

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, Sept. 20

Gypsy Day Parade in Aberdeen

Volleyball at Hamlin Invitational, 9 a.m.

Due to the weather and field conditions, the JH and JV Jamboree scheduled for today in Webster has been postponed until next Saturday.

Boys Soccer at Freeman Academy, Noon

Sunday, Sept. 21

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

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion 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.



Monday, Sept. 22

FIRST DAY OF AUTUMN

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, chips.

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

Groton Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, potluck at Noon

Cross Country at Deuel, 4 p.m.

3rd-6th GBB Skills, 6-8 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 23

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets mashed potatoes.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

JH/JV Football at Langford vs. Britton-Hecla. JH at 4:30, JV at 5:30

Volleyball at Warner: (Welke: 7th-5:15, 8th-6:30; Arena: C-5:15, JV-6:30, V-7:45))

Groton Daily Independent
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1440

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

Norte Dame Reopening

Notre Dame's twin towers and roof reopened today, nearly six and a half years after a fire severely damaged the over 850-year-old Catholic cathedral in central Paris. Visitors can now climb its 424 stairs and enjoy a close look at its famed gargoyles.

The restoration has sought to honor the cathedral's original 13th-century Gothic craftsmanship—an effort requiring over 1,000 oak trees and more than 2,000 artisans. The interior reopened in December with a ceremony attended by 1,500 dignitaries, including then-first lady Jill Biden and president-elect Donald Trump. French President Emmanuel Macron had previously vowed to fully reconstruct Notre Dame within five years of the 2019 fire.

Before the fire, Notre Dame attracted over 11 million tourists annually—more than the Eiffel Tower or the Louvre. Since partially reopening, average daily attendance has exceeded 35,000, putting it on pace to surpass pre-fire visitorship. Tickets for this weekend sold out in 24 minutes.

GOP spending bill fails in Senate after passing House.

The Senate yesterday blocked a Republican-backed bill to fund the government through Nov. 21 and boost lawmaker security funds by \$88M, hours after the measure narrowly passed the House. A counterproposal by Senate Democrats to fund the government until Oct. 31, boost security funds to \$320M, extend healthcare tax credits, roll back Medicaid cuts, and restore public broadcast funding also failed. Congress must reach a consensus by Sept. 30 to avert a government shutdown.

Judge rejects Trump's \$15B suit against NYT, Penguin Random House.

A federal judge dismissed an 85-page libel lawsuit President Donald Trump filed for being unnecessarily long. The complaint accused The New York Times of being a mouthpiece for the Democratic Party and Penguin Random House of publishing false, malicious information in a book by two Times reporters titled "Lucky Loser." Trump's lawyers have 28 days from Friday to refile a revised suit no longer than 40 pages. The New York Times and Penguin Random House rejected the accusations.

CDC advisory panel nixes COVID-19 vaccine recommendations.

A 12-member vaccine advisory panel appointed by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy voted yesterday to loosen COVID-19 shot guidance, advising "individual-based decision-making." It also postponed a vote on the hepatitis B vaccine and said federal insurance should not cover a combined measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella vaccine. The panel's votes require Centers for Disease Control and Prevention approval before becoming federal guidance.

Russian jets reportedly violate Estonian airspace.

Estonia said three Russian military jets violated its airspace for 12 minutes Friday. NATO jets intercepted the aircraft, and Estonia summoned a top Russian diplomat to protest what its foreign minister called the most aggressive of four Russian incursions on Estonia's airspace this year. Poland and Latvia imposed airspace restrictions last week after Russian drones entered Polish airspace. Separately, the European Union passed its first-ever sanctions on Russian liquefied natural gas.

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Ig Nobel Prize honors lighthearted scientific achievements.

Researchers who determined rainbow lizards prefer cheese pizza and that painting zebra stripes on cows repels flies were among those honored at the 35th annual Ig Nobel Prize ceremony Thursday at Boston University. Established in 1991 as the Nobel Prize's satirical sister, the award recognizes achievements that make people laugh and think. Click the headline to read up on all the winning discoveries.

"Junk Bond King" opens \$500M museum celebrating American capitalism.

The Milken Center for Advancing the American Dream opens today in Washington, DC. Founded by former Wall Street financier Michael Milken, the museum has attracted funding from numerous billionaires, including Walmart heiress Alice Walton and Citadel CEO Ken Griffin. Milken turned to philanthropy—focusing on economic policy and medical research—after a 1990 fraud conviction barred him from the securities industry. President Donald Trump pardoned Milken in 2020.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Melissa H. in Locust Grove, Georgia.

"We are driving in lovely Ireland. Stopping to buy groceries, my husband couldn't find his wallet. He thought the only spot it could have come out of his pocket was a site a half hour behind us. We drove back and couldn't find it. Then we got a call from our son in the States saying he was contacted by someone on Instagram who found the wallet! Got in touch with them and they will mail it back to us."

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Cardinals shut out Tigers in Clear Lake mudfest

CLEAR LAKE – On a misty, mud-soaked Friday night, the Deuel Cardinals powered their way past the Groton Area Tigers 20-0 in Clear Lake.

The Cardinals (4-0) wasted no time, marching 48 yards in eight plays after a Groton punt to open the game. Carson Marko capped the drive with a one-yard touchdown run, and Gavin Kloos added the two-point conversion run for an 8-0 first-quarter lead.

Groton nearly answered in the second quarter after a 25-yard punt return set them up at the Cardinal 30. But on third-and-10, Kloos stepped in front of a pass and returned it 80 yards for a touchdown, pushing the lead to 14-0.

At halftime, Groton statistician Tom Woods reminded listeners what kind of night it was: "Paul says it's a light mist out there — I think Paul's on drugs because it's raining cats and dogs," Woods joked. "MVPs tonight? The moms and dads who have to wash these uniforms. They're the real heroes."

Woods also broke down the numbers at the break: Deuel rushed for 99 yards on 20 carries, led by Owen Haas with 51. Groton had just 36 yards, with freshman quarterback Asher Johnson going 1-for-9 passing for eight yards to his cousin Anthony Tracy. "We like to throw it a little with Asher," Woods said, "but he was having a hard time holding the ball. Our ball boys were working overtime to keep it dry."

The mud continued to dictate play in the second half. After a scoreless third quarter, Deuel sealed the win with a nine-play, 48-yard march early in the fourth. Haas finished the drive with a four-yard run to make it 20-0.

Despite the loss, Groton coach Shaun Wanner was encouraged by his team's progress. "Our kids played hard tonight," Wanner said. "I thought we played harder and more physical than last week, and that's what we're trying to do — just keep getting a little better every week. In these rainy conditions, it's hard to throw the ball, but I thought we ran it better tonight."



Brave souls were watching the game in the rain. (Photo

by Paul Kosel)



Coach Shaun Wanner gives directions to Asher Johnson and Anthony Tracy. (Photo

by Paul Kosel)

Wanner pointed to the second-quarter interception as a key turning point. "That changed the game — from 8-0 to 14-0 in a hurry," he said. "But we've got young kids learning how to make plays, and I don't fault them for trying. I'm happy with how they responded and kept competing."

Deuel finished with 13 first downs and 185 rushing yards, led by Kloos with 77. Haas added 42, Marko had 41, and Aiden Sievers chipped in 23. Sievers also completed two passes for 30 yards, both to Oliver Fieber. The Cardinals put the ball on the ground twice but recovered both, and they were flagged three times for 20 yards.

Groton managed six first downs and 36

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rushing yards on 27 carries. Anthony Tracy led with nine carries for eight yards, while Johnson added 11 for seven yards and went 2-of-11 passing for 17 yards. Tracy caught one pass for eight yards and Ryder Johnson one for nine. The Tigers had one fumble but managed to recover it and played a clean game with no penalties.

Defensively, Connor Glines had 12 tackles for the Tigers and was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship to a South Dakota college. Keegen Tracy and Lincoln Krause added eight stops each, while Gavin England and Logan Warrington tallied seven apiece.

With three games remaining, Wanner said the Tigers will keep pushing. "Football's the ultimate team sport. We've just got to keep grinding, keep getting better, and have fun with it," he said. "We'll show up Monday, get back to work, and get ready for Clark-Willow Lake."

Groton (1-4) will host the Cyclones on Friday.



Anthony Tracy tried to gain a few yards before being taken down by Deuel's Jaxtin Winter. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



Ryan and Kristy Scepianiak were all prepared to watch the football game at Clear Lake. After the game, their son, Isaiah, stopped by for a short visit. (Photos by Paul Kosel)



Asher Johnson carries the ball. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Northern Tops South Dakota in Education Programs and Residence Halls

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Northern State University has been ranked No. 1 in South Dakota for our education program (No. 94 nationally) and residence halls (dorms) in Niche’s 2026 rankings.

Niche, a platform for college reviews and rankings, bases its results on factors such as academic quality, student satisfaction, campus safety and housing options.

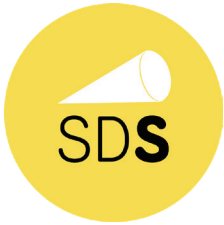
“At Northern, preparing future teachers isn’t just what we do, it’s who we are. Being ranked #1 reflects the heart and soul our faculty and staff give to our students and the community of learners we’ve built. It’s truly special,” said Dr. Anna Schwan, dean of the Millicent Atkins School of Education.

These rankings are reinforced by student reviews on Niche.com. One student highlighted their experience at Northern: “Northern has a welcoming, close-knit community, and the professors are supportive and approachable. The smaller class sizes made it easy to connect and get personalized help, and there are plenty of opportunities to get involved. It’s a community-focused campus where faculty and staff genuinely want students to succeed.”

Dean of Students Sean Blackburn added, ““We are very proud of our residence halls and appreciate the confirmation from Niche.com that our student experience is one of the best in the region.”

A student praised the faculty: “I have enjoyed my classes with almost every professor because they all have the goal of helping their students grow.”

This recognition underscores Northern’s dedication to providing top-tier education and exceptional student housing, solidifying its position as a leader in higher education in South Dakota.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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Retiring Standing Rock tribal chairwoman calls for more communication with South Dakota leaders

North Dakota commission offers model for improved relations, Janet Alkire says

BY: JOHN HULT-SEPTEMBER 19, 2025 5:43 PM

MOBRIDGE — Days before the end of her term, the first woman elected chair of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe said South Dakota leaders could learn something from their neighbors to the north.

Janet Alkire, a U.S. Air Force veteran, twice served as the tribe's executive director before being elected as chairwoman in 2021.

On Friday at the Grand River Resort near Mobridge, she told the South Dakota State-Tribal Relations Committee she'll continue to work "from afar" for her people.

The tribe of 16,000 members — 11,000 of whom live on the reservation that spans the border of North and South Dakota — will elect a chair, vice chair, and eight tribal council members Wednesday.

Cabinet office with tribal leaders helps in North Dakota

Standing Rock members are "tri-citizens," Alkire said, of the tribe, the states and the federal government. Because Standing Rock straddles two states, that means Alkire and other tribal leaders have six members of Congress to lobby.

"I'm pretty sure they're tired of us, because we visit them a lot," Alkire said.

On Friday, she told State-Tribal Relations Committee members that trust and relationships between the state and tribes hinge on frequent and respectful communication.

Committee member Scott Odenbach, the Republican House majority leader from Spearfish, wanted to know if he and his counterparts in state government could learn anything from North Dakota's approach to working with tribes.

Communication is the prime place for improvement with South Dakota, Alkire said.

The state's annual legislative sessions offer more opportunities to engage with lawmakers and pursue legislation than in North Dakota, where lawmakers meet every other year. But North Dakota has an Indian Affairs Commission that facilitates year-round connections.

"We actually meet with them quite often, because they're coming out of the governor's office and they're right there at the Legislature, monitoring what's going on," Alkire said.

That commission includes North Dakota's governor, the leaders of North Dakota's tribes and three at-large members, two of whom must be Native American. The office also has an executive director and three other full-time staff members.

Standing Rock Council Member Cyril Archambault is the tribe's North Dakota legislative liaison. He's in frequent contact with commission members on legislation. The commission meets quarterly, holds at least two training sessions for tribes each year and holds spot events as needed.

South Dakota has similar entities, including the committee that met Friday and the Department of Tribal Relations, but Archambault said the comparison ends there.

"I don't see much commitment from South Dakota. I'll just be honest," he said.

Nola Taken Alive, another Standing Rock council member in attendance Friday, noted that her tribe has a healthy relationship with North Dakota Gov. Kelly Armstrong.

South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden has met with Standing Rock leaders, which Taken Alive said signaled potential improvement in relations.

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His predecessor, current U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, had a strained relationship with tribes. Taken Alive attributed what she described as "friction" between Noem and tribes to "blatant disrespect, at times" from Noem. She pointed to comments Noem made last year about drug cartels allegedly operating on reservations. All nine tribal governments voted to ban Noem from their lands last year, for those comments and for saying Native American children "don't have any hope."

"With Governor Armstrong, he's always reaching out," Taken Alive said of North Dakota's leader. "That's a healthy relationship."

Federal outreach to continue

Alkire noted that Standing Rock and South Dakota's other tribal nations face similar challenges with law enforcement and health care funding. Standing Rock needs 30 officers, for example, but only has funding enough for 10.

Changes to Medicare and Medicaid embedded in the "One Big Beautiful Bill" passed this summer by Congress, she said, will ripple across state and tribal borders.

"The tribes in South Dakota, all nine of them, realize that the relationships that we have with the state are very important," Alkire said.

During a break in the committee meeting, Alkire told South Dakota Searchlight that the ascension of former North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum to Interior secretary offers another avenue to maximize the impact of tribal issues in Washington, D.C.

Standing Rock had a working relationship with Burgum, who intends to maintain the secretary's Tribal Advisory Committee. Alkire represented the Great Plains for former Interior Secretary Deb Haaland on her version of the committee.

Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. also intends to maintain such a committee. That has Alkire hopeful, as well.

"That is the best line of communication," she said. "I mean, they can communicate within their agencies, but you need to hear the perspective of the tribes."

As for her plan after she leaves office, Alkire said it can be summed up in one word.

"Rest," she said.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Cross-border tensions flare as North Dakota considers lawsuit against South Dakota pipeline law

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR-SEPTEMBER 19, 2025 1:26 PM

Supporters of South Dakota's law barring the use of eminent domain for carbon dioxide pipelines are pushing back after North Dakota's attorney general suggested his state might challenge the measure in court.

In an interview published Thursday, Fargo radio station The Flag (WZFG) asked North Dakota Attorney General Drew Wrigley if he would file a lawsuit against South Dakota. Wrigley said his office is "examining all possibilities." He also criticized South Dakota's law, calling it a "bad policy choice" and a "hostile act."

"To have a nation, you have to have commerce between, around and across states," Wrigley said. "There are limitations on what one state can do that then would make them the regulator of the nation, so to speak."

The South Dakota legislation, signed into law in March, prohibits the use of eminent domain for carbon pipeline projects. Eminent domain is the legal right to access private property for projects that benefit the public, with compensation for landowners determined by a court. It's commonly used for projects such as electrical power lines, water pipelines, oil pipelines and highways.

The change effectively blocked Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions from constructing its proposed \$9 billion pipeline across South Dakota to connect ethanol plants in that state, as well as Minnesota, Iowa and

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Nebraska, with plants and an underground storage site in North Dakota. The project would capitalize on federal tax credits incentivizing the prevention of heat-trapping emissions into the atmosphere.

Summit has since sought to remove language from its Iowa permit conditioning the start of construction on approvals in the Dakotas. The project has permits not only in Iowa but also in North Dakota and Minnesota, while Nebraska has no permitting process for the project and South Dakota regulators have twice rejected Summit's applications. Summit did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday.

South Dakota's Speaker of the House, Rep. Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, criticized Wrigley's comments. Hansen, one of several candidates for governor next year, was one of the sponsors of the eminent domain ban and voted for it. He is campaigning with his running mate, Rep. Karla Lems, R-Canton, the bill's prime sponsor in the House.

"Let's call this what it is," Hansen wrote on social media. "It appears the carbon pipeline lobbyists have found their latest puppet — and now North Dakota taxpayers might be forced to bankroll a lawsuit against their own neighbors in South Dakota, all to help a private carbon pipeline company."

Sen. Mark Lapka, R-Leola, the bill's prime sponsor in the South Dakota Senate, defended the legislation. He said the bill "in no way, shape or form" prevents a carbon pipeline from being built in South Dakota but instead gives landowners an option.

"They now have the ability to choose whether they want to participate in something, or — if it does not work out for their best interests — they have the opportunity to say no," Lapka said.

Republican South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley's office would be responsible for defending the state if a lawsuit is filed.

"I will defend the laws and people of South Dakota, it's as simple as that," Jackley said in a statement to South Dakota Searchlight. "The Legislature voted for the private property rights by wide margins, and Gov. Rhoden signed it into law. The people of South Dakota voted decisively on this issue, and I will support them."

Republican South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden's office referred Searchlight to a letter he sent legislators in March explaining his decision to sign the bill. The letter referenced "easements," which are land access agreements, and made a distinction between voluntary easements and the involuntary kind that could come with eminent domain.

"South Dakota landowners feel strongly that the threat of involuntary easements for the proposed carbon dioxide pipeline infringes on their freedoms and their property rights," Rhoden wrote in the letter.

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.

Chance of government shutdown rises as US Senate fails to advance spending bill

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ARIANA FIGUEROA-SEPTEMBER 19, 2025 10:01 AM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate deadlocked Friday over how to fund the government past a deadline at the end of September, escalating the odds of a shutdown and heightening tensions on Capitol Hill.

Democrats on a 44-48 vote blocked a seven-week stopgap spending bill that had passed the House just hours earlier, refusing to aid Republican leaders in getting the 60 votes needed to advance the legislation.

Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski and Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul, both Republicans, voted against the bill, while Pennsylvania Democratic Sen. John Fetterman voted for it.

Republicans on a 47-45 vote blocked a Democratic counter-proposal, a one-month stopgap bill that included several health care provisions.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., told reporters ahead of the votes that Democrats can either

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accept the GOP-drafted stopgap bill or shut the government down. President Donald Trump told Republicans they did not need to negotiate with Democrats on the legislation.

"The choice is pretty clear. It's going to be funding the government through a clean, short-term continuing resolution or a government shutdown," Thune said. "And that's the choice the Democrats have. The House has acted. The president's ready to sign the bill."

Complicating matters is the congressional calendar, which has both chambers out next week for Rosh Hashanah. The Senate's not scheduled to return until Sept. 29, with less than 48 hours to broker a deal and get it to Trump's desk.

Thune said he's not inclined to bring senators back early, despite the impasse.

"I'd say it's unlikely we'll be in next week but, obviously, you never completely shut the door," Thune said.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., told reporters following his chamber's vote on the stopgap he hadn't decided whether to reconvene the House earlier than planned.

"There's a lot of discussion about it," Johnson said. "The members have a lot of work to do in their districts as well, and so we try to balance those interests."

House Republicans announced later in the day the chamber wouldn't come back until Oct. 1, essentially jamming the Senate with the GOP bill.

Shutdown appearing more likely

Democratic leaders have vowed not to help Republicans get the votes needed on their current stopgap — a stark contrast from March, when Senate Democrats did just that, leading to significant frustration from their House colleagues.

The stalemate and congressional calendar have ratcheted up the odds of a protracted, deeply political government showdown that could last for weeks or even months.

Washington Sen. Patty Murray, the top Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, said during floor debate the only path away from a shutdown runs through bipartisan negotiations.

"Why aren't they willing to just meet and actually start charting a course on how we move forward? I think the main reason is Donald Trump," Murray said. "He told Republicans, 'Don't even bother dealing with Democrats.' It seems like Republican leaders are just afraid to cross the aisle and have a simple meeting, a mere conversation, if it risks losing Donald Trump."

Murray said that approach to governing will have significant consequences for major legislation, which requires the support of at least some Democratic senators to advance in a Senate with 53 GOP members.

"So to get things done for our families back home, Republicans need to work with Democrats," Murray said. "And if Republican leadership cannot find the courage to do that on what should be low-hanging fruit here, if they can't sit down with our Democratic leadership to talk about a short-term CR, what does that mean for the work that we've been doing for our full-year spending bills? What does it mean for extending those health care tax credits? And what does it mean for any of the other challenging issues we would all like to work on together to address?"

Connecticut Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy told reporters it's "malpractice" and "bananas" that GOP leaders don't plan to shorten or cancel the break.

"What I'm hearing is that we're not here next week. Like, are you kidding me?," Murphy said. "You have all the evidence you need that Republicans want a shutdown — A, they refuse to negotiate and B, they're sending us home for the week before the government shuts down. This seems like a planned shutdown as far as I can tell."

"There's zero effort — zero — by Republicans to try to solve this."

House passes bill

U.S. House Republicans passed the seven-week stopgap government funding bill earlier Friday.

The 217-212 vote represents the second time this year the House approved what's called a continuing resolution on a predominantly party-line vote.

Maine Democratic Rep. Jared Golden was the only member of his party to support the bill. Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie and Indiana Rep. Victoria Spartz were the only Republicans to vote no.

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House Appropriations Chairman Tom Cole, R-Okla., said the stopgap spending bill is needed to give lawmakers more time to pass the dozen full-year government spending bills and called it the "responsible path."

"We are certainly moving forward productively and a bipartisan, bicameral agreement is firmly within our grasp," Cole said. "We just need more time to sustain negotiations and complete our work. That's why we're here today."

Cole said that not approving a stopgap bill before the start of the next fiscal year on Oct. 1 would lead to a shutdown and hinder those talks.

"Let me be very clear, a shutdown would do nothing to help our work on full-year bills or to support the American people," Cole said. "So if you want stability for the American people, if you want time to negotiate in good faith and if you want regular order, you'll support this CR. Any other vote would be reckless, not just for both parties but for the entire nation."

A 'broken political system'

Connecticut Rep. Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the committee, said Republicans' decision to write the stopgap bill on their own signaled they weren't actually interested in bipartisanship and that it "reflects a broken political system."

"They would rather shut down the government than sit down and talk with Democrats about lowering costs for millions of Americans, preventing people from getting kicked off their health care and stopping President Trump and budget director Russ Vought from stealing from our communities and from our constituents," DeLauro.

The Trump administration's unilateral actions on spending, she said, are making work on government funding more complicated, since Democrats cannot trust the White House budget office to implement the laws as written.

"This administration continues to freeze, to terminate and cancel \$410 billion in commitments to families, to farmers, to children, to small businesses and communities in every part of our country," DeLauro said. "Billions of these commitments will soon be lost forever if Congress refuses to rein in this administration's illegal actions."

Republican and Democratic alternatives

Republicans' 91-page stopgap spending bill would fund the government at current rates through Nov. 21, giving lawmakers more time to complete work on the full-year appropriations bills.

That bill, which was released Tuesday, includes \$30 million to reimburse local police departments that provide security for lawmakers when they're back in their home states, \$30 million for the U.S. Marshals Service for "Executive Branch protective services" and \$28 million to bolster security for U.S. Supreme Court justices.

Democrats' counter-proposal, released Wednesday, would fund the government through Oct. 31 and permanently extend the enhanced tax credits for people who buy their health insurance through the Affordable Care Act Marketplace.

The legislation would reverse many of the health care proposals Republicans included in their "big, beautiful" law, including substantial changes and funding cuts to Medicaid.

Democrats' 68-page bill would bolster security funding considerably more than the GOP proposals. An additional \$30 million would go toward mutual aid agreements with local and state police departments that provide security for members in their home states, \$90 million would be provided for House security programs, and \$66.5 million for the Senate Sergeant at Arms.

There would be an additional \$140 million for the federal courts, the Supreme Court, and the U.S. Marshals Service.

No negotiations

Stopgap spending bills have been a relatively routine and bipartisan part of funding the government for decades, until this year when Republican leaders drafted the legislation on their own.

Democrats have said consistently that if GOP leaders don't work with them to draft a bipartisan stopgap, they cannot expect Democrats to vote for the final product.

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The stalemate, which has to do with the process as well as significant policy differences, appears likely to lead to the first government shutdown since 2019.

A funding lapse this year, however, will impact much larger swaths of the federal government than that 35-day shutdown.

When that impasse began, Congress had passed five of the dozen full-year government funding bills, meaning that anyone working for Congress or in the departments of Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Labor and Veterans Affairs wasn't impacted.

Lawmakers have yet to pass any of the appropriations bills for the upcoming fiscal year, meaning every department and agency that makes up the federal government will have to decide which employees work without pay and which are furloughed if a shutdown begins.

Those plans have been public in the past and appeared on the Office of Management and Budget's website, but no guidance was posted as of Friday afternoon.

The White House budget office did not respond to a request from States Newsroom about whether it intends to post agency contingency plans.

Senators depart the Capitol

After Friday's final vote, senators rushed out to catch flights back home.

"That's a wrap," GOP Ohio Sen. Bernie Moreno said as he walked off the Senate floor.

Democratic Sen. Elissa Slotkin brushed past reporters and declined to answer questions, saying she had to catch a flight back to Michigan.

GOP Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa and Democratic Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota exited the Capitol together.

As the two walked to cars waiting for them just outside the Senate, Ernst told Klobuchar to enjoy her break and the Minnesota Democrat added that she hoped Republicans and Democrats could work together during the brief recess.

Hawaii Democratic Sen. Brian Schatz said during a press conference that he was dumbfounded by Republicans' actions.

"I'm still a little flabbergasted that they couldn't generate a majority for their own proposal and that we're just over a week from a potential government shutdown," Schatz said. "And I am more than a little flabbergasted that the House just decided after a six-week recess to take another recess and come back after the end of the federal fiscal year."

Montana Republican Sen. Steve Daines said during a separate press conference with GOP leaders that Democrats were bending to the demands of their voters.

"Think about where we were the last time there was a CR to keep the government open, and Chuck Schumer voted for it," Daines said. "What happened? The radical left attacked Chuck Schumer, and now today, he has yielded to the radical left that seeks a government shutdown."

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.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

Resolution honoring Charlie Kirk passed in US House in bipartisan vote

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA-SEPTEMBER 19, 2025 2:00 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House passed a resolution Friday honoring conservative activist Charlie Kirk and condemning his assassination.

The five-page resolution — agreed to 310-58 — lauds Kirk as a "courageous American patriot" whose "commitment to civil discussion and debate stood as a model for young Americans across the political spectrum."

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The resolution divided the lower chamber, as Democratic lawmakers have condemned the assassination of Kirk and violence in politics but have blasted beliefs he voiced.

All 58 votes against the resolution came from Democrats. Ninety-five Democrats voted in favor of the resolution, 38 voted "present" and 22 did not vote.

All 215 Republican votes were in support of the resolution. Four GOP members did not vote.

Tensions emerged in Congress in the days since Kirk was fatally shot Sept. 10 while speaking on a Utah college campus. The resolution also came as President Donald Trump and his administration have sought to crack down on rhetoric surrounding Kirk's death. Trump, Vice President JD Vance and members of the Cabinet plan to attend a memorial service for Kirk on Sunday in Arizona.

"We passed a resolution to honor the life and legacy of Charlie Kirk, my late friend, the friend of so many in this chamber, and we called out political violence in America," House Speaker Mike Johnson told reporters in the U.S. Capitol following the vote.

The Louisiana Republican recited the last line of the resolution, which says the House "calls upon all Americans ... to reject political violence, recommit to respectful debate, uphold American values, and respect one another as fellow Americans."

"Sadly, a number of Democrats could not bring themselves to vote for that," Johnson said. "We have to let everybody make their own judgments about that."

In a Friday statement, Congressional Black Caucus Chair Yvette Clarke and members of the group said "violence has no place in our politics," including the killing of Kirk.

"At the same time, we must condemn violence without abandoning our right to speak out against ideas that are inconsistent with our values as Americans," the New York Democrat and caucus members said, adding that they "strongly disagree with many of the beliefs Charlie Kirk promoted."

They also described the House resolution as "an attempt to legitimize Kirk's worldview — a worldview that includes ideas many Americans find racist, harmful, and fundamentally un-American."

Friday's passage came a day after the Senate passed a resolution — introduced by Florida GOP Sen. Rick Scott — that designates Oct. 14, 2025, as a "National Day of Remembrance for Charlie Kirk." There was no roll call vote taken.

Oct. 14 marks Kirk's birthday.

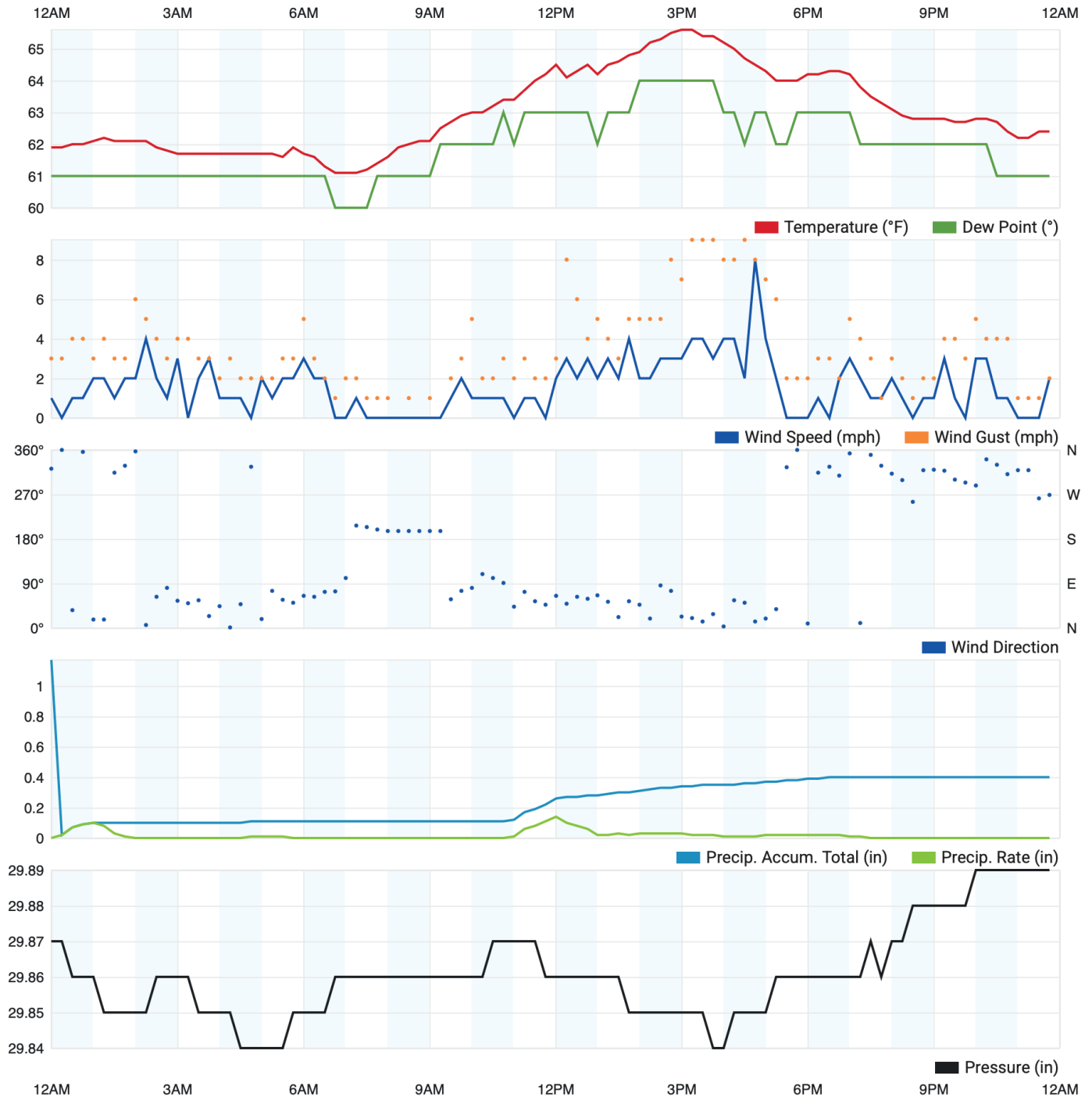
Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

September 19, 2025



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Saturday



High: 68 °F

Slight Chance
Showers and
Patchy Fog

Saturday Night



Low: 49 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Sunday



High: 73 °F

Mostly Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 51 °F

Mostly Clear

Monday



High: 76 °F

Sunny

Upcoming Forecast

September 20, 2025 3:58 AM

Saturday



Highs: 65-75°F

20-40% chance for scattered
afternoon showers over
northeastern SD

Sunday



Highs: 68-78°F

Monday



Highs: 68-78°F

20-35% chance for afternoon
and evening showers over
south central SD

Saturday Night



Lows: 48-58°F

Potential for Patchy Fog

Sunday Night



Lows: 50-55°F



Aberdeen, SD

Today will have a 20-40% chance for scattered afternoon showers over northeastern SD. Cloudy skies start to clear up tonight and stay clear through Monday morning when partly cloudy skies stick around for the day. Temperatures will warm into the mid 60s to upper 70s over the next couple of days, with lows in the upper 40s to upper 50s.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 66 °F at 3:07 PM

Low Temp: 61 °F at 6:43 AM

Wind: 10 mph at 3:10 PM

Precip: : 0.40

Today's Info

Record High: 94 in 1937

Record Low: 20 in 1901

Average High: 73

Average Low: 45

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.33

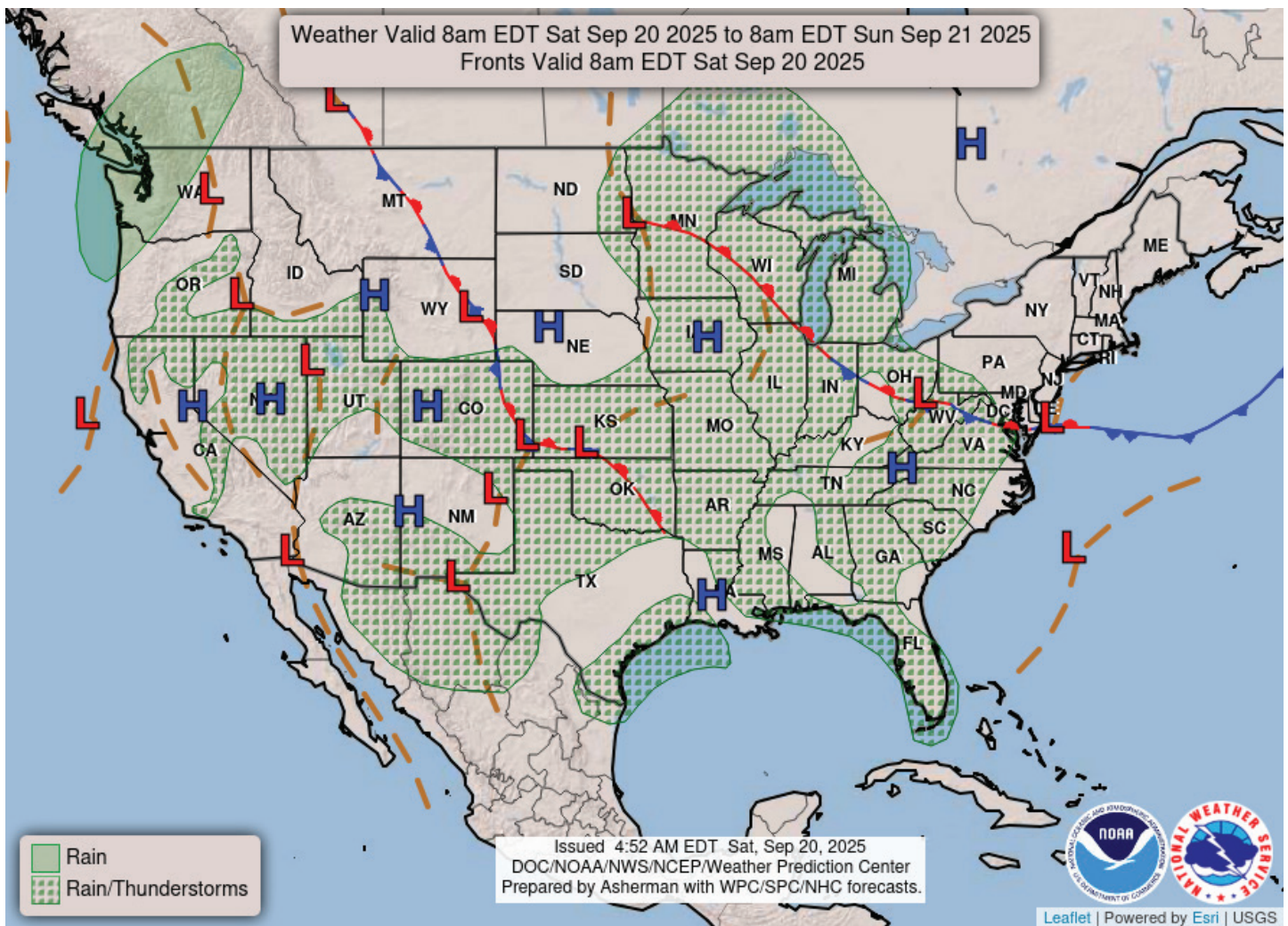
Precip to date in Sept.: 2.62

Average Precip to date: 17.67

Precip Year to Date: 22.92

Sunset Tonight: 7:34 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:18 am



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Today in Weather History

September 20, 1970: During the late afternoon, golfball hail fell in and around Redfield with a tornado reported just north of Doland. No damage was reported with the hail or the tornado.

September 20, 1972: About 430 pm, in southeast South Dakota, a tornado caused an estimated \$95,000 damage to property and 50,000 damage to crops in Utica and nearby rural areas. Buildings were damaged; trees and power lines were downed.

1845 - A tornado traveled 275 miles across Lake Ontario, New York and Lake Champlain. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1909: A large and deadly Category 3 hurricane made landfall near Grand Isle, Louisiana during the late evening hours. The states of Louisiana and Mississippi showed catastrophic damage resulting in 371 deaths and \$265 million in damage (2010 USD).

1926 - A hurricane which hit Miami, FL, on the 18th, pounded Pensacola with wind gusts to 152 mph. Winds raged in excess of 100 mph for four hours, and above 75 mph for 20 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1961: On September 10th, the Television Infrared Observation Satellite observed an area of thunderstorms west-southwest of the Cape Verde Islands, suggesting a possible tropical cyclone. This storm is the first large tropical cyclone to be discovered on satellite imagery and would eventually become Hurricane Esther. On September 20th, Hurricane Esther, a Category 4 storm off of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina began to slow down as it moved north-northeast well off the Jersey shore. The storm continued to weaken as it made a five-day loop south of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, then moved to Cape Cod and into Maine on the 26th.

1967 - Hurricane Beulah moved into South Texas, and torrential rains from the hurricane turned the rich agricultural areas of South Texas into a large lake. Hurricane Beulah also spawned a record 115 tornadoes. (David Ludlum)

1983 - The temperature at West Yellowstone MT plunged to six degrees below zero, while the temperature at San Francisco CA soared to 94 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Oklahoma and west Texas. In Oklahoma, a thunderstorm at Seiling produced three inches of rain in one hour, golf ball size hail, and wind gusts to 60 mph which collapsed a tent at the state fair injuring nine persons. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Showers and thunderstorms produced locally heavy rains in central Wyoming, and snow in some of the higher elevations. Casper WY reported 1.75 inches of rain in 24 hours, and a thunderstorm north of the Wild Horse Reservoir produced 1.90 inches of rain in just forty minutes.

1989 - Hugo jilted Iris. Hurricane Hugo churned toward the South Atlantic Coast, gradually regaining strength along the way. Tropical Storm Iris got too close to Hugo, and began to weaken. A cold front brought strong and gusty winds to the Great Basin and the Southern Plateau Region, with wind gusts to 44 mph reported at Kingman AZ. (The National Weather Summary)

2002: A glacial avalanche buries the village of Karmadon in Russia, killing more than 100 people.

2005 - Hurricane Rita tracked through the Florida Straits and just south of the Florida Keys. Winds were sustained at tropical storm force at Key West, where peak winds gusted to 76 mph.

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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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.19.25

2 22 27 42 58 8

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$451,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.17.25

8 33 36 45 51 2

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$3,090,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 41 Mins 24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.19.25

9 16 23 25 26 17

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 56 Mins 24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.17.25

1 21 24 28 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$26,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 56 Mins 24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.17.25

8 19 47 51 58 21

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 25 Mins 24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.17.25

7 30 50 54 62 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$99,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 25 Mins 24 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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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

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL

Avon 67, Colome 0
Brandon Valley 55, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 14
Castlewood 56, Wilmot 21
Clark-Willow Lake 34, Parker/Marion 13
Dell Rapids 36, Milbank 7
Deuel 20, Groton 0
Elk Point-Jefferson 56, Baltic 6
Faulkton 37, Leola-Frederick High School 0
Hot Springs 55, Lakota Tech 6
Howard 54, Canistota 8
Huron 33, Sturgis Brown High School 16
Madison 34, Vermillion 15
Mobridge-Pollock 50, Webster 0
North Central 33, Northwestern 0
Spearfish 21, Aberdeen Central 6
Tea 38, Douglas 6
WWSSC 20, Winner 6
Wagner 49, Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 34
Winnebago, Neb. 55, Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 22

Some high school football scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Rapid City Central, 25-9, 25-17, 25-13
Durango Fall Classic, Las Vegas=
Harrisburg def. Los Alamitos, Calif., 25-19, 22-25, 25-19
Harrisburg def. Redwood-Larkspur, Calif., 27-25, 25-16
Harrisburg def. Village Christian, Calif., 25-9, 25-14

Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Clayton Kershaw soaks in the applause in his last regular-season start at Dodger Stadium

By BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Clayton Kershaw pitched the final regular-season home game of his 18-year career with the Los Angeles Dodgers on Friday, welcomed and sent off with standing ovations a day after announcing his decision to retire at season's end.

Kershaw's longtime warmup song, "We Are Young" by Fun, blared as fans held up camera phones to capture the moment as the game began and he took the field by himself at first. The cheers quickly turned to boos when San Francisco Giants leadoff hitter Heliot Ramos turned on an 86-mph slider for a 431-foot home run.

"I was grinding out there, working way too hard to get people out," he said.

But the cheers returned after Rafael Devers took a called third strike leading off the fifth. Manager Dave Roberts came to the mound and hugged Kershaw as his teammates on the field, in the dugout and in

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the bullpen joined the sellout crowd of 53,037 in applauding the 37-year-old left-hander as he departed. Kershaw kept the ball and got no argument from Roberts.

"I said, 'You can do whatever you want, it's your night,'" the manager said.

Kershaw left with the Dodgers trailing 2-1. He gave up two runs and four hits, struck out six and walked four in 4 1/3 innings on 91 pitches, 56 for strikes.

"It wasn't his best," Roberts said, "but like he does, he just finds ways to compete, get outs and put us in a position to win a ballgame."

The defending World Series champion Dodgers rallied for a 6-3 victory to clinch their 13th consecutive postseason berth.

"We got a win, we clinched a playoff berth, I got to sit on that mountain one last time," he said. "I just can't be more grateful."

Kershaw waved as he walked off, blew a kiss toward his family and then wrapped his arms around himself in a hugging gesture to the crowd. Two-way superstar Shohei Ohtani stepped forward to hug Kershaw, one of many he received from everyone in the dugout. With fans clamoring, Kershaw came out for a curtain call, slowly turning around and soaking in the scene.

"I wouldn't change it," he said. "Perfect night."

Fans donned No. 22 jerseys in a salute to Kershaw, although Ohtani's No. 17 was prominent as usual.

Kershaw was surrounded by teammates, his pregnant wife Ellen, who was in tears, their four children, friends and fans who've watched him work his way through the Dodgers' farm system to reach the majors at age 20 and go on to win three Cy Young Awards as well as two World Series championships and throw a no-hitter in 2014.

"Having things to celebrate is only as good as the people you have to celebrate with," he said.

Also on hand were former teammate Russell Martin, who caught Kershaw's major league debut in 2008, and Los Angeles Rams quarterback Matthew Stafford, who was Kershaw's high school football teammate in Texas.

"This is one of those moments that people are going to look back and go, 'I was there for the last time he started a home game at Dodger Stadium,'" Roberts said before the game.

Kershaw, a Dallas native who lives there in the offseason, has spent his entire 18-year career in Los Angeles.

"In a world that people take the easy way out, chase short money, the grass is greener kind of adage, the loyalty part of it is just not what it used to be," Roberts said. "Clayton lives by those values and it means something for him to wear the same uniform. That's where I gained a lot of respect for him."

Among Kershaw's milestone moments in the city was reaching 3,000 career strikeouts in July.

The Dodgers added a Kershaw bobblehead to their promotional schedule in July after he reached the milestone and the item will be given out Saturday. He will address the fans before Sunday's game.

"Everybody who is just a fan is going to wrap their arms around Clayton Kershaw," teammate Freddie Freeman said. "He deserves everything he's going to get from the fans."

While his velocity has dipped in recent years, Kershaw's famed competitive fire still burns brightly.

"Winning is always my favorite thing," he said.

Kershaw has battled injuries in recent years that made getting to this point all the harder. He missed the entire postseason last year, when the Dodgers beat the New York Yankees in the World Series.

"Not a lot of people get this opportunity," he said, "so I'm just super grateful for it."

Kershaw said he would make another start next week in Seattle, where the Dodgers end the regular season.

Estonia says 3 Russian fighter jets entered its airspace in 'brazen' incursion

By GEIR MOULSON and ANDREW WILKS Associated Press

Estonia summoned a Russian diplomat to protest after three Russian fighter aircraft entered its airspace

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without permission Friday and stayed there for 12 minutes, the Foreign Ministry said. It happened just over a week after NATO planes downed Russian drones over Poland and heightened fears that the war in Ukraine could spill over.

Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna said Russia violated Estonian airspace four times this year "but today's incursion, involving three fighter aircraft entering our airspace, is unprecedentedly brazen."

Estonian Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur also said the government had decided "to start consultations among the allies" under NATO's article 4, he wrote on X, after Russian jets "violated our airspace yet again."

The North Atlantic Council, NATO's principal political decision-making body, is due to convene early next week to discuss the incident in more detail, NATO spokesperson Allison Hart said Friday.

Article 4, the shortest of the NATO treaty's 14 articles, states that: "The Parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of any of them, the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened."

U.S. President Donald Trump told reporters he will soon be briefed by aides on the reported incursion. "I don't love it," he said, adding, "I don't like when that happens. It could be big trouble, but I'll let you know later."

Russian officials did not immediately comment.

European governments rattled

Russia's violation of Poland's airspace was the most serious cross-border incident into a NATO member country since the war in Ukraine began with Russia's all-out invasion in February 2022. Other alliance countries have reported similar incursions and drone crashes on their territory.

The developments have increasingly rattled European governments as U.S.-led efforts to stop the war in Ukraine have come to nothing.

The European Union's foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas called Friday's incursion "an extremely dangerous provocation" that "further escalates tensions in the region."

"On our side, we see that we must show no weakness because weakness is something that invites Russia to do more," she said. "They are increasingly more dangerous — not only to Ukraine, but also to all the countries around Russia."

Estonia, along with fellow Baltic states Lithuania and Latvia and neighboring Poland, are staunch supporters of Ukraine.

Italian F-35 fighter jets respond to Russian incursion

The Russian MIG-31 fighters entered Estonian airspace in the area of Vaindloo Island, a small island located in the Gulf of Finland in the Baltic Sea, the Estonian military said in a separate statement.

The aircraft did not have flight plans and their transponders were turned off, the statement said, nor were the aircraft in two-way radio communication with Estonian air traffic services.

Italian Air Force F-35 fighter jets, currently deployed as part of the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission, responded to the incident, according to the statement.

In a post on social media, Hart described the incident as "another example of reckless Russian behavior and NATO's ability to respond."

NATO fighter jets scramble hundreds of times most years to intercept aircraft, many of them Russian warplanes in northwest Europe flying too close to the airspace of its member countries, but it's rarer for planes to cross the boundary.

Dozens of NATO jets are on round-the-clock alert across Europe to respond to incidents such as unannounced military flights or civilian planes losing communication with air traffic controllers.

Separately, Maj. Taavi Karotamm, spokesperson for the Estonian Defense Forces, told The Associated Press the Russian planes flew parallel to the Estonian border from east to west and did not head toward the capital, Tallinn.

Karotamm said the reason for the border violation is unknown, but added that it may have been to "shift the focus of NATO and its members on to defending itself, rather than bolstering Ukrainian defense."

"Russia's increasingly extensive testing of boundaries and growing aggressiveness must be met with a

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swift increase in political and economic pressure," Tsakhna, the foreign minister, said.

The Russian charge d'affaires was summoned and given a protest note, a ministry statement said.

British spy chief says 'no evidence' Putin wants peace

Earlier Friday, the head of Britain's foreign intelligence agency said there is "absolutely no evidence" that Russia's President Vladimir Putin wants to negotiate peace in Ukraine.

Richard Moore, chief of the Secret Intelligence Service, or MI6 as it is more commonly known, said Putin was "stringing us along."

"He seeks to impose his imperial will by all means at his disposal. But he cannot succeed," Moore said. "Bluntly, Putin has bitten off more than he can chew. He thought he was going to win an easy victory. But he — and many others — underestimated the Ukrainians."

The war has continued unabated in the three years since Russia invaded its neighbor. Ukraine has accepted proposals for a ceasefire and a summit meeting, but Moscow has demurred.

Trump said Thursday during a state visit to the United Kingdom that Putin "has really let me down" in peace efforts.

Putin is 'mortgaging the future' of Russia

Moore was speaking at the British consulate in Istanbul after five years as head of MI6. He leaves the post at the end of September. The agency will then get its first female chief.

Moore said the invasion had strengthened Ukrainian national identity and accelerated its westward trajectory, as well as pushing Sweden and Finland to join NATO.

"Putin has sought to convince the world that Russian victory is inevitable. But he lies. He lies to the world. He lies to his people. Perhaps he even lies to himself," Moore told a news conference.

He said that Putin was "mortgaging his country's future for his own personal legacy and a distorted version of history" and the war was "accelerating this decline."

Analysts say Putin believes he can outlast the political commitment of Ukraine's Western partners and win a protracted war of attrition by wearing down Ukraine's smaller army with sheer weight of numbers.

Ukraine, meanwhile, is racing to expand its defense cooperation with other countries and secure billions of dollars of investment in its domestic weapons industry.

MI6 unveils dark web portal

The spy chief was speaking as MI6 unveiled a dark web portal to allow potential intelligence providers to contact the service. Dubbed "Silent Courier," the secure messaging platform aims to recruit new spies for the U.K., including in Russia.

"To those men and women in Russia who have truths to share and the courage to share them, I invite you to contact MI6," Moore said.

Not just Russians but "anyone, anywhere in the world" would be able to use the portal to offer sensitive information on terrorism or "hostile intelligence activity," he said.

Trump signs proclamation adding \$100K annual fee for H-1B visa applications

By BARBARA ORTUTAY and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday signed a proclamation that will require a \$100,000 annual visa fee for highly-skilled foreign workers and rolled out a \$1 million "gold card" visa as a pathway to U.S. citizenship for wealthy individuals, moves that face near-certain legal challenges amid widespread criticism he is sidestepping Congress.

If the moves survive legal muster, they will deliver staggering price increases. The visa fee for skilled workers would jump from \$215. The fee for investor visas, which are common in many European countries, would climb from \$10,000-\$20,000 a year.

H-1B visas, which require at least a bachelor's degree, are meant for high-skilled jobs that tech companies find difficult to fill. Critics say the program is a pipeline for overseas workers who are often willing to work for as little as \$60,000 annually, well below the \$100,000-plus salaries typically paid to U.S. technology

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workers.

Trump on Friday insisted that the tech industry would not oppose the move. Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick said "all big companies" are on board.

Representatives for the biggest tech companies, including Amazon, Apple, Google and Meta, did not immediately respond to messages for comment on Friday. Microsoft declined to comment.

Lutnick said the change will likely result in far fewer H-1B visas than the 85,000 annual cap allows because "it's just not economic anymore."

"If you're going to train people, you're going to train Americans," Lutnick said on a conference call with reporters. "If you have a very sophisticated engineer and you want to bring them in ... then you can pay \$100,000 a year for your H-1B visa."

Trump also announced he will start selling a "gold card" visa with a path to U.S. citizenship for \$1 million after vetting. For companies, it will cost \$2 million to sponsor an employee.

The "Trump Platinum Card" will be available for a \$5 million and allow foreigners to spend up to 270 days in the U.S. without being subject to U.S. taxes on non-U.S. income. Trump announced a \$5 million gold card in February to replace an existing investor visa — this is now the platinum card.

Lutnick said the gold and platinum cards would replace employment-based visas that offer paths to citizenship, including for professors, scientists, artists and athletes.

Critics of H-1Bs visas who say they are used to replace American workers applauded the move. U.S. Tech Workers, an advocacy group, called it "the next best thing" to abolishing the visas altogether.

Doug Rand, a senior official at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services during the Biden administration, said the proposed fee increase was "ludicrously lawless."

"This isn't real policy — it's fan service for immigration restrictionists," Rand said. "Trump gets his headlines, and inflicts a jolt of panic, and doesn't care whether this survives first contact with the courts."

Lutnick said the H-1B fees and gold card could be introduced by the president but the platinum card needs congressional approval.

Historically, H-1B visas have been doled out through lottery. This year, Amazon was by far the top recipient of H-1B visas with more than 10,000 awarded, followed by Tata Consultancy, Microsoft, Apple and Google. Geographically, California has the highest number of H-1B workers.

Critics say H-1B spots often go to entry-level jobs, rather than senior positions with unique skill requirements. And while the program isn't supposed to undercut U.S. wages or displace U.S. workers, critics say companies can pay less by classifying jobs at the lowest skill levels, even if the specific workers hired have more experience.

As a result, many U.S. companies find it cheaper to contract out help desks, programming and other basic tasks to consulting companies such as Wipro, Infosys, HCL Technologies and Tata in India and IBM and Cognizant in the U.S. These consulting companies hire foreign workers, often from India, and contract them out to U.S. employers looking to save money.

First lady Melania Trump, the former Melania Knauss, was granted an H-1B work visa in October 1996 to work as a model. She was born in Slovenia.

In 2024, lottery bids for the visas plunged nearly 40%, which authorities said was due to success against people who were "gaming the system" by submitting multiple, sometimes dubious, applications to unfairly increase chances of being selected.

Major technology companies that use H-1B visas sought changes after massive increases in bids left their employees and prospective hires with slimmer chances of winning the random lottery. Facing what it acknowledged was likely fraud and abuse, USCIS this year said each employee had only one shot at the lottery, whether the person had one job offer or 50.

Critics welcomed the change but said more needs to be done. The AFL-CIO wrote last year that while changes to the lottery "included some steps in the right direction," it fell short of needed reforms. The labor group wants visas awarded to companies that pay the highest wages instead of by random lottery, a change that Trump sought during his first term in the White House.

Texas A&M president steps down but doesn't say if controversial classroom video was a factor

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

HOUSTON (AP) — The president of Texas A&M University, roiled by an online video of a confrontation between a student and professor in a class that discussed gender, said Friday that now is the time to leave, but he did not offer a specific reason.

Mark A. Welsh III and the school had faced political pressure and criticism, including from the governor, after the video was posted on social media. Colleges and universities around the country have been weathering controversies over gender identity, sexual preference and diversity, issues derided as part of a "woke" agenda.

"When I was first appointed as President of Texas A&M University, I told then Chancellor John Sharp and our Board of Regents that I would serve as well as I possibly could until it was time for someone else to take over," Welsh said in a statement issued Friday. "Over the past few days, it's become clear that now is that time."

The video was posted last week by Republican state Rep. Brian Harrison and showed a confrontation during a children's literature course. The professor was later fired after Harrison called the professor's actions "DEI and LGBTQ indoctrination."

Welsh's resignation, announced Thursday by university system leaders, took effect Friday. Texas A&M University said Friday Welsh wouldn't be granting any interviews.

"Pres. Welsh's decision to resign comes at a critical moment, and we agree with him that now is the right time for change in leadership," Robert Albritton, chair of the board of regents, said in a statement.

When Welsh departed the administration building Friday, he was met by hundreds of cheering students, faculty and others as he and his wife Betty left the campus.

On Wednesday, a group of current and former student leaders praised Welsh in a letter to university system leaders.

"We stand united in support of his leadership, committed to working alongside him," the letter said.

But Welsh had lost the support of many students and faculty over firing the professor, Melissa McCoul, said Leonard Bright, a professor at Texas A&M's Bush School of Government and Public Service.

"I think we all wish that he would have recognized that capitulating to these political requests was never going to end well for him," said Bright, interim president of the American Association of University Professors A&M chapter.

The video was taken by a student heard debating with McCoul about gender identity. The student said those discussions in class were illegal because of President Donald Trump's executive order that recognizes two genders and that the topic was against her religious beliefs.

Welsh has been a general in the U.S. Air Force and a dean of A&M's Bush School of Government and Public Service.

When Welsh was interim president in August 2023, he issued a statement strongly defending academic freedom at A&M. A&M had faced fallout when it backtracked on hiring a veteran journalist to reboot its journalism school after a conservative website criticized her research on race and diversity. The university was also criticized for suspending another professor after a student accused her of speaking unfavorably about the lieutenant governor during a lecture about the opioid crisis.

"We must foster an academic community that engages in meaningful, respectful dialogue around controversial issues and competing ideas," Welsh had said.

While A&M is considered to be a very conservative university, Bright said many of his conservative students "want to know the other arguments," and the university has a responsibility to teach all students "in ways that expands them, that inoculates them against misinformation." But Welsh was unable to "stay committed" to defending academic freedom, he said.

The Texas A&M University System on Friday provided to The Associated Press a copy of Welsh's three-

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paragraph resignation letter. It also did not explain Welsh's resignation.

A new Texas law forbids K-12 schools from teaching about sexual orientation or gender identity. The law does not apply to institutions of higher education.

Texas A&M is in College Station, about 95 miles (153 kilometers) northwest of Houston. A&M is one of the largest public universities in the country, with more than 70,000 students at its main campus.

Various universities and their presidents around the country, including Harvard, Columbia, and the University of Virginia, have come under increased scrutiny this year from conservative critics and the Trump administration over diversity, equity and inclusion practices and the schools' responses to campus protests.

Kennedy's vaccine advisers change COVID shot guidance, calling them an individual choice

By MIKE STOBBE and LAURAN NEERGAARD Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s new vaccine advisers added confusion Friday to this fall's COVID-19 vaccinations — declining to recommend them for anyone and leaving the choice up to those who want a shot.

Until now, the vaccinations had been recommended as a routine step in the fall for nearly all Americans — just like a yearly flu vaccine.

The Food and Drug Administration already had placed new restrictions on this year's shots from Pfizer, Moderna and Novavax, reserving them for people over 65 or younger ones who are deemed at higher risk from the virus.

In a series of votes Friday, advisers to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention took the unprecedented step of not recommending them even for high-risk populations like seniors. Instead they decided people could make individual decisions after talking with a doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

The panel also urged the CDC to adopt stronger language around claims of vaccine risks, despite push-back from outside medical groups who said the shots had a proven safety record from the billions of doses administered worldwide.

The divided panel narrowly avoided urging states to require a prescription for the shot. The move came after protests from some of the advisers that the extra step would block access to vaccination.

"I have to wait a year" to see his primary care provider, said panelist Dr. Cody Meissner of Dartmouth College. "It's essentially going to be a barrier."

The meeting represented the latest example of Kennedy's monthslong effort to reshape the nation's vaccine policies to match his long-standing suspicions about the safety and effectiveness of well-established shots.

Independent public health experts reacted with relief that the panel didn't add more roadblocks to vaccination, but they said the lack of a recommendation will prove confusing for people who don't know if a shot might benefit them.

"The good news is anyone can get this vaccine. The bad news is that no one is encouraged to get it even if you're in a high-risk group," said Dr. Paul Offit, a Children's Hospital of Philadelphia vaccine researcher and former government adviser who has sparred with Kennedy for years.

Dr. Sean O'Leary of the American Academy of Pediatrics said the panel's daylong debate involved clear efforts to sow distrust about vaccines that would have "real-time impacts on American children."

But he said people could instead follow guidelines from his and other medical groups that still make specific recommendations for the vaccines.

"It was a very, very strange meeting," O'Leary said.

Several states have announced policies to try to assure that access, worried about Friday's decision. And a group representing most health insurers, America's Health Insurance Plans, said earlier this week that its members will continue covering the shots through 2026.

The panel's decision still must go to the CDC's interim director, Jim O'Neill, for sign-off. A former investor, critic of health regulations and Kennedy's deputy at HHS, O'Neill recently took the lead at the agency

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following the firing of its Senate-confirmed director, Susan Monarez.

COVID-19 remains a public health threat. CDC data released in June shows the virus resulted in 32,000 to 51,000 U.S. deaths and more than 250,000 hospitalizations last fall and winter. Most at risk for hospitalization are seniors and young children, especially those who were unvaccinated.

The COVID-19 vaccines are not perfect, but CDC data shows they provide the strongest protection against severe infection and death, even if people still become infected. Likewise, people can get COVID-19 repeatedly as the virus continues to evolve.

Like flu vaccines, COVID-19 shots now are being updated yearly, but only about 44% of seniors and 13% of children were up-to-date on the coronavirus vaccinations last year, the CDC said.

The meeting was more freewheeling and chaotic than in the past. Many committee members challenged CDC's data, and raised questions about studies in mice or other concerns that the agency's own safety surveillance hadn't deemed credible.

The panel did recommend that the CDC add more information about risks and uncertainties to vaccine sheets that are given to patients.

"I don't think the effects on access are as dramatic as they could have been," said Dr. Jesse Goodman of Georgetown University, a former FDA vaccine chief. "But there's a lot that's uncertain and the negative effect on public trust will continue."

One risk that already is on the vaccines' label is a rare side effect called myocarditis, a kind of heart inflammation, that was discovered in the early days of vaccination in 2021. On Friday, a scientist studying whether people with certain genes are uniquely susceptible to that risk told the panel the Trump administration had canceled his grant before the research could be finished.

The COVID-19 debate was only one issue the panel tackled during its two-day meeting. In other steps: — The advisers postponed a decision on whether to end a longstanding CDC recommendation that all newborns be vaccinated at birth against a liver virus, hepatitis B.

The panel had been considering whether to recommend delaying that initial vaccination — something doctors and parents already can choose to do — but pulled back amid criticism from independent pediatric and infectious disease specialists who say the vaccine is safe and has helped infant infections drop sharply.

— On Thursday, the panel recommended a new restriction on another childhood vaccine.

They recommended that for children under 4, their first dose of protection against MMR — measles, mumps and rubella — and chickenpox should be in separate shots, not a combination version known as MMRV. Since 2009, the CDC has said it prefers separate shots for initial doses of those vaccines and 85% of toddlers already do.

On Friday, the committee also recommended that the government's Vaccines for Children program — which covers vaccine costs for about half of U.S. kids — align its guidance with that narrower MMRV usage.

President Donald Trump was asked Friday if he was comfortable with the CDC advisers' recommendation or if he'd like Americans to take the shots that were developed under his Operation Warp Speed at the height of the pandemic. Trump, who got the virus in October 2020 before the vaccine was available, said he remained "very proud" of Operation Warp Speed, and was not upset that Kennedy was skeptical of the vaccine.

"I had the vaccine and I was very happy with it," Trump said.

Senate rejects competing bills to fund government, increasing risk of shutdown on Oct. 1

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Senate rejected competing measures on Friday to fund federal agencies for a few weeks when the new budget year begins on Oct. 1, increasing prospects for a partial government shutdown on that date.

Leaders of the two parties sought to blame the other side for the standoff. Democrats accused Republicans of not negotiating with them to address some of their priorities on health care as part of the funding

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measure, even though they knew Democratic votes would be needed to get a bill to the president's desk.

Republicans said Democrats were making demands that would dramatically increase spending and were not germane to the core issue of keeping agencies fully running for a short period of time while negotiations continued on a full-year spending package.

It's unclear how the two sides will be able to avoid a shutdown. Republicans are planning on what amounts to a do-over vote on their proposal close to the deadline in the hopes that more Democrats will have second thoughts. Democrats are repeating their demand that Republicans sit down with them and work on a compromise.

"The theater must end," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said after the vote. "Let's sit down and negotiate."

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., gave no indication of a change in course.

"All it takes is a handful of Democrats to join the Republicans in keeping the government open and funded, and to ensure we have a chance to get the appropriations process completed in the way it was intended," Thune said.

House Republicans unify behind a short-term bill

The Senate action came after the House earlier in the day passed the Republican-led funding bill. The measure would extend government funding generally at current levels for seven weeks. The bill would also add about \$88 million in security funding for lawmakers and members of the Supreme Court and executive branch in the wake of the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk.

The vote was 217-212. Rep. Jared Golden of Maine was the lone Democratic member to support the bill. Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, D-Wash., also said she tried to vote for the bill but was not recognized by the presiding officer. She was listed officially as not voting.

House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana said he knew he had few votes to spare as he sought to persuade fellow Republicans to vote for the funding patch, something many in his conference have routinely opposed in past budget fights. But this time, GOP members saw a chance to portray the Democrats as responsible for a shutdown.

"The ball is in Chuck Schumer's court. I hope he does the right thing. I hope he does not choose to shut the government down and inflict pain on the American people," Johnson said.

President Donald Trump had urged House Republicans to pass the bill and put the burden on Democrats to oppose it. GOP leaders often need Trump's help to win over holdouts on legislation.

Trump predicted Friday that there could be "a closed country for a period of time." He said the government will continue to "take care" of the military and Social Security payments in a closure.

Democrats press for action on health care

Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., said that in opposing the continuing resolution, Democrats were working to protect the health care of the American people. He said that with Republicans controlling the White House and both branches of Congress, "Republicans will own a government shutdown. Period. Full stop."

The Senate moved quickly after the House vote to take up the measure plus the Democratic counter. Both bills fell far short of the 60 votes required for passage.

The Democratic proposal would extend enhanced health insurance subsidies set to expire at the end of the year, plus reverse Medicaid cuts that were included in Republicans' big tax breaks and spending cuts bill enacted earlier this year.

The Democratic measure actually received more votes than the Republican one due to absences. The 47-45 vote went strictly along party lines.

"The American people will look at what Republicans are doing, look at what Democrats are doing, and it will be clear that public sentiment will be on our side," Schumer said.

The Republican measure gained 44 votes, including from Democratic Sen. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania. But 48 voted against it, including two Republicans, Sens. Rand Paul of Kentucky and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

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Uncertainty ahead as lawmakers leave Washington

Both chambers of Congress are out of session next week because of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year. Senators will return on Sept. 29. House Republicans don't plan to be back until October. They were advised by leadership Friday that no votes would take place on Sept. 29-30, as previously scheduled.

The move by House GOP leadership essentially forces the Senate to approve the House-passed measure or risk a shutdown. Johnson said lawmakers have a lot of work to do in their districts.

Most Democrats appear to be backing Schumer's demand that there be negotiations on the bill — and support his threats of a shutdown, even as it is unclear how they would get out of it.

"Look, the president said really boldly, don't even talk to Democrats. Unless he's forgotten that you need a supermajority to pass a budget in the Senate, that's obviously his signal he wants a shutdown," said Sen. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wis.

While the Democratic measure to fund the government had no chance of passage, it does give Democrats a way to show voters their focus on cutting health care costs. Unless Congress act, tax credits going to low- and middle-income people who purchase health insurance through the Affordable Care Act will expire. That will mean a big increase in premiums for millions of Americans.

"There are some things we have to address. The health insurance, ACA, is going to hammer millions of people in the country, including in red states," said Sen. Angus King, I-Maine. "To me, that can't be put off."

Republicans have said the tax credit issue can be dealt with later this year. They're also using Schumer's previous arguments against shutdowns to make the case he's playing politics.

"Democrats voted in favor of clean CRs no fewer than 13 times during the Biden administration," Thune said. "Yet now that Republicans are offering a clean CR, it's somehow a no go. It's funny how that happens."

Trump says he and Xi will meet in South Korea in coming weeks and he'll later go to China

By DIDI TANG and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump said he would meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping at a regional summit taking place at the end of October in South Korea and will visit China in the "early part of next year," following a lengthy phone call between the two on Friday.

In a Truth Social post, Trump said Xi would come to the United States "at an appropriate time" and that they had made progress on "the approval of the TikTok Deal" to allow the popular social media app to keep operating in the U.S., though he didn't give details.

A statement from the Chinese government did not mention the visits, nor did it offer clarity on what Xi had agreed to regarding a sale of a controlling stake by TikTok's Chinese parent company to avoid a U.S. ban. But Xi told Trump to avoid imposing trade restrictions to keep trade ties from getting worse, according to the statement.

While the highly anticipated call suggested a cordial relationship between the leaders of the world's two largest economies, their statements showed the challenges facing two countries with conflicting worldviews that are so entwined. A fundamental sign of cooperation was a willingness to meet face to face.

"The call was a very good one, we will be speaking again by phone, appreciate the TikTok approval, and both look forward to meeting at APEC!" Trump wrote, referring to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group of 21 economies on the Pacific Rim.

Later Friday, Trump said American investors were lined up on TikTok and described Xi as "a gentleman" in the negotiations. But Trump was vague on the ownership of TikTok's algorithm, a critical technology that populates what users see on the app and is subject to Beijing's export restrictions.

"It's all being worked out," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office, saying the call with Xi lasted nearly two hours. "We're going to have very good control."

Efforts to finalize the TikTok deal

ByteDance, TikTok's Chinese-owned parent company, thanked both leaders in a statement and expressed interest in ongoing negotiations to ensure the app's services continue for U.S. users, without providing

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much insight into how the ownership question would be resolved. Trump said the deal was "well on its way."

The Trump administration said this week that a framework deal for the app's ownership was reached with Chinese officials during trade talks in Madrid.

Trump, who has credited the app with helping him win another term, several times has extended a deadline for it to be spun off from ByteDance. It is a requirement under a law passed last year seeking to address data privacy and national security concerns.

U.S. officials have been concerned about ByteDance's roots and ownership, pointing to laws in China that require Chinese companies to hand over data requested by the government.

Chinese officials said Monday that a consensus was reached on authorization of the "use of intellectual property rights," including the algorithm, and that the two sides agreed on entrusting a partner with handling U.S. user data and content security.

During the call, Xi told Trump that Beijing "would be happy to see productive commercial negotiations in keeping with market rules," which would "lead to a solution that complies with China's laws and regulations and takes into account the interests of both sides," according to the Chinese statement.

"The U.S. side needs to provide an open, fair and non-discriminatory environment for Chinese investors," it said.

Craig Singleton, senior China fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington think tank, said there does not appear to be a done deal over TikTok.

"Beijing frames market-based talks under Chinese law, keeping a de facto veto, while Trump casts himself as the final approver," he said.

Trump and Xi speak on wider trade issues

Trump said in Friday's social media post that the two also made progress on "many very important issues including Trade, Fentanyl, the need to bring the War between Russia and Ukraine to an end."

A day earlier, Trump said Russia's war in Ukraine could end if European countries put higher tariffs on China. Trump didn't say if he planned to raise tariffs on Beijing over its purchase of Moscow's oil, as he has done with India.

U.S. and Chinese officials have held four rounds of trade talks between May and September, with another likely in the coming weeks. Both sides have paused high tariffs and pulled back from harsh export controls.

They are yet to reach any deal, however, on tech export restrictions, Chinese purchases of U.S. agricultural products or fentanyl. The Trump administration has imposed additional 20% tariffs on Chinese goods linked to allegations that Beijing has failed to stem the flow to the U.S. of the chemicals used to make opioids.

China responded by levying additional 10% to 15% tariffs on U.S. farm goods.

Trump's second-term trade war with Beijing has cost U.S. farmers one of their top markets. From January through July, American farm exports to China fell 53% compared with the same period last year. The damage was even greater in some commodities: U.S. sorghum sales to China, for instance, were down 97%.

Sean Stein, president of the U.S.-China Business Council, said if there is an agreement to remove the fentanyl tariffs, Beijing could roll back the retaliatory tariffs and resume purchases of U.S. farm goods and other products, he said.

"There'll be a lot of positive market sentiment that comes from this, and it will alleviate the human costs of fentanyl," he said.

What to know about the search for Travis Decker, who was wanted in the deaths of his daughters

By The Associated Press undefined

The remains of a former soldier wanted in the deaths of his three young daughters were believed to be found this week in the mountains of Washington state, authorities said.

Law enforcement teams have been searching for 32-year-old Travis Decker since early June, when a deputy found his truck and the bodies of his three daughters — all under age 10 — at a campground in

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central Washington.

Authorities are now waiting for forensic tests to confirm the identity of the remains, but the Chelan County Sheriff's Office said on Thursday that preliminary findings suggest the remains belong to Decker. Results of the DNA tests are expected soon, the sheriff's office said Friday.

What to know about the case:

Travis Decker's ex-wife was worried about his mental health

A year ago, Decker's ex-wife sought to restrict him from having overnight visits with their daughters, saying his mental health issues had worsened and that he had become increasingly unstable. She wrote in a petition to modify their parenting plan that Decker, who was an infantryman in the Army for eight years until 2021, was often living out of his truck.

The girls' bodies were found after a scheduled visit

Authorities began looking for Decker and his daughters after he failed to return them to their mother's home following a scheduled visit. A sheriff's deputy found the bodies — 9-year-old Paityn Decker, 8-year-old Evelyn Decker and 5-year-old Olivia Decker — along with their father's truck on June 2 at a campground outside Leavenworth, about 120 miles (190 kilometers) east of Seattle. An autopsy determined the girls died from suffocation, the sheriff's office said.

The search covered a rugged terrain in Washington

Following the discovery of the bodies, more than 100 officials with state and federal agencies searched for Decker across hundreds of square miles, including mountainous and remote land. Decker had training in navigation, survival and other skills, authorities said, and once lived in the backwoods off the grid. At one point early in the search, authorities thought they spotted Decker near a remote alpine lake after receiving a tip from hikers.

Remains were found near campground

The sheriff's office said Friday that the remains were found in a remote wooded area near Grindstone Mountain, not far from the campground. They did not say when they were discovered or provide any other details.

Florida federal judge tosses Trump's \$15B defamation lawsuit against The New York Times

By CURT ANDERSON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — A Florida federal judge on Friday tossed out a \$15 billion defamation lawsuit filed by President Donald Trump against The New York Times.

U.S. District Judge Steven Merryday ruled that Trump's 85-page lawsuit was overly long and full of "tedious and burdensome" language that had no bearing on the legal case. The judge gave Trump 28 days to file an amended complaint that should not exceed 40 pages.

"A complaint is not a megaphone for public relations or a podium for a passionate oration at a political rally," Merryday wrote in a four-page order. "This action will begin, will continue, and will end in accord with the rules of procedure and in a professional and dignified manner."

Trump's legal team plans to continue the lawsuit "in accordance with the judge's direction on logistics," spokesman Aaron Harison said.

The lawsuit named four Times journalists and cited a book and three articles published within a two-month period before the last election.

The Times had said it was meritless and an attempt to discourage independent reporting. "We welcome the judge's quick ruling, which recognized that the complaint was a political document rather than a serious legal filing," spokesman Charlie Stadlander said Friday.

Merryday noted that the lawsuit did not get to the first defamation count until page 80. The lawsuit delves into Trump's work on "The Apprentice" TV show and an "extensive list" of Trump's other media appearances.

"As every lawyer knows (or is presumed to know), a complaint is not a public forum for vituperation and

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invective — not a protected platform to rage against an adversary,” wrote Merryday, an appointment of former President George H.W. Bush. “Although lawyers receive a modicum of expressive latitude in pleading the claim of a client, the complaint in this action extends far beyond the outer bound of that latitude.”

The lawsuit named a book and an article written by Times reporters Russ Buettner and Susanne Craig that focuses on Trump’s finances and his pre-presidency role in “The Apprentice.” Trump said in the lawsuit that they “maliciously peddled the fact-free narrative” that television producer Mark Burnett turned Trump into a celebrity — “even though at and prior to the time of publications defendants knew that President Trump was already a mega-celebrity and an enormous success in business.”

The lawsuit also attacked claims the reporters made about Trump’s early business dealings and his father, Fred.

Trump also cited an article by Peter Baker last Oct. 20 headlined “For Trump, a Lifetime of Scandals Heads Toward a Moment of Judgment.” He also sued Michael S. Schmidt for a piece two days later featuring an interview with Trump’s first-term chief of staff, John Kelly, headlined “As Election Nears, Kelly Warns Trump Would Rule Like a Dictator.”

Trump has also sued ABC News and CBS News’ “60 Minutes,” both of which were settled out of court by the news organizations’ parent companies. Trump also sued The Wall Street Journal and media mogul Rupert Murdoch in July after the newspaper published a story reporting on his ties to wealthy financier and convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Kimmel’s rise from radio to cultural icon hits roadblock with ABC’s suspension of late-night TV show

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — In a crowded late-night field, Jimmy Kimmel rose to become a cultural fixture.

For two decades, Kimmel has been one of the most familiar faces on television. He’s the kind of entertainer who could blend slapstick humor with sharp political satire and still find himself entrusted with hosting Hollywood’s most prestigious ceremonies. His career arc has been impressive, rising from radio gigs in Las Vegas to rubbing elbows with the likes of Meryl Streep at the Oscars and turning world leaders into punch lines on “Jimmy Kimmel Live!”

In an industry that thrives on turnover, Kimmel’s staying power has been rare. He’s been the voice that helped anchor ABC in the late-night arena, until now with his show suspended indefinitely over his comments earlier this week about the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk on Sept. 10.

What sparked the controversy

Just last week, Kimmel reminded audiences why he’s long been one of the sharpest voices in late night. He won his fourth Primetime Emmy for hosting “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?” then used the moment to defend his friend Stephen Colbert, whose “Late Show” was canceled in July just days after criticizing the President Donald Trump–Paramount Global settlement. Kimmel cursed CBS from the stage and brushed off executives who called the cancellation “financial.” He told the crowd that he loved Colbert. Colbert’s show is to end in May 2026.

Kimmel, 57, didn’t stop there. After the Creative Arts Emmy ceremony, he took aim at Donald Trump directly, saying, “I’m giving this guy a little poke, and he deserves it, and I enjoy it, and I hope that people enjoy it too.”

Days later, his bluntness collided with tragedy and politics. In a monologue following the assassination of Kirk, Kimmel quipped that “many in MAGA land are working very hard to capitalize on the murder of Charlie Kirk.”

The backlash was immediate. Nexstar and Sinclair, two of ABC’s largest affiliate owners, said they would be pulling “Jimmy Kimmel Live!” from their stations. Under mounting pressure, ABC — Kimmel’s late-night show home since 2003 — suspended the show indefinitely.

For a host such as Kimmel who has long walked the tightrope between comedy and controversy, this is

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the steepest challenge yet. He has not commented on the suspension.

Here's what we know:

A start in radio, a break in comedy

Kimmel's story began in Las Vegas, where he honed his craft at small radio stations. The early grind was like a boot camp for bigger stages marked by unpaid internships, quirky promotions and on-the-fly lessons in timing and voice control.

His first big break came with Comedy Central's "Win Ben Stein's Money." Kimmel's quick wit as Stein's sidekick earned him a daytime Emmy in 1999 and national attention. He followed that with "The Man Show," co-created with Adam Carolla, which gave him credibility as both a comic and a producer. Shows like "Crank Yankers" and "The Andy Milonakis Show" soon followed with Kimmel's creative hand.

His rise: Why Kimmel became famous

The turning point was 2003. That's when ABC handed him his own late-night program, "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" Over the years, he grew from a scrappy newcomer into a late-night staple. The show was anchored by viral sketches, celebrity pranks, political monologues and deeply personal stories.

Kimmel became more than a host. He was a cultural translator, using comedy to navigate moments of national crisis or collective joy, whether in his emotional monologues about health care after his son's heart surgery or in his pointed critiques of Washington politics.

His trust factor grew, and Hollywood leaned on him to host major events. He's hosted the Emmys three times and the Oscars four, handling everything from an envelope mix-up involving "La La Land" vs. "Moonlight" to a live global telecast watched by hundreds of millions.

"It's an experience that I try to remember is special," Kimmel said in an interview with The Associated Press last year. "I just want to make sure for the people who are watching and the people who are there that we bring the proper amount of respect and also the proper amount of disrespect to the proceedings."

Why Kimmel matters to ABC

For ABC, Kimmel has been an anchor. His late-night program gave the network a consistent foothold in a crowded media landscape. His celebrity Rolodex drew stars, his political edge attracted headlines and his human touch built loyalty.

Beyond late night, Kimmel has carried ABC's brand into prime events. He hosted "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" in its celebrity revival and headlined industry-defining award shows that drove global audiences back to the network. He kept himself relevant interviewing presidents, roasting movie stars and pulling kids into his annual Halloween candy prank.

Along with TV, Kimmel extended his brand back to his hometown, Las Vegas. He opened Jimmy Kimmel's Comedy Club on the Las Vegas Strip, where comedians such as actor-comic Luenell currently hold residencies.

The uncertain road ahead

Kimmel now finds himself at a crossroads. He is a comedian who climbed from Las Vegas radio booths to Hollywood's biggest podiums, but he's also now a personality caught in a national debate over the boundaries of free speech and corporate caution.

In an interview with Variety this past summer, Kimmel was asked if he was worried that the administration would come after comedians, as it has journalists.

"Well, you'd have to be naive not to worry a little bit," he said. "But that can't change what you're doing."

Kimmel's contract with The Walt Disney Co.-owned network expires in May 2026.

It remains unclear whether "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" returns or he reinvents himself on another platform.

Earlier this summer, Kimmel said if comedians were targeted, he hoped that "even my colleagues on the right will support my right to say what I like."

Trump asks the Supreme Court to allow him to enforce transgender and nonbinary passport policy

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By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's administration asked the Supreme Court on Friday to let it enforce a passport policy for transgender and nonbinary people that requires male or female sex designations based on birth certificates.

The Justice Department appealed a lower-court order allowing people use the gender or "X" identification marker that lines up with their gender identity.

It's the latest in a series of emergency appeals from the Trump administration, many of which have resulted in victories amid litigation, including on banning transgender people from the military.

The government argues it can't be required to use sex designations it considers inaccurate on official documents. The plaintiffs, meanwhile, say the policy violates the rights of transgender and nonbinary Americans.

The State Department changed its passport rules after Trump, a Republican, handed down an executive order in January declaring the United States would "recognize two sexes, male and female," based on what it called "an individual's immutable biological classification."

Transgender actor Hunter Schafer, for example, said in February that her new passport had been issued with a male gender marker, even though she submitted the application with the female gender marker she's used for years on her driver's license and passport.

A judge blocked the Trump administration policy in June after a lawsuit from nonbinary and transgender people, some of whom said they were afraid to submit applications. An appeals court left the judge's order in place.

The Trump administration on Friday asked the Supreme Court to put the order on hold while the lawsuit plays out.

"The Constitution does not prohibit the government from defining sex in terms of an individual's biological classification," Solicitor General D. John Sauer wrote.

He pointed to the high court's recent ruling upholding a ban on transition-related health care for transgender minors. The courts conservative majority found that law doesn't discriminate on the basis of sex, and Sauer argued that finding also supports the Trump administration's decision to change passport rules issued in 2021.

An attorney for the plaintiffs, on the other hand, said the passport rules are discriminatory.

"This administration has taken escalating steps to limit transgender people's health care, speech, and other rights under the Constitution, and we are committed to defending those rights," said Jon Davidson, senior counsel for the LGBTQ & HIV Project at the American Civil Liberties Union.

US military strike off the coast of Venezuela disrupts life in impoverished fishing communities

By REGINA GARCIA CANO Associated Press

GUÍRIA, Venezuela (AP) — On Venezuela's Paria Peninsula, an idyllic stretch of Caribbean coast, it is an open secret that boats departing from its ports transport both drugs and fish.

Residents claim not to know who owns the illegal cargo, but they can tell when business is doing well because people eat out, get their hair and nails done and buy expensive meat. They also admit that none of this has happened since the U.S. military struck on one of those boats earlier this month.

Few details are known about the deadly Sept. 2 strike on a boat the Trump administration claims departed Venezuela carrying drugs and 11 members of the Tren de Aragua gang, fueling speculation. Fishermen in the peninsula told The Associated Press they do not entirely blame those who enter the illegal trade, as living off fishing alone in Venezuela today is to accept a life of poverty.

Fishing boats in the breathtaking peninsula have been repurposed to smuggle migrants, traffic humans, wildlife and fuel. These so-called "other businesses" have flourished since Venezuela's economic collapse a decade ago.

"There is no revolution here," said retiree Alberto Díaz, referring to the self-described socialist movement

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that the late Hugo Chávez launched in Venezuela in 1999 with the promise of improving the lives of the poor using the country's oil. "What there is here is hunger, sacrifice, pure pain."

Walking through the Güiria neighborhood of one of the strike's victims, Díaz lamented the decline of the local fishing industry, which once offered jobs with living wages and a way for people "to be happy."

Speculation abounds

Speculation over the strike is still going around Venezuela, with people wondering who died and whether their deaths are part of a plan to topple President Nicolás Maduro. Some have questioned their government's assertions that a video of the strike released by U.S. President Donald Trump was created with artificial intelligence and that a boat of that size cannot venture into the high seas.

But fishermen in the peninsula, who know their craft, immediately recognized some characteristics of the boat from the video. They said it was a 12-meter-long fishing boat known in Venezuela as "peñero" with four powerful and expensive motors. They estimated the engines were at least 200 horsepower each, a force five times more powerful than that typically used on local peñeros.

"Fishing doesn't pay enough to buy a motor like that," said fisherman Junior González, taking a break from repairing a boat along the shore of Guaca. Only a handful of roughly two dozen sardine processing plants still operate in this community following years of overfishing, failed restoration and the country's overarching crisis.

González explained that the motors he uses run between \$4,000 and \$5,000 each, while one of those needed to reach Trinidad and Tobago — the suspected destination of the targeted boat — sell for \$15,000 to \$20,000.

'Small-scale traffickers'

The Trump administration has yet to explain how the military assessed the boat's cargo and determined the passengers' alleged gang affiliation before the attack. National security officials told members of Congress last week that the boat was fired on multiple times after it had changed course.

The strike, which followed a buildup of U.S. maritime forces in the Caribbean, marked a paradigm shift in how the U.S. is willing to combat drug trafficking in the Western Hemisphere. The U.S. military killed three other people Monday after striking a second vessel that Trump said was carrying drugs from Venezuela.

Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello has said authorities are investigating the first strike but has not provided further details. He, Maduro and other government officials have repeatedly said Venezuela is not a key player in global drug trafficking.

Several fishermen and a local leader who asked not to be identified for fear of retaliation from Maduro's government told AP the boat targeted on Sept. 2 departed Venezuela from San Juan de Unare, another fishing community on the northern coast of the peninsula. They said the men aboard hailed from that town as well as Güiria.

While some fishermen supplement their income with drug trafficking out of desperation, Christopher Sabatini, a research fellow at the Chatham House in London, said the Trump administration "has completely exaggerated" the scope of their illicit activities by linking them to the Venezuelan Tren de Aragua gang and deeming them an immediate threat to the U.S.

"If you look at (the boats), these could never make the journey all the way up the Caribbean to the United States," Sabatini said. "These are small-scale fishermen — and now small-scale drug traffickers — that don't represent the crux of the issue."

'Everyone here knows what happened'

On Sunday, González, his father and siblings were the only fishermen on the shore dotted by moored boats as recent policy changes have restricted how often crews can fish for sardines. In communities like Guaca and El Morro de Puerto Santo, the new rules could drop a fisherman's income below \$100 a month, which isn't enough to cover a week of groceries under Venezuela's current economy.

Drug running, in contrast, pays thousands at once.

"He doesn't have food this week," Kira Torres said, pointing to a member of her husband's fishing crew, which had returned to El Morro de Puerto Santo last week without any sardines, so they earned no money.

Torres said the community has ruling-party leaders who coordinate the delivery of government subsidies,

including food rations. Yet, they have not received them in months.

She conceded that some fishermen in the peninsula turn to drug running for “easy money,” but ultimately, they do it because they have no other choice.

“Many make the mistake because they are in dire need,” Torres said, pointing at reasons like hunger or having a sick relative. “Need forces them to do anything, and since the government doesn’t come here to help, what is one supposed to do?”

The impact of the illegal trade in parts of the peninsula is clear: businesses quickly deduce a successful drug run when people suddenly pay for goods and services with crisp U.S. dollar and euro bills. They buy more than a handful of things at convenience stores and treat themselves to a burger and fries.

Restaurant and bakery owner Jean Carlos Sucre has noticed this pattern in Güiria and is worried about the future. He said the recent U.S. strike has only worsened the “asphyxiating” conditions already facing his business due to Venezuela’s soaring inflation — leading to a significant drop in his weekly sales.

“Those who are working illegally aren’t setting sail for fear of being caught by the gringos, I imagine,” Sucre said. “Everyone here knows what happened, but very few talk. This week I sold 10 hamburgers out of the 90 I was selling (before the strike).”

Pakistan says its nuclear program can be made available to Saudi Arabia under defense pact

By JON GAMBRELL and MUNIR AHMED Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Pakistan’s defense minister says his nation’s nuclear program “will be made available” to Saudi Arabia if needed under the countries’ new defense pact, marking the first specific acknowledgment that Islamabad had put the kingdom under its nuclear umbrella.

Defense Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif’s comments underline the importance of the pact struck this week between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which have had military ties for decades.

The move is seen by analysts as a signal to Israel, long believed to be the Middle East’s only nuclear-armed nation. It comes after Israel’s attack targeting Hamas leaders in Qatar last week killed six people and sparked new concerns among Gulf Arab nations about their safety as the Israel-Hamas war devastated the Gaza Strip and set the region on edge.

Minister’s remarks touch on the nuclear program

Speaking to Geo TV in an interview late Thursday night, Asif made the comments while answering a question on whether “the deterrence that Pakistan gets from nuclear weapons” will be made available to Saudi Arabia.

“Let me make one point clear about Pakistan’s nuclear capability: that capability was established long ago when we conducted tests. Since then, we have forces trained for the battlefield,” Asif said.

“What we have, and the capabilities we possess, will be made available to (Saudi Arabia) according to this agreement,” he added.

The two countries signed a defense deal Wednesday declaring that an attack on one nation would be an attack on both.

The International Atomic Energy Agency, with which both nations have monitoring agreements, did not immediately respond to a request for comment over the Pakistani defense minister’s remarks. Asif criticized Israel in the interview for not fully disclosing its suspected nuclear weapons program to the IAEA.

The pact comes after Israel’s attack on Qatar

Israel has not commented on the two nations’ defense pact. Pakistan long has criticized Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians, but has not been directly involved in any war against it. And while neither nation has diplomatic ties to Israel, American officials had sought to mediate a diplomatic recognition deal involving Saudi Arabia before Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel that sparked the war.

“We have not named any country whose attack would automatically trigger a retaliatory response. Neither has Saudi Arabia named any country, nor have we,” Asif said in the interview. “This is an umbrella arrangement offered to one another by both sides: if there is aggression against either party — from any

side — it will be jointly defended, and the aggression will be met with a response.”

The deal came a week after the attack in Doha as Gulf Arab countries weigh how to defend themselves. Israeli attacks since Oct. 7, 2023, have stretched across Iran, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, Qatar, Syria and Yemen.

Asked if others could join the pact, the minister added: “I can say the door is not closed to others.”

That idea was repeated by Pakistan’s Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar.

“It is premature to say anything, but after this development, other countries have also expressed a desire for similar arrangements,” Dar told reporters in London in televised remarks. “Such things follow due process. Even with Saudi Arabia, it took several months to finalize.”

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have longstanding ties

Saudi Arabia has long been linked to Pakistan’s nuclear program. Retired Pakistani Brig. Gen. Feroz Hassan Khan has said Saudi Arabia provided “generous financial support to Pakistan that enabled the nuclear program to continue, especially when the country was under sanctions.” Pakistan faced U.S. sanctions for years over its pursuit of the bomb, and saw new ones imposed over its ballistic missile work at the end of the Biden administration.

Pakistan developed its nuclear weapons program to counter India’s atomic bombs. The two neighbors have fought multiple wars against each other, and again came close to open warfare after an attack on tourists in April in Indian-controlled Kashmir. India is believed to have an estimated 172 nuclear warheads, while Pakistan has 170, according to the U.S.-published Bulletin of Atomic Scientists.

Pakistan’s Shaheen 3 ballistic missile, believed to be able to carry both conventional and nuclear warheads, has a maximum range of 2,750 kilometers (1,700 miles) — making it capable of reaching Israel.

A robot programmed to act like a 7-year-old girl works to combat fear and loneliness in hospitals

By HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

Days after Meagan Brazil-Sheehan’s 6-year-old son was diagnosed with leukemia, they were walking down the halls of UMass Memorial Children’s Medical Center when they ran into Robin the Robot.

“Luca, how are you?” it asked in a high-pitched voice programmed to sound like a 7-year-old girl. “It’s been awhile.”

Brazil-Sheehan said they had only met the 4-foot-tall (1.2-meter-tall) robot with a large screen displaying cartoonlike features once before after they were admitted several days earlier.

“His face lit up,” she said about the interaction in June in Worcester, Massachusetts. “It was so special because she remembered him.”

Robin is an artificial intelligence -powered therapeutic robot programed to act like a little girl as it provides emotional support at nursing homes and hospital pediatric units while helping combat staffing shortages. Five years after launching in the U.S., it has become a familiar face in 30 health care facilities in California, Massachusetts, New York and Indiana.

“Nurses and medical staff are really overworked, under a lot of pressure, and unfortunately, a lot of times they don’t have capacity to provide engagement and connection to patients,” said Karen Khachikyan, CEO of Expper Technologies, which developed the robot. “Robin helps to alleviate that part from them.”

As AI increasingly becomes a part of daily life, it’s found a foothold in medical care — providing everything from note-taking during exams to electronic nurses. While heralded by some for the efficiency it brings, others worry about its impact on patient care.

Robin is about 30% autonomous, while a team of operators working remotely controls the rest under the watchful eyes of clinical staff. Khachikyan said that with each interaction, they’re able to collect more data — while still complying with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act, or HIPAA — and get closer to it being able to function independently.

“Imagine a pure emotional intelligence like WALL-E. We’re trying to create that,” he said, referencing the 2008 animated film.

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Making its rounds

On a recent Friday, a staff member at HealthBridge Children's Hospital in Orange County, California, read off a list of patients she needed Robin to visit, along with the amount of time to spend with each one.

The robot with a sleek white triangle-shaped frame that Khachikyan said was designed for hugging, rolled into a room with a teenager injured in a car accident. The robot played what it described as his favorite song — "No Fear" by DeJ Loaf — and he danced along. In the hallway, Robin cracked up a young child held by her mother when it put on a series of silly glasses and a big red nose. In another room, the robot played a simplified version of tic-tac-toe with a patient.

Samantha da Silva, speech language pathologist at the hospital, said patients light up when Robin comes into their room and not only remembers their names but their favorite music.

"She brings joy to everyone," da Silva said. "She walks down the halls, everyone loves to chat with her, say hello."

Robin mirrors the emotions of the person it is talking with, explained Khachikyan. If the patient is laughing then the robot laughs along, but if they're sharing something difficult, its face reflects sadness and empathy.

In nursing homes, Robin plays memory games with people suffering from dementia, takes them through breathing exercises on difficult days and offers them a form of companionship that resembles a grandchild with a grandparent.

Khachikyan recalled a moment last year at a facility in Los Angeles where a woman was having a panic attack and asked specifically for the robot. Robin played songs by her favorite musician and videos of her favorite animal — Elvis Presley and puppies — until she had calmed down.

But with the Association of American Medical Colleges projecting that the U.S. will face a shortage of up to 86,000 physicians in the next 11 years, Khachikyan's vision for Robin goes far beyond this type of support.

He said they're working to make the robot able to measure patients' vitals and check to see how they're doing and then send that information to their medical team. Longer term plans include designing Robin to help elderly patients change their clothes and go to the bathroom.

"Our goal is to design the next evolution of Robin; that Robin will take more and more responsibilities and become even more essential part of care delivery," Khachikyan said.

He clarified that it's not about replacing health care workers but about filling in the gaps in the workforce.

At UMass Memorial Children's, the robot is very much a part of a team of support for patients. When Luca needed an IV after not getting one in a while, Micaela Cotas, a certified child life specialist came in with the robot and showed him an IV and what was about to happen, and then Robin played a cartoon of it getting an IV put in.

"It just kind of helps show that Robin has gone through those procedures as well, just like a peer," Cotas said.

Finding its niche

Robin was developed by Khachikyan while he was getting his Ph.D. He said growing up in a single-parent household in Armenia had been lonely, so years later he wanted to build a type of robot that could act as a person's friend.

Developers tested it in a variety of industries before an investor suggested that pediatric hospitals would be a good fit because of the stress and loneliness children often feel.

"That was kind of an aha moment," he said. "We decided, OK let's try it."

They had success introducing it at a pediatric hospital in Armenia and by 2020 launched a pilot program at UCLA Mattel Children's Hospital.

Since Robin was created, its personality and character have changed significantly based on the responses from people it interacts with.

Khachikyan gave the example of Robin's answer to the question: "What is your favorite animal." Initially they tried having the robot respond with dog. They also tried cat. But when they tried chicken, the children cracked up. So they stuck with it.

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"We created Robin's personality by really taking users into the equation," he said. "So we often say that Robin was designed by users."

What a new poll shows about where Americans think the country is heading

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Republicans' outlook on the direction of the country has soured dramatically, according to a new AP-NORC poll that was conducted shortly after last week's assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk.

The share of Republicans who see the country headed in the right direction has fallen sharply in recent months, according to the September survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. Today, only about half in the GOP see the nation on the right course, down from 70% in June. The shift is even more glaring among Republican women and the party's under-45 crowd.

Overall, about one-quarter of Americans say things in the country are headed in the right direction, down from about 4 in 10 in June. Democrats and independents didn't shift meaningfully.

Interviews with Republicans who took the poll suggest that political violence and nagging worries about social discord are playing a role in the notable shift in their mood after a summer scarred by killings of figures on both sides of the political spectrum, although they also mentioned another array of worries, including jobs, household costs and crime.

"I've spent a lot of time worrying about the worsening political discourse and, now, the disturbing assassinations," said Chris Bahr, a 42-year-old Republican from suburban Houston.

"If you'd have talked to me two weeks ago, I wouldn't have brought it up as a main concern but more of a gnawing feeling," the software administrator said. "It's something I've been thinking about. But now it's violence, while before it was just this sense of animosity and division."

An unusually sharp drop among Republicans

Views of the country's direction tend to be fairly stable, but major events sometimes shake partisans' feelings about the state of the country, even when their party is in power. Democrats, for example, were more likely to say the U.S. was headed the wrong way after the Supreme Court in June 2022 overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark decision that established a federal right to abortion. Democrat Joe Biden was president.

But the GOP shift in optimism, especially among younger Republicans and GOP women, is noteworthy for its scale. The drop in Republicans who see the country headed in the right direction is bigger than the decline between October 2020 and December 2020, after President Donald Trump, a Republican, lost his reelection bid. It's more similar in scope to the decline that occurred in the first two months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Among Republicans younger than 45, the decline is particularly glaring: 61% say the country is headed in the wrong direction, a spike of 30 percentage points since June, the last time the question was asked.

Mostly, 42-year-old truck driver Mustafa Robinson, a Republican, is troubled by the cost of living, but he has been increasingly bothered by what he wishes was a stronger sense of national unity.

"It's like, you think you're heading in the right direction with your career and your job, but everything around you is going up in price. It seems like you can't catch a break," said Robinson, a married father of three who lives in Delaware County just southwest of Philadelphia. "But we are also supposed to be united as a country and coming together. And we are not. I'm so perplexed how we're not on the same page about anything, so bad that these people are being shot."

Some express concern about political violence

Kirk, who started the Arizona-based political organization Turning Point USA and had been a leader rallying young conservatives for Trump, died Sept. 10 after he was shot during an outdoor event at Utah Valley University.

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On June 14, Democrat Melissa Hortman, Minnesota's state House speaker, and her husband were shot to death in their suburban Minneapolis home in what authorities called an act of targeted political violence.

In April, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, his family and guests fled the governor's mansion in Harrisburg after a man broke into the home and set a fire that caused significant damage. It happened during the Jewish holiday of Passover, and Shapiro is Jewish.

Last year, Trump was the target of an assassination attempt during an election campaign rally in Butler, Pennsylvania, where he was shot in the ear.

Worries about political violence aren't new for many Americans. Last October, an AP-NORC poll found that 42% of U.S. adults were "extremely" or "very" concerned about the possibility of increased political violence directed at political figures or election officials in the aftermath of the presidential election.

Trump has blamed the "radical left" for Kirk's killing and has discussed pursuing progressive groups in response. Without establishing any link to last week's shooting, he and members of his administration have discussed classifying some groups as domestic terrorists, ordering racketeering investigations and revoking tax-exempt status for some.

The economy is also a factor for some

GOP women's view of the nation's course has shifted almost as much as younger Republicans' view, according to the poll. About three-quarters of Republican women say the country is going in the wrong direction, up from 27% in June. By comparison, 56% of Republican men say the country is going the wrong way, up from 30% in June.

And not all of the people who think the U.S. is on a worrying trajectory have political violence at the top of their mind. Joclyn Yurchak, 55, from northeast Pennsylvania, ticked off a list of problems she feels have put the United States on a downward path.

Yurchak, a warehouse worker going back to school for business, says good jobs are harder to find and require longer commutes. She is bothered by illegal immigration, though she believes Trump has begun to make inroads, and worries about criminal drug activity in her area.

Asked about Kirk and other political targets, Yurchak attributed the episodes to a broader fraying of the nation's social fabric.

"It's all the violence, not just political. There's just so much crime in the country. It's disgusting," said Yurchak. "Nobody has respect for anybody anymore. It's sad."

Like others, Minnesota Republican Jeremy Gieske first noted economic uncertainty as the chief reason for his wrong-track opinion, before circling back without prompting to what he called "all the political poison."

"We're at each other's throats," said the 47-year-old product manager from Rogers, just northwest of Minneapolis. "This viciousness on both sides. We have villainized others, like we're on the brink of social collapse. Is Kirk the straw that breaks the camel's back or sets off a powder keg? It's on everyone's mind."

As controversy swirls around late-night TV, here's what a new poll shows about who still watches

By LINLEY SANDERS and ITZEL LUNA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As late-night talk shows undergo major changes and controversy, a new poll finds that while most Americans don't watch them regularly, the ones who do make such programming part of their routine are more likely to be Democrats.

Only about one-quarter of Americans say they have watched a late-night talk show or variety show at least monthly in the last year, according to the survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The poll was conducted after the announcement that Stephen Colbert's show was being canceled but before Jimmy Kimmel's suspension.

More people say they catch late-night TV segments online, through recirculated clips.

The poll comes at a time when President Donald Trump has celebrated Kimmel's suspension and Colbert's cancellation while calling for other late-night hosts to be fired and the head of the Federal Communica-

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tions Commission has pushed to root out what he describes as liberal bias from networks. Late-night TV shows are also facing economic challenges and changing audiences that have more options than ever in what to watch.

In follow-up interviews, several Republicans said they used to enjoy late-night shows but now feel that they are too political.

Cyndi Christner, 70, a Republican from Michigan, said the comedy segments she's seen from the major talk shows recently aren't for a "universal" audience and don't feel like jokes but rather "just political hacks trying to keep a small minority audience."

"When I watch a late-night show, I would like to be entertained, and they just got ugly," Christner said. "That's just the bottom line. They got ugly, and it wasn't entertaining anymore."

Democrats are more likely to be regularly watching late-night talk shows

Democrats tend to be more regular late-night TV viewers.

Just under half of Democrats say they've watched late-night clips at least once a month in the past year, compared with only about a quarter of either Republicans or independents. Democrats are also more likely to regularly watch all or most of a late-night TV show. About one-third of Democrats say they've done this monthly over the last year, compared with about 2 in 10 Republicans or independents.

While Richard Zamorano, 66, doesn't regularly watch late-night talk shows, he enjoys watching Jimmy Fallon, and sometimes he'll tune in for the monologue or record the show to watch later. He's alarmed by Kimmel's suspension and Colbert's cancellation and worries about the Republican president's expressed interest in going after other hosts.

Zamorano, who identifies as a moderate Democrat, said he has always enjoyed late-night comedians' ability to poke fun at former presidents. He doesn't want other hosts to back away from that comedy, but he also understands that their jobs could be at risk.

"If these guys aren't careful what they say, we're going to lose all of the late-night broadcasting," Zamorano said. "I don't recognize my country."

Late-night clips are more popular than shows

It's not just politics that's changing late-night viewership. The late-night TV genre has been losing its audience to streaming services and highlight reels of the shows for years.

About half of U.S. adults say they've watched all or most of a late-night talk or variety show at some point in the past year, but for many of those people, it's not a regular part of their routine. Clips reach a wider audience, with about 6 in 10 U.S. adults having watched clips from a late-night talk show in the past year.

Only about one-quarter of Americans say they have watched a late-night talk show at least monthly in the past year, but more, about one-third, say they've watched related clips. Even as relatively few Americans are sitting down each night to watch full programs, many are familiar with the hosts and have thoughts on the shifting media landscape.

John Burns, an independent from Oregon, said he tries to watch Colbert's show but it can be hard to catch it live. Though he can't always tune in, he admires Colbert's comedic style and calls his writers "masterful." He wonders who will fill the void to help the country laugh at itself when Colbert's show goes off the air in May.

"I just hate to lose the voices that represent so many of us. They're doing it in a humorous way," Burns said. "We have to be able to laugh at ourselves, so I just feel like, in losing that, we're losing a part of what makes America America."

Late-night clip-watchers are younger

There are no age differences among the people who watch late-night TV shows, but clip watchers skew younger.

About 7 in 10 Americans under age 30 say they've watched clips from late-night TV shows in the past year, compared with 56% of Americans age 60 or older.

Ben Majetich, a 61-year-old Republican from Washington, used to watch late-night shows when he was younger. He would tune in live for Johnny Carson, Jay Leno or David Letterman. But he believes the late-

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night TV shows have changed over the years in a way that moved them from entertainment and escapism to partisan attacks.

"They were very good in the old days when bringing up current events, regardless of who it was about, and joking about it. Everybody could laugh. It wasn't mean-spirited. It wasn't so cutting," Majetich said. "Nowadays, I do think it's slanted one direction more than the other, and it really is critical and biting, and it has an undercurrent of almost viciousness to it."

He thinks it's important for people with a national platform, like Kimmel, to be cautious with their words. He extends that to the president, as well, noting that he'd rather Trump focus on "his presidential stuff" and not posting on social media about late-night hosts. He still thinks the shows could change back toward the nonpolitical entertainment he once enjoyed.

"I think it's going to be an evolution," he said. "I hope everybody starts going to the point where it becomes a lot more nonpartisan than it has in the past and go back to what the roots were where you have that entertainment value without pushing a message."

What to know about Brendan Carr, the head of the Federal Communications Commission

WASHINGTON (AP) — ABC took comic Jimmy Kimmel's late-night show off the air indefinitely Wednesday, just hours after Federal Communications Commission chairman Brendan Carr called his comments about Charlie Kirk's assassination "truly sick."

Carr is a longtime FCC commissioner named as chairman by President Donald Trump in November. In the months since, he has launched investigations of ABC, CBS and NBC news.

"Americans no longer trust the legacy national news media to report fully, accurately, and fairly. It is time for a change," Carr said in July, after the FCC approved CBS owner Paramount's \$8 billion merger with Skydance.

Here's what to know about Carr:

Carr is a longtime FCC commissioner

The FCC regulates broadcasting, telecommunications and broadband.

Carr was already a longtime member of the commission and served previously as the FCC's general counsel. He was unanimously confirmed by the Senate three times and both Trump and President Joe Biden nominated him to the commission.

Before joining the commission as a staff member in 2012, he worked as an attorney at Wiley Rein LLP and clerked on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit.

He has more recently embraced Trump's ideas about social media and tech. He wrote a section devoted to the FCC in "Project 2025," a sweeping blueprint for gutting the federal workforce and dismantling federal agencies in a second Trump administration produced by the conservative Heritage Foundation. Trump has claimed he didn't know anything about Project 2025, but many of its themes have aligned with his statements.

The FCC takes on broadcast networks

In March, Carr said he was opening an investigation into Walt Disney Co. and ABC to see whether they are "promoting invidious forms of DEI discrimination." He also opened separate investigations into CBS and NBC news.

Talking about the Kimmel situation on Fox News Wednesday, he said broadcasters with FCC licenses have "a unique obligation to operate in the public interest. And over the years, the FCC walked away from enforcing that public interest obligation. I don't think we're better off as a country for it."

In July, he hailed the Paramount-Skydance merger as an opportunity to bring more balance to "once-storied" CBS.

FCC approval of the merger came after months of turmoil around Trump's legal battle with the CBS program "60 Minutes." With the specter of the Trump administration potentially blocking the deal, Paramount agreed to a \$16 million settlement with the president.

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CBS then announced it was canceling Stephen Colbert's "Late Show" just days after the comedian sharply criticized the settlement on air. Paramount cited financial reasons, but big names both within and outside the company have questioned those motives.

Shortly before the FCC approved the merger, Paramount agreed to hire an ombudsman at CBS News to investigate complaints of political bias. The job went to Kenneth Weinstein, the former head of a conservative think tank who has made several donations to Republican causes, including President Donald Trump's 2024 campaign.

Carr takes on Kimmel

On Wednesday, Carr said Kimmel appeared to be making an intentional effort to mislead the public that conservative activist Kirk's assassin was a right-wing Trump supporter. He called Kimmel's comments about Kirk's death "truly sick" and said his agency has a strong case for holding Kimmel, ABC and Disney accountable for spreading misinformation.

Kirk, a top conservative podcaster, was shot and killed last week at an appearance on a college campus in Utah.

Kimmel made several remarks about the reaction to Kirk's death last week on "Jimmy Kimmel Live," including that "many in MAGA land are working very hard to capitalize on the murder of Charlie Kirk."

"This is a very, very serious issue right now for Disney," Carr said on the Benny Johnson podcast. "We can do this the easy way or the hard way. These companies can find ways to take action on Kimmel or there is going to be additional work for the FCC ahead."

House Democratic leaders on Thursday called for Carr's resignation and accused him of "bullying" ABC into suspending Kimmel.

In a joint statement, the leaders — including House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries — said the move was part of Trump and Republicans' effort to wage a "war on the First Amendment."

A brutal beating by deputies was caught on tape. They were cleared by state police anyway

By JIM MUSTIAN and JACK BROOK Associated Press

MANSFIELD, La. (AP) — The strip search lasted just six minutes, but when it ended, Jarius Brown had a broken nose, fractured eye socket and a badly swollen face.

Never-before-published footage shows why: Two Louisiana sheriff's deputies pummeled the naked 25-year-old, flinging him around the DeSoto Parish Detention Center laundry room while landing a flurry of 50 punches.

In the aftermath of the 2019 assault, one of the deputies resigned and the other was suspended. Internal records show the sheriff's office concluded "there was no way of defending" the deputies' actions.

Yet, that's just what the Louisiana State Police did, an Associated Press investigation has found. After waiting months to analyze the graphic video and more than a year to even interview Brown, the agency cleared the deputies of wrongdoing. The state police ultimately supported the deputies' claims that Brown had been the "aggressor" in an altercation that took place after he had been arrested on charges of stealing a car.

The case might have ended there had federal prosecutors not eventually gotten involved and come to the opposite conclusion: Brown had been the victim of excessive force.

The graphic footage remained under wraps for six years but emerged this month in Brown's long-running lawsuit seeking damages for his injuries. Brown, now 32, declined to comment through his attorneys.

Gary Evans, a former DeSoto Parish district attorney, said the case underscores the safety net the Justice Department long provided in smaller communities — a role many advocates fear has been thrown into doubt as the department dials back its civil rights enforcement amid President Donald Trump's mandate to "unleash" the police.

"This was a great miscarriage of justice at the state level, and it shows the system has broken down and doesn't protect citizens," Evans said. "In a community like this, the federal government is the only

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avenue for anything to get done.”

Brown’s beating was just the latest in a litany of police misconduct cases in DeSoto Parish, a rural swath of piney woods and rolling farmlands south of Shreveport, Louisiana.

A month before Brown was pummeled, another deputy was charged with malfeasance after tackling and repeatedly punching a man walking into a grocery store. He agreed to a permanent ban from law enforcement in exchange for the charges being dismissed. In another case, a DeSoto Parish deputy was charged with third-degree rape after ordering a woman he arrested to perform oral sex on him.

Russell Graham, a state police spokesperson, declined to explain his agency’s conclusion that there “was not sufficient evidence” the deputies in Brown’s case committed a crime. He attributed delays in the investigation to the COVID-19 pandemic, which began six months after the beating.

“LSP remains committed to thorough, impartial investigations and working with partners to ensure accountability and uphold public trust,” Graham wrote in an email to AP, adding the agency had “conducted a thorough investigation of this matter when it was presented to them.”

Former deputy Javarrea Pouncy pleaded guilty to using excessive force and was sentenced last year to serve about three years in federal prison. He could not be reached for comment.

The other deputy, DeMarkes Grant, who pleaded guilty to obstructing justice, was released from prison in April after serving a 10-month sentence. Grant told AP he was still “stressed out” and had “lost a lot” as a result of his conviction. He declined to say whether he regretted the beating.

“What has happened has happened,” he said.

Experts: Brown was victim of excessive force

Use of force experts questioned the divergent outcomes at the state and federal level, saying Brown never posed a threat and the beating was excessive.

The grainy footage shows a handcuffed Brown calmly walking into the jail’s laundry room before disrobing. The beating begins halfway through the search, after the deputies confront Brown for not squatting as directed so they could fully search him.

Neither deputy sought medical care for Brown after the beating, but the warden recognized the man needed attention and ensured he was taken to the hospital.

“I don’t know how any objective evaluator of this incident could determine this was anything but excessive,” said Charles “Joe” Key, a former Baltimore police lieutenant who typically testifies in defense of police and reviewed the footage at AP’s request.

Andrew Scott, a former police chief of Boca Raton, Florida, said there was nothing on the video that would have justified the beating. He could only surmise the deputies were “delivering retribution.” Any police official who justified the beating after watching the video, Scott added, is “not a competent or truthful expert.”

Within days of the beating, DeSoto Parish Sheriff Jayson Richardson suspended Grant and elicited Pouncy’s resignation. He defended the state police probe in a recent interview, saying federal and state reviews weren’t an “apples to apples” comparison due to differing criminal statutes.

Evans, the former district attorney, said local officials repeatedly thwarted his efforts to obtain the video. Louisiana State Police described Brown as aggressor

Louisiana State Police ultimately provided the beating video to Evans’ successor, Charles Adams, who closed the investigation in 2021. Regardless of what the video shows, Adams told AP, the state police report would have made a state prosecution “very difficult, if not impossible” because it concluded there wasn’t enough evidence of a crime.

“That report would have been brought out and beat over our head,” Adams said.

The state police report describes Brown as the aggressor and said the man told troopers he was “probably high” when he was attacked but that officers took “appropriate action” against him.

State investigators also concluded the footage supported the deputies’ accounts of the attack. The U.S. Justice Department, however, charged both deputies with falsifying their reports, which Grant admitted were fabricated to create a “false narrative.”

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Weeks after the September 2019 beating at the jail, Brown pleaded guilty to "unauthorized use of a motor vehicle" and was sentenced to 18 months behind bars. State police interviewed Brown in jail in early 2021 and reported he "did not want anything done" about the beating and "was not interested in pursuing the matter criminally or civilly."

A local judge, Amy McCartney, dismissed the lawsuit Brown filed against the deputies, ruling in 2023 the beating did not constitute a "crime of violence." An appeals court reversed that decision, and Brown's lawyers are seeking damages for his injuries and medical expenses.

"Jarius Brown survived a horrific, unprovoked beating," said Brown's attorney, Michael Imbroscio, adding he is "entitled to justice." Brown also is represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana, which fought a lengthy legal battle related to the state's statute of limitations on civil claims stemming from police violence.

Brown's father, Derek Washington, said the attack sent his son's already unstable mental capacity "into a more severe case of schizophrenia and anxiety." Today, Brown is fearful of crowds and closed-in spaces, he said, and "cannot function in society."

"He always thinks someone is trying to harm him physically," Washington said. "Right now, my son is just a stranger, and I just want to get some semblance of him back."

Today in History: September 20, Billie Jean King wins "Battle of the Sexes"

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Sept. 20, the 263rd day of 2025. There are 102 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 20, 1973, in their so-called "Battle of the Sexes," tennis star Billie Jean King defeated Bobby Riggs in straight sets, 6-4, 6-3, 6-3, in the Houston Astrodome.

Also on this date:

In 1519, Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan and his crew set out from Spain on five ships to find a western passage to the Spice Islands. (Magellan was killed en route, but one of his ships completed the first circumnavigation of the globe three years later.)

In 1946, the first Cannes Film Festival, lasting 16 days, opened in France.

In 1962, James Meredith, a Black student, was blocked from enrolling at the University of Mississippi by Democratic Gov. Ross R. Barnett.

In 1964, The Beatles concluded their first full-fledged U.S. tour by performing in a charity concert at the Paramount Theater in New York.

In 1967, the Cunard liner Queen Elizabeth 2 was christened by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II in Clydebank, Scotland.

In 2011, the repeal of the U.S. military's 18-year-old "don't ask, don't tell" compromise took effect, allowing gay and lesbian service members to serve openly.

In 2017, Hurricane Maria, the strongest storm to hit Puerto Rico in more than 80 years, struck the island, wiping out as much as 75 percent of power distribution lines and causing an island-wide blackout.

In 2019, Three Mile Island in Pennsylvania, the 1979 site of the nation's worst commercial nuclear power accident, was shut down by its owner after producing electricity for 45 years.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Sophia Loren is 91. Author George R. R. Martin is 77. Actor Gary Cole is 69. TV news correspondent Deborah Roberts is 65. Actor Maggie Cheung is 61. Actor Kristen Johnston is 58. Rock singers Gunnar and Matthew Nelson are 58. Race car driver Juan Pablo Montoya is 50. Actor Jon Bernthal is 49. Actor Aldis Hodge is 39. Mixed martial artist Khabib Nurmagomedov is 37. Singer-songwriter Phillip Phillips is 35.