

# Groton Daily Independent

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## **Saturday, Sept. 27**

C Team/JH Volleyball at Matchbox Tournament, 9 a.m.

Soccer at West Central (Girls at 2:30 p.m., Boys at 4:30 p.m.)

## **Sunday, Sept. 28**

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

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



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

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

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

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

5th Grade Girls Basketball at GHS, 4 p.m.

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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.**

## Iran Sanctions Reimposed

The United Nations is set to reimpose sanctions on Iran today over alleged violations of a 2015 nuclear deal. The move follows unsuccessful negotiations between European and Iranian leaders. The UN Security Council yesterday rejected a last-minute resolution from Russia and China seeking to delay the penalties—including asset freezes and travel bans—by six months.

Satellite imagery suggests Iran conducted an undeclared missile test last week at Imam Khomeini Spaceport, about 145 miles southeast of Tehran. While Iran has not confirmed the launch, one Iranian lawmaker claimed—without evidence—that Tehran tested a potential intercontinental ballistic missile. Such missiles typically have ranges exceeding 3,415 miles, placing at least all of Europe within reach.

The suspected test comes as Iran also repairs missile sites struck by Israeli forces in June, following accusations that Iran was enriching near-weapons-grade uranium in violation of the 2015 deal (see report). Iran suspended cooperation with the UN's nuclear watchdog in response to the strikes, in part triggering today's reimposition of sanctions.

## New York City gunman had CTE, medical examiner finds.

The 27-year-old shooter who killed four people this summer in the NFL headquarters building was found to have low-stage chronic traumatic encephalopathy. CTE is a degenerative brain disease linked to repeated head trauma, which causes symptoms including memory loss, confusion, and aggression. The disease is commonly associated with football (which the shooter played in high school) and can only be diagnosed after death.

## Supreme Court approves emergency request to withhold \$4B in foreign aid.

The high court, in a 6-3 decision, temporarily blocked a lower court ruling that required the Trump administration to spend more than \$4B in foreign aid appropriated by Congress before the funds expire Sept. 30. The conservative majority said enforcing the order would likely cause greater harm to Trump's foreign policy than to aid recipients. The liberal justices dissented, arguing the issue merited a full briefing or oral arguments.

## UN delegates walk out on Netanyahu's speech.

Dozens of delegates left the UN's New York headquarters yesterday before Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address. Speaking to a half-empty hall, Netanyahu directed his remarks to hostages held by Hamas, citing that Israel had put speakers around Gaza and took over phones to broadcast his words. He vowed to continue Israel's military campaign and admonished countries—including France and the UK—that recently moved to recognize Palestinian statehood.

## Immigration officers detain Iowa school superintendent.

The superintendent of Des Moines Public Schools, Ian Roberts, was detained Friday for being in the US illegally. A final order of removal was issued against him last year and he had no work authorization. Roberts was found in possession of a loaded gun, a hunting knife, and \$3K in cash after fleeing from immigration officers during a traffic stop. Roberts, who was born in Guyana and had entered the US in 1999 on a student visa, had led the Des Moines school district since 2023.

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## **Anthropic to triple international workforce.**

The San Francisco-based AI startup's Claude chatbot now serves over 300,000 enterprise customers. Nearly 80% of usage comes from outside the United States, with per-person adoption in South Korea, Australia, and Singapore surpassing the US. The \$183B company is opening its first Asia office in Tokyo, hiring for over 100 roles across Europe, and recruiting leadership in nations including India and New Zealand.

## **The Netherlands returns looted fossils to Indonesia.**

The Dutch government agreed to return over 28,000 fossils to Indonesia, after a commission ruled they were wrongfully removed during the late 19th century. Local communities, for whom the fossils held spiritual and economic value, were coerced into revealing sites to Dutch settlers. The soon-to-be-repatriated Dubois Collection, housed in a Dutch natural history museum, includes a skull fragment considered the first fossil evidence of Homo erectus, an ancestor of modern humans.

## **'Rocky Horror Picture Show' turns 50.**

Originally a 1975 film adaptation of a stage musical, "Rocky Horror Picture Show" follows a stranded couple who stumble into the mansion of a flamboyant scientist and his eccentric guests. The film initially flopped, earning roughly \$1M (\$6M today) before being pulled from theaters. It has since become a cult classic, earning around \$160M worldwide, and remains the longest-running theatrical release in history.

## **Humankind(ness)**

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Jeff P. in New Amsterdam, Indiana.

"My wife and I decided to go to lunch today at our favorite Mexican restaurant. We had a wonderful meal, talking and tasting each other's food, as usual. We finished and asked for our check. Our waitress told us that a gentleman who had just left had already paid for our lunch! I saw him eating alone. I have no idea why he chose to pay for our lunch, but it made our day! Since we didn't have to pay for the food, we tipped our waitress very generously."



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## Clark-Willow Lake Pulls Away from Groton, 20-7

The Groton Area Tigers showed grit and flashes of progress Friday night, but in the end, Clark-Willow Lake used a handful of big plays and a balanced attack to secure a 20-7 win on the road.

Groton struck first midway through the second quarter after Logan Warrington forced a fumble that Gavin England recovered at the Cyclone 14-yard line. On the next snap, freshman quarterback Asher Johnson darted in from 10 yards out for his first career rushing touchdown. Karson Zak's extra point gave the Tigers a 7-0 lead with 9:12 left in the half.

"That was Asher's first rushing touchdown of his high school career," noted longtime Groton Area statistician Tom Woods during his halftime report. "He's playing with more confidence each game. The whole team has had to endure some adversity—mistakes, missed chances—but what I like is they never give up. They're working hard, and I couldn't be prouder."

The Cyclones answered before the break with a steady drive capped by a one-yard plunge from Jakob Steen, who finished the night with 11 carries for 49 yards and two touchdowns. Quarterback Matoa Denoyer then connected with Joey Ries for the two-point conversion to edge ahead 8-7. A Groton defensive stand in the red zone, highlighted by senior Ryder Johnson knocking down a fourth-down pass, kept the margin close heading into halftime.

Woods also pointed to the resilience of Ryder Johnson, who continues to play through a painful bone bruise. "It kind of acts like a high ankle sprain. Punting the ball like he did is extraordinarily painful, but he's a gamer and gives it his all," Woods said.

At halftime, Clark-Willow Lake led 8-7, but Woods reminded listeners of the bigger picture in his Woods Words of Wisdom. "It's high school football. Life lessons. We don't always win everything. Sometimes we wonder why we keep fighting, but the truth is we just keep battling, keep moving forward, and keep being the good."

The Cyclones extended their lead in the third quarter when Lincoln Rydburn hauled in a big catch down to the Groton 2-yard line, setting up another Steen touchdown. In the fourth, Emerson Larson broke loose for a long run to the 7, and the Cyclones punched it in two plays later on a Lincoln Riedburn five yard pass from Ries. The PAT run attempt failed. Larson carried 8 times for 95 yards on the night, while Rydburn added 2 receptions for 53 yards and a score.

Clark-Willow Lake's quarterback Joey Ries spread the ball around, completing 7 of 14 passes for 94 yards. His targets included Larson (12 yards), Ernesto Garcia (12 yards), Denoyer (7 yards), Cooper Pommer (5 yards), and even Ries himself (5 yards on a deflection). Garcia also chipped in with 5 catches for 14 yards, while on defense Rydburn led the way with 7 tackles, Garcia and Steen each adding 6.

Groton had chances, but costly sacks and missed opportunities stalled drives. Still, head coach Shaun Wanner came away encouraged. "We hung in there. The second half it was 14-7. We still had a chance to tie the game. Just a couple big plays got us," Wanner said. "Other than that, I thought the kids played hard. We did some things a lot better tonight."

The Tigers finished with 8 first downs and 151 total yards. Asher Johnson led the ground game with 15 carries for 33 yards and his touchdown, while Ryder Schelle added 9 carries for 17 yards and Keegen



**Ryder Schelle gains a few yards on this run in the Clark/Willow Lake football game Friday in Groton.** (Photo

by Paul Kosel)

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Tracy chipped in 17 yards on 3 attempts. Johnson was sharp through the air, completing 8 of 11 passes for 84 yards. Tracy hauled in 4 catches for 30 yards, Ryder Johnson caught 3 for 60, and Schelle had one grab for minus-6.

On defense, the Tigers were led by Tucker Hardy with 11 tackles, Tracy with 10, Warrington with 9, and Connor Glines with 6. Sacks were recorded by Jordan Schwan (2) and one each by Gavin England, Logan Warrington, and Tucker Hardy. Tackles for a loss on players other than the quarterback were made by Karter Moody, Logan Warrington, and Conner Glines.

The Cyclones finished with 18 first downs, 164 rushing yards on 36 carries, and 94 yards passing. They lost one of two fumbles and had 10 penalty yards, while Groton played clean with no turnovers but drew 3 penalties for 20 yards.

The loss dropped Groton to 1-5 on the season heading into next week's rivalry game against Aberdeen Roncalli at Dacotah Stadium in Aberdeen. "It doesn't matter how many wins or losses you have—it's always a big one," Wanner said.

Clark-Willow Lake, now 4-1, will travel to Deuel next Friday to face the 4-1 Cardinals.

Despite the 20-7 loss, both Woods and Wanner stressed the positives. "Kids got a positive attitude. They show up for practice. They get after it," Wanner said. "They know if they play like they're capable, they keep themselves in the games."

For Woods, the message was just as clear: "If we look for the good, the good will win. And if we can't find it, that means we've got to be it."

## **Box Score**

### **Team Totals**

Clark-Willow Lake: 18 first downs, 36 carries, 164 rushing yards, 94 passing yards, 2-10 penalties, 1 fumble lost

Groton Area: 8 first downs, 27 carries, 67 rushing yards, 84 passing yards, 3-20 penalties, 1 interception, no fumbles.

### **Groton Area Rushing**

Asher Johnson: 15 carries, 33 yards, 1 TD

Ryder Schelle: 9 carries, 17 yards

Keegen Tracy: 3 carries, 17 yards

### **Groton Area Passing**

Asher Johnson: 8-11, 84 yards

Ryder Johnson: 0-1

### **Groton Area Receiving**

Keegen Tracy: 4 catches, 30 yards

Ryder Johnson: 3 catches, 60 yards

Ryder Schelle: 1 catch, -6 yards

### **Groton Area Defense**

Tucker Hardy: 11 tackles, 1 sack

Keegen Tracy: 10 tackles

Logan Warrington: 9 tackles, 1 sack, TFL

Connor Glines: 6 tackles, TFL

Jordan Schwan: 2 sacks

Gavin England: 1 sack

Karter Moody: TFL

Tucker Hardy: 1 sack

### **Clark-Willow Lake Rushing**

Emerson Larson: 8 carries, 95 yards

Jakob Steen: 11 carries, 49 yards, 2 TD

Matoa Denoyer: 3 carries, 2 yards

Talen Huber: 2 carries, 4 yards

Joey Ries: 5 carries, -23 yards

### **Clark-Willow Lake Passing**

Joey Ries: 7-14, 94 yards

### **Clark-Willow Lake Receiving**

Lincoln Rydburn: 2 catches, 53 yards, 1 TD

Emerson Larson: 1 catch, 12 yards

Emesto Garcia: 1 catch, 12 yards

Matoa Denoyer: 1 catch, 7 yards

Cooper Pommer: 1 catch, 5 yards

Joey Ries: 1 catch, 5 yards

### **Clark-Willow Lake Defense**

Lincoln Rydburn: 7 tackles

Emesto Garcia: 6 tackles

Jakob Steen: 6 tackles

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## Football Scores

### 11-Man

Aberdeen Central 21, Sturgis 13  
Brandon Valley 53, Rapid City Central 7  
Bridgewater/Emery-Ethan 38, Baltic 8  
Brookings 21, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 7  
Chamberlain 7, Mt. Vernon-Plankinton 6  
Clark/Willow Lake 20, Groton Area 7  
Custer 19, Lead-Deadwood 18  
Dell Rapids 22, Tri-Valley 14  
Deuel 46, Sioux Valley 40  
Elk Point-Jefferson 49, Beresford 14  
Harrisburg 49, Rapid City Stevens 0  
Hot Sprints 31, Rapid City Christian 20  
Huron 27, Spearfish 25  
Lennox 43, Dakota Valley 23  
Milbank 29, Vermillion 14  
Mobridge-Pollock 40, Belle Fourche 6  
Parker 30, McCook Central/Montrose 20  
Sioux Falls Christian 42, Madison 6  
Sioux Falls Lincoln 33, Sioux Falls Washington 31  
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 32, Sioux Falls Jefferson 29  
St. Thomas More 69, Lakota Tech 0  
Tea Area 26, Mitchell 20  
Watertown 48, Douglas 0  
Webster Area 32, Aberdeen Roncalli 26  
West Central 41, Canton 19  
Winner 36, Miller/Highmore-Harrold 8  
Woonsocket-Wessington Springs-Sanborn Central  
13, Wagner 6  
Yankton 35, Pierre 28

### 9-Man

Alcester-Hudson 41, Gayville-Volin 6  
Britton-Hecla 46, Great Plains Lutheran 0  
Bruke 44, Tripp-Delmont-Armour-AC-DC 14  
Castlewood 50, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 0  
Centerville 55, Irene-Wakonda 0  
Colman-Egan 30, Estelline-Hendricks 14  
Corsica-Stickney 64, Colome 0  
De Smet 54, Florence-Henry 14  
Dell Rapids St. Mary's 78, Iroquois-Lake Preston 24  
Deubrook ARea 30, Wavery-South Shore 12  
Dupree 54, Faith 0  
Gregory 57, Wolsey-Wessington 6  
Hamlin 55, Redfield 0  
Hanson 49, Chester Area 0  
Harding County 24, Timber Lake 12  
Hill City 26, Bennett County 14  
Hitchcock-Tulare 42, Sunshine Bible Academy 22  
Ipswich 52, Herreid-Selby Area 12  
Kadoka 40, New Underwood 14  
Parkston 70, Bon Homme 21  
Philip 51, Jones County 0  
Platte-Geddes 64, Lyman 28  
Sioux Falls Lutheran 44, Canistota 0  
Sully Buttes 30, Faulkton ARea 22  
Viborg-Hurley 50, Garretson 0  
Wall 56, Stanley County 6  
Warner 56, Northwestern 16  
Waubay-Summit 26, Wilmot 18

### AN

Crazy Horse 62, Flandreau Indian 26  
McLaughtlin 54, Omaha Nation 0  
Tiospa Zina 54, Marty 26

## South Dakota Mosquito



SD WNV (as of September 26):

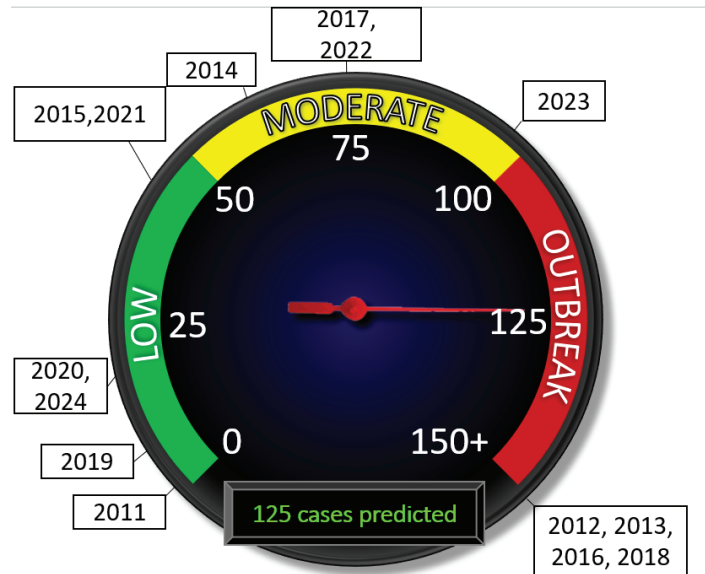
74 human cases (Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Brown, Corson, Codington, Charles Mix, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Gregory, Haakon, Hamlin, Hand, Hughes, Hutchinson, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marshall, Meade, Miner, Minnehaha, Pennington, Roberts, Sanborn, Stanley, Spink, Yankton, Walworth) and 4 deaths

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

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

US WNV (as of September 26): 1137 cases (AL, AR, AZ, CA, CO, CT, DC, DE, FL, GA, IA, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, MA, MD, MI, MN, MO, MS, MT, NC, ND, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, SD, TN, TX, UT, VA, WI, WY)

WNV Prediction Model – Total Number of Cases Projected for 2025, South Dakota (as of September 26)



### Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2025

Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 57  
Total mosquito pools tested: 1,338  
% positivity: 15.47%

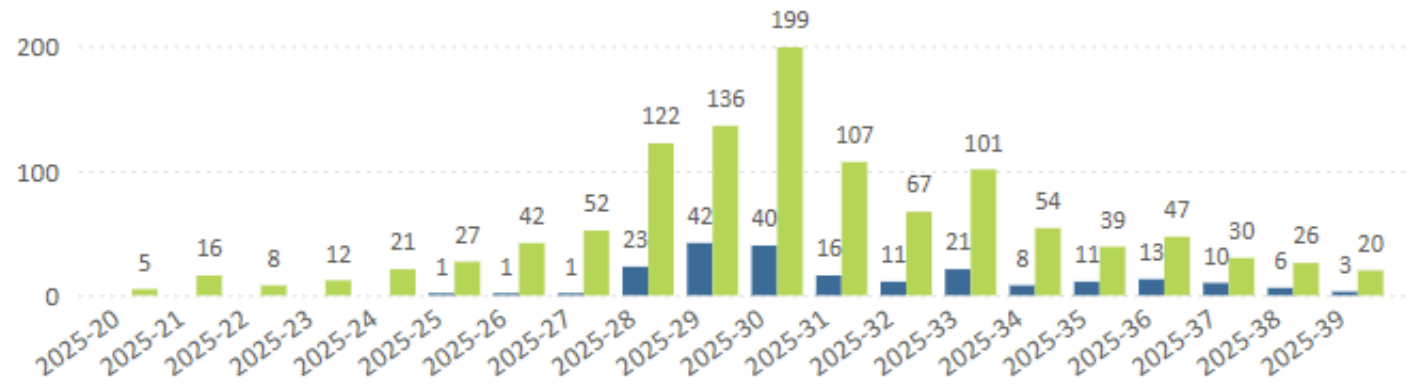


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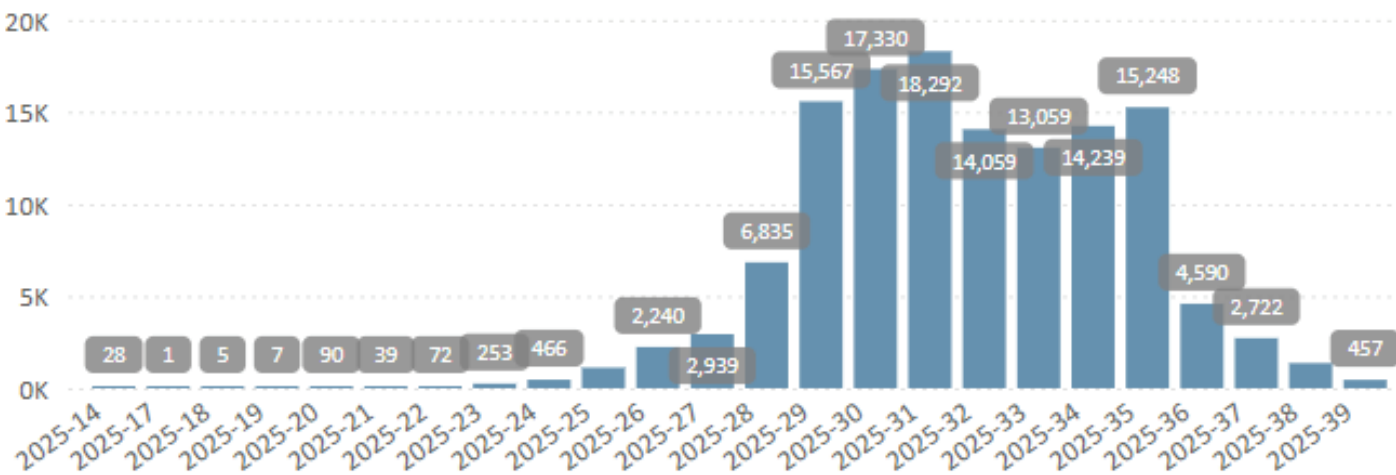
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## Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative



## Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week





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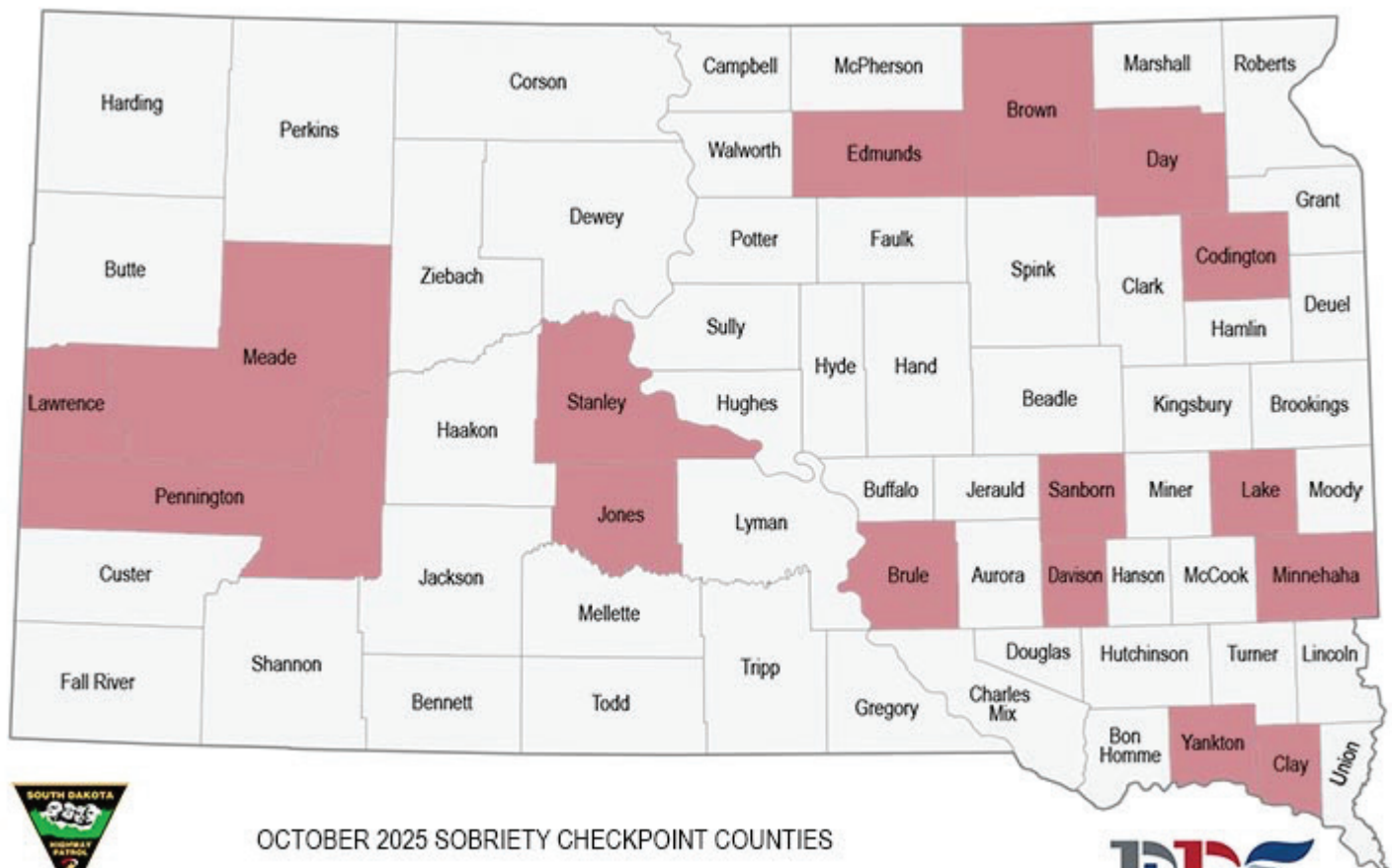
## Highway Patrol Announces October Sobriety Checkpoints

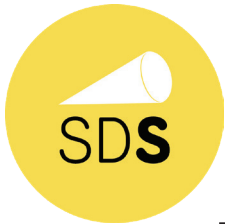
PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Highway Patrol has announced sobriety checkpoints will be conducted in 16 different counties during the month of October. These checkpoints will take place in the counties of Brown, Brule, Clay, Codington, Davison, Day, Edmunds, Jones, Lake, Lawrence, Meade, Minnehaha, Pennington, Sanborn, Stanley, and Yankton.

The monthly checkpoints are designed to encourage people to not drink and drive. The checkpoints are funded by the South Dakota Office of Highway Safety and conducted by the South Dakota Highway Patrol with the help of local law enforcement.

Officials remind drivers not to drink and drive regardless of whether there is a checkpoint planned in their county. People who have been drinking are urged to designate a sober driver or take an alternate form of commercial or public transportation.

Both the Office of Highway Safety and the Highway Patrol are agencies of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### RFK Jr. has 'some very interesting views,' Thune tells South Dakota audience

**US Senate majority leader says more oversight hearings may be needed to bring Kennedy 'back into a zone that's more consistent' with science**

**BY: SETH TUPPER-SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 6:47 PM**

RAPID CITY — When John Thune disagrees with people, he tries to do it "in a respectful way," he said Friday.

So his description of Robert F. Kennedy Jr. might be as close as Thune gets to a put-down.

"He's got some very interesting views," Thune said.

The Republican U.S. Senate majority leader from South Dakota made the comments in response to an audience member at the Black Hills Forum and Press Club. The question came from Sherry Bea Smith, who identified herself as a nurse from Nemo, a small Black Hills community.

Smith said "Americans have been placed in harm's way" by Kennedy, the secretary of the federal Department of Health and Human Services. Smith asked Thune — who voted for Kennedy's confirmation — if he has a plan to "provide oversight and take action to ensure the health and safety of the American public."

Thune replied that the Senate is exercising its oversight role and will continue to do so. He referenced a "fairly argumentative and explosive and combative" Senate Finance Committee hearing with Kennedy earlier this month, and said he expects more hearings like that if Kennedy takes actions that senators view as out-of-step with science.

"I think that's where a majority of my colleagues are," Thune said. "And I think if RFK veers off too much one way or another on that, I'm guessing he'll be brought back into a zone that's more consistent with that overall philosophy."

Kennedy sparked controversy recently with his assertion that Tylenol is one potential driving factor behind autism, despite the medical community describing the link as inconclusive. Kennedy's critics responded with concern, including for pregnant women. Medical professionals worry that if pregnant mothers avoid using Tylenol to treat fevers, they could increase their risk for miscarriage and other complications.

Thune, who has two daughters and three granddaughters, indicated he shares that concern. He said recommendations and decisions about public health should be made by "medical professionals, by people who are grounded in science, grounded in medicine, and have done the research." Kennedy is a lawyer, not a physician or scientist.

"Especially on an issue like Tylenol," Thune said, "that ought to be something that your doctor gives you advice about."

Another controversial Kennedy move was his firing and replacement earlier this year of everyone on an influential vaccine advisory panel. That panel has since moved to change recommendations concerning childhood vaccines, COVID-19 immunizations and more.

Before Kennedy was appointed to the Trump administration, he was known for spreading false and misleading information about the safety of vaccines, including a repeatedly debunked claim that some vaccines lead to autism.

Thune said he's had discussions about vaccine safety with President Donald Trump.

"The president believes in vaccines," Thune said. "He's made that very clear."

*Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.*

## Medals awarded for Wounded Knee Massacre won't be rescinded, Hegseth announces

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR-SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 2:40 PM

U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth announced Thursday that Medals of Honor awarded to U.S. soldiers for their role in the Wounded Knee Massacre will not be rescinded.

The massacre occurred on Dec. 29, 1890. Lakota people were camped near Wounded Knee Creek on the Pine Ridge Reservation in southwestern South Dakota, where they were surrounded by hundreds of Army soldiers. A shot rang out while the soldiers tried to disarm the camp, and chaotic shooting ensued.

Fewer than 40 soldiers were killed (some by friendly fire, according to historians), while estimates of Lakota deaths ran from 200 to 300 or more, depending on the source. After some of the bodies froze on the ground for several days, a military-led burial party placed them in a mass grave.

Hegseth used the word "battle" to describe the massacre.

"Under my direction, we're making it clear, without hesitation, that the soldiers who fought in the Battle of Wounded Knee in 1890 will keep their medals," Hegseth said in a video posted to social media. "And we're making it clear that they deserve those medals. This decision is now final, and their place in our nation's history is no longer up for debate."

Hegseth's predecessor during the Biden administration, Lloyd Austin, created a panel last year to review the medals. At the time, the Defense Department said "approximately 20" soldiers had received a Medal of Honor for participating in the massacre. Historians have noted that the records associated with some of the medals are incomplete or unclear.

There was no public report from the panel and no public action on the matter by the Biden administration before Biden left office. Hegseth held up a report in his social media video that he said was generated by that panel in October, but the Defense Department has not published it. A request from South Dakota Searchlight for the report is pending with the department.

"Upon deliberation, that panel concluded that these brave soldiers should, in fact, rightfully keep their medals from actions in 1890," Hegseth said.

Hegseth alleged the prior administration was too concerned with being "politically correct" to share a final decision.

Oliver "OJ" Semans, a Rosebud Sioux tribal member who advocates for the revocation of the medals, said he wasn't surprised by Hegseth's statements. Semans said he felt the review panel's makeup was skewed toward protecting the military's image.

"I think it's a shame that Secretary Hegseth was misled by his predecessor's report," Semans said.

Past efforts to rescind the medals through congressional action have failed. U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Massachusetts, introduced another bill to do so this year.

U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, was at a public event Friday in Rapid City, about 90 miles from Wounded Knee. Thune said the decision was Hegseth's to make and that the decision was supported by an "independent review."

South Dakota Searchlight asked Thune if he agreed with Hegseth's use of the word "battle" and Hegseth's statement that the soldiers "deserve those medals."

"Whenever you're talking about those types of events in our nation's history, you need to do it in a respectful way," Thune said. "I didn't watch what he said, but like I said, I think the decision that he issued is the one that everybody will end up having to adhere to."

*South Dakota Searchlight's Seth Tupper contributed to this report.*

*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.*

## Half of states don't have enough money to cover their bills, report finds, but SD gets a 'B'

**Some states aren't disclosing all their costs, masking whether budgets are truly balanced**

**BY: KEVIN HARDY-SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 7:00 AM**

Half of American states do not have enough funds to pay their bills, according to a new analysis released Thursday.

The nonprofit Truth in Accounting, which advocates for more transparency in public finance, released its Financial State of the States report. It concluded that 25 states were unable to cover all their financial obligations at the end of fiscal year 2024, which for most states ended June 30.

While every state but Vermont mandates a balanced budget, the report says elected officials often exclude certain costs such as future pension obligations and deferred maintenance from their budget calculations.

"This practice essentially shifts these financial responsibilities onto future taxpayers, leaving them to cover the expenses that should have been accounted for in the current budget," the report states.

In total, Truth in Accounting calculated states hold \$2.2 trillion in assets and \$2.9 trillion in debts. At \$832 billion, unfunded pension obligations are the largest driver of state debts, according to the report.

Truth in Accounting sorts states based on their ability to cover their debts. The top "sinkhole states" — states lacking the funds to cover their costs — were New Jersey, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, and California.

Conversely, 25 states touted a surplus of funds relative to their total costs and debts. The top surplus states were North Dakota, Alaska, Wyoming, Utah and Tennessee.

Rather than funding promises of pension payouts and retiree health care, some elected officials in those states have used those funds to keep taxes low and pay for politically popular programs, the report said. That can make a state budget appear balanced, though its debt continues to increase — the equivalent of charging "a credit card without having the money to pay off the debt."

The report grades the finances of each state, including a look at its total assets, unfunded liabilities and debts. It also calculates the overall costs to each resident: Kentucky, for example, would need \$11,500 from each of its taxpayers to pay all of its outstanding bills, according to the report.

Truth in Accounting lobbies for greater transparency in government and has suggested legislation on the matter. The organization says governments should publish budgets that show the full scope of their debts and future obligations.

"A representative form of government depends on an informed electorate; however, due to current practices in accounting and budgeting, a state's true financial health is usually obscured, and citizens are deceived or, at best, misled," the report said. "Without access to truthful, timely, and transparent information, how can citizens be knowledgeable participants in their governments?"

### **South Dakota gets a 'B' grade**

#### **FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT**

The nonprofit Truth in Accounting, which advocates for more transparency in public finance, gave South Dakota a "B" grade in a new Financial State of the States report.

The report examines each state's total assets, unfunded liabilities and debts. It also calculates the short-fall or surplus per taxpayer: South Dakota, for example, has enough of a budget surplus to leave \$8,200 left over per taxpayer after paying all its bills, according to the report. That's the ninth highest surplus per taxpayer in the country.

While giving South Dakota kudos for its financial condition, balanced budget and smart money management, the report includes a warning. As federal support declines to pre-pandemic levels, the report says, "South Dakota could see a \$1.3 billion reduction in federal funding, representing around 19 percent of projected expenses for the state's primary government. This may present challenges for maintaining services and balancing the budget."

*Kevin Hardy covers business, labor and rural issues for Stateline from the Midwest.*



## A federal government shutdown is nearing.

### Here's a guide for what to expect.

**BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, ASHLEY MURRAY, JACOB FISCHLER, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND  
SHAUNEEN MIRANDA-SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 7:42 PM**

WASHINGTON — Congress' failure to pass a short-term government funding bill before midnight Tuesday will lead to the first shutdown in nearly seven years and give President Donald Trump broad authority to determine what federal operations keep running — which will have a huge impact on the government, its employees, states and Americans.

A funding lapse this year would have a considerably wider effect than the 35-day one that took place during Trump's first term and could last longer, given heightened political tensions.

The last shutdown didn't affect the departments of Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Labor and Veterans Affairs, since Congress had approved those agencies' full-year funding bills.

Lawmakers had also enacted the Legislative Branch appropriations bill, exempting Capitol Hill from any repercussions.

That isn't the case this time around since none of the dozen government spending bills have become law. That means nearly every corner of the federal government will feel the pain in some way if a compromise isn't reached by the start of the fiscal year on Oct. 1.

States Newsroom's Washington, D.C. Bureau offers you a quick guide to what could happen if Republicans and Democrats don't broker an agreement in time.

#### **How does the White House budget office determine what government operations are essential during a shutdown?**

Generally, federal programs that include the preservation of life or property as well as those addressing national security continue during a shutdown, while all other activities are supposed to cease until a funding bill becomes law.

But the president holds expansive power to determine what activities within the executive branch are essential and which aren't, making the effects of a shutdown hard to pinpoint unless the Trump administration shares that information publicly.

Presidential administrations have traditionally posted contingency plans on the White House budget office's website, detailing how each agency would shut down — explaining which employees are exempt and need to keep working, and which are furloughed.

That appears to have changed this year. The web page that would normally host dozens of contingency plans remained blank until late September, when the White House budget office posted that a 940-page document released in August calls for the plans to be "hosted solely on each agency's website."

Only a few departments had plans from this year posted on their websites as of Friday afternoon.

The White House budget office expects agencies to develop Reduction in Force plans as part of their shutdown preparation, signaling a prolonged funding lapse will include mass firings and layoffs.

While the two-page memo doesn't detail which agencies would be most affected, it says layoffs will apply to programs, projects, or activities that are "not consistent with the President's priorities."

Trump will be paid during a shutdown since Article II, Section 1, Clause 7 of the Constitution prevents the president's salary from being increased or decreased during the current term.

No one else in the executive branch — including Cabinet secretaries, more than 2 million civilian employees and over 1 million active duty military personnel — will receive their paycheck until after the shutdown ends.

#### **Are federal courts exempt from a shutdown since they're a separate branch of government?**

The Supreme Court will continue to conduct normal operations in the event of a shutdown, according to its Public Information Office.

The office said the court "will rely on permanent funds not subject to annual approval, as it has in the

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past, to maintain operations through the duration of short-term lapses of annual appropriations," in a statement shared with States Newsroom.

As for any impact on lower federal courts, the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts said the federal judiciary was still assessing the fiscal 2026 outlook and had no comment.

The office serves as the central support arm of the federal judiciary.

During the last government shutdown from late 2018 into early 2019, federal courts remained open using court fee balances and "no-year" funds, which are available for an indefinite period.

The Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts has said that if those funds run out, they would operate under the terms of the Anti-Deficiency Act, which "allows work to continue during a lapse in appropriations if it is necessary to support the exercise of Article III judicial powers."

Supreme Court justices and appointed federal judges continue to get paid during a government shutdown, as Article III of the Constitution says the judges' compensation "shall not be diminished" during their term.

## **What happens to Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid?**

The three programs exist largely outