same at 12.1%, as did the American Indian Alaska Native alone population at 1%.

In the marriage department, the share of men who have never married increased from 37.2% to 37.6%, and it rose from 31.6% to 32.1% for women.

Fewer people moved, as costs of renting and owning homes rose

Last year, only 11% of U.S. residents moved to another home, compared to 11.3% in the previous year. The decline of people moving this decade has been part of a continuous slide as home prices have skyrocketed in some metros and interest rates have gone up. In 2019, by comparison, 13.7% of U.S. residents moved.

The monthly costs for U.S. homeowners with a mortgage rose to \$2,035 from \$1,960. Homeowners with

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 28 of 84

a mortgage in California (\$3,001), Hawaii (\$2,937), New Jersey (\$2,797), Massachusetts (\$2,755), and the District of Columbia (\$3,181) had the highest median monthly costs.

Costs for renters also increased as the median rent with utilities went from \$1,448 to \$1,487.

Missouri voters and lawmakers clash over who should be able to initiate constitutional amendments

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Missouri voters and the lawmakers they elect could be headed for a clash at the ballot box over the power to set public policy.

Citizen activists rallying Wednesday at the Missouri Capitol kicked off an initiative petition drive for a proposed constitutional amendment that would make it harder for state lawmakers to reverse or revise citizen-led initiatives approved by voters.

Meanwhile, Republican lawmakers at the Capitol for a special session about redistricting are proposing their own constitutional amendment that would make it harder for citizen-initiated constitutional amendments to pass.

The conflicting measures, which both could appear on the 2026 ballot, highlight the growing tension in Missouri and elsewhere between the will of voters and their elected representatives.

"I want our legislators to stop overturning the will of the people," said Lauren Bakker, a suburban St. Louis resident who was among the first to sign the initiative petition backed by the Respect Missouri Voters Coalition.

The initiative pushes back against Missouri lawmakers, who recently took steps to repeal voter-approved initiatives on abortion rights and paid sick leave and imposed more requirements on ballot initiative campaigns.

Nearly 150 bills were introduced across 15 state legislatures this year seeking to make it harder for initiatives to qualify for the ballot or win approval by voters — nearly double the amount of just two years ago, according to the Fairness Project, a progressive group that has backed dozens of ballot initiatives in states.

This year's new laws include one in Republican-led Florida that allows felony charges against individuals if they collect more than 25 signed ballot petitions other than their own or those of immediate family members, and don't register with the state as a petition circulator. Meanwhile, the Republican-led legislatures in North Dakota and South Dakota referred measures to a future ballot proposing a 60% public vote threshold to approve constitutional amendments.

"Lawmakers have consistently around the country enacted restrictions on the citizens' ability to use direct democracy as a check and balance on their power," said Dane Waters, founder of the Initiative and Referendum Institute at the University of Southern California.

Some state lawmakers contend that it's too easy for citizen activists backed by wealthy out-of-state funders to use ballot initiatives to insert controversial and complex policies into state constitutions.

"To change our constitution should be harder," said Missouri state Rep. Bill Lucas, a Republican.

Missouri lawmakers seek a tougher threshold to amend the constitution

About half of the 50 states allow people to bypass their legislatures by gathering signatures to place proposals on the ballot. That includes 16 where proposed constitutional amendments can be placed directly on the ballot by citizen petitions.

In most of those states, a simple majority of statewide voters is all that's needed to approve constitutional amendments. But Colorado requires a 55% vote for most measures, and Florida a 60% vote.

A proposal passed Tuesday by the Missouri House, and now pending in the Senate, would require citizen-initiated amendments to receive a majority vote in each of the state's eight congressional districts to pass. Amendments placed on the ballot by the Legislature would need only a statewide majority, as is currently the case. No other state has a dual standard like that.

Critics say it would be almost impossible for initiative supporters to meet.

"In effect, it's saying we're going to kill the initiative process," said Liz Kester, of Columbia, who is helping

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 29 of 84

with the Respect Missouri Voters initiative.

Democratic lawmakers, who are a minority in Missouri, also raised concerns.

"I can't even get eight out of eight of my family members to decide what we want to cook at our family reunion, let alone get eight congressional districts to all be in line," said state Rep. Marty Joe Murray, of St. Louis.

Republican lawmakers contend that their proposal would force initiatives to win support from both rural and urban areas and from congressional districts represented by both Republicans and Democrats.

"If you're going to change the constitution of Missouri, you will have to have broad consensus," said Republican state Rep. Ed Lewis, who is sponsoring the measure backed by Republican Gov. Mike Kehoe.

Citizen activists seek to rein in legislative powers

On Wednesday, the Respect Missouri Voters Coalition erected a tent outside the Capitol and began gathering petition signatures for a proposed constitutional amendment that would bar anything other than a simple statewide majority vote from being required to pass initiatives. The measure also would bar the Legislature from increasing how many signatures are needed for initiatives to qualify for the ballot, or taking actions that would weaken citizens' initiative and referendum rights.

The proposal also would prohibit the Legislature from changing or repealing citizen-initiated laws or constitutional amendments unless 80% of House and Senate members vote to refer the revisions to a statewide ballot.

The Legislature this year repealed a voter-approved law requiring employers to provide paid sick leave and referred to the ballot a new amendment seeking to undo an abortion-rights amendment passed by voters last November.

John Billman, of Columbia, said he signed initiative petitions for both of those measures. On Wednesday, he signed the Respect Missouri Voters initiative because he said he was tired of the Legislature "weaseling around it, passing laws in some way that undo what the people want."

Supporters want to collect about 300,000 signatures, which would be about three-quarters more than it would need to qualify for the ballot, said Benjamin Singer, co-founder of the Respect Missouri Voters Coalition.

If they succeed, the measure could appear on the ballot alongside the Legislature's proposal, which is titled as the "Protect Missouri Voters" amendment. That could create some confusion — and tough choices — for voters.

"The Legislature is proving our point. The politicians in Jefferson City are shameless in their attempts to trick voters into taking away our freedoms," Singer said.

Lakota Music Project to take program on tour this fall

By MOLLY WETSCH/South Dakota News Watch South Dakota News Watch

There are very few places in the world where one can listen to a violin and a cello played alongside a Lakota drum and singers.

In October, the Lakota Music Project will travel South Dakota for its Shared Vision Tour and give communities across the state a chance to hear just that.

The Lakota Music Project, an initiative of the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra, began as a "conviction" of Delta David Gier, music director of the symphony. Just six months after he started that role in 2004, he began to think about the community that the symphony served. When he first started reaching out to Lakota musicians, he was met with skepticism.

"It was surprising, but it was my first lesson in learning how to listen," Gier told News Watch. "Barry LeBeau, who was working with United Sioux Tribes in Pierre, said, 'You're crazy, but I'd like to try to help you.'"

Gier eventually started conversations with Lakota musicians across the state with the help of LeBeau. That led him to Melvin Young Bear, of the New Porcupine Singers, a drumming group from the Pine Ridge reservation.

It would be four years after that meeting that the orchestra and the singers would play a single note

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 30 of 84

on a stage together.

"There was a pivotal moment of a snowy evening in March in Pine Ridge. It must've been about 2007 and it was our principal string quartet, our principal woodwind quintet and the New Porcupine Singers," Gier said. "It was really awkward like, 'What are we doing here?' But we just started playing music for each other. Then (Young Bear) said, 'Our hope is that we will pass on this tradition to the next generation.' I said 'Bingo. That's exactly what we do, too.'"

First Lakota Music Project tour was in 2009

Now, the Lakota Music Project has been performing new programs since the inaugural tour in 2009, which saw performances on the Pine Ridge, Santee Sioux and Rosebud reservations.

The model, a concert split into two parts with individual performances from both groups followed by collaborative performances, has remained largely unchanged. The Creekside Singers, from the Pine Ridge reservation, now work in collaboration with the orchestra.

Emmanuel Black Bear, current drum keeper of the Creekside Singers, has been involved with the Lakota Music Project since its inception. He told News Watch that much of the work the group does is on building understanding alongside rehearsing and performing music.

"If we focus solely on our differences, we will probably never get along. So we have to focus on our similarities and how we make this work and how we do it in a positive way," Black Bear said. "We've been doing this for so many years that a lot of us have become good friends with each other. We have that trust between us, so we're able to come together with music."

And there are plenty of differences between traditional Lakota music and traditional symphonic music. Differences in the music

Orchestras typically play with sheet music, and Lakota musicians typically do not. The way that a piece begins will vary greatly between the two groups, with orchestras starting on the same note every time and Lakota singers following the lead of the drum keeper.

Gier said the project has been successful not only in its national prominence – the project has played at the Museum of the American Indian in Washington and for lawmakers in Pierre – but in how it has connected two musical communities in the state, which for most of history have never interacted with one another.

"There's been a lot of tears in rehearsals, not out of frustration but out of joy. You see how hard we're working to fuse these two traditions together to create something beautiful that people will be able to understand and come away with a sense of possibility," Gier said.

This year, Derek Bermel, a composer from New York, is premiering work with the tour.

Bermel has worked in music composition alongside a variety of cultures, from West Africa to Belgium. His work with the Lakota Music Project was the first time composing music from a Native American perspective.

"I wanted the musicians in the Creekside Singers to feel comfortable. As long as I was focused on them feeling comfortable, I felt that the audience would also feel comfortable," Bermel told News Watch.

"I heard this very powerful sound and I recognized that they were great melody writers. They were brilliant melodists, and that was the core. They produced these melodies that were like iron. They were solid. They were perfectly constructed. Like a tree trunk, they couldn't be broken."

He worked alongside the Creekside Singers and the symphony to write orchestral accompaniments and notate music that the singers gifted to the project.

"You keep trying to get closer to something that's inevitable, which is this shared space between these two cultures musically," Bermel said. "The most important thing was to understand the way they think about their music from a structural perspective."

Tour aims to reach underserved communities

The program's tour will take the music to six locations in South Dakota, three of which are on reservations: Sinte Gleska University on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, Wagner Community School on the Yankton Indian Reservation and Lakota Tech High School on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

The tour begins Oct. 13 at the Crazy Horse Memorial in the southern Black Hills and move east through the week, ending Oct. 18 at the LSS Multi-Cultural Center in Sioux Falls.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 31 of 84

The concerts are free to attend, which is essential to reaching all members of the community, Gier said. The performances at schools will be particularly meaningful to Black Bear, whose role as drum keeper requires that he not only protect the sacred drum but the tradition of Lakota music itself. He frequently works with youth programs to pass on critical cultural skills and ideals.

"When we talk about preservation of cultures, preservation isn't the recording of things. It's the teaching on. If we teach on, we're preserving our culture, our language," Black Bear said.

While the tour will primarily make its way through many Native communities across the state, Black Bear said that the goal – to connect communities across cultures – remains the same no matter who's in the audience.

"If my people can see the message, we've done it," Black Bear said. "If non-Native people can see the message or hear the message, we've also accomplished what we're setting out to do."

This story was originally published by South Dakota News Watch and distributed through a partnership with The Associated Press.

Conservative activist Charlie Kirk assassinated at Utah university; shooter still at large

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, MARK SHERMAN and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

OREM, Utah (AP) — Charlie Kirk, a conservative activist and close ally of President Donald Trump who played an influential role in rallying young Republican voters, was shot and killed at a Utah college event in what the governor called a political assassination.

Authorities say Kirk was killed with one gunshot from a rooftop on Wednesday. Whoever fired the gun then slipped away amid the chaos of screams and students fleeing the Utah Valley University campus. Federal, state and local authorities were searching for an unidentified shooter early Thursday and were working what they called "multiple active crime scenes."

"This is a dark day for our state. It's a tragic day for our nation," Utah Gov. Spencer Cox said. "I want to be very clear this is a political assassination."

Two people were detained Wednesday, but neither was determined to be connected to the shooting and both were released, Utah public safety officials said.

Authorities did not immediately identify a motive behind Kirk's killing, but the circumstances of the shooting drew renewed attention to an escalating threat of political violence in the United States that in the last several years has cut across the ideological spectrum. The assassination drew bipartisan condemnation, but a national reckoning over ways to prevent political grievances from manifesting as deadly violence seemed elusive.

Videos posted to social media from Utah Valley University show Kirk speaking into a handheld microphone while sitting under a white tent emblazoned with the slogans "The American Comeback" and "Prove Me Wrong." A gunshot rings out, and Kirk can be seen reaching up with his right hand as blood gushes from the left side of his neck. Stunned spectators gasp and scream before people start running away.

Kirk was taking questions about gun violence

Kirk was speaking at a debate hosted by his nonprofit political youth organization, Arizona-based Turning Point USA, at the Sorensen Center courtyard on campus. Immediately before the shooting, Kirk was taking questions from an audience member about mass shootings and gun violence.

"Do you know how many transgender Americans have been mass shooters over the last 10 years?" the person asked. Kirk responded, "Too many."

The questioner followed up: "Do you know how many mass shooters there have been in America over the last 10 years?"

"Counting or not counting gang violence?" Kirk asked.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 32 of 84

Then the shot rang out.

The shooter, who Cox pledged would be held accountable in a state with the death penalty, wore dark clothing and fired from a building roof some distance away.

Madison Lattin was watching only a few dozen feet from Kirk's left when she heard the bullet hit Kirk.

"Blood is falling and dripping down, and you're just like so scared, not just for him but your own safety," she said.

Lattin said she saw people drop to the ground in an eerie silence pierced immediately by cries. She ran while others splashed through decorative pools to get away. Some fell and were trampled in the stampede. People lost their shoes, backpacks, folding chairs and water bottles in the frenzy.

When Lattin later learned that Kirk had died, she wept, she said, describing him as a role model who had showed her how to be determined and fight for the truth.

Trump calls Kirk a 'martyr for truth'

About 3,000 people were in attendance, according to a statement from the Utah Department of Public Safety. The university police department had six officers working the event, along with Kirk's own security detail, authorities said.

Trump announced Kirk's death on social media and praised the 31-year-old, who was co-founder and CEO of Turning Point, as "Great, and even Legendary." Later Wednesday, he released a recorded video from the White House in which he called Kirk a "martyr for truth and freedom" and blamed the rhetoric of the "radical left" for the killing.

Utah Valley University said the campus was immediately evacuated after the shooting, with officers escorting people to safety. The campus will be closed until Monday.

Meanwhile, armed officers walked around the neighborhood bordering the campus, knocking on doors and asking for any information residents might have on the shooting. Helicopters buzzed overhead.

Wednesday's event, billed as the first stop on Kirk's "The American Comeback Tour," had generated a polarizing campus reaction. An online petition calling for university administrators to bar Kirk from appearing received nearly 1,000 signatures. The university issued a statement last week citing First Amendment rights and affirming its "commitment to free speech, intellectual inquiry, and constructive dialogue."

Last week, Kirk posted on X images of news clips showing his visit was sparking controversy. He wrote, "What's going on in Utah?"

Condemnation from across the political spectrum

The shooting drew swift condemnation across the political aisle as Democratic officials joined Trump, who ordered flags lowered to half-staff and issued a presidential proclamation, and Republican allies of Kirk in decrying the violence.

"The attack on Charlie Kirk is disgusting, vile, and reprehensible," Democratic California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who last March hosted Kirk on his podcast, posted on X.

"The murder of Charlie Kirk breaks my heart. My deepest sympathies are with his wife, two young children, and friends," said Gabrielle Giffords, the former Democratic congresswoman who was wounded in a 2011 shooting in her Arizona district.

The Kirk shooting appeared poised to become part of a spike of political violence that has touched a range of ideologies and representatives of both major political parties. The attacks include the assassination of a Minnesota state lawmaker and her husband at their house in June, the firebombing of a Colorado parade to demand Hamas release hostages and a fire set at the house of Pennsylvania's governor, who is Jewish, in April. The most notorious of these events is the shooting of Trump during a Pennsylvania campaign rally last year.

Former Utah congressman Jason Chaffetz, who was at Wednesday's event, told the Fox News Channel that he didn't believe Kirk had enough security.

Turning Point was founded in suburban Chicago in 2012 by Kirk, then 18, and William Montgomery, a tea party activist, to proselytize on college campuses for low taxes and limited government. It was not an immediate success.

But Kirk's zeal for confronting liberals in academia eventually won over an influential set of conservative

financiers.

Despite early misgivings, Turning Point enthusiastically backed Trump after he clinched the GOP nomination in 2016. Kirk served as a personal aide to Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son, during the general election campaign.

Soon, Kirk was a regular presence on cable TV, where he leaned into the culture wars and heaped praise on the then-president. Trump and his son were equally effusive and often spoke at Turning Point conferences.

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Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 34 of 84

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Polish PM Tusk vows to press ahead with military modernization after Russian drone incursion

By CLAUDIA CIOBANU Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk pledged Thursday to push ahead with a “great modernization program” for his country’s military, a day after Russian drones crossed into Poland and amplified international tensions around Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, including what the Kremlin’s future territorial ambitions might be.

European officials described Wednesday’s incursion, which occurred during a wave of recent unrelenting Russian strikes on Ukraine, as a deliberate provocation, forcing the NATO alliance to confront a potential threat in its airspace for the first time.

It deepened longstanding fears that the three-year war between Poland’s neighbors could precipitate a wider conflict. U.S.-led efforts to steer Moscow and Kyiv toward a peace settlement have so far failed to get traction.

The Polish Air Navigation Agency announced Thursday morning that Poland was introducing air traffic restrictions in the eastern part of the country. It said the step was taken at the request of the Polish army for national security reasons but did not elaborate.

Poland said some of the drones that entered its airspace Wednesday came from Belarus, where Russian and local troops have begun gathering for war games scheduled to start Friday. Poland is closing its border with Belarus at midnight Thursday, a planned move also associated with the military exercises.

Underscoring the global repercussions of the war, China on Thursday urged Poland to keep open a section of the Belarus border for a China-EU freight track that crosses it. The rail line is part of China’s Belt and Road Initiative to boost trade with other countries.

Tusk addressed Polish troops at an air base in the central city of Lask, praising their quick action and that of NATO allied forces from the Netherlands that responded to the multiple Russian drone incursions.

The response also brought questions, however, about the wisdom of using advanced fighter jets to shoot down relatively cheap drones.

Poland expects to receive its first F-35 fighter jets from the United States next year, he said. It will be the first delivery of some of the 32 aircraft expected by 2030 as part of a support package finalized five years ago, Tusk said.

Polish President Karol Nawrocki also visited a military air base Thursday, striking a defiant tone in a statement that said Poland “doesn’t get scared by Russian drones.”

Nawrocki described the incursion as “an attempt to test our abilities, the ability to react.” He was visiting a base in Poznan-Krzesiny, in western Poland.

The Kremlin said it had nothing to add to a Wednesday statement by Russia’s Defense Ministry, which insisted that Russian forces had not targeted Poland and that it was open to discuss the incident with Polish officials.

It also dismissed talk of the incursion being a provocation. “The statements we hear from Warsaw: well, they’re nothing new. This rhetoric is typical of almost all European capitals,” Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said.

The European Council on Foreign Relations, a think tank, concluded that Putin is testing Europe’s resolve as it endeavors to address the threat from Moscow while the United States demands it shoulder more of the financial burden.

“Inconsistency between words and deeds seem to have eroded Europe’s credibility in Russia’s eyes,” it said in an analysis published Friday.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday offered an ambiguous initial response to Russia’s drone incursion. “What’s with Russia violating Poland’s airspace with drones? Here we go!” Trump posted on social media.

Trump told Nawrocki, the Polish president, in the White House last week that the U.S. will maintain a

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 36 of 84

robust military presence.

Several European leaders said they believed the incursion amounted to an intentional expansion of Russia's assault against Ukraine.

"Russia's war is escalating, not ending," European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas told reporters in Brussels on Wednesday. "What (Russian President Vladimir) Putin wants to do is to test us. What happened in Poland is a game changer," she said, adding that it should result in stronger sanctions.

Polish airspace has been violated many times since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, but never on this scale in Poland or anywhere else in NATO territory.

Russian drone attacks on civilian areas are daily occurrences in Ukraine. The Ukrainian military has successfully developed drones to combat the attacks, called interceptors. The war has spurred fast-track development of high-tech drone technology.

Ukraine's Defense Minister Denys Shmyhal and his British counterpart John Healey signed an agreement for the United Kingdom to produce Ukrainian interceptor drones, Shmyhal said Thursday on Telegram, as other countries strive to modernize their militaries.

The Ukrainian air force said Thursday its forces intercepted 62 out of 66 Russian strike and decoy drones in the country's airspace overnight.

In the city of Sumy in northeastern Ukraine, Russian drones and debris from those intercepted damaged an educational facility, apartment blocks and the landmark Holy Resurrection Cathedral, regional head Oleh Hryhorov wrote in Telegram.

What to know about the fatal shooting of Charlie Kirk, the co-founder of Turning Point USA

By The Associated Press undefined

Charlie Kirk, the CEO and co-founder of the conservative youth organization Turning Point USA, was fatally shot at an event at a Utah college.

Kirk was a top podcaster, culture warrior and ally of President Donald Trump. He led an effort to remake the GOP's get-out-the-vote effort in the 2024 election based on the theory there were thousands of Trump supporters who rarely vote but could be persuaded to vote.

His killing Wednesday is the latest example of political violence in the U.S. spanning a range of political ideologies and affecting both major political parties.

Here's what to know about Kirk's shooting:

One gunshot fired from a roof

Kirk was speaking at a debate hosted by Turning Point USA at Utah Valley University when authorities said the shooter fired from a roof.

Videos posted to social media show Kirk speaking into a handheld microphone while sitting under a white tent. A single shot rings out and Kirk reaches up with his right hand as blood gushes from the left side of his neck.

Utah Valley is the state's largest public university with an enrollment of 47,000. It's about 40 miles (64 kilometers) south of the state capital of Salt Lake City.

The hunt for Kirk's killer

The shooter targeted one person, said Beau Mason, the commissioner of the Utah Department of Public Safety.

Gov. Spencer Cox called the killing a "political assassination."

A person of interest was in custody Wednesday evening, Cox said, though no charges were immediately announced. Officials had no information indicating a second person was involved, the Republican governor said.

Officers were seen looking at a photo on their phones and showing it to people to see if they recognized a person of interest. Authorities said the shooter wore dark clothing.

Two people were detained Wednesday, but neither was determined to be connected to the shooting and

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 37 of 84

both were released, public safety officials said.

The university said the campus was immediately evacuated and remained closed. Classes were canceled until further notice. Those still on campus were asked to stay in place until police officers could safely escort them off.

Kirk's rise from Trump aide to major conservative influencer

Kirk was 18 years old when he co-founded Turning Point in suburban Chicago in 2012 with William Montgomery, a tea party activist. They aimed to take their ideas for low taxes and limited government to college campuses.

Turning Point enthusiastically backed Trump after he clinched the GOP nomination for president in 2016. Kirk served as a personal aide to the then-candidate's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., during the general election campaign.

The Trump connection helped fuel Turning Point's rise to prominence. Soon, Kirk was a regular presence on cable TV, where he leaned into the culture wars and heaped praise on the president.

Contributions to the group doubled and then tripled — eventually climbing to \$79.2 million in 2022, according to an analysis of publicly available tax filings. The group states that it now has a presence on nearly 4,000 high school and college campuses, operating as a conservative lifestyle brand that promotes hundreds of online influencers.

Kirk was known for provocative statements on race that he used to court Gen Z voters.

"I'm sorry. If I see a Black pilot, I'm going to be like, 'Boy, I hope he's qualified,'" Kirk said during a 2024 podcast episode with fellow right-wing activist Jack Posobiec.

Kirk staunchly opposed the enactment of Juneteenth as a federal holiday. He said the move to elevate the date was motivated by "anti-American" sentiment that promoted "a neo-segregationist view" that he claimed sought to supplant Independence Day.

Politicians unite in condemning the attack

Republicans and Democrats alike swiftly condemned the attack.

Trump ordered flags lowered to half-staff and issued a presidential proclamation. The president, who sustained a minor ear injury when he was shot at a campaign event last year, said he and Kirk had a close relationship.

He described Kirk on Truth Social as a "great guy from top to bottom. GOD BLESS HIM!"

Democratic California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who last March hosted Kirk on his podcast, posted on X: "The attack on Charlie Kirk is disgusting, vile, and reprehensible."

Musk loses crown as the world's richest person to Larry Ellison and then snatches it back

By BERNARD CONDON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The battle among billionaires for bragging rights as the world's richest person got heated Wednesday with the surprising surge of an old contender: Larry Ellison.

In a stunning few minutes after markets opened, stock in Ellison's Oracle Corp. rocketed more than a third, enough for him to temporarily wrest the title from its longtime holder Elon Musk and hand it to the software giant's co-founder.

But the stock market is fickle, and Musk was back on top by the end of the day, at least according to Bloomberg, as Oracle gave up a bit of its earlier gains.

For those keeping score, the difference now is a billion, which isn't much given the size of the figures: Musk's \$384.2 billion versus \$383.2 billion for Ellison.

The dueling fortunes are so big each could fund the lifestyles of 5 million typical American families for a year, about the entire population of Florida, allowing them to all quit their jobs. Or they could just tell all of South Africa to take a vacation for year and produce nothing, based on its gross domestic product.

The brief switch in the ranking came after a blockbuster earnings report from Oracle powered by mul-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 38 of 84

tibillion dollar orders from customers as the artificial-intelligence race heats up.

Musk became the world's richest person for the first time four years ago. A big reason is his stake in a hot, but now cooling, electric car maker, Tesla.

Stock in the company has been moving in the opposite direction of Oracle's, dropping 14% so far this year. Musk also controls several private companies, including rocket maker SpaceX, his artificial intelligence company xAI and the former Twitter, now called X.

Ellison owns about 40% of Oracle, which means its surging stock added \$100 billion to his net worth in little over a half-hour after the stock market opened.

The night before, after trading had closed, the company announced in an earnings report that it had struck more than \$300 billion worth of new deals, including contracts with the OpenAI, Meta, Nvidia and Musk's xAI. It said that it now expects revenue from its cloud infrastructure business to jump 77% to \$18 billion this fiscal year. then rise to \$144 billion in four years after that.

Ellison said in an earnings call that Oracle would not just be making money from its computing centers that help build the next chatbots, but from the day-to-day running of those AI systems to run robots in factories, design drugs in laboratories, place bets in financial markets and automate legal and sales work at companies.

In other words, Ellison's surge in wealth Wednesday morning reflected investor expectations that computers will take over many jobs now done by humans — and Oracle will benefit.

Or as the 81-year-old said on the call, "AI Changes Everything."

Musk is hoping the same for Tesla and his own net worth, but he's been struggling to convince investors.

The company had been promising a big turnaround in electric car sales after they fell sharply earlier this year, but the bounce back hasn't happened. Musk has been downplaying the bad numbers by trying to shift investors' focus to Tesla's other business of making robots and advances in the artificial intelligence behind its cars and robotaxis.

While he keeps talking up the Tesla future, though, the bad news keeps coming.

Tesla sales in the European Union plunged 40% earlier this summer, the seventh month in row of drops, as customers balked at buying his cars after he took to X to support extreme right-wing politicians there. The company has been losing market share in the U.S., too, as buyers angry with his embrace of Donald Trump have stayed away from Tesla showrooms.

Oracle stock closed Wednesday at \$328.33, a 36% jump. Tesla was up less than 1% at \$347.79.

Israeli airstrikes on Yemen kill at least 35, Houthi officials say

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and LORNE COOK Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel launched another round of heavy airstrikes in Yemen on Wednesday, killing dozens just days after Houthi rebels carried out a drone attack that struck an Israeli airport.

The Israeli strikes killed at least 35 people and wounded more than 130 others, the Houthi-run health ministry said. Search crews were continuing to dig through the rubble.

Most of those killed were in Sanaa, the capital, where a military headquarters and a fuel station were hit, the health ministry said.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, meanwhile, said she would seek sanctions and a partial trade suspension against Israel over the war in the Gaza Strip. The move adds to Israel's already unprecedented global isolation as it grapples with the fallout from its strike targeting Hamas leaders in U.S.-allied Qatar on Tuesday.

Al-Masirah, a Houthi-controlled satellite news channel, said one of the strikes on Yemen hit a military headquarters building in central Sanaa. Neighboring houses were also damaged, it reported.

Israel has previously launched waves of airstrikes in response to the Houthis' firing missiles and drones at Israel. The Iran-backed Houthis say they are supporting Hamas and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, and on Sunday, sent a drone that breached Israel's multilayered air defenses and slammed into a southern airport.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 39 of 84

'No safe zone'

Israel reiterated its calls for some 1 million people to evacuate Gaza City, where it has been bombing high-rises and ramping up a new offensive aimed at taking over the largest Palestinian city, already devastated from earlier raids and experiencing famine.

The Israeli military said Wednesday it soon will increase the pace of targeted strikes near Gaza City as it readies for the next phases of its operation in what it calls Hamas' last remaining stronghold.

Palestinians have been ordered to head south to a designated safe zone where hundreds of thousands already live in squalid tent camps and where Israel regularly strikes what it says are militant targets. Many have refused to leave Gaza City, saying they no longer have the strength or money to relocate.

"There is no safe zone in the Gaza Strip," Fawzi Muftah said as people walked alongside a line of vehicles loaded with mattresses, carpets and other belongings. "Danger is everywhere."

Amal Sobh, displaced with 30 relatives — including 13 orphans — said a three-wheel vehicle carrying their belongings broke down and they have no fuel, leaving them stranded.

"We don't have good blankets or good beddings, and winter is coming, what do we do for our children? We don't even have a proper tent to shelter us," said Sobh, whose husband was arrested during the war.

Airstrikes on Yemen

Israel's strikes in Yemen followed earlier attacks that killed the Houthi prime minister and other top officials in a major escalation of the nearly 2-year-old conflict between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group.

The strikes on Wednesday hit a station that provides fuel to hospitals in the capital, Essam al-Mutawakel, spokesman for rebel-run Yemen Petroleum Company, told the Al-Masirah news channel. Residents said they heard violent explosions in multiple areas of the city, with fire and smoke in the skies.

The Houthi media office said Israel also hit a government facility in the strategic city of Hazm, the capital of northern Jawf province. Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree said rebels fired surface-to-air missiles at the Israeli fighter jets.

Houthi-backed President Mahdi al-Mashat vowed on Wednesday to continue the attacks, warning Israelis to "stay alarmed since the response is coming without fail."

'Man-made famine'

The Gaza Health Ministry says 126 Palestinians, including 26 children, have died of causes related to malnutrition since international experts announced famine in Gaza City on Aug. 22. A total of 404 people, including 141 children, have died of causes related to malnutrition since the war began.

"Man-made famine can never be a weapon of war. For the sake of the children, for the sake of humanity. This must stop," von der Leyen said Wednesday, to applause in the European Parliament at its meeting in Strasbourg, France.

Israel denies there is starvation in Gaza and says it allows in enough humanitarian aid. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar, in a social media post, said von der Leyen had succumbed to pressures that undermine Israel-Europe relations.

Von der Leyen plans to freeze support to Israel given by the European Union's executive branch although it was not immediately clear how much it provides to Israel and what it is used for.

The 27-nation EU is deeply divided in its approach to Israel and the Palestinians, and it's unclear whether a majority will be found to endorse the sanctions and trade measures called for by von der Leyen.

Outrage over strike on Qatar

The strike on Qatar, a U.S. ally, drew widespread condemnation from countries in the Mideast and beyond. It also marked a dramatic escalation in the region and risked upending talks aimed at ending the war and freeing hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza.

Hamas claims its senior leadership, who were weighing a new U.S. ceasefire proposal, survived the strike, which killed two lower-ranking members and three bodyguards.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, abducting 251 people and killing some 1,200, mostly civilians. Forty-eight hostages are still held inside Gaza, around 20 of them believed to be alive.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed more than 64,600 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry does not say how many were civilians or combatants but says women and children make up around half the dead.

Israel says it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames Hamas for their deaths because the militants operate in densely populated areas. Large parts of major cities in Gaza have been completely destroyed.

Her age -- and maybe her name -- are mysteries, but this girl could be North Korea's next leader

By HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Likely in her early teens and bearing a close resemblance to her mother, the daughter of North Korea leader Kim Jong Un is increasingly viewed as the country's likely next ruler.

The girl, believed to be named Kim Ju Ae, was in the spotlight again as she accompanied her father on his high-profile China trip, his own first visit to a major gathering of world leaders and her first known trip abroad.

Video and images carried by North Korean state media showed her right behind her father and ahead of Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui as they got off a train in Beijing, clapping as officials at the North Korean Embassy in Beijing bowed to her father, and standing near him as he was seated with senior officials in a meeting room inside his train.

South Korea's spy agency said Sept. 11 that it assesses that the trip solidified her status as her father's likely heir.

She is believed to be 12 or 13 years old. Not much else is known about her, but her repeated appearances at high-profile events with her father have prompted speculation that she's being groomed as North Korea's next leader.

China trip is analyzed intensively

In a closed-door briefing for lawmakers, the South Korean National Intelligence Service said Kim Jong Un was believed to have brought his daughter to China to help her acquire overseas experience and cement her status as his likely heir, according to lawmaker Park Sunwon, who attended the meeting.

The spy agency cited coverage of her appearances in China in the country's main state TV station and newspaper, which target the ordinary citizens, according to lawmaker Lee Seong Kweun, who was also present at the meeting.

Her name and age are unconfirmed

North Korean state media outlets have never published her name, referring to her as Kim Jong Un's "respected" or "most beloved" child.

The belief that she is named Ju Ae is based on an account by former NBA champion Dennis Rodman, in which he recalled holding Kim Jong Un's baby daughter during a trip to Pyongyang in 2013.

Her exact age is unconfirmed but South Korean intelligence officials believe she was born in 2013.

In 2023, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers it assessed Kim Jong Un and his wife Ri Sol Ju also have an older son and a younger third child whose gender is unknown.

She's being increasingly showcased in her father's events

Kim Jong Un allowed his daughter to be seen in public for the first time during a test launch of an inter-continental ballistic missile in November 2022. Photos in state media showed Kim Ju Ae wearing a white coat and red shoes as she watched a soaring missile from a distance and walked hand-in-hand with her father.

Her carefully-crafted appearances have included missile tests, military parades, and the launch of a naval destroyer in April.

Kim Jong Un has recently expanded his daughter's public appearances beyond military events to include some of his most ambitious economic projects and cultural events, including the opening of a beach resort in June.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 41 of 84

Some question her chances to take over a male-dominated system

South Korea's National Intelligence Service issued a careful assessment last year that it views Kim Ju Ae as her father's likely successor, citing a comprehensive analysis of her public activities and the state protocols provided to her.

However, some outside experts disagree with that assessment, citing Kim Jong Un's relatively young age and the extremely male-dominated nature of North Korea's power hierarchy.

In its Thursday's briefing at parliament, the National Intelligence Service assessed that Kim has no major health issues and that he conducted official schedules in China smoothly.

Since its foundation in 1948, North Korea has been successively ruled by male members of the Kim family — Kim's father Kim Jong Il and grandfather Kim Il Sung. Kim Jong Un inherited power in late 2011 upon his father's death.

As Nepal's army tries to restore order, capital's residents ask what's next

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Residents of Nepal's capital rushed to buy groceries Thursday morning when the army briefly lifted a curfew it imposed to quell violent protests that toppled the country's government, as confusion set in about who would govern the Himalayan nation.

Nepal army, which took control of the capital Tuesday night after two days of protests that burned government buildings and businesses, lifted the curfew for four hours Thursday morning. People rushed to buy rice, vegetables and meat, while others took the opportunity to pray at Hindu temples.

Armed soldiers were guarding the streets, checking vehicles and offering assistance to those in need.

It remained unclear who would take control of the government as the search for an interim leader continued.

Nepalis wonder who's in charge

When the protests prompted Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli to resign Tuesday, the country's ceremonial President Ram Chandra Poudel asked him to lead a transitional government until a new one could be put in place. But Oli fled from his official residence, and his whereabouts were not clear.

Residents of the capital wondered who was in charge. "I feel there should be an election soonest and new leaders who are able to work for the country should be elected," said Sanu Bohara, a shop owner. "After all this what we need is peace. I feel there should not have been so much destruction, but that has already happened."

Anup Keshar Thapa, a retired government officer who was looking at the charred official residences of ministers, said it was not clear who would lead the country and if people would actually listen to them. "If the protests had gone in an organized way, it would be clear who was leading," he said.

Representatives of the protesters met with military officials at the army headquarters in Kathmandu on Wednesday to discuss a transitional leader, with some of them pushing for Sushila Karki, a popular former chief justice.

Rehan Raj Dangal, a representative of the protesters, said his group has proposed to military leaders that Karki head an interim government. Karki, the only woman to serve as chief justice of Nepal's Supreme Court, was a popular figure when she served in the post in 2016 and 2017.

However, other protesters among a crowd gathered outside the army headquarters opposed Karki.

Anger at social media ban triggered protests

Demonstrations by thousands of protesters were sparked Monday by a short-lived government ban on social media. platforms including Facebook, X and YouTube, which the government said had failed to register and submit to oversight.

The protests drew a police crackdown in which officers opened fire, and escalated Tuesday with attacks on government buildings.

The social media ban was lifted on Tuesday, but the demonstrations continued, fueled by rage over the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 42 of 84

deaths of protesters, which protesters blamed on police.

The protests spiraled to reflect broader discontent. Many young people are angry about “nepo kids” of political leaders who seem to enjoy luxury lifestyles and numerous advantages while most youth struggle to find work.

With youth unemployment running at about 20% last year, according to the World Bank, the government estimates that more than 2,000 young people leave the country every day to seek work in the Middle East or Southeast Asia.

Protesters set fires at the the parliament building, the presidential residence, the central secretariat that houses the offices of the prime minister and key ministries, and the prime minister’s official residence.

Smoke was still rising from those buildings on Wednesday.

The building of Kantipur publication, Nepal’s biggest media outlet, also was torched and damaged. Car showrooms were also torched and burned-out vehicles dotted the streets.

The military takes control

The military is rarely mobilized in Nepal, and soldiers initially stayed in their barracks as police lost control of the situation. Late Tuesday, the security forces started to mobilize, saying they were committed to preserving law and order.

The overall death toll in the violence has reached 30, the Health Ministry said Wednesday, with 1,033 people injured. The death and injuries were rising as reports were trickling in from other parts of the country about the casualties.

On Wednesday, soldiers quelled a jailbreak in the heart of Kathmandu. Inmates at the main jail had overpowered guards, set fire to buildings and tried to escape. Soldiers fired into the air, apprehended the escaping inmates and transferred them to other jails. No injuries were reported.

Conservative activist Charlie Kirk assassinated at Utah university

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, MARK SHERMAN and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

OREM, Utah (AP) — Charlie Kirk, a conservative activist and close ally of President Donald Trump who played an influential role in rallying young Republican voters, was shot and killed Wednesday at a Utah college event in what the governor called a political assassination carried out from a rooftop.

“This is a dark day for our state. It’s a tragic day for our nation,” said Utah Gov. Spencer Cox. “I want to be very clear this is a political assassination.”

No suspect was in custody late Wednesday, though authorities were searching for a new person of interest, according to a law enforcement official familiar with the matter who was not authorized to discuss the situation by name and spoke on condition of anonymity. Two people were detained earlier in the day but neither was determined to have had any connection to the shooting and both have been released, Utah public safety officials said.

Authorities did not immediately identify a motive but the circumstances of the shooting drew renewed attention to an escalating threat of political violence in the United States that in the last several years has cut across the ideological spectrum. The assassination drew bipartisan condemnation, but a national reckoning over ways to prevent political grievances from manifesting as deadly violence seemed elusive.

Videos posted to social media from Utah Valley University show Kirk speaking into a handheld microphone while sitting under a white tent emblazoned with the slogans “The American Comeback” and “Prove Me Wrong.” A single shot rings out and Kirk can be seen reaching up with his right hand as a large volume of blood gushes from the left side of his neck. Stunned spectators are heard gasping and screaming before people start to run away. The Associated Press was able to confirm the videos were taken at Sorensen Center courtyard on the Utah Valley University campus.

Kirk was speaking at a debate hosted by his nonprofit political organization. Immediately before the shooting, Kirk was taking questions from an audience member about mass shootings and gun violence.

“Do you know how many transgender Americans have been mass shooters over the last 10 years?” the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 43 of 84

person asked. Kirk responded, "Too many."

The questioner followed up: "Do you know how many mass shooters there have been in America over the last 10 years?"

"Counting or not counting gang violence?" Kirk asked.

Then a single shot rang out. The shooter, who Cox pledged would be held accountable in a state with the death penalty, wore dark clothing and fired from a building roof some distance away to the courtyard where the event took place.

Some 3,000 people were in attendance, according to a statement from the Utah Department of Public Safety, which also said the university police department had six officers working the event along with Kirk's own security detail.

The death was announced on social media by Trump, who praised the 31-year-old Kirk, the co-founder and CEO of the youth organization Turning Point USA, as "Great, and even Legendary." Later Wednesday, he released a recorded video from the White House in which he called Kirk a "martyr for truth and freedom" and blamed the rhetoric of the "radical left" for the killing.

Utah Valley University said the campus was immediately evacuated and remained closed. Classes were canceled until further notice. Those still on campus were asked to stay in place until police officers could safely escort them off campus. Armed officers walked around the neighborhood bordering the campus, knocking on doors and asking for information on the shooter.

Officers were seen looking at a photo on their phones and showing it to people to see if they recognized a person of interest.

The event, billed as the first stop on Kirk's "The American Comeback Tour," had generated a polarizing campus reaction. An online petition calling for university administrators to bar Kirk from appearing received nearly 1,000 signatures. The university issued a statement last week citing First Amendment rights and affirming its "commitment to free speech, intellectual inquiry, and constructive dialogue."

Last week, Kirk posted on X images of news clips showing his visit was sparking controversy. He wrote, "What's going on in Utah?"

The shooting drew swift condemnation across the political aisle as Democratic officials joined Trump, who ordered flags lowered to half-staff and issued a presidential proclamation, and Republican allies of Kirk in decrying the violence.

"The attack on Charlie Kirk is disgusting, vile, and reprehensible," Democratic California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who last March hosted Kirk on his podcast, posted on X.

"The murder of Charlie Kirk breaks my heart. My deepest sympathies are with his wife, two young children, and friends," said Gabrielle Giffords, the former Democratic congresswoman who was wounded in a 2011 shooting in her Arizona district.

The shooting appeared poised to become part of a spike of political violence that has touched a range of ideologies and representatives of both major parties. The attacks include the assassination of a Minnesota state lawmaker and her husband at their house in June, the firebombing of a Colorado parade to demand Hamas release hostages, and a fire set at the house of Pennsylvania's governor, who is Jewish, in April. The most notorious of these events is the shooting of Trump during a campaign rally last year.

Former Utah congressman Jason Chaffetz, a Republican who was at Wednesday's event, said in an interview on Fox News Channel that he heard one shot and saw Kirk go back.

"It seemed like it was a close shot," Chaffetz said, who seemed shaken as he spoke.

He said there was a light police presence at the event and Kirk had some security but not enough.

"Utah is one of the safest places on the planet," he said. "And so we just don't have these types of things."

Turning Point was founded in suburban Chicago in 2012 by Kirk, then 18, and William Montgomery, a tea party activist, to proselytize on college campuses for low taxes and limited government. It was not an immediate success.

But Kirk's zeal for confronting liberals in academia eventually won over an influential set of conservative financiers.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 44 of 84

Despite early misgivings, Turning Point enthusiastically backed Trump after he clinched the GOP nomination in 2016. Kirk served as a personal aide to Donald Trump Jr., the president's eldest son, during the general election campaign.

Soon, Kirk was a regular presence on cable TV, where he leaned into the culture wars and heaped praise on the then-president. Trump and his son were equally effusive and often spoke at Turning Point conferences.

Politicians who have experienced violence directly react to Charlie Kirk shooting

WASHINGTON (AP) — The fatal shooting of conservative activist Charlie Kirk at an event in Utah had particular resonance for public figures who have experienced political violence themselves.

Kirk, who served as chief executive and cofounder of the youth organization Turning Point USA, made frequent appearances on college campuses and in other settings, engaging in political dialogue with students in public settings.

Several leaders who have survived public attacks or had family members victimized joined in bipartisan condemnation of the attack on Kirk.

Nancy Pelosi

The former House speaker's husband was seriously injured at their California home in 2022 by a man wielding a hammer, who authorities said was a believer in conspiracy theories.

Pelosi, a Democrat, posted that "the horrific shooting today at Utah Valley University is reprehensible. Political violence has absolutely no place in our nation."

Donald Trump

The president sustained a minor ear injury when he was shot at a campaign event last year. He was also the target of a failed assassination attempt while playing golf in Florida. He had a close relationship with Kirk and announced his passing Wednesday on his Truth Social site.

Trump described Kirk on Truth Social as a "great guy from top to bottom. GOD BLESS HIM!"

He also posted, "No one understood or had the Heart of the Youth in the United States of America better than Charlie."

Gabrielle Giffords

The former U.S. representative, a Democrat, suffered a serious brain injury from a 2011 shooting while meeting with constituents at a shopping center in her Arizona congressional district. She survived and has taken up the cause of fighting gun violence.

Giffords posted on social media that she was "horrified" to hear of Kirk's shooting.

"Democratic societies will always have political disagreements," she wrote, "but we must never allow America to become a country that confronts those disagreements with violence."

Steve Scalise

The House majority leader, a Louisiana Republican, was shot at practice for a charity baseball game involving members of Congress in the Virginia suburbs in 2017. The man who attacked Scalise had grievances against Trump and Republicans and was later fatally shot by police.

Scalise asked people on the social media platform X to "please join me in praying for Charlie Kirk after this senseless act."

Josh Shapiro

The Pennsylvania governor, a Democrat and potential national candidate, was evacuated with his family from the governor's mansion earlier this year after a man broke into the building and set a fire that caused significant damage.

"We must speak with moral clarity," Shapiro wrote on X. "The attack on Charlie Kirk is horrifying and this growing type of unconscionable violence cannot be allowed in our society."

Gretchen Whitmer

The Michigan governor, a Democrat, was the subject of a failed kidnapping plot by right-wing extremists

who hoped to ignite a civil war. Two men were imprisoned for their 2020 attempt to kidnap the governor during her first term.

"We should all come together to stand up against any and all forms of political violence," Whitmer wrote on social media.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

The Health and Human Services secretary appeared to invoke his family's losses as he reacted to Kirk's killing. Kennedy's father, for whom he was named, was assassinated in 1968 as he sought the Democratic presidential nomination. Kennedy Sr. was an outspoken critic of the Vietnam War and an advocate for civil rights legislation as attorney general during his brother's presidency and after John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963.

"Once again, a bullet has silenced the most eloquent truth teller of an era," Kennedy wrote on social media. He called Kirk a "relentless and courageous crusader for free speech."

Assassination of Charlie Kirk adds to America's roll call of public violence

By LISA MASCARO and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the tragic roll call of violence in American public life, Charlie Kirk's name joins what has fast become a long list.

The influential 31-year old commentator, who cast his young professional life rousing other young people to embrace or debate his brand of conservatism, was slain doing what he does best: holding a provocative question-and-answer session on a college campus.

Kirk had been sparring with a questioner at Utah Valley University over who commits gun violence. Then the shot rang out.

President Donald Trump, a survivor of assassination attempts including at a 2024 campaign rally, announced on social media: Kirk was dead.

"It has to stop," House Speaker Mike Johnson pleaded from the U.S. Capitol. "This is not who we are."

Condemnation of the violence came quickly, from all corners and across the political divide, and it was universal. But it has never been enough. Within minutes a shouting match erupted during a moment of silence in the House. One Republican lawmaker wanted an actual prayer for Kirk; Democrats called for changes in gun laws. Online, certain far-right figures responded with anger and pointed blame. And so did Trump.

"We're moving in a very dangerous direction, and I think we have been moving in this direction for quite some time," said Kurt Braddock, an assistant professor of public communication at American University.

Though nothing is publicly known about the shooter or the motive in this case, Braddock said it can't be ignored that polarization and normalization of violence have become threaded through U.S. politics.

"It's incumbent on both sides to take steps to lower the temperature and make it clear that violence should never be considered an acceptable form of political action," he said.

The nation's long history of violence in the public realm carries many data points. It has felled presidents, presidential contenders, activists like Kirk and some of the most consequential figures in American civic life — Abraham Lincoln, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Among those who have survived the violence, Trump does not stand alone. Elected officials in the U.S. have been shot at and critically wounded while talking to voters outside a grocery store in Arizona; practicing for a congressional baseball game in Virginia; answering the door to their own home in Minnesota. The governor's house in Pennsylvania was set ablaze as he and his family slept inside. Members of Congress fled the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

"It's time for all Americans and the media to confront the fact that violence and murder are the tragic consequence of demonizing those with whom you disagree day after day, year after year," said Trump — who then proceeded to blame what he called the "radical left" for the attacks.

Bruce Hoffman, a senior fellow for counterterrorism and homeland security at the Council on Foreign

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 46 of 84

Relations, said how the country responds to Kirk's killing will be crucial to what happens next.

"In the past, we had elected officials that would seek to bring the country together rather than to cast blame," he said. "We'll have to see what in the coming days our national leaders have to say about this, and whether they can be effective in lowering the temperature."

College campuses where Kirk draws robust and curious crowds to discuss not just politics but their questions about growing into adulthood have often been battlegrounds of ideas and centers of American thought, from the Vietnam War protests at Kent State to the Israel-Hamas war demonstrations of the Trump era.

Conservative commentators in particular have complained of being unfairly blocked from universities as students protested their appearances at college campuses. Trump has turned the force of the U.S. government against Harvard, Columbia and the nation's premier universities to end policies his administration views as too "woke."

Kirk, a charismatic figure who founded his Turning Point USA as an 18-year-old, grew into an influential leader tapping into the mood of a younger generation's grievances with society.

A Christian father of two, he demonstrated a combative new approach to conservatism that openly criticized racial justice movements, the news media and LGBTQ rights. Critics said his views perpetuated racist, anti-immigrant and anti-feminist ideas.

Kirk often faced protests and controversy when he visited college campuses, including on his recent tour.

Ahead of Wednesday's event, an online petition calling for the university's administrators to reconsider allowing him to speak received nearly 1,000 signatures. A similar petition at Utah State University, where Kirk was set to appear later in the month, gathered nearly 7,000 signatures.

In Utah, Gov. Spencer Cox, a Republican, pleaded with Americans to look at themselves, and the way they treat one another, as the nation prepares to celebrate the 250th anniversary of its founding.

"We desperately need leaders in our country, but more than the leaders, we just need every single person in this country to think about where we are and where we want to be," he said. "Is this what 250 years has wrought on us?"

He prayed that "all of us will try to find a way to stop hating our fellow Americans."

US marks 24th anniversary of 9/11 terror attacks

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Americans are marking 24 years since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks with solemn ceremonies, volunteer work and other tributes honoring the victims.

Many loved ones of the nearly 3,000 people killed will join dignitaries and politicians at commemorations Thursday in New York, at the Pentagon and in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Others choose to mark the day at more intimate gatherings.

James Lynch, who lost his father, Robert Lynch, during the World Trade Center attack, said he and his family will attend a ceremony near their hometown in New Jersey before spending the day at the beach.

"It's one of those things where any kind of grief, I don't think it ever goes away," Lynch said as he, his partner and his mother joined thousands of volunteers preparing meals for the needy at a 9/11 charity event in Manhattan the day before the anniversary. "Finding the joy in that grief, I think, has been a huge part of my growth with this," he said.

The remembrances are being held during a time of increased political tensions. The 9/11 anniversary, often promoted as a day of national unity, comes a day after conservative activist Charlie Kirk was shot and killed while speaking at a college in Utah.

The reading of names and moments of silence

Kirk's killing is expected to prompt additional security measures around the 9/11 anniversary ceremony at the World Trade Center site in New York, authorities said.

At ground zero in lower Manhattan, the names of the attack victims will be read aloud by family and loved ones in a ceremony attended by Vice President JD Vance and his wife, second lady Usha Vance.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 47 of 84

Moments of silence will mark the exact times when hijacked planes struck the World Trade Center's iconic twin towers, as well as when the skyscrapers fell.

At the Pentagon in Virginia, the 184 service members and civilians killed when hijackers steered a jetliner into the headquarters of the U.S. military will be honored. President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump will attend the service before heading to the Bronx for a baseball game between the New York Yankees and Detroit Tigers Thursday evening.

And in a rural field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, a similar ceremony marked by moments of silence, the reading of names and the laying of wreaths, will honor the victims of Flight 93, the hijacked plane that crashed after crew members and passengers tried to storm the cockpit. That service will be attended by Veterans Affairs Secretary Doug Collins.

Like Lynch, people across the country are also marking the 9/11 anniversary with service projects and charity works as part of a national day of service. Volunteers will be taking part in food and clothing drives, park and neighborhood cleanups, blood banks and other community events.

Reverberations from attacks persist

In all, the attacks by al-Qaida militants killed 2,977 people, including many financial workers at the World Trade Center and firefighters and police officers who had rushed to the burning buildings trying to save lives.

The attacks reverberated globally and altered the course of U.S. policy, both domestically and overseas. It led to the "Global War on Terrorism" and the U.S.-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and related conflicts that killed hundreds of thousands of troops and civilians.

While the hijackers died in the attacks, the U.S. government has struggled to conclude its long-running legal case against the man accused of masterminding the plot, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. The former al-Qaida leader was arrested in Pakistan in 2003 and later taken to a U.S. military base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, but has never received a trial.

The anniversary ceremony in New York was taking place at the National Sept. 11 memorial and Museum, where two memorial pools ringed by waterfalls and parapets inscribed with the names of the dead mark the spots where the twin towers once stood.

The Trump administration has been contemplating ways that the federal government might take control of the memorial plaza and its underground museum, which are now run by a public charity currently chaired by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a frequent Trump critic. Trump has spoken of possibly making the site a national monument.

In the years since the attacks, the U.S. government has spent billions of dollars providing health care and compensation to tens of thousands of people who were exposed to the toxic dust that billowed over parts of Manhattan when the twin towers collapsed. More than 140,000 people are still enrolled in monitoring programs intended to identify those with health conditions that could potentially be linked to hazardous materials in the soot.

Authorities say a student is dead after shooting 2 peers and then himself at Colorado high school

By COLLEEN SLEVIN and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

DENVER (AP) — A student shot two of his peers Wednesday at a suburban Denver high school before shooting himself and later dying, authorities said.

The handgun shooting was reported around 12:30 p.m. at Evergreen High School in Evergreen, Colorado, about 30 miles west of Denver in the Rocky Mountain foothills.

Shots were fired both inside and outside the school building, and law enforcement officers who responded found the shooter within five minutes of arriving, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office spokesperson Jacki Kelley said.

None of the law enforcement officers who responded to the shooting fired any shots, Kelley said.

More than 100 police officers from the surrounding area rushed to the school to try to help, Kelley said. A 1999 school shooting at Jefferson County's Columbine High killed 14 people, including a woman who

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 48 of 84

died earlier this year of complications from her injuries in the shooting.

The teens were originally listed in critical condition, St. Anthony Hospital CEO Kevin Cullinan said. Their ages were not released.

By early evening, one teen was in stable condition with what Dr. Brian Blackwood, the hospital's trauma director, described as non-life threatening injuries. He declined to provide more details.

The high school with more than 900 students is largely surrounded by forest. It is about a mile from the center of Evergreen, which has a population of 9,300 people.

After the shooting, parents gathered outside a nearby elementary school waiting to reunite with their children.

Wendy Nueman said her 15-year-old daughter, a sophomore at Evergreen High School, didn't answer her phone right away after the shooting, The Denver Post reported. When her daughter finally called back, it was from a borrowed phone.

"She just said she was OK. She couldn't hardly speak," Nueman said, holding back tears. She gathered that her daughter ran from the school.

"It's super scary," she said. "We feel like we live in a little bubble here. Obviously, no one is immune."

Eighteen students who fled from the shooting took shelter at a home just down the road, after an initial group of them pounded on the door asking for help, resident Don Cygan told Denver's KUSA-TV. One student said he heard gunshots while in the school's cafeteria and ran out of the school, Cygan said.

Cygan, a retired educator familiar with lockdown trainings to prepare for possible shootings, said he took down the names of all the students and the names of the parents who later arrived there to pick them up. His wife, a retired nurse, was able to calm the teens down and treat them for shock, he said.

"I hope they feel like they ran to the right house," he said.

Charlie Kirk, who helped build support for Trump among young people, dies after campus shooting

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

Charlie Kirk, who rose from a teenage conservative campus activist to a top podcaster and ally of President Donald Trump, was shot and killed Wednesday during one of his trademark public appearances at a college in Utah. He was 31.

Kirk died doing what made him a potent political force — rallying the right on a college campus, this time Utah Valley University. The event was kicking off a planned series of Kirk college appearances from Colorado to Virginia dubbed "The American Comeback Tour."

His assassination was one of an escalating number of attacks on political figures, from the assassination of a Democratic state lawmaker and her husband in Minnesota to last summer's shooting of Trump, that have roiled the nation.

Trump announced Kirk's death on his social media site, Truth Social.

Kirk personified the pugnacious, populist conservatism that has taken over the Republican Party in the age of Trump. An unabashed Christian conservative who often made provocative statements about gender, race and politics, Kirk launched his organization, Turning Point USA, in 2012, targeting younger people and venturing onto liberal-leaning college campuses where many GOP activists were nervous to tread.

At the center of the right-of-center universe

A backer of Trump during the president's initial 2016 run, Kirk took Turning Point from one of a constellation of well-funded conservative groups to the center of the right-of-center universe.

Turning Point's political wing helped run get-out-the-vote efforts for Trump's 2024 campaign, trying to energize disaffected conservatives who rarely vote. Trump won Arizona, Turning Point's home state, by five percentage points after narrowly losing it in 2020. The group is known for its events that often feature strobe lighting and pyrotechnics. It claims more than 250,000 student members.

Trump on Wednesday praised Kirk, who started as an unofficial adviser during Trump's 2016 campaign and more recently became a confidant. "He was a very, very good friend of mine and he was a tremen-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 49 of 84

dous person," Trump told the New York Post.

Kirk showed off an apocalyptic style in his popular podcast, radio show and on the campaign trail. During an appearance with Trump in Georgia last fall, he said Democrats "stand for everything God hates." Kirk called the Trump vs. Kamala Harris choice "a spiritual battle."

"This is a Christian state. I'd like to see it stay that way," Kirk told the 10,000 or so Georgians, who at one point joined Kirk in a deafening chant of "Christ is King! Christ is King!"

Influencing a new generation of conservatives

Kirk was a regular presence on college campuses. Last year, for the social media program "Surrounded," he faced off against 20 liberal college students to defend his viewpoints, including that abortion is murder and should be illegal.

The author of several books, including one on the Second Amendment, Kirk was a staunch supporter of gun rights.

"I think it's worth to have a cost of, unfortunately, some gun deaths every single year so that we can have the Second Amendment to protect our other God-given rights," Kirk said during a Turning Point event in Salt Lake City in 2023, adding that gun deaths can be reduced but will never go away.

Admirers stressed that, for all of Kirk's confrontational rhetoric, he relished debate and the free exchange of ideas. "His entire project was built on reaching across the divide and using speech, not violence, to address and resolve the issues!" William Wolfe, executive director of the Center for Baptist Leadership, posted on X.

Kirk's style was influential for a new generation of conservatives. Republican Rep. Anna Paulina Luna of Florida spoke on the Capitol steps after the shooting Wednesday, reflecting on Kirk's influence on her political journey.

"I was supposed to go to medical school. Charlie Kirk called me the day before I was supposed to leave, and recruited me to be the national Hispanic outreach director for the organization," Luna said. "I was with him at many of them, debating those kids, and that conversation needs to happen. You can't squelch that."

Kirk was married to podcaster Erika Frantzve. They have two young children.

Zeal for challenging liberals

Turning Point was founded in suburban Chicago in 2012 by a then 18-year-old Kirk and William Montgomery, a tea party activist, to proselytize on college campuses for low taxes and limited government. It was not an immediate success.

But Kirk's zeal for confronting liberals in academia eventually won over an influential set of conservative financiers.

Despite early misgivings, Turning Point enthusiastically backed Trump after he clinched the GOP nomination in 2016. Kirk served as a personal aide to Donald Trump Jr. during the general election campaign.

Soon, Kirk was a regular presence on cable TV, where he leaned into the culture wars and heaped praise on the then-president. Trump and his son were equally effusive and often spoke at Turning Point conferences.

Kirk announced he was organizing buses to travel to Washington to back Trump on Jan. 6, 2021, and later invoked the Fifth Amendment rather than answering questions from the Jan. 6 subcommittee.

Also in 2021, as he stepped up criticism of the Black Lives Matter movement on college campuses, Kirk called George Floyd, the Black man whose 2020 murder at the hands of Minneapolis police sparked protests that roiled Trump's last full year in office, a "scumbag."

"Just don't totally mess up this state," Kirk said at the event in Mankato, Minnesota. "It was built by wonderful Scandinavians, and it seems as if it's being destroyed now, rather intentionally."

As money poured in, Kirk bought a \$4.75 million Spanish-style estate on a gated Arizona country club. Turning Point steered millions of dollars to contractors owned by Kirk and his associates, and some Republicans were skeptical when it announced it would spearhead an attempt to turn out infrequent voters during Trump's 2024 campaign.

But as younger voters shifted right in 2024 and Trump ran up a five-point margin of victory in Arizona, Kirk and his allies claimed vindication of his view of a sharp-elbowed, culture-war-oriented conservatism.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 50 of 84

Advocate of a new Christian conservatism

Kirk's evangelical Christian beliefs were intertwined with his political perspective, and he argued that there was no true separation of church and state.

He also referenced the Seven Mountain Mandate that specifies seven areas where Christians are to lead — politics, religion, media, business, family, education and the arts, and entertainment.

In the foreword to a book written by a pastor and Turning Point staffer to be published next week, Kirk wrote: "In today's America, the Christian faithful are faced with a terrifying and broad array of dangers and threats. We are menaced not by new false gods, but by the return of demons from long ago."

Kirk argued for a new conservatism that advocated for freedom of speech, challenging Big Tech and the media, and centering working-class Americans beyond the nation's capital.

"We have to ask ourselves a question as a conservative movement: Are we going to revert back to the party of the status quo ruling class?" he said in his speech opening the Conservative Political Action Conference in 2020.

"Or are we going to learn from what I call the MAGA doctrine? The MAGA doctrine, which is a doctrine of American renewal, revival, one that America is the greatest country in the history of the world."

South Korea says a charter plane carrying South Korean workers will leave Atlanta at Thursday noon

By RUSS BYNUM, HYUNG-JIN KIM and KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

FOLKSTON, Ga. (AP) — A South Korean charter plane arrived in Atlanta on Wednesday to take home Korean workers detained in an immigration raid in Georgia last week. Its planned return the same day was canceled, and South Korea's Foreign Ministry later said the flight would take place Thursday at noon, without giving further details.

A total of 475 workers, more than 300 of them South Koreans, were rounded up in the Sept. 4 raid at the battery factory under construction at Hyundai's sprawling auto plant. U.S. authorities released video showing some being shackled with chains around their hands, ankles and waists, causing shock and a sense of betrayal among many in South Korea, a key U.S. ally.

South Korea's government later said it reached an agreement with the U.S. for the release of the workers. Workers expected to be brought back home after days of detention.

South Korean TV footage showed the charter plane, a Boeing 747-8i from Korean Air, taking off at Incheon International Airport, just west of Seoul, and it landed in Atlanta on Wednesday morning.

The Foreign Ministry said the plane was not able to depart from the U.S. the same day, as South Korea wished, due to an unspecified reason involving the U.S. side.

During a visit to Washington on Wednesday, South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun met U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and told him that his country's people were left with "big pains and shocks" because the video of the workers' arrests was publicly disclosed, his ministry said in a statement.

Cho called for the U.S. administration to help the workers leave as soon as possible — without being handcuffed — and to make sure they do not face problems in future reentry to the U.S., the statement said.

The workers were being held at an immigration detention center in Folkston, in southeast Georgia. South Korean media reported that they would be freed and bused 285 miles (460 kilometers) to Atlanta to take the charter plane. Three empty buses were parked at the detention center.

South Korean officials said they have been negotiating with the U.S. to win "voluntary" departures of the workers, rather than deportations that could result in making them ineligible to return to the U.S. for up to 10 years.

The workplace raid by the U.S. Homeland Security agency was its largest yet as it pursues its mass deportation agenda. The Georgia battery plant, a joint venture between Hyundai and LG Energy Solution, is one of more than 20 major industrial sites that South Korean companies are currently building in the United States.

Many South Koreans view the raid as a source of national disgrace and remain stunned by it. Only 10 days

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 51 of 84

earlier, President Lee Jae Myung and U.S. President Donald Trump held their first summit in Washington, on Aug. 25. In late July, South Korea also promised hundreds of billions of dollars in U.S. investments to reach a tariff deal.

Experts say Seoul is not likely to take any major retaliatory steps against the U.S., but the raid could become a source of tensions between the allies.

South Korea calls for improvement in US visa systems

U.S. authorities said some of the detained workers had illegally crossed the U.S. border, while others entered legally but had expired visas or entered on visa waivers that prohibited them from working.

But South Korean experts and officials said Washington has yet to act on Seoul's yearslong demand to ensure a visa system to accommodate skilled Korean workers, though it has been pressing South Korea to expand industrial investments in the U.S.

South Korean companies have been relying on short-term visitor visas or Electronic System for Travel Authorization to send workers who are needed to launch manufacturing sites and handle other setup tasks, a practice that had been largely tolerated for years.

LG Energy Solution, which employed most of the detained workers, instructed its South Korean employees in the U.S. on B-1 or B-2 short-term visit visas not to report to work until further notice and told those with ESTAs to return home immediately.

During his meeting with Rubio, Cho proposed the creation of a joint South Korea-U.S. working group to introduce a new visa category for South Korean workers, according to his ministry.

Cho met the previous day with representatives of major Korean companies operating in the U.S. including Hyundai, LG and Samsung. Cho told them South Korean officials are in active discussions with U.S. officials and lawmakers about possible legislation to create a separate visa quota for South Korean professionals, according to the ministry.

Trump said this week that the workers "were here illegally" and that the U.S. needs to work with other countries to have their experts train U.S. citizens to do specialized work such as battery and computer manufacturing.

Atlanta immigration attorney Charles Kuck, who represents several of the detained South Koreans, told The Associated Press that no company in the U.S. makes the machines used in the Georgia battery plant. So they had to come from abroad to install or repair equipment on-site — work that would take about three to five years to train someone in the U.S. to do, he said.

The South Korea-U.S. military alliance, forged in blood during the 1950-53 Korean War, has experienced ups and downs over the decades. But surveys have shown a majority of South Koreans support the alliance, as the U.S. deployment of 28,500 troops in South Korea and 50,000 in Japan has served as the backbone of the American military presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

During a Cabinet Council meeting on Tuesday, Lee said he felt "big responsibility" over the raid and expressed hopes that the operations of South Korean businesses will not be infringed upon unfairly again.

3 fired FBI officials sue Patel, saying he bowed to Trump administration's 'campaign of retribution'

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Three high-ranking FBI officials were fired last month in a "campaign of retribution" carried out by a director who knew better but caved to political pressure from the Trump administration, according to a federal lawsuit filed Wednesday that describes the White House as directly meddling in the bureau's personnel moves

The complaint says Director Kash Patel told one of the ousted agents, Brian Driscoll, that he knew it was "likely illegal" to fire agents based on cases they worked but was powerless to stop it because the White House and the Justice Department were determined to remove all agents who investigate President Donald Trump. It quotes Patel as having told Driscoll in a conversation last month that "the FBI tried to put the president in jail and he hasn't forgotten it."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 52 of 84

The lawsuit was filed on behalf of Driscoll, Steve Jensen and Spencer Evans, three of five agents known to have been fired last month in a purge that current and former officials say has unnerved the workforce. The legal challenge from officials who once occupied the top rungs of the bureau's leadership ladder, and who together had decades of law enforcement experience, paints a portrait of an agency whose personnel decisions are shaped more by political considerations than public safety ones.

"Patel not only acted unlawfully but deliberately chose to prioritize politicizing the FBI over protecting the American people," the suit says. It adds that "his decision to do so degraded the country's national security by firing three of the FBI's most experienced operational leaders, each of them experts in preventing terrorism and reducing violent crime."

Spokespeople for the FBI declined to comment on the lawsuit, as they also did after the agents were ousted.

Concerns of reputational damage

The suit was filed in federal court in Washington, where judges and grand juries have pushed back against Trump administration initiatives and charging decisions. It names as defendants Patel and Attorney General Pam Bondi, as well as the FBI, the Justice Department and the Executive Office of the President.

Besides reinstatement, the suit seeks, among other remedies, the awarding of back pay, an order declaring the firings illegal and even a forum for them to clear their names. It notes that Patel, in a Fox News Channel interview two weeks after the terminations, said "every single person" found to have weaponized the FBI had been removed from leadership positions, even though the suit says there's no indication any of the three had done so.

"This false and defamatory public smear impugned the professional reputation of each of the Plaintiffs, suggesting they were something other than faithful and apolitical law enforcement officials, and has caused not only the loss of the Plaintiffs' present government employment but further harmed their future employment prospects," the suit states.

Unnerving requests from leadership

The three fired officials, according to the lawsuit, had participated in and supervised some of the FBI's most complex work, including international terrorism investigations.

"They were pinnacles of what the rank-and-file aspired to, and now the FBI has been deprived not only of that example but has been deprived of very important operational competence," said Chris Mattei, one of the agents' lawyers. "Their firing from the FBI, taken together, has put every American at greater risk than when Brian Driscoll, Steve Jensen and Spencer Evans were in positions of leadership."

Another of their attorneys, Abbe Lowell, said the lawsuit shows FBI leadership is "carrying out political orders to punish law enforcement agents for doing their jobs."

Perhaps the most prominent of the plaintiffs is Driscoll, a former commander of the FBI's specialized hostage rescue team who served as acting director between when then-Director Christopher Wray resigned in January and Patel was confirmed in February.

In that job, he had a well-publicized standoff in the first days of the Trump administration with a senior Justice Department official, Emil Bove, over Bove's demand for a list of agents who worked on the investigation into the Jan. 6, 2021, riot by a mob of Trump supporters at the U.S. Capitol. Driscoll pushed back against the order, prompting Bove to accuse him of "insubordination."

Driscoll survived the dispute and took another high-profile position overseeing the FBI's Critical Incident Response Group, or CIRG, which deploys to crises. But new problems arose last month, the complaint says, when an FBI pilot whose duties included flying the bureau's private jet was falsely identified on social media as having signed the search warrant for the investigation into Trump's hoarding of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Florida.

The complaint says Driscoll was told that the pilot, Chris Meyer, could no longer fly Patel on the FBI plane. Driscoll acceded to the request but refused to strip Meyer entirely of his pilot duties and balked when told of the Trump administration's desires to fire him.

The lawsuit recounts a conversation from early August in which Driscoll told Patel that it would be illegal to fire someone based on case assignments. Patel, according to the suit, said he understood the actions

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 53 of 84

were “likely illegal” and risked opening him to lawsuits but that he had to fire those whom his superiors wanted him to “because his ability to keep his own job depended on the removal of the agents who worked on cases involving the President.”

Meyer was among the five fired last month, but is not one of the plaintiffs in Wednesday’s suit.

One of the plaintiffs, Jensen, was picked by Patel to run the bureau’s Washington field office despite a backlash from Trump loyalists about his earlier leadership role coordinating investigations into the Capitol riot. The suit says that even as Jensen was publicly defended by FBI leadership, he was told by Patel and Deputy Director Dan Bongino that they were spending “a lot of political capital” to keep him in the position.

In May, according to the complaint, Bongino told him he would have to fire an agent assigned to his office who’d worked on Trump-related cases but also on investigations into officials of both major political parties. That agent, Walter Giardina, was also among those fired last month.

Another plaintiff, Evans, says he was targeted for retribution over his leadership role in the FBI’s Human Resources Division during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which made him responsible for reviewing accommodation requests from employees seeking exemption from vaccine mandates.

That position exposed Evans to a barrage of criticism from a former agent, who, the lawsuit says, regularly aired his grievances against Evans on social media and maintained access to Patel.

Evans was among the senior executives told in late January to either retire or be fired, but he was given a reprieve and permitted to remain in his job. Despite being reassured that he had the support of Patel and Bongino, he was told in May that he would have to leave his position as head of the Las Vegas field office.

On Aug. 6, the lawsuit says, Evans was packing for a new FBI assignment in Huntsville, Alabama, when he was notified he had been fired. The stated cause was a “lack of reasonableness and overzealousness” in implementing COVID-19 protocols, though the suit says he has no recollection of having ever denied a request for a vaccination exemption.

NATO scrambles jets to shoot down Russian drones in Poland, raising fears of war spillover

By CLAUDIA CIOBANU, ILLIA NOVIKOV and RAFAL NIEDZIELSKI Associated Press

WOHYN, Poland (AP) — Multiple Russian drones crossed into Poland in what European officials described Wednesday as a deliberate provocation, causing NATO to send fighter jets to shoot them down. A NATO spokesman said it was the first time the alliance confronted a potential threat in its airspace.

The incursion, which occurred during a wave of strikes by the Kremlin on Ukraine, and the NATO response swiftly raised fears that the war could spill over — a fear that has been growing in Europe as Russia steps up its attacks and peace efforts go nowhere.

Poland requested an emergency meeting of the U.N. Security Council on the drone incursion. South Korea’s U.N. Mission, which holds the council presidency this month, said the time was being discussed.

Russia’s Defense Ministry said it did not target Poland, while Belarus, a close ally of Moscow, said it tracked some drones that “lost their course” because they were jammed.

However, several European leaders said they believed the incursion amounted to an intentional expansion of Russia’s assault against Ukraine.

“Russia’s war is escalating, not ending,” European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas told reporters in Brussels. “What (Russian President Vladimir) Putin wants to do is to test us. What happened in Poland is a game changer,” and it should result in stronger sanctions.

Polish airspace has been violated many times since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, but never on this scale in Poland or anywhere else in NATO territory.

Poland said some of the drones came from Belarus, where Russian and Belarusian troops have begun gathering for war games scheduled to start Friday.

It was not immediately clear how many drones were involved. Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk told parliament 19 violations were recorded over seven hours, but he said information was still being gathered. Polish authorities said nine crash sites were found, with some of them hundreds of kilometers from the

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 54 of 84

border.

"There are definitely no grounds to suspect that this was a course correction mistake or the like," German Defense Minister Boris Pistorius told parliament. "These drones were very clearly put on this course deliberately."

Dutch fighter jets came to Poland's aid and intercepted some drones. Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski later thanked the Dutch government "for the magnificent performance of Dutch pilots in neutralizing" the drones.

NATO met to discuss the incident, which came three days after Russia's largest aerial attack on Ukraine since the war began.

Poland says some drones came from Belarus

Tusk told parliament that the first violation came at approximately 11:30 p.m. Tuesday and the last around 6:30 a.m. Wednesday. Earlier, Defense Minister Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz wrote on X that more than 10 objects crossed into Polish airspace.

"What is new, in the worst sense of the word, is the direction from which the drones came. This is the first time in this war that they did not come from Ukraine as a result of errors or minor Russian provocations. For the first time, a significant portion of the drones came directly from Belarus," Tusk said in parliament.

The Russian Defense Ministry said its overnight strikes targeted Ukraine's military-industrial complex in the western regions of the country — which border Poland — with no planned targets on Polish territory.

In an unusual message of outreach, the ministry said it was ready to hold consultations with Poland's Defense Ministry.

Belarusian Maj. Gen. Pavel Muraveiko, the chief of the country's general staff and first deputy defense minister, appeared to try to put some distance between his country and the incursion.

In an online statement, he said that as Russia and Ukraine traded drone strikes overnight, Belarusian air defense forces tracked "drones that lost their course" after they were jammed, adding that Belarusian forces warned their Polish and Lithuanian counterparts about "unidentified aircraft" approaching their territory.

A house was hit in the village of Wryki in the Lublin region near the Ukrainian border, Mayor Bernard Blaszczuk told the TVP Info television news channel. The roof was severely damaged, but no one was hurt.

Rattled NATO members vow support

NATO air defenses supported Poland in what spokesman Col. Martin O'Donnell called "the first time NATO planes have engaged potential threats in Allied airspace." That included the Dutch F-35 fighter jets that intercepted drones, according to Defense Minister Ruben Brekelmans.

The alliance "is committed to defending every kilometer of NATO territory, including our airspace," O'Donnell said.

Tusk told parliament that consultations took place under Article 4 of the NATO treaty — a clause that allows countries to call for urgent discussions with their allies. The consultations happened Wednesday at a previously planned meeting. They do not automatically lead to any action under Article 5, which is NATO's collective security guarantee.

Mark Lyall Grant, U.K. national security adviser from 2015 to 2017, said the incursion was an obvious escalation of Russia's war in Ukraine, but there was not yet enough evidence to say it was an attack on a NATO member.

But many European leaders expressed deep concern, including those in the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia that are the NATO members most nervous about Russian aggression.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called it an "extremely dangerous precedent for Europe" and called for Russia to "feel the consequences."

"Moscow always tests the limits of what is possible and, if it does not encounter a strong response, remains at a new level of escalation," he said.

By midday in Washington, U.S. President Donald Trump's only public comments about the incursion was a short post on social media: "What's with Russia violating Poland's airspace with drones? Here we go!"

Trump was set to speak later Wednesday to Polish President Karol Nawrocki, according to a White House official who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 55 of 84

Phillips O'Brien, professor of strategic studies at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, said the incident underscored the failure of NATO member states to accurately assess the threat posed by Russia and properly prepare for war.

"NATO states, even front line ones, have clearly not prepared for war of the type that is happening now," he said in his Substack newsletter.

Poland has complained about Russian objects entering its airspace during attacks on Ukraine before.

In August, Poland's defense minister said that a flying object that crashed and exploded in a cornfield in eastern Poland was identified as a Russian drone, and called it a provocation.

In March, Poland scrambled jets after a Russian missile briefly passed through Polish airspace on its way to a target in western Ukraine. And in 2022, a missile that was likely fired by Ukraine to intercept a Russian attack landed in Poland, killing two people.

Russian attacks hit central and western Ukraine

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian air force said Russia fired 415 strike and decoy drones, as well as 42 cruise missiles and one ballistic missile overnight.

Ukrainian air defenses intercepted or jammed 386 drones and 27 cruise missiles, according to the report.

One person was killed and at least five wounded, while several homes and businesses were damaged, according to local officials.

The Russian Defense Ministry said in its morning report Wednesday that it had destroyed 122 Ukrainian drones over various Russian regions overnight, including over the illegally annexed Crimea and areas of the Black Sea.

Judge blocks a Trump policy cutting off some social services for immigrants in the US illegally

By MAKIYA SEMINERA Associated Press

A federal judge on Wednesday blocked Trump administration restrictions on services for immigrants in the country illegally, including the federal preschool program Head Start, health clinics and adult education.

The order from the judge in U.S. District Court in Rhode Island applies to 20 states and the District of Columbia, whose attorneys general, all Democrats, sued the administration. It puts the administration's reinterpretation of a Clinton-era federal policy on hold while the case is decided.

Under the proposed changes, some community-level programs would be reclassified as federal public benefits, making them inaccessible to people without legal status. Individual public benefits, such as food stamps and college financial aid, have been largely unavailable to people in the country without legal status.

U.S. District Judge Mary McElroy, who was appointed by Trump in 2019, said in her order that the policy rollout was "rushed" in a way that would worsen the impact for people cut off from community services and those tasked with verifying eligibility.

"The Government argues that it has somehow interpreted this statute incorrectly for the nearly thirty years that it has been the law," McElroy wrote. "In its view, everyone ... has misunderstood it from the start — at least until last month, when the right way to read it became clear to the Government. The Court is skeptical of that."

Messages seeking comment were left with the Department of Health and Human Services, the Education Department, the Department of Labor and the Department of Justice, which each were named as defendants.

The states' lawsuit argued the government failed to follow the rulemaking process and did not provide the required notice on conditions placed on federal funds.

The rule changes had been paused initially within the states that sued after they reached a temporary agreement with the Trump administration.

"With this victory, we are protecting children's education, safeguarding critical health care, and preserving the safety net that keeps families afloat," New York Attorney General Letitia James said.

Proponents of Head Start immediately voiced concern that the new policy would harm immigrant com-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 56 of 84

munities by taking away health services and educational opportunities. The administrative burdens of implementing the new rule would cause many under-resourced Head Start programs to close, according to the plaintiffs' complaint.

The federal government said it interprets Head Start as a federal public benefit, similar to welfare programs that exclude immigrants in the country illegally. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr, whose agency oversees Head Start, said the directive would stop diverting "hardworking Americans' tax dollars to incentivize illegal immigration."

In addition to preserving Head Start access, the lawsuit also sought to block the restrictions on other federal programs, including substance abuse services, mental health resources in schools, career and technical education, and job training opportunities.

Over 40% of arrests in Trump's DC law enforcement surge relate to immigration, AP analysis finds

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has portrayed his federal law enforcement surge in Washington as focused on tackling crime. But data from the federal operation, analyzed by The Associated Press, shows that more than 40% of the arrests made over the monthlong operation were in fact related to immigration.

The finding highlights that in the nation's capital, the administration continued to advance its hardline immigration agenda.

The Trump administration has claimed success in the federal takeover in D.C., saying it has led to more than 2,300 arrests, including more than a dozen homicide suspects, 20 alleged gang members and hundreds of people accused of drug and gun crimes. More than 220 illegal guns have been taken off the street, including in one case from a teen who made a concerning social media post about a school, officials said.

Yet the prominence of immigration arrests — more than 940 people — has fueled criticism that the true purpose of the operation may have been to expand deportations.

"The federal takeover has been a cover to do federal immigration enforcement," said Austin Rose, a managing attorney at Amica Center for Immigrant Rights, an advocacy group. "It became pretty clear early on that this was a major campaign of immigration enforcement."

For critics, the effort appears less a one-off push against crime in the capital than a model for federal intervention and the highlighting of violent crime in other cities led by Democratic mayors, a familiar political playbook that Trump leaned on during the 2020 campaign.

Already, officials in Chicago, long a foil for the administration's law-and-order rhetoric, were bracing for an influx of immigration agents and possibly National Guard troops. Trump himself fanned speculation over the weekend, posting on social media a parody image from "Apocalypse Now" with helicopters looming over Chicago and the caption: "I love the smell of deportations in the morning."

Unclear how many faced non-immigration charges

The administration has repeatedly argued that deportations are inseparable from crime reduction, often casting those arrested by immigration authorities as the "worst of the worst." Still, it remains unclear how many of those taken into custody in Washington had any other charges pending.

In a statement, White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said many had prior arrests, convictions or outstanding warrants for crimes like assault, drug possession and child sexual abuse, without specifying a number.

"Law enforcement is doing an outstanding job removing these threats from D.C. communities — the focus of this operation has been stopping violent crime committed by anyone, regardless of their immigration status," Jackson said in an email.

Internal law enforcement reports obtained by the AP provide a partial picture. Over 10 days sampled during the surge, about 22 percent of those arrested on immigration violations had criminal records, including for driving while intoxicated, drug possession, grand larceny and burglary. That sample makes up

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 57 of 84

a third of the entire period. Figures for other days were not immediately available.

Trump's D.C. operation was launched to address a "crime emergency."

Trump's emergency order is set to expire

On Aug. 11, Trump invoked Section 740 of the District of Columbia Home Rule Act in an executive order to declare a "crime emergency" so his administration could take over the city's police force. That order is set to expire overnight Wednesday. He signed a directive for Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth to activate the National Guard, which remains in the city along with other federal agents.

While immigration enforcement agents have been part of the operation since the beginning, Trump has put an emphasis on wanting to address the city's crime rates, which figures show slowed during the federal law enforcement surge but were already falling before it. Congress let the emergency order expire on Wednesday, but National Guard troops are expected to remain deployed in the city.

Just a few days after the president declared a crime emergency, Attorney General Pam Bondi ordered city officials to revoke the district's "sanctuary policies," signaling the administration's efforts to focus on immigration enforcement in the operation. Sanctuary policies generally limit cooperation by local law enforcement with federal immigration officers.

After a lawsuit by D.C. officials, the administration agreed to leave the city's police chief in control of the department, but Bondi, in a new memo, directed police to cooperate with federal immigration enforcement regardless of any city law.

In Bondi's order last month on "restoring safety and security" to the nation's capital, she wrote the dangers posed by violent crime in the city are "multiplied by the District's sanctuary city policies." She added that the "proliferation of illegal aliens into our country during the prior Administration, including into our Nation's capital, presents extreme public safety and national security risks to our country."

Peer-reviewed academic studies have generally found no link between immigration and violent crime, though conclusions vary based on the data examined.

Immigrants felt the clampdown through the surge

Immigration and Customs Enforcement made immigration-related arrests in the Washington area before the operation launched. But the agency's presence has been much more visible since the Aug. 11 launch of the operation. Activists across the city have responded, often publicizing on social media locations where ICE has been seen and sharing videos of agents arresting people.

Immigrants worried about checkpoints or arrests have furiously been sharing information across messaging apps about streets to avoid. Activists have also stepped in to deliver food to immigrants fearful of leaving their homes because they risk encountering federal officers surging into the city.

"It's created unimaginable fear and forced people to completely alter their routines, not go to work," said Rose of the advocacy group.

In social media posts, the Homeland Security Department has highlighted the number of people it has arrested for immigration violations as part of the Trump administration's violent crime operation in D.C. In one such post, it said staff at Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection were being deployed to "help clean up the streets of our nation's capital."

"DHS will support the re-establishment of law and order and public safety in DC, which includes taking drug dealers, gang members, and criminal aliens off city streets," the department said.

New findings by NASA Mars rover provide strongest hints yet of potential signs of ancient life

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA's Mars rover Perseverance has uncovered rocks in a dry river channel that may hold potential signs of ancient microscopic life, scientists reported Wednesday.

They stressed that in-depth analysis is needed of the sample gathered there by Perseverance — ideally in labs on Earth — before reaching any conclusions.

While acknowledging the latest analysis "certainly is not the final answer," NASA's science mission chief

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 58 of 84

Nicky Fox said it's "the closest we've actually come to discovering ancient life on Mars."

Roaming Mars since 2021, the rover cannot directly detect life, past or present. Instead, it carries a drill to penetrate rocks and tubes to hold the samples gathered from places judged most suitable for hosting life billions of years ago. The samples are awaiting retrieval to Earth — an ambitious plan that's on hold as NASA seeks cheaper, quicker options.

Calling it an "exciting discovery," a pair of scientists who were not involved in the study — SETI Institute's Janice Bishop and the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Mario Parente — were quick to point out that non-biological processes could be responsible.

"That's part of the reason why we can't go so far as to say, 'A-ha, this is proof positive of life,'" lead researcher Joel Hurowitz of Stony Brook University told The Associated Press. "All we can say is one of the possible explanations is microbial life, but there could be other ways to make this set of features that we see."

Either way, Hurowitz said it's the best, most compelling candidate yet in the rover's search for potential signs of long-ago life. It was the 25th sample gathered; the tally is now up to 30. The findings appeared in the journal *Nature*.

"It would be amazing to be able to demonstrate conclusively that these features were formed by something that was alive on another planet billions of years ago, right?" Hurowitz said. But even if that's not the case, it's "a valuable lesson in all of the ways that nature can conspire to fool us."

Collected last summer, the sample is from reddish, clay-rich mudstones in Nereid Vallis, a river channel that once carried water into Jezero Crater. This outcrop of sedimentary rock, known as the Bright Angel formation, was surveyed by Perseverance's science instruments before the drill came out.

Along with organic carbon, a building block of life, Hurowitz and his team found minuscule specks, dubbed poppy seeds and leopard spots, that were enriched with iron phosphate and iron sulfide. On Earth, these chemical compounds are the byproducts when microorganisms chomp down on organic matter.

"There is no evidence of microbes on Mars today, but if any had been present on ancient Mars, they too might have reduced sulfate minerals to form sulfides in such a lake at Jezero Crater," Bishop and Parente wrote in an accompanying editorial.

There's no evidence of present-day life on Mars, but NASA over the decades has sent spacecraft to Mars in search of past watery environments that might have supported life way back when.

When Perseverance launched in 2020, NASA expected the samples back on Earth by the early 2030s. But that date slipped into the 2040s as costs swelled to \$11 billion, stalling the retrieval effort.

Until the samples are transported off of Mars by robotic spacecraft or astronauts, scientists will have to rely on Earthly stand-ins and lab experiments to evaluate the feasibility of ancient Martian life, according to Hurowitz.

NASA's acting Administrator Sean Duffy said budgets and timing will dictate how best to proceed, and even raised the possibility of sending sophisticated equipment to Mars to analyze the samples on the red planet. "All options are on the table," he said.

Ten of the titanium sample tubes gathered by Perseverance were placed on the Martian surface a few years ago as a backup to the rest aboard the rover, all part of NASA's still fuzzy return mission.

NCAA bans 3 college basketball players for betting on their own games at Fresno St, San Jose St

By CLIFF BRUNT AP Sports Writer

The NCAA banned three men's college basketball players for sports betting on Wednesday, saying they had bet on their own games at Fresno State and San Jose State and were able to share thousands of dollars in payouts.

The NCAA Committee on Infractions released findings from an enforcement investigation that concluded Mykell Robinson, Steven Vasquez and Jalen Weaver bet on one another's games and/or provided infor-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 59 of 84

mation that enabled others to do so during the 2024-25 regular season; two of them manipulated their performances to ensure certain bets were won. The eligibility was permanently revoked.

The NCAA said a sports integrity monitoring service in January notified Fresno State and NCAA enforcement staff that a Nevada sportsbook operator had flagged suspicious prop bets on Robinson. The investigation began a week later. The Associated Press could not immediately locate the former players for comment.

According to the NCAA, Robinson and Vasquez had been roommates at Fresno State during the 2023-24 season. In January 2025, Robinson and Vasquez, now at San Jose State, discussed over text message that Robinson planned to underperform in several statistical categories during a regular-season game. Robinson also placed multiple bets on Weaver, his teammate at Fresno State in 2024-25, the NCAA found.

The game that drew attention to Robinson was Fresno State's Jan. 7 matchup with Colorado State. The NCAA said he had three bets based on his performance – one was \$200 to win \$1,450; the second was \$800 to win \$5,800; and the third was \$1,200 to win \$8,700.

Investigators found that before that game, Robinson told his mother to transfer money by Apple Pay to Vasquez so Vasquez could coordinate a \$200 bet on Robinson's under-line for Robinson. After the game, the NCAA said, Vasquez helped Robinson transfer \$1,425 of the winnings to Robinson's mother. On Jan. 10, Vasquez provided \$200 to Robinson.

Also last season, Robinson placed 13 daily fantasy sports over-line and under-line prop bets totaling \$454 on parlays that included his own performance. He collected \$618 on one occasion, the NCAA said.

Robinson placed bets on Weaver before a game in late December 2024 after he and Weaver exchanged information about their respective betting lines, the NCAA said. Weaver also placed a \$50 prop bet on a parlay for himself, Robinson and a third athlete, and he won \$260.

Vasquez and Robinson failed to cooperate with the enforcement staff's investigation, the NCAA said. Weaver cooperated and agreed to the violation in his case.

All three were released from their respective teams and are no longer enrolled at their previous schools. Neither school was punished.

Fresno State said it cooperated willingly with the NCAA.

"The university proactively shared reported information concerning sports wagering activity with the NCAA and worked collaboratively with the NCAA staff throughout the investigation," the school said in a statement. "While the eligibility consequences for the former student-athletes are significant, the case ultimately resulted in a Level III/Secondary violation and no sanctions for the institution. The university continues to have confidence in the Fresno State Athletics' culture and is grateful to conclude this matter."

San Jose State said in a statement that it is aware of the decision and noted that Vasquez had already been removed from the roster several months ago. He graduated in May 2025.

The latest case comes eight years after a 2017 federal investigation into off-the-books payments to players and their families that, at the time, was against NCAA rules and one of the biggest scandals in the sport's history.

Since then, the growth of legalized gambling across the United States has raised concerns for college sports leaders and there have been allegations against schools involving betting, including some against three other basketball programs earlier this year.

The NCAA in June said that "several sports betting-related violations by staff members at NCAA schools" have been resolved in recent years and noted its enforcement staff was working on issuing notices of allegations in several ongoing gambling cases.

"The enforcement staff's sports betting-related caseload has significantly increased in recent years, and our staff — including our new sports betting integrity unit — has been effective in detecting and pursuing violations," Jon Duncan, NCAA vice president of enforcement, said then.

The nation's largest college sports organization, overseeing some 500,000 athletes, also said it was considering a proposal that would allow athletes and staff members to bet on professional sports and shift enforcement efforts to college sports betting and "behaviors that directly impact game integrity." The

Division I Council introduced the proposal that will be considered this fall and be implemented if Divisions II and III officials also approve.

Current NCAA rules do not allow athletes or institutional staff to engage in sports betting for any sports that have NCAA championships; bets by an athlete on their own team or own sport risks a lifetime ban from college athletics. Those rules would not change under the pending proposal.

Harris says leaving reelection decision to Biden was 'recklessness,' but she defends his abilities

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Former Vice President Kamala Harris says it was “recklessness” for Democrats to leave it to President Joe Biden to decide whether to continue seeking another term last year, but she defends his ability to do the job, according to an excerpt of her new book.

Harris, in an excerpt of “107 Days” published Wednesday in *The Atlantic*, writes that as questions swirled about whether the then-81-year-old Biden should seek reelection, she and others left the decision to him and first lady Jill Biden.

“Was it grace, or was it recklessness? In retrospect, I think it was recklessness,” Harris said.

The remarks are the first time Harris has been publicly critical of Biden’s decision to run again — an ill-fated decision that saw him drop out in July 2024 after a disastrous debate performance, leaving her to head up the Democratic ticket and ultimately lose to Republican Donald Trump.

“The stakes were simply too high,” Harris writes in the book. “This wasn’t a choice that should have been left to an individual’s ego, an individual’s ambition. It should have been more than a personal decision.”

Biden’s office did not immediately have a comment Wednesday.

Throughout the campaign and in its wake, Harris had avoided much criticism of the president she served beside and defended him amid questions about his mental acuity.

In the book excerpt, Harris continues to defend Biden’s ability to do the job but describes him in 2024 and especially at the time of his “debate debacle” as “tired.”

“On his worst day, he was more deeply knowledgeable, more capable of exercising judgment, and far more compassionate than Donald Trump on his best. But at 81, Joe got tired. That’s when his age showed in physical and verbal stumbles,” Harris writes. “I don’t think it’s any surprise that the debate debacle happened right after two back-to-back trips to Europe and a flight to the West Coast for a Hollywood fundraiser. I don’t believe it was incapacity.”

She adds that if she believed Biden were incapacitated, she would have said so out of loyalty to the country.

Harris also blames those close to Biden for unflattering media coverage throughout the time she served as vice president and throwing her under the bus to boost Biden’s public standing.

She writes about receiving a high level of scrutiny as the first female vice president but says “when the stories were unfair or inaccurate, the president’s inner circle seemed fine with it. Indeed, it seemed as if they decided I should be knocked down a little bit more.”

Harris writes that she often learned that Biden’s staff was “adding fuel to negative narratives” that surrounded her, such as stories about her vice presidential office being in disarray and having high turnover.

The former vice president also accuses Biden’s staff of being afraid of her upstaging him, describing a speech she gave in Selma, Alabama, in March of last year in which she called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and more humanitarian aid to be delivered to people there.

“It went viral, and the West Wing was displeased,” Harris says, “I was castigated for, apparently, delivering it too well.”

She suggests that diminishing her also diminished Biden, especially “given the concerns about his age.”

Harris’ success, she writes, would be a marker of Biden’s good judgment and a reassurance to the public that if something happened to the president she could step in.

“My success was important for him,” she writes. “His team didn’t get it.”

Harris' book, whose title is a nod to the length of her abbreviated presidential campaign, is set to be published by Simon & Schuster on Sept. 23.

Previous charges, delayed mental health evaluation were missed opportunities in Charlotte stabbing

By CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

After Decarlos Brown Jr. was arrested for the fatal stabbing of a Ukrainian refugee aboard a North Carolina commuter train, he was quickly sent to a state mental hospital for an evaluation. It was a sharp contrast from a January misdemeanor arrest, where it took more than six months for a court to order a mental evaluation after Brown told officers that he had been given a human-made substance that controlled when he ate, talked or walked.

The Justice Department on Tuesday charged Brown, 34, with causing death on a mass transportation system last month when he allegedly killed 23-year-old Iryna Zarutskya in what has become the latest flashpoint for the White House's efforts to paint Democratic-led cities as havens for violent criminals.

The January arrest was just one of the missed opportunities in Brown's criminal history, according to experts. He had cycled through the criminal justice system for more than a decade, court records show.

"I think there are multiple failed opportunities here, in the mental health space and in the criminal justice space," said Kenneth Corey, a former department chief for the New York City Police Department who now teaches at the University of Chicago Crime Lab's Policing Leadership Academy.

Decarlos Brown could have faced a federal charge before

Court records show Brown was initially charged in 2014 with being a felon in possession of a firearm, which is sometimes used by federal prosecutors to pull cases into the federal system where there are often stiffer penalties. Federal prosecutors did not take the case, and the state charge was dropped in exchange for a guilty plea on a charge of robbery using a deadly weapon, court records show.

The Justice Department filing Tuesday was Brown's first charge in federal court, according to a search of federal records.

Brown also is now charged with first-degree murder in state court, where records show he was sent a week after his arrest to a state mental hospital for an evaluation to determine his capacity to proceed with trial. Both the federal charge and the state charge could carry the death penalty.

Calls to the Mecklenburg County Public Defender's Office were not answered Wednesday.

Video released Friday shows Zarutskya entering a light-rail train on Aug. 22 and taking a seat in front of Brown. Minutes later, without any apparent interaction, he pulls out a pocketknife, stands and slashes her in the neck, investigators said.

The Trump administration has blamed Democrats for what they say is out-of-control crime and violence in blue cities. The White House has highlighted Brown's case and Trump has repeatedly referred to it, saying in one social media post: "Criminals like this need to be LOCKED UP."

U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy chimed in early Wednesday announcing the Federal Transit Administration had launched an investigation into the security spending and safety plans for the Charlotte Area Transit System. Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles said in a statement that the city would cooperate and has already committed to increasing security and police patrols on the system.

Corey said many federal prosecutors offices tell police and local officials they lack financial resources to try more cases of felons in possession of a firearm, which carries a penalty of up to 10 years in prison. But he believes the charge could be used better as a tool against the small percentage of people responsible for repeated violent offenses.

"They end up taking only the worst of the worst because they don't have the resources," Corey said. "And to be clear, despite multiple previous arrests, I'm not sure this man's case rose to anywhere near that threshold."

A court must order a mental health evaluation

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 62 of 84

In January, Brown was arrested after repeatedly calling 911 from a hospital, where he complained that someone was trying to control him with foreign substances. He was quickly released without bail on a promise to return for court, which is standard for lower-level misdemeanors. The charge carries a maximum sentence of four months in jail under standards approved by the Republican-led Legislature in 2013.

His public defender requested a mental evaluation to determine if he could contribute to his defense. A judge signed an order on July 28 telling Brown to report to a community forensic evaluator within seven days. It's unclear if Brown went. Court records show that after the train stabbing, the evaluation order was canceled without being finished.

Dr. Robert Cochrane, the statewide director of forensic services at North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services, noted symptoms of mental illness can ebb and wane and that anyone can petition the court if they think someone can't contribute to their own defense.

"But it requires a court order to do an evaluation," he said.

Delays for court-ordered evaluations aren't long in North Carolina.

In the first six months of this year, department records showed it took on average 18 days for court-ordered evaluations by a certified forensic evaluator in the community — the standard for lesser charges. It took 69 days on average between an order and an evaluation at a state mental hospital where people facing higher-level crimes are more often sent, and which usually involve more in-depth investigations including seeking records and interviews with family or friends.

An involuntary commitment also requires a court order

Brown's mother told local television she sought an involuntary psychiatric commitment this year after he became violent at home. Doctors diagnosed him with schizophrenia.

But experts say involuntary commitments are often difficult to obtain. A court must find someone to be a danger to themselves or others. Once someone is stabilized, they generally are free to leave.

Trump administration appeals ruling blocking him from firing Federal Reserve Gov. Cook

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's administration on Wednesday appealed a ruling blocking him from firing Federal Reserve Gov. Lisa Cook as he seeks more control over the traditionally independent board.

The notice of appeal came hours after U.S. District Judge Jia Cobb handed down the ruling. The White House has insisted Trump, a Republican, has the right to fire Cook over allegations raised by one of his appointees that she committed mortgage fraud related to two properties she bought before she joined the Fed.

The case could soon reach the Supreme Court, where the conservative majority has allowed Trump to fire several board members of other independent agencies but has suggested that power has limitations at the Federal Reserve.

Cook's lawyers have argued that firing her was unlawful because presidents can only fire Fed governors for cause, which has typically meant poor job performance or misconduct. The judge found the president's removal power is limited to actions taken during a governor's time in office.

Cook is accused of saying that both her properties, in Michigan and Georgia, were primary residences, which could have resulted in lower down payments and mortgage rates. Her lawsuit denied the allegations without providing details. Her attorneys said she should have gotten a chance to respond to them before getting fired.

Trump has repeatedly attacked Fed Chair Jerome Powell for not cutting the short-term interest rate the Fed controls more quickly. If Trump can replace Cook, he may be able to gain a 4-3 majority on the Fed's governing board.

No president has sought to fire a Fed governor before. Economists prefer independent central banks because they can do unpopular things like lifting interest rates to combat inflation more easily than elected

officials can.

Cook is set to participate in a Fed meeting next week. The meeting is expected to reduce its key short-term rate by a quarter-point to between 4% and 4.25%.

She was adopted into an abusive home in the US. Decades later, ICE deported her back to Brazil

By LEA SKENE and TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

It sounded like freedom, like a world of possibility beyond the orphanage walls.

Maria Pires was getting adopted. At 11 years old, she saw herself escaping the chaos and violence of the Sao Paulo orphanage, where she'd been sexually assaulted by a staff member. She saw herself leaving Brazil for America, trading abandonment for belonging.

A single man in his 40s, Floyd Sykes III, came to Sao Paulo to meet her. He signed some paperwork and brought Maria home.

She arrived in the suburbs of Baltimore in the summer of 1989, a little girl with a tousel of dark hair, a nervous smile and barely a dozen words of English. The sprawling subdivision looked idyllic, with rows of modest brick townhouses and a yard where she could play soccer.

She was, she believed, officially an American.

But what happened in that house would come to haunt her, marking the start of a long descent into violence, crime and mental illness.

"My father — my adopted father — he was supposed to save me," Pires said. Instead, he tortured and sexually abused her.

After nearly three years of abuse, Sykes was arrested. The state placed Pires in foster care.

By then, she was consumed with fury. In the worst years, she beat a teenager at a roller rink, leaving him in a coma. She attacked a prison guard and stabbed her cellmate with a sharpened toothbrush.

In prison, she discovered that no one had ever bothered to complete her immigration paperwork. Not Sykes. Not Maryland social service agencies.

That oversight would leave her without a country. She wasn't American, it turned out, and she'd lost her Brazilian citizenship when she was adopted by Sykes, who died several years ago. But immigration officials, including those under President Donald Trump's first administration, let her stay in the country.

After her release from prison in 2017, Pires stayed out of trouble and sought help to control her anger. She checked in once a year with Immigration and Customs Enforcement and paid for an annual work permit.

But in the second Trump administration — with its promise of mass deportations, a slew of executive orders and a crackdown targeting those the president deemed "the worst of the worst" — everything changed. Trump's unyielding approach to immigration enforcement has swept up tens of thousands of immigrants, including many like Pires who came to the U.S. as children and know little, if any, life outside America. They have been apprehended during ICE raids, on college campuses, or elsewhere in their communities, and their detentions often draw the loudest backlash.

In Pires' case, she was detained during a routine check-in, sent to one immigration jail after another, and ultimately deported to a land she barely remembers. The Associated Press conducted hours of interviews with Pires and people who know her and reviewed Maryland court records, internal ICE communications, and adoption and immigration paperwork to tell her story.

U.S. immigration officials say Pires is a dangerous serial criminal who's no longer welcome in the country. Her case, they say, is cut and dried.

Pires, now 47, doesn't deny her criminal past.

But little about her story is straightforward.

A new chapter of childhood, marked by abuse

Pires has no clear memories from before she entered the orphanage. All she knows is that her mother spent time in a mental institution.

The organization that facilitated her adoption was later investigated by Brazilian authorities over allega-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 64 of 84

tions it charged exorbitant fees and used videos to market available children, according to a Sao Paulo newspaper. Organization leaders denied wrongdoing.

Pires remembers a crew filming a TV commercial. She believes that's how Sykes found her.

In his custody, the abuse escalated over time. When Sykes went to work, he sometimes left her locked in a room, chained to a radiator with only a bucket as a toilet. He gave her beer and overpowered her when she fought back. She started cutting herself.

Sykes ordered her to keep quiet, but she spoke almost no English then anyway. On one occasion, he forced a battery into her ear as punishment, causing permanent hearing loss.

In September 1992, someone alerted authorities. Sykes was arrested. Child welfare officials took custody of Maria, then 14.

Maryland Department of Human Services spokesperson Lilly Price said the agency couldn't comment on specific cases because of confidentiality laws but noted in a statement that adoptive parents are responsible for applying for U.S. citizenship for children adopted from other countries.

Court documents show Sykes admitted sexually assaulting Maria multiple times but he claimed the assaults stopped in June 1990.

He was later convicted of child abuse. Though he had no prior criminal record, court officials acknowledged a history of similar behavior, records show.

Between credit for time served and a suspended prison sentence, Sykes spent about two months in jail.

Sykes' younger sister Leslie Parrish said she's often wondered what happened to Maria.

"He ruined her life," she said, weeping. "There's a special place in hell for people like that."

Parrish said she wanted to believe her brother had good intentions; he seemed committed to becoming a father and joined a social group for adoptive parents of foreign kids. She even accompanied him to Brazil.

But in hindsight, she sees it differently. She believes sinister motives lurked "in the back of his sick mind."

At family gatherings, Maria didn't show obvious signs of distress, though the language barrier made communication difficult. Other behavior was explained away as the result of her troubled childhood in the orphanage, Parrish said.

"But behind closed doors, I don't know what happened."

Years in prison and an eventual release

Pires' teenage years were hard. She drank too much and got kicked out of school for fighting. She ran away from foster homes, including places where people cared for her deeply.

"If ever there was a child who was cheated out of life, it was Maria," one foster mother wrote in later court filings. "She is a beautiful person, but she has had a hard life for someone so young."

She struggled to provide for herself, sometimes ending up homeless. "My trauma was real bad," she said. "I was on my own."

She became angry and violent. She would fight anyone who crossed her.

At 18, she pleaded guilty to aggravated assault for the roller rink attack. She served two years in prison, where she finally learned basic reading and writing skills. It was then that authorities — and Pires herself — discovered she wasn't a U.S. citizen.

Her criminal record meant it would be extremely difficult to gain citizenship. Suddenly, she faced deportation.

Pires said she hadn't realized the potential consequences when accepting her plea deal.

"If I had any idea that I could be deported because of this, I would not have agreed to it," she wrote, according to court records. "Going to jail was one thing, but I will lose everything if I am deported back to Brazil."

A team of volunteer lawyers and advocates argued she shouldn't be punished for something beyond her control.

"Maria has absolutely no one and nothing in Brazil. She would be completely lost there," an attorney wrote in a 1999 letter to immigration officials.

Ultimately, the American judicial system agreed: Pires would be allowed to remain in the United States if she checked in annually with ICE, a fairly common process until Trump's second term.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 65 of 84

"How's your mental?"

Pires didn't immediately take advantage of her second chance.

She was arrested for cocaine distribution in 2004 and for check fraud in 2007. While incarcerated, she picked up charges for stabbing her cellmate in the eye, burning an inmate with a flat iron and throwing hot water on a correctional officer. Her sentence was extended.

Pires said she spent several years in solitary confinement, exacerbating her mental health challenges.

Her release in 2017 marked a new beginning. Through therapy and other support services, she learned to manage her anger and stay out of trouble. She gave up drinking. She started working long days in construction. She checked in every year with immigration agents.

But in 2023, work dried up and she fell behind on rent. She felt her mental health slipping. She applied for a women's transitional housing program in Baltimore.

Pires thrived there. With no high school diploma and only second-grade reading skills, she qualified for a state-run job training course to polish and refinish floors. Photos show her smiling broadly in a blue graduation gown.

Friends say Pires may have a tough exterior, but she's known for thinking of others first. She often greets people with a cheerful question: "How's your mental?" It's her way of acknowledging that everyone carries some sort of burden.

"This is a person who just yearns for family," said Britney Jones, Pires' former roommate. "She handles things with so much forgiveness and grace."

The two were living together when Pires went to downtown Baltimore on March 6 for her annual immigration check-in. She never returned.

A crackdown on "the worst of the worst"

When President Donald Trump campaigned for a second term, he doubled down on promises to carry out mass deportations. Within hours of taking office, he signed a series of executive orders, targeting what he called "the worst of the worst" — murderers, rapists, gang members. The goal, officials have said, is 1 million deportations a year.

In March, Pires showed up at the immigration office with paperwork listing all her check-ins over the past eight years. This time, instead of receiving another compliance report, she was immediately handcuffed and detained.

"The government failed her," attorney Jim Merklinger said. "They allowed this to happen."

Given that she was adopted into the country as a child, she shouldn't be punished for something that was out of her hands from the start, he said.

Her March arrest sparked a journey across America's immigration detention system. From Baltimore, she was sent to New Jersey and Louisiana before landing at Eloy Detention Center in Arizona.

She tried to stay positive. Although Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric made her nervous, Pires reminded herself that the system granted her leniency in the past. She told her friends back home not to worry.

A deportation priority

On June 2, in an email exchange obtained by AP, an ICE agent asked to have Pires prioritized for a deportation flight to Brazil leaving in four days.

"I would like to keep her as low profile as possible," the agent wrote.

Her lawyer tried to stop the deportation, calling Maryland politicians, ICE officials and Brazilian diplomats.

"This is a woman who followed all the rules," Merklinger said. "This should not be happening."

He received terrified calls from Pires, who was suddenly transferred to a detention facility near Alexandria, Louisiana, a common waypoint for deportation flights.

Finally, Pires said, she was handcuffed, shackled, put on a bus with dozens of other detainees, driven to the Alexandria airport and loaded onto an airplane. There was a large group of Brazilians on the flight, which was a relief, though she spoke hardly any Portuguese after so many years in the U.S.

"I was just praying to God," she said. "Maybe this is his plan."

After two stops to drop off other deportees, they arrived in the Brazilian port city of Fortaleza.

Starting from scratch back in Brazil

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 66 of 84

Brazilian authorities later took Pires to a women's shelter in an inland city in the eastern part of the country. She has spent months there trying to get Brazilian identification documents. She began relearning Portuguese — listening to conversations around her and watching TV.

Most of her belongings are in a Baltimore storage unit, including DJ equipment and a tripod she used for recording videos — two of her passions.

In Brazil, she has almost nothing. She depends on the shelter for necessities such as soap and toothpaste. But she maintains a degree of hope.

"I've survived all these years," Pires said. "I can survive again."

She can't stop thinking about her birth family. Years ago, she got a tattoo of her mother's middle name. Now more than ever, she wants to know where she came from. "I still have that hole in my heart," she said.

Above all, she hopes to return to America. Her attorney recently filed an application for citizenship. But federal officials say that's not happening.

"She was an enforcement priority because of her serial criminal record," Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said in an email. "Criminals are not welcome in the U.S."

Every morning, Pires wakes up and keeps trying to build a new life. She's applied for Brazilian work authorization, but getting a job will probably be difficult until her Portuguese improves. She's been researching language classes and using her limited vocabulary to communicate with other shelter residents.

In moments of optimism, she imagines herself working as a translator, earning a decent salary and renting a nice apartment.

She wonders if God's plan will ever become clear.

Black student dragged from his car and beaten by Florida officers files federal lawsuit

By KATE PAYNE Associated Press/Report for America

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Jacksonville law enforcement officers violated the civil rights of a 22-year-old Black college student when they pulled him from his car and beat him during a traffic stop, according to a lawsuit filed in a federal court in Jacksonville on Wednesday.

A video showing a Jacksonville Sheriff's officer punching and dragging William McNeil from his car during a stop in February went viral online this summer and sparked nationwide outrage.

Prosecutors announced in August they would take no action after determining the conduct of Officer D. Bowers of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office did not constitute a crime, according to an investigative report released by the State Attorney's Office for the Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida.

McNeil's attorneys Ben Crump and Harry Daniels say Jacksonville Sheriff's Office's policies allow officers to engage in racial profiling and "illegal or excessive use of force" without fear of consequences. Crump is a Black civil rights attorney who has gained national prominence representing victims of police brutality and vigilante violence.

"It's an unjustifiable, unnecessary and most importantly unconstitutional use of force," Crump said.

The attorneys said the lawsuit is aimed not only at addressing the treatment of their client, but at changing the culture of policing in the area.

Jacksonville Sheriff T.K. Waters has said there's more to the story than the viral cellphone video and that McNeil was repeatedly asked to exit his vehicle. Waters, who is Black, said the footage from inside the car "does not comprehensively capture the circumstances surrounding the incident."

The lawsuit names Waters, Bowers, and another officer named D. Miller, as well as the City of Jacksonville and Duval County government. A spokesperson for the sheriff's office declined to comment, citing the pending litigation.

According to a prosecutors' report, Bowers stopped McNeil for failing to turn on his headlights and buckle his seatbelt, after seeing his SUV parked outside a house the officer was surveilling for "drug activity."

Questioning the justification for the stop, McNeil requested a supervisor respond to the incident. Based on a review of body camera footage, interviews with officers and statements by McNeil, prosecutors said

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 67 of 84

Bowers gave McNeil a dozen "lawful commands," which he disobeyed.

Crump has claimed officers' accounts of the incident are unreliable and has fiercely criticized prosecutors' finding that officers did not commit any criminal wrongdoing, saying his client remained calm while the officers who are trained to de-escalate tense situations were the ones escalating violence. Crump said the case harkened back to the Civil Rights movement, when Black people were often attacked when they tried to assert their rights.

According to his attorneys, McNeil suffered a laceration to the chin and lip, a fractured tooth, and has been diagnosed with an "ongoing traumatic brain injury." McNeil also continues to suffer post-traumatic stress disorder-like symptoms, including nightmares and flashbacks of the incident, his lawyers wrote in a legal filing.

McNeil's attorneys have also formally called on the Department of Justice to conduct its own investigation of the incident and what they described as "excessive force" and "systemic failures" by Jacksonville officials.

Unproven Lyme disease tests and treatments are proliferating

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Lyme disease can cause serious harm, but so can bogus tests and treatments.

The complexity of diagnosing the tick-borne disease has given rise to an entire industry of unapproved tests and unproven alternative treatments that experts say should be avoided, including lasers, herbal remedies and electromagnets.

"It really is a buyer-beware situation," said Dr. Robert Smith, a Lyme specialist at MaineHealth Institute for Research.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to diagnosing Lyme. Doctors use a combination of visual clues, information reported by their patients and the standard medical test, which has a number of limitations.

When patients show the classic symptoms — including a bull's eye rash, fever and fatigue — a short course of antibiotics usually resolves them. But a subset of patients will go on to experience months or even years of arthritis, pain and fatigue — poorly understood symptoms that overlap with a number of other medical conditions.

That has left an opening for so-called "nonstandard" Lyme tests and treatments. Interest in those products has been amplified by influencers and a growing list of celebrities attributing various health problems to the disease, most recently Justin Timberlake.

That might lead patients to spend hundreds or thousands of dollars on bogus tests, which aren't covered by insurance, followed by unapproved treatments that may do more harm than good. And it's possible some of them may not have had Lyme at all.

In a recent consensus report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Smith and other experts called for more funding and research into the chronic symptoms experienced by some Lyme patients.

"The key thing is that these people are suffering and we need to come up with strategies to alleviate that suffering, whatever the trigger was," Smith said.

At the same time, Smith and his colleagues warn that "profiteering entities" are pushing Lyme products that are "costly, may not work and may cause harm."

Here's a look at the established approach for testing and treating Lyme and how to spot unproven alternatives.

The standard Lyme test comes with limits

First identified 50 years ago, Lyme disease takes its name from the Connecticut town where the earliest cases were diagnosed.

The challenge of diagnosing it begins with the standard laboratory test, which comes with a number of caveats that must be carefully weighed.

The bacteria that causes Lyme, carried by certain ticks in the Northeast and Midwest, doesn't circulate throughout the body. Often it stays in the skin near the tick bite, making it hard to detect.

Instead, Lyme tests look for antibodies, proteins that help fight off foreign invaders, which usually only

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 68 of 84

appear in the blood several weeks after an infection.

That's the best approach available, but experts acknowledge its shortcomings: If the test is given too early it will come back negative because antibodies haven't yet appeared.

"That's one of the problems," Smith says. "We can't say for sure in the first couple of weeks that it's Lyme disease or not based on these tests."

Also, these antibodies continue to circulate in the blood long after the infection. That means the test can return a positive result years or even decades later — making it difficult to distinguish between a new case and an old one.

Medical guidelines deal with this ambiguity by recommending doctors diagnose and start antibiotics in all patients who have the signature bull's eye rash associated with Lyme. But as many as 30% of those infected never get the rash, causing further uncertainty.

Unproven options for testing are plentiful

The limitations of the approved test has opened the door to alternative tests, ranging from over-the-counter kits to specialty laboratories.

The more expensive tests are often ordered by self-described "Lyme literate" physicians and health providers, who may have backgrounds in fields unrelated to infectious disease, like homeopathy.

Spotting unproven Lyme tests is relatively easy, since only antibody blood tests are approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

Any Lyme test available for sale at a drugstore or website is unapproved, says Andrea Love, a microbiologist and director of the American Lyme Disease Foundation. Another red flag is the use of saliva, urine or other bodily fluids besides blood to detect Lyme.

"When you see these other tests appear on the market, it's very likely that they're not accurate and haven't done their due diligence, which should make people skeptical" Love says.

Patients will bear most of the costs for unapproved tests, which may provide inaccurate information and derail a diagnosis for other conditions that are sometimes mistaken for Lyme, such as rheumatoid arthritis.

While acceptance of post-treatment Lyme is growing, Love and some other experts recommend caution when approaching the topic. Studies estimate that 10% to 20% of people treated for Lyme will have ongoing symptoms that can't be clearly explained. But she and others point to startlingly high numbers of people reporting such problems in regions that have no documented history of Lyme, such as Australia.

"The sheer number of people who believe they have these post-treatment Lyme symptoms is orders of magnitude higher than what you would expect among people who legitimately have Lyme," she said.

Serious risks with alternative Lyme treatments

While the downsides of ineffective Lyme tests are considerable, experts say they are often the gateway to even riskier therapies.

A recent medical paper documented nearly 120 clinics across the U.S. offering unproven Lyme treatments, some with consultation fees as high as \$3,000.

Treatments include electrical stimulation, "ozone-based therapy" and hyperbaric oxygen therapy, procedures that aren't covered by insurance and can carry price tags as high as \$6,000.

Love and other doctors say the most worrisome approach involves long-term intravenous use of antibiotics — sometimes multiple drugs for years.

While antibiotics are effective for quickly killing Lyme bacteria, multiple large studies have shown no benefits to their long-term use for chronic Lyme symptoms.

Smith and other experts have reported cases of patients who spent years getting regular antibiotic infusions, only to develop life-threatening gut infections after the drugs killed off healthy bacteria needed to support the digestive tract.

"There is clearly harm being done to people who are suffering and who, out of desperation, take on these great expenses or can be harmed by treatments that are not proven effective," Smith said.

Trump's signature, a symbol of presidential power, is under new

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 69 of 84

scrutiny thanks to the Epstein case

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

The signature of an American president is one of the planet's most powerful symbols. It can set your tax bill, your immigration status and who does or does not get aid from the world's largest economy.

Now, though, Donald Trump's distinctive signature is being scrutinized for a decidedly un-presidential reason.

Two documents in Jeffrey Epstein's 50th-birthday album purportedly include Trump's signature — one on a risqué line drawing of a female body and one on a picture of Epstein holding up a novelty check bearing Trump's name. A House committee released the 2003 book Monday, with some members insisting the multi-peaked black signatures are authentically Trump's, one of the best-known autographs in the world. The White House says the president did not sign the letter or the check to Epstein, who was later exposed as a sex offender and died by suicide in prison in 2019.

"It's not my signature," Trump told reporters outside a restaurant in Washington on Tuesday night. "And it's not the way I speak." Also Tuesday, the president declared the Epstein matter "a dead issue" in a phone call with NBC News.

The "birthday book" signatures matter in part because they are perceived as a measure of how close Trump was to Epstein before the president says he ended the friendship two decades ago.

And they are part of a bipartisan push in Congress for the release of the so-called Epstein files after years of speculation and conspiracy theories stoked by Trump and many of his allies. The Justice Department in August began turning over records from the Epstein sex trafficking investigation to the House Oversight Committee.

Signatures have a history of conferring authority. But now?

By the standards of handwriting scholars, determining whether it's truly Trump's signature is difficult. By the standards of the U.S. political system, it's impossible. Despite the obvious resemblance to Trump's other signatures, partisan loyalty is driving opinion.

Tamara Plakins Thornton, professor emerita of history at the University at Buffalo and author of "Handwriting in America: A Cultural History," said handwritten signatures have conferred authority and authenticity "by consent" since the printing press raised their popularity in the 19th century.

"We have a fondness for signatures as marks of the unique self," Thornton said. "But of course it's kind of baloney if you think about it. It's been a long time since (a signature) really could give that rock-solid proof."

"Authenticity is a very difficult thing to prove," said Tyler Feldman, owner of Inscriptographs, a memorabilia firm in Las Vegas. The multibillion-dollar memorabilia industry, he said, revolves around establishing an object's authenticity via science and analysis contracted to specialists. In the age of AI and deepfakes, "there are so many fraud signatures out there," he added, "whether he signed it or not, it's too hard to say."

Nonetheless, signatures have great value — and a long history in American folklore.

The signing pens themselves are status symbols of presidential access, shown off in lobbying and congressional offices around Washington as signs of clout. It is customary, for example, for presidents to sign legislation into law using multiple pens they then give out, often on camera, to stakeholders in turn. Then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi did the same when she signed articles of impeachment against Trump in 2020 in what amounted to a power flex as the leader of a separate and equal branch of government.

John Hancock, one of the nation's founders, famously signed his name to the Declaration of Independence in a large and flamboyant style — the better, legend has it, for the king of England to read without his spectacles. Now, one's "John Hancock" is a nickname for one's signature.

If not proof, signatures point to stubborn political pain for Trump

Even Trump can see from experience that he can't just command the sizable swaths of his own base demanding a full accounting to let it go, especially after his allies stoked the call to release the Epstein files. He's tried repeatedly to deflect attention to other matters and shame "weaklings" who persist in asking about Epstein. Trump has called the scandal "a Democrat hoax that never ends" and vowed to sue The Wall Street Journal, which first revealed the letter.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 70 of 84

Even the “hoax” characterization has changed in the face of questions of logic: Who would have forged his signature in 2003 and why? On Tuesday, White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt answered that it was all a Democratic and media narrative “to drag on this bad story about him.” She said the White House would support analyses of Trump’s purported signature on the Epstein scrapbook.

Republican Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky, who is leading a bipartisan push for a House vote to force the Justice Department to release its Epstein files, played down the letter’s relevance.

“I think the document’s a distraction,” Massie said. “I do think that it does bear on the credibility of the people who are trying to keep these documents from being released. It’s sort of indicative of the things that might come out if we were to release all of the files. In other words: embarrassing, but not indictable.”

Trump understands the value of his autograph

Trump was a celebrity before he was a politician, and his signature is an extension of his brand. He has long been fond of sending notes to people, always with his thick scrawl at the bottom. In December 2015, Trump was widely photographed signing the chest of a female supporter at a rally in Manassas, Virginia, rock star-style. Smiling, she then blew him a kiss, according to photos of the exchange.

He understands the value of authenticity: As recently as June, Trump repeated his long-standing allegations that President Joe Biden’s White House relied on an autopen to sign presidential pardons, executive orders and other key documents, and said that cast doubt on their validity. Pressed by reporters, Trump acknowledged he had no such evidence, and Biden said any such suggestion was false.

As president, Trump keeps Sharpie markers handy. When he went to the U.S. Open, on Sunday, he signed hats and tossed them to supporters in the crowd.

Trump also enjoys the theatricality of signing documents, a way to demonstrate the power of the presidency. He frequently summons the press into the Oval Office while he completes executive orders. An aide lays the document on the desk in front of him, Trump scrawls his signature and then holds it up for the cameras.

“Seriously, is that a good signature?” he asked during one such session on Aug. 25. “Who can write like that? Nobody.”

UK ambassador to US in the spotlight over his links to ‘best pal’ Epstein

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Wednesday that he has “confidence” in the country’s ambassador to the United States, who faces mounting criticism of his links to the convicted pedophile Jeffrey Epstein.

Starmer’s defense of Peter Mandelson came after Democrats on the House Oversight Committee released a 50th birthday album compiled in 2003 for Epstein, who at the time was a wealthy and well-connected financier. In that album, Mandelson — in a handwritten note — called Epstein “my best pal.”

Other alleged contributors to the album that was compiled by British convicted sex trafficker Ghislaine Maxwell were President Donald Trump, former President Bill Clinton and attorney Alan Dershowitz in a “friends” section, and included other letters with sexually provocative language.

Mandelson, who took on the prestigious diplomatic role earlier this year in the wake of the Labour Party’s election victory in July 2024, has admitted knowing Epstein well and told The Sun newspaper that the comments he wrote were “very embarrassing to see and to read.”

Insisting that he has a “tremendous sense, a profound sense of sympathy” for Epstein’s victims, Mandelson said his comments were written before Epstein was indicted and that he did not have a business relationship with him.

Epstein took his own life in prison in August 2019 while awaiting trial on sex-trafficking charges, more than a decade after his conviction for soliciting prostitution from a minor.

“I never saw any evidence of criminal activity,” he said. “Perhaps it’s because I’m a gay man, perhaps when I knew him, perhaps when I was associated with him those years ago, as I did with my then partner

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 71 of 84

and now husband, we never, ever saw any evidence or sign of this activity, which has since come to light."

The revelations about Mandelson's links with Epstein prompted Kemi Badenoch, leader of the main opposition Conservative Party, to ask Starmer whether the position of the U.S. ambassador was "tenable."

Starmer said Mandelson, 71, has "repeatedly expressed his deep regret" for his association with Epstein.

"I have confidence in him, and he is playing an important role in the U.K.-U.S. relationship," he said.

A skilled political operator, Mandelson is no stranger to controversy, having twice resigned from former Prime Minister Tony Blair's government in 1998 and 2001. He subsequently became a European Commissioner for trade, before returning to frontline British politics in 2008 to serve under Blair's successor, Gordon Brown.

Starmer considers Mandelson's trade expertise as vital in helping to limit the scale of tariffs imposed on the import of British goods into the U.S.

Starmer's office insisted that all due process was followed in appointing Mandelson. Spokesman Dave Pares said the ambassador had gone through "extensive vetting and background checks."

For a prime minister who has had a bruising week after the resignation of his deputy prime minister, Angela Rayner, over a tax dispute, the Mandelson distraction is unwelcome.

Mandelson has indicated that further embarrassing revelations are likely to emerge in the coming weeks.

"I have no doubt at all that there's a lot of traffic, correspondence, exchanges between us, absolutely," he said.

Trump loves the spotlight that comes with sports. He especially loves when it's on him

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump couldn't stand to cede the spotlight in 2020 as the Washington Nationals opened their pandemic-shortened season at home against the New York Yankees by having Dr. Anthony Fauci throw the first pitch.

"I think I'm doing that on Aug. 15 at Yankee Stadium," the president said shortly before Fauci took the mound.

He never made it to the Bronx that year, later saying he needed to stay at the White House to manage the pandemic. But eight months into his second term, Trump rarely shies away from ensuring he remains at the forefront of American sports and cultural life. He frequently turns to high-wattage athletic events to ensure his presence is felt far beyond the traditional realm of the presidency.

In September alone, Trump has at least three New York-area sporting events on his calendar.

He watched Carlos Alcaraz win the U.S. Open on Sunday and returns to the city Thursday when the Yankees host the Detroit Tigers on the 24th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The president also plans to attend the opening round of the Ryder Cup at Bethpage Black on Long Island this month, and has encouraged U.S. captain Keegan Bradley to play.

"He's much more present, verbal and opinionated when it comes to sport than any president before him," said David Andrews, a University of Maryland professor and author of "Making Sport Great Again." "Being at a major sporting event does bring with it heightened visibility, and it allows people to clip you on social media."

Sports have long helped define who Trump is

Sports were central to Trump's public persona decades before he entered politics. He once owned the USFL's New Jersey Generals and bid unsuccessfully to buy the New York Mets. While he's not expected to throw the first pitch on Thursday, he has done so previously, including at a 2000 game in Wrigley Field and six years later at Fenway Park.

The Yankees game will be Trump's eighth major sporting event in as many months since returning to the White House in January. He attended the Super Bowl in New Orleans, the Daytona 500, UFC fights in Miami and Newark, New Jersey, the NCAA wrestling championships in Philadelphia, the FIFA Club World

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 72 of 84

Cup final in East Rutherford, New Jersey, and the U.S. Open men's final.

All of that doesn't count all the weekends he spent golfing at his courses in Florida, New Jersey and Virginia, as well as a swing to inaugurate a new Trump course in Scotland.

The appearances can sometimes take turns that most presidents would try to avoid. Trump was booed at the U.S. Open and the Club World Cup final. And he often pounces on off-field issues where he thinks he might have impact — pushing for the late Pete Rose to be inducted into baseball's Hall of Fame and calling for the Cleveland Guardians and Washington Commanders to go back to their old team nicknames.

The president has also held many White House events promoting the U.S. co-hosting the World Cup next year — even though he was not much of a soccer fan before — and is paying close attention to preparations for the 2028 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Sometimes sports and political diplomacy have collided. Trying to defuse a contentious Oval Office meeting with Trump in May, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa brought two golf stars from his country, Ernie Els and Retief Goosen.

"They're champions," Trump said then. "I respect champions."

Though he was long a Yankees fan and close to the team's longtime late owner, George Steinbrenner, Trump has lately kept his preferences to himself and been more willing to soak up the spectacle of big events rather than rooting as a fan.

Asked if Trump is still Yankee fan or if the spectacle of major sporting events is more important than his personal rooting interests, White House spokesperson Taylor Rogers said only that Trump "will return to his home state" to attend the game. On a similar subject, however, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Trump "is a New Yorker at heart. He loves the city very much." That's despite the fact Trump changed his primary residence to Florida in 2019.

Baseball and presidents

The national pastime's presidential connections go well beyond Trump.

Abraham Lincoln liked to watch the games on a diamond just south of the White House. Richard Nixon compiled an exhaustive, all-star dream teams list spanning several leagues and eras that made national headlines. Ronald Reagan, who was once a baseball announcer, watched a 1988 game from the Chicago Cubs dugout.

On April 14, 1910, William Howard Taft hurled a ball from the stands to begin the custom of presidents throwing out first pitches when baseball teams open their seasons in Washington. George W. Bush tossed the first pitch as the Yankees played the Arizona Diamondbacks in the 2001 World Series, a moment that came to symbolize national resilience after the Sept. 11 attacks weeks earlier.

Barack Obama was the last president to throw the first pitch, in 2010. Joe Biden did not, and neither did Trump in his first term.

The exaggerations that are now familiar in Trump's political life are also found in his sports obsession, though.

"I was supposed to be a pro baseball player," he once wrote. By Trump's account, in Brian Kilmeade's 2005 book "The Games Do Count," "I was still thinking in high school that I had a shot at the major leagues until I attended a tryout with another young kid named Willie McCovey. I watched him hit the ball, and I said I really believe I will enjoy the real estate business for my entire life."

Except that couldn't have happened the way Trump recalls. McCovey's Hall of Fame career did famously feature a tryout for the New York Giants in Florida, but that was in 1955 — when Trump wasn't yet 10.

Curt Smith, a former speechwriter for President George H.W. Bush and author of "The Presidents and the Pastime," wrote about Trump's high school baseball career at New York Military Academy and noted, "A lot of the characteristics we of course recognize today were born back then."

Smith said teammates remembered Trump as a strong enough right-handed pull hitter that opposing teams would set their defenses to the left side of the diamond. Instead of hitting to the gap on the right, Trump would hit to the defenders on the left because he "wanted to overpower them."

"He was a real gamer," Smith said. "He loved to win."

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 73 of 84

France's finances are in turmoil. Here's how it came to this

By DAVID McHUGH AP Business Writer

France's finances and politics are in turmoil. President Emmanuel Macron has just appointed a new prime minister — the fourth person to hold the job in the past 12 months. The deficit is out of control. Borrowing costs are rising. And parliament can't muster a majority to tackle spending.

It's a serious comedown for a major industrial power that has the second-largest economy in Europe.

Here's how France found itself in this state of affairs:

First the pandemic, then an energy crisis

France last balanced its budget in 1973, and maintained a generous welfare state with strong worker protections. That worked for years so long as solid economic growth swept tax revenue into government coffers and kept deficits from getting out of hand. First as economy minister and then from 2017 as president, Macron took steps to improve growth and state finances, cutting taxes and spending and raising the retirement age from 62 to 64.

Accumulated debt was high — over 90% of annual gross domestic product from 2008 on — but manageable due to steady growth, near-zero interest rates for much of the past decade, and France's solid credit rating that let it borrow on favorable terms.

Then came the pandemic, followed by an energy crisis after Russia cut off most natural gas supplies over its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. The government spent heavily on subsidies to keep businesses afloat and shield consumers from higher gas and electric bills. At the same time, a global shift occurred in interest rates, sending them suddenly higher.

Almost overnight, the pile of accumulated debt jumped: from 98% of GDP in pre-pandemic year 2019 to 114% in 2020, where it has stayed. The annual deficit last year ballooned beyond forecasts to 5.8%, well above the 3% limit under European Union rules.

France is hardly alone in loading up on debt in recent years. Its debt pile is smaller than Greece's, which is 152% of GDP, and Italy's, which is 138%. It's also lower than the U.S.'s 119%. France, however, lacks the U.S. advantage of having the world's dominant reserve currency which supports Washington's ability to borrow, while Greece has been running budget surpluses after being bailed out and Italy reduced its deficit last year. Greek 10-year bonds now yield 3.3%, indicating the market views them as less risky than France's.

Macron's election call was a self-inflicted wound

Macron called new elections last year after his pro-European party took a beating in elections for the European parliament from Marine Le Pen's anti-immigration, nationalist party. The new French parliament wound up sharply divided, with a leftist coalition facing off against Le Pen's party and with centrists in between. There's been no functioning majority — except to say "no" to austerity and topple Prime Ministers Gabriel Attal, Michel Barnier and Francois Bayrou in quick succession.

France has both high government spending and high taxes

Taxes in France are 43.8% of GDP, the highest in the EU. Spending is also high. The money goes for pensions, civil servant salaries, and recently increased defense spending due to the perceived threat from an increasingly aggressive Russia.

With interest rates much higher these days, interest costs have reached 67 billion euros a year, money that is not available for spending on schools, pensions or health care. And high taxes leave less room for increases without hurting growth.

With a deficit that big, France will have to enact some mix of tax increases and spending cuts equal to around 5% of gross domestic product over the next several years, according to economist Zsolt Darvas, senior fellow at the Bruegel think tank in Brussels. That's doable — Greece did even more after its debt crisis in 2010-2015 — but a heavy lift for any government.

And it's not happening yet. The National Assembly balked at Bayrou's plan to start putting finances on a sustainable path by eliminating two public holidays and cutting 44 billion euros (\$55.4 billion) in spending,

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 74 of 84

toppling him in a confidence vote and leaving investors wondering when exactly legislators would confront the deficit. Macron named Sebastien Lecornu as Bayrou's successor on Tuesday.

France isn't in a financial crisis. Yet

When governments spend more than they take in in taxes, they fill the gap, or annual deficit, by selling bonds to investors. When the debts come due, governments pay them off by selling new bonds, which usually works fine — so long as bond investors are confident that the government is managing its finances well.

That confidence has been eroded by the deadlock in parliament. As a result, markets are demanding higher interest rates on French borrowing to compensate them for the additional risk that the political logjam will continue, the deficit will remain high, and the bonds will fall in value or — still very unlikely — that France might not pay at all.

The outside scenario France must avoid is a death spiral in which investor doubts push borrowing costs higher, and high borrowing costs increase the deficit and fuel more investor doubts in a self-reinforcing doom loop, like the one that sank Greece and threatened Italy in the early 2010s.

"A genuine financial crisis with a self-reinforcing doom loop ... remains quite unlikely for the time being," said Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg bank. "Of course, we cannot rule it out completely."

If legislators "continue to reject common sense and insist on unfinanceable demands, the risk could rise," he said.

His base case is: France "continues to muddle through" with mediocre growth, somewhat higher borrowing costs and a small deficit reduction.

France will have to fix this on its own.

In a case of extreme and unwarranted market panic that threatens France's ability to borrow, the European Central Bank could intervene by buying French bonds and driving down the government's borrowing costs to sustainable levels. But the ECB reserves such aid for countries pursuing "sound and sustainable" policies, meaning the central bank won't bail out politicians who refuse to act.

The same applies to the eurozone bailout fund, the European Stability Mechanism, and the International Monetary Fund. Help from them imposes even stricter conditions on spending and policy, and France would still have to make the fiscal adjustment anyway.

Economist Darvas said there's no rescue program that would spare France having to bite the bullet. "It's very hard to imagine that France, such a big and proud country, would go cap in hand to the ESM and possibly the IMF," Darvas said. "So again we come back to the same position... that in whatever world, France will have to do the fiscal adjustment."

She was adopted into an abusive US home. Decades later, immigration policies sent her back to Brazil

By LEA SKENE and TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

It sounded like freedom, like a world of possibility beyond the orphanage walls.

Maria Pires was getting adopted. At 11, she saw herself escaping the violence of the Sao Paulo orphanage, leaving Brazil for America.

A single man in his 40s, Floyd Sykes III, came to meet her. He signed paperwork and brought Maria home. She arrived in suburban Baltimore in 1989. She was, she believed, officially an American.

But what happened there would come to haunt her.

"My father — my adopted father — he was supposed to save me," Pires said. Instead, he tortured and sexually abused her.

After nearly three years, Sykes was arrested. Pires entered foster care.

By then, she was consumed with fury. In the worst years, she beat a teenager at a roller rink, leaving him in a coma. She attacked a prison guard and stabbed her cellmate with a sharpened toothbrush.

In prison, she discovered that no one ever completed her immigration paperwork. That oversight would

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 75 of 84

leave her without a country, but immigration officials let her stay in the country.

In President Donald Trump's second administration — with its promise of mass deportations — everything changed. Trump's unyielding approach to immigration enforcement has swept up tens of thousands of immigrants, including many like Pires who came to the U.S. as children and know little, if any, life outside America.

Pires was detained during a routine check-in, sent to one immigration jail after another, and ultimately deported to a land she barely remembers. The Associated Press conducted hours of interviews with Pires and people who know her and reviewed Maryland court records, internal ICE communications, and adoption and immigration paperwork to tell her story.

U.S. immigration officials say Pires is a dangerous criminal who's no longer welcome in the country.

Pires, now 47, doesn't deny her criminal past.

But little about her story is straightforward.

A new chapter of childhood, marked by abuse

Pires has no clear memories from before entering the orphanage. The organization that facilitated her adoption was later investigated over allegations it charged exorbitant fees and used videos to market children.

Pires remembers a crew filming a commercial. She believes that's how Sykes found her.

In his custody, the abuse escalated over time. He'd lock her in a room, chained to a radiator. He overpowered her when she fought back. She started cutting herself.

In September 1992, someone alerted authorities. Sykes was arrested. Child welfare officials took custody of Maria, then 14.

Maryland Department of Human Services spokesperson Lilly Price said the agency couldn't comment on specific cases because of confidentiality laws but noted in a statement that adoptive parents are responsible for applying for U.S. citizenship for their children.

Court documents show Sykes admitted sexually assaulting Maria but he claimed the assaults stopped in June 1990.

He was convicted of child abuse. In the end, Sykes spent about two months in jail.

Sykes' sister Leslie Parrish said she's often wondered what happened to Maria. Parrish said her brother seemed committed to fatherhood.

In hindsight, she sees it differently. She believes sinister motives lurked "in the back of his sick mind."

Years in prison, with progress and setbacks

During her teenage years, Pires was kicked out of school for fighting. She ran away from foster homes, sometimes ending up homeless.

At 18, she pleaded guilty to aggravated assault for the roller rink attack. She served two years in prison. It was then that authorities — and Pires herself — discovered she wasn't a U.S. citizen.

Her criminal record meant it would be extremely difficult to gain citizenship. Suddenly, she faced deportation. Pires said she hadn't realized the potential consequences when accepting her plea deal.

A team of volunteer lawyers and advocates argued she shouldn't be punished for something beyond her control.

Ultimately, the American judicial system agreed: Pires would be allowed to remain in the U.S. if she checked in annually with ICE.

Pires didn't immediately take advantage of her second chance.

She was arrested for cocaine distribution in 2004 and check fraud in 2007. While incarcerated, she picked up charges for stabbing her cellmate in the eye, burning an inmate and throwing hot water on an officer.

Her 2017 release marked a new beginning. Through therapy and other support services, she learned to manage her anger and stay out of trouble. She started working long days in construction. She checked in yearly with immigration agents.

But in 2023, work dried up. She fell behind on rent and felt her mental health slipping. She applied for a women's transitional housing program in Baltimore.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 76 of 84

Pires thrived there. With no high school diploma and only second-grade reading skills, she qualified for a state-run job training course to polish and refinish floors. Photos show her smiling broadly in a blue graduation gown.

This year, on March 6, Pires showed up at the Baltimore immigration office for her annual check-in. Instead of receiving a compliance report, she was handcuffed and detained.

That sparked a journey across America's immigration detention system. From Baltimore, she was sent to New Jersey and Louisiana before landing at Eloy Detention Center in Arizona.

A deportation priority, and starting from scratch in Brazil

On June 2, in an email exchange obtained by AP, an ICE agent asked to have Pires prioritized for an upcoming deportation flight to Brazil.

Her lawyer tried to stop the deportation. He received terrified calls from Pires, who was transferred to a facility near Alexandria, Louisiana, a common waypoint for deportation flights.

Finally, Pires said, she was handcuffed, shackled, put on a bus, driven to the Alexandria airport and loaded onto an airplane.

"I was just praying to God," she said. "Maybe this is his plan."

After two stops to drop off other deportees, they arrived in the Brazilian port city of Fortaleza.

Brazilian authorities later took Pires to a women's shelter in the eastern part of the country.

She's spent months trying to get Brazilian identification documents. Most of her belongings are in a Baltimore storage unit. She tries to remain hopeful.

"I've survived all these years," Pires said. "I can survive again."

Her attorney filed an application for U.S. citizenship. But federal officials say that's not happening, citing her "serial criminal record."

Pires applied for Brazilian work authorization. In moments of optimism, she imagines herself working as a translator, earning a decent salary and renting a nice apartment.

She wonders if God's plan will ever become clear.

Trump's strike on alleged Venezuelan drug boat raises questions about his use of military power

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — Within a week of Donald Trump's election, Sen. Lindsey Graham counseled the president-elect to quickly send a message to the drug cartels from the White House.

"Blow up something," Graham told Trump.

The brazen military strike on a suspected drug-smuggling speedboat carrying 11 people from Venezuela this month is just what the South Carolina senator had in mind. But it has cleaved fresh divisions within the Republican Party over Trump's campaign promise to keep the U.S. out of foreign entanglements and the reality of a commander in chief whose America First agenda is pursuing a tougher military stance.

And it's raising stark questions about just how far Trump intends to wield his presidential power over the U.S. military without a robust check on the executive branch from Congress.

Already, Trump has dropped 30,000-pound (13,600-kilogram) bombs on Iran's nuclear sites without any new authorizations from Capitol Hill. He deployed the military to Los Angeles over the objections of California's Democratic governor and wants the National Guard in other cities, too. Trump's allies pressured senators to confirm Pete Hegseth as defense secretary despite objections to his past behavior and skepticism of "warrior culture" at the Pentagon. And last week Trump rebranded the Department of Defense as the Department of War.

"I don't care whether it's a Republican president or a Democrat president," said Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, once a Trump rival for the White House. "We can't just want to kill people without having some kind of process."

"We're just going to blow up ships? That just isn't who we are," Paul said.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 77 of 84

'Killing cartel members'

The Trump administration, and the president himself, have said the lethal strike on the vessel from Venezuela was intended to make it clear that the U.S. would not tolerate drugs being shipped into this country. They said those killed on the boat in the Caribbean included members of the Tren de Aragua gang, which operates from Venezuela, though details have been scarce.

"Killing cartel members who poison our fellow citizens is the highest and best use of our military," Vice President JD Vance posted on social media.

When a prominent commenter suggested that killing civilians without due process would be a war crime, Vance replied that he didn't care "what you call it."

Paul, the senator, responded to Vance with his own questions.

"Did he ever read To Kill a Mockingbird?" Paul wrote. "Did he ever wonder what might happen if the accused were immediately executed without trial or representation?"

"What a despicable and thoughtless sentiment it is to glorify killing someone without a trial."

A bipartisan briefing on the matter for the Senate's top national security staff was abruptly canceled last week. And Tuesday's rescheduled session left many questions unanswered.

'There's a legal way to do that'

The Trump administration did not explain its authority for the strike and would not provide legal opinion, according to a person familiar with the briefing who insisted on anonymity because it was closed.

"Where is the legality here?" said Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., a former Navy combat pilot and astronaut.

"I understand the need for us to be able to take out drug dealers from being able to deliver drugs into the United States," he said. "There's a legal way to do that."

But Kelly said he worries for the military officers involved with the mission. "What situation did we, did the White House, just put them in?" he said. "I don't know if this was legal or not."

What Venezuela had to say

After Trump announced the strike, Venezuelan state television showed Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and first lady Cilia Flores walking the streets of his childhood neighborhood. A television presenter said Maduro was "bathing in patriotic love" as he interacted with supporters.

Maduro did not immediately address the strike directly but charged that the United States was "coming for Venezuela's riches," including the world's largest proven oil reserves.

Trump's national security vision and the power to enact it

Republicans have been shifting their national security priorities since Trump's first term moved the GOP away from its traditional mooring as a party with a muscular approach to confronting adversaries and assisting allies abroad.

Trump's America First approach initially launched a new era of U.S. neo-isolationism more aligned with the libertarian-leaning Paul than traditional defense hawks like Graham.

But in his second term, Trump is testing not his national security vision but his power to enact it.

Sen. Jim Risch of Idaho, the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he is "extremely confident" that the target of the boat bombing was "a group of narco-terrorists."

"I can't tell you how many lives were saved by the president of the United States when he pulled the trigger on that," Risch said Tuesday. "There were tons of drugs that went down with that that would've wound up right here in the USA."

Gesturing to the Supreme Court building across from the Capitol, GOP Sen. Josh Hawley of Missouri said he believes the president's actions fall under his Article II authority, since the administration said the drugs were heading to the U.S.

"My gut intuition is it's within the president's commander in chief powers," Hawley said.

Briefing for lawmakers

But Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, called for lawmakers to receive a full briefing from the Trump administration, including the legal rationale for the military strike.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 78 of 84

If the president exceeded his authority, then the Senate must consider all remedies available, including limiting the use of funds for further unauthorized military operations, he said. "We cannot risk the life of American servicemembers based on secret orders and dubious legal theories," Reed said.

Graham, a former judge advocate general, or JAG, officer in the Navy, recalled his advice as Trump prepared to return to the White House.

"Whether it's a lab, I don't care if it's in Mexico, I don't care where it is," Graham recalled. "I said, 'Look for a target that changes the game.'"

Asked if the strike on the Venezuelan boat was it, Graham said: "Works for me."

Takeaways from our collaboration on schools recovering from wildfires

By CAROLYN JONES of CalMatters undefined

PARADISE, Calif. (AP) — One of the deadliest wildfires in U.S. history, the Camp Fire in Paradise is among the many natural disasters that have upended American students' learning over the past decade.

Damaged schools, lost homes and layers of trauma have left a mark on thousands of children — a scenario sure to continue as climate change makes these events more frequent and more intense.

The challenges that persist in Paradise nearly seven years later are a reminder of how long learning recovery can take, and a lesson on how schools can give traumatized kids a better chance of thriving long term.

The Associated Press is collaborating with CalMatters, Honolulu Civil Beat, Blue Ridge Public Radio and Centro de Periodismo Investigativo in Puerto Rico to examine how school communities are recovering from the disruption of natural disasters. Here are key takeaways.

Schools must balance mental health with academics

For most students, the Camp Fire and its aftermath made it almost impossible to focus on schoolwork. Schools pushed academics aside in favor of mental health, a move that most agreed was necessary but set students back months, if not years, academically.

"People think, natural disaster — mental health. They don't think about the academic component to it," said Carrie Dawes, health and wellness coordinator for Paradise Unified. "You put that aside when you have a little kiddo crying because they don't have a house to live in. You're not going to say, 'OK, snap out of it. We've got math to do.'"

Last year, only 13% of graduating seniors in Paradise Unified met the entrance requirements for California's public universities or completed a career training program, compared with 45% statewide. Not one student from Paradise Unified enrolled as a freshman at the University of California.

Test scores reflect the academic malaise. Among eighth graders, only 11% met the state's standard for math. Just 18% of sixth graders were reading at grade level. The numbers were even worse for low-income students.

Officials who lived through the Camp Fire now say schools should prioritize academics somewhat, even when the impulse is to drop everything in favor of mental health. The first few years after the fire, school days were dedicated almost entirely to social-emotional activities as therapists and counselors were dispatched to campuses.

"In the beginning, we did a lot of art and singing. Taking daily walks. We had baby goats and therapy dogs," said Casey Taylor, the superintendent of Achieve Charter School. "That's what we needed."

But those activities shouldn't come at the expense of algebra and reading, Taylor said.

School closures contribute to academic decline, too

In the Camp Fire, the town of Paradise was almost entirely wiped out. Eighty-five people died, including some in their cars as they tried to escape. More than 18,000 buildings burned, including most of the town's schools. At least 26,000 people were displaced.

Schools began the long process of recovery as the chaos began to settle: locating students, finding new facilities, assessing the damage and getting academics back on track after nearly a month of canceled classes.

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 79 of 84

During the 2018-19 school year, the Paradise Unified School District reported 154 closure days across its dozen schools as a result of the Camp Fire, impacting about 4,200 students, according to data analysis by CalMatters.

It's not uncommon for students to miss school after a natural disaster, either because they've suddenly become homeless, struggle with mental health, or both. But disaster-related absenteeism can take an especially steep toll on students' learning, according to research from the NWEA, a not-for-profit education research firm. Middle schoolers who lose a week of school due to extreme weather actually miss three weeks of progress in reading and almost four weeks in math, researchers found, most likely due to trouble concentrating.

Even when schools reopen, the community will never be the same

Taylor described the first few months after the fire as the "hero phase," where the community pulled together and vowed to resurrect their town.

But then a more difficult period ensued, rife with disillusionment. Fire survivors got tired of living out of suitcases, and many were daunted by the hassle and expense of rebuilding. Old friends and neighbors started moving away, bringing further layers of loss, Taylor said.

Enrollment in Paradise Unified has been increasing but is still less than half what it was before the fire — 1,657 last year, compared with 3,441 in 2017. And the student body is a bit different from before the fire: lower-income, more diverse, more students with disabilities. At least a quarter of the students are new to Paradise and didn't experience the fire.

Taylor and other Paradise school officials now advise other districts that have experienced a natural disaster, and their top suggestion is to make sure the adults are cared for, too.

In Paradise, the community relied on teachers to serve as a backbone amid the chaos. But many teachers also lost their homes, which meant they were haggling with insurance companies while finding new places to live and commuting long distances — in some cases, more than 100 miles — to be with their students.

For Taylor, the pivotal moment came when her school was able to move back to its original campus after operating out of a church in Chico for three years. Families sobbed when they saw the new playground and the freshly painted school buildings.

The next milestone must be academic, she and others said. Teachers need to set higher expectations, and schools need to provide tutoring and other support to help students catch up. Emotional wellness and academic rigor should not be mutually exclusive, Taylor said.

Paradise Unified broke ground in June on rebuilding its main elementary school. The 46,000-square-foot campus will include a STEM lab, soccer field and outdoor stage.

This California town was ravaged by a wildfire. Seven years later, schools are still recovering

By CAROLYN JONES of CalMatters, MEGAN TAGAMI of Honolulu Civil Beat and SHARON LURYE of The Associated Press undefined

PARADISE, Calif. (AP) — Nearly seven years after Paradise was ravaged by wildfire, the foothill town smells like pine trees again. New homes are sprouting up on once-scorched lots. Construction trucks rumble through neighborhoods. An ice cream shop recently opened around the corner from the newly rebuilt high school.

But in the town's classrooms, recovery has been more complicated — and much slower. Even as Paradise gradually rebuilds schools lost to California's 2018 Camp Fire, officials have found getting kids on track academically — and recreating a tight-knit, thriving school community — is a lot tougher than just flipping on the lights at a new campus.

"We'll get there, but we have not yet recovered," said Superintendent Tom Taylor before he retired in May. "We're not yet where we want to be."

One of the deadliest wildfires in U.S. history, the Camp Fire is among the many natural disasters that have upended student learning over the past decade. Damaged schools, lost homes and layers of trauma

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 80 of 84

have left a mark on thousands of children — a scenario sure to continue as climate change makes these events more frequent and more intense.

The Associated Press is collaborating with CalMatters, Honolulu Civil Beat, Blue Ridge Public Radio and Centro de Periodismo Investigativo in Puerto Rico to examine how school communities are recovering from the disruption of natural disasters.

The challenges that persist in Paradise are a reminder of how long learning recovery can take — and a lesson on how schools can give traumatized kids a better chance of thriving long term.

It's also a lesson on how to balance mental health and academics in the years following a disaster. For most students, the Camp Fire and its aftermath made it almost impossible to focus on schoolwork. Schools pushed academics aside in favor of mental health, a move that most agreed was necessary but set students back months if not years academically.

"People think, natural disaster — mental health. They don't think about the academic component to it," said Carrie Dawes, health and wellness coordinator for Paradise Unified. "You put that aside when you have a little kiddo crying because they don't have a house to live in. You're not going to say, 'OK, snap out of it. We've got math to do.'"

Camp Fire left students in a lingering academic malaise

In the Paradise disaster's wake, students found themselves moving frequently. Schools were temporarily housed in unusual places — hardware stores, warehouses, churches. Nearly everyone was consumed by anxiety and grief. Learning fell to the wayside.

Kenny Michael, now a high school senior, was in fifth grade when the fire erupted. Although her immediate family was safe, some beloved neighbors died. Michael spent months grappling with family strife, loss and stress, including over their missing cats.

"It wasn't just a matter of the fire hitting," Michael said. "It was all this other stuff, too."

Once an enthusiastic learner, Michael failed fifth grade and lost interest in school, saying she was too distracted to concentrate on classroom lessons. She's now living with her grandmother in Magalia, a small community adjacent to Paradise, and attends an online school. She takes solace in talking to friends and writing horror and fantasy stories — about fire.

But she has no immediate plans to attend college after she graduates this year.

This is typical for Paradise teens. Last year, only 13% of graduating seniors in Paradise Unified met the entrance requirements for California's public universities or completed a career training program, compared with 45% statewide. Last year, not one student from Paradise Unified enrolled as a freshman at the University of California.

Test scores reflect the academic malaise. Among eighth graders, only 11% met the state's standard for math. Just 18% of sixth graders were reading at grade level. The numbers were even worse for low-income students.

The statistics show that, even once the immediate effects of the fire subsided, academics continued their downward spiral.

Disaster-related absences take a steep toll on learning

Before the Camp Fire roared through Butte County in November 2018, Paradise was a quiet, woodsy town filled with families and retirees. There was a movie theater, a bowling alley, a pet store and a Fosters Freeze, known for burgers and shakes. Everyone loved the beer brittle at Joy Lyn's candy shop. In April, residents celebrated Gold Nugget Days with a parade, chili cook-off and a Miss Gold Nugget contest.

Within a few hours, all of that was gone. The Gold Rush-era town was almost entirely wiped out in the fire. Eighty-five people died, including some in their cars as they tried to escape. More than 18,000 buildings burned, including most of the town's schools. At least 26,000 people were displaced.

Schools began the long process of recovery as the chaos began to settle: locating students, finding new facilities, assessing the damage and getting academics back on track after nearly a month of canceled

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 81 of 84

classes.

It's been a protracted process.

During the 2018-19 school year, the Paradise Unified School District reported 154 closure days across its dozen schools as a result of the Camp Fire, impacting about 4,200 students, according to data analysis by CalMatters. But the impacts of the Camp Fire were far reaching, impacting nearly 1 million students across the state — 15% of all students that year — as drifting smoke prompted more than 1,600 schools to close.

California schools have become used to the phenomenon. Since 2022-23, kids in California have lost more than 3.5 million days of learning because of disasters, according to UndauntedK12, a policy and research group. And that learning loss is magnified because of the stress associated with such catastrophes.

It's not uncommon for students to miss school after a natural disaster, either because they've suddenly become homeless, struggle with mental health, or both. But disaster-related absenteeism can take an especially steep toll on students' learning, according to research from the NWEA, a not-for-profit education research firm. Middle schoolers who lose a week of school due to extreme weather actually miss three weeks of progress in reading and almost four weeks in math, researchers found, most likely due to trouble concentrating.

It's a concern facing a growing number of schools nationwide.

In North Carolina, some students lost two months' worth of class this past academic year because of both Hurricane Helene last September and other extreme weather events. The historic Category 4 storm damaged tens of thousands of homes and numerous school buildings, causing mass displacement and academic setbacks.

In Hawaii, the deadly August 2023 Lahaina wildfires resulted in students at four schools losing at least five weeks of learning days. At King Kamehameha III Elementary, a historic elementary school that burned down in the fires, kids lost more than 50 days of instruction.

The compound effects of missed class time are evident in Lahaina. Students' test scores took a sharp dip in the school year after the disaster as kids transitioned among online classes, learning hubs and schools outside of West Maui. Only 29% of King Kamehameha III's students tested proficient in math in spring 2024, for example, compared with 46% the year before.

Even at the three Lahaina public schools that remained standing after the fires, students weren't able to return to the campuses until mid-October because of debris cleanup and environmental testing.

Students struggled to find motivation in school or attended class sporadically before the fires, according to Lahainaluna High School teacher Jarrett Chapin, and the disaster made matters worse. In the 2023-24 school year, 28% of Lahainaluna students were proficient in English, compared with nearly 50% the year before the fire. Only 5% of kids tested as proficient in math.

Finding normalcy can be a struggle after a disaster

In Paradise, even as the town's schools set about rebuilding damaged campuses and tending to students and families, the community faced the reality that it would never be the same.

Casey Taylor, the superintendent of Achieve Charter School, described the first few months after the fire as the "hero phase," where the community pulled together and vowed to resurrect their town. "Paradise Strong" and "We Will Rebuild" signs proliferated.

But then a more difficult period ensued, rife with disillusionment. Fire survivors got tired of living out of suitcases, and many were daunted by the hassle and expense of rebuilding. Old friends and neighbors started moving away, bringing further layers of loss, Taylor said.

"It hurts," said Taylor, a Paradise native whose own home was destroyed in the fire. "Your community just starts spiraling."

Enrollment in Paradise Unified has been increasing but is still less than half what it was before the fire — 1,657 last year, compared with 3,441 in 2017. And the student body is a bit different from before the fire: lower-income, more diverse, more students with disabilities. At least a quarter of the students are new to Paradise and didn't experience the fire.

Taylor and other Paradise school officials now advise other districts that have experienced a natural

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 82 of 84

disaster, and their top suggestion is to make sure the adults are cared for, too.

"We found that initially, the adults needed attention the most. You think it's going to be the kids, but they're so much more resilient in the moment," said Michelle Zevely, Butte County Office of Education's deputy superintendent of student programs and education support.

In Paradise, the community relied on teachers to serve as a backbone amid the chaos. But many teachers also lost their homes, which meant they were haggling with insurance companies while finding new places to live and commuting long distances — in some cases, more than 100 miles — to be with their students.

"Teachers just needed to talk, or to cry, but they couldn't because they're in the classroom and the students were their top priority," said Tamara Conry, a former math teacher at Paradise Intermediate School, who now works for the state teachers union.

When academics fall by the wayside

Another lesson from Paradise is the importance of prioritizing academics even when the impulse is to drop everything in favor of mental health. The first few years after the fire, school days were dedicated almost entirely to social-emotional activities as therapists and counselors were dispatched to campuses.

"In the beginning, we did a lot of art and singing. Taking daily walks. We had baby goats and therapy dogs," Taylor said. "We spent a lot of time talking about emotions, because that's what we needed."

The mental-health focus was indeed necessary. Aryah Berkowitz, who was in sixth grade at Achieve charter school when the fire took her home, two of her dogs and her family's business, said the therapy and teachers' social-emotional offerings were instrumental in helping her through those difficult years after the fire.

But those activities shouldn't come at the expense of algebra and reading, Taylor said.

Once an ambitious student, Berkowitz was suspended twice for acting out after the 2018 disaster. It took her four years, she said, to focus on academics again. But she credits her teachers and counselors in Paradise for helping her through that difficult time and getting her back on track. She graduated from high school in June and plans to join the Army, pursuing her goal of becoming a K-9 handler.

Taylor remembers the first signs of renewal in Paradise, when the town became something more than an ashy moonscape. First a gas station opened, then a grocery was rebuilt, and eventually the Gold Nugget celebration returned. Even Joy Lyn's candy shop reopened.

For Taylor, the pivotal moment came when her school was able to move back to its original campus after operating out of a church in Chico for three years. Families sobbed when they saw the new playground and the freshly painted school buildings.

The next milestone must be academic, she and others said. Teachers need to set higher expectations, and schools need to provide tutoring and other support to help students catch up. Emotional wellness and academic rigor should not be mutually exclusive, Taylor said.

It's a lesson recovering schools are applying in other disaster-torn parts of the country.

Just two years after Maui's devastating fires, Lahainaluna High has doubled down on college preparation, introducing an Advanced Placement seminar class last fall that challenged students with intense research projects and writing assignments. The school has also increased enforcement of students' attendance, contacting parents when their kids don't show up to class.

While the rigor and heightened accountability have been daunting for some students, many rose to the challenge and are proud of what they've achieved in school, according to Chapin, the local high school teacher.

"I think our successes this year have crowded out a lot of stuff that could have paralyzed us," he said.

Paradise Unified broke ground in June on rebuilding its main elementary school. The 46,000-square-foot campus will include a STEM lab, soccer field and outdoor stage.

"It took almost five years before we could see the light at the end of the tunnel," Taylor said. "But now the light is shining very bright."

Court rules Lisa Cook can remain a Fed governor while fighting

Trump's attempt to fire her

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal court has ruled that embattled Federal Reserve Gov. Lisa Cook can remain in her position while she fights President Donald Trump's efforts to fire her.

The ruling, which will almost certainly be appealed, is a blow to the Trump administration's efforts to assert more control over the traditionally independent Fed, which sets short-term interest rates to achieve its congressionally mandated goals of stable prices and maximum employment. Congress has also sought to insulate the Fed from day-to-day politics.

U.S. District Judge Jia Cobb late Tuesday granted Cook's request for a preliminary injunction blocking her firing while the dispute makes its way through the courts. Cobb ruled that Cook would likely prevail in the lawsuit she filed late last month to overturn her firing.

Trump, a Republican, said he was firing Cook on Aug. 25 over allegations raised by one of his appointees that she committed mortgage fraud related to two properties she purchased in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Atlanta in 2021, before she joined the Fed. Cook is accused of saying the properties were "primary residences," which could have resulted in lower down payments and mortgage rates than if either was designated a second home or investment property.

The White House insisted Trump had the right to fire Cook.

"President Trump lawfully removed Lisa Cook for cause due to credible allegations of mortgage fraud from her highly sensitive position overseeing financial institutions on the Federal Reserve Board of Governors," White House spokesman Kush Desai said Wednesday in a statement. "This ruling will not be the last say on the matter, and the Trump Administration will continue to work to restore accountability and confidence in the Fed."

But Cobb ruled that the allegations likely weren't sufficient legal cause to fire Cook. Under the law governing the Fed, governors can only be removed "for cause," which Cobb said was limited to actions taken during a governor's time in office.

The "removal of a Federal Reserve Governor extends only to concerns about the Board member's ability to effectively and faithfully execute their statutory duties, in light of events that have occurred while they are in office," Cobb wrote. Cobb was appointed by President Joe Biden, a Democrat.

"President Trump has not stated a legally permissible cause for Cook's removal," the ruling added.

The decision means Cook will be able to participate in the Fed's meeting Sept. 16-17, when it is expected to reduce its key short-term rate by a quarter-point to between 4% and 4.25%.

Federal Reserve governors aren't like cabinet secretaries and the law doesn't allow a president to fire them over policy disagreements or because he simply wants to replace them. Congress sought to insulate the Fed from political pressure, the court noted, by giving Fed governors long, staggered terms that make it unlikely a president can appoint a majority of the board in a single term.

"Allowing the President to unlawfully remove Governor Cook on unsubstantiated and vague allegations would endanger the stability of our financial system and undermine the rule of law," Cook's lawyer, Abbe Lowell, said in a written statement. "Governor Cook will continue to carry out her sworn duties as a Senate-confirmed Board Governor."

The court also directed the Fed's board of governors and its chair, Jerome Powell, "to allow Cook to continue to operate as a member of the Board for the pendency of this litigation."

Lowell had argued in court filings that Cook was entitled to a hearing and a chance to respond to the charges before being fired but was not provided either. The court agreed that she was not provided due process by the Trump administration. Her lawsuit denied the charges but did not provide more details.

The case could become a turning point for the 112-year-old Federal Reserve. No president has sought to fire a Fed governor before. Economists prefer independent central banks because they can do unpopular things like lifting interest rates to combat inflation more easily than elected officials.

Many economists worry that if the Fed falls under the control of the White House, it will keep its key interest rate lower than justified by economic fundamentals to satisfy Trump's demands for cheaper bor-

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Sept. 11, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 099 ~ 84 of 84

rowing. That could accelerate inflation and could also push up longer-term interest rates, such as those on mortgages and car loans. Investors may demand a higher yield to own bonds to offset greater inflation in the future, lifting borrowing costs for the U.S. government, and the entire economy.

If Trump can replace Cook, he may be able to gain a 4-3 majority on the Fed's governing board. Trump appointed two board members during his first term and has nominated a key White House economic adviser, Stephen Miran, to replace Adriana Kugler, another Fed governor who stepped down unexpectedly Aug. 1. The Senate Banking Committee is scheduled to vote Wednesday on Miran's nomination.

Trump has said he will only appoint to the Fed people who will support lower rates.

Trump has repeatedly attacked Powell and the other members of the Fed's interest-rate setting committee for not cutting the short-term interest rate they control more quickly. It currently stands at 4.3%, after Fed policymakers reduced it by a full percentage point late last year. Trump has said he thinks it should be as low as 1.3%, a level that no Fed official and few economists support.

Powell recently signaled that the central bank was leaning toward cutting its rate at its meeting next week.

Cook is the first Black woman to serve as a Fed governor. She was a Marshall Scholar and received degrees from Oxford University and Spelman College, and prior to joining the board she taught at Michigan State University and Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

Today in History: September 11, al-Qaeda attacks the United States

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Sept. 11, the 254th day of 2025. There are 111 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 11, 2001, nearly 3,000 people were killed as 19 al-Qaida hijackers seized control of four jetliners, sending two of the planes into New York's World Trade Center, one into the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, and the fourth into a field in western Pennsylvania. It remains the deadliest terror attack in history.

Also on this date:

In 1789, Alexander Hamilton was appointed the first U.S. Secretary of the Treasury.

In 1814, an American fleet scored a decisive victory over the British in the Battle of Lake Champlain in the War of 1812.

In 1936, Boulder Dam — later renamed the Hoover Dam — began operation as President Franklin D. Roosevelt pressed a button in Washington to signal the startup of the dam's first hydroelectric generator.

In 1941, groundbreaking took place for the Pentagon.

In 1954, the Miss America pageant made its network TV debut on ABC.

In 1973, Chilean President Salvador Allende (ah-YEN'-day) died during a violent military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet.

In 1985, Pete Rose of the Cincinnati Reds broke Ty Cobb's MLB career hits record with his 4,192nd hit.

In 2008, presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama put aside politics as they visited ground zero together on the anniversary of 9/11 to honor its victims.

In 2012, a mob armed with guns and grenades launched a fiery nightlong attack on a U.S. diplomatic outpost and a CIA annex in Benghazi, Libya, killing U.S. Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans.

In 2023, over 4,000 people died and thousands more were missing after heavy rain from Mediterranean Storm Daniel caused two dams to collapse, flooding the city of Derna, Libya.

Today's Birthdays: Composer Arvo Pärt is 90. Film director Brian De Palma is 85. Singer-actor-dancer Lola Falana is 83. Musician Mickey Hart is 82. Guitarist Leo Kottke is 80. Actor Amy Madigan is 75. Rock musician Tommy Shaw (Styx) is 72. Sportscaster Lesley Visser is 72. Actor Scott Patterson is 67. Actor/director Roxann Dawson is 67. Actor John Hawkes is 66. Actor Virginia Madsen is 64. Musician-composer Moby is 60. Singer Harry Connick Jr. is 58. Actor Taraji (tuh-RAH'-jee) P. Henson is 55. Rapper Ludacris is 48. Football Hall of Famer Ed Reed is 47. Country singer Charles Kelley (Lady A) is 44. Actor Elizabeth Henstridge is 38. Actor Tyler Hoechlin (HEK'-lihn) is 38.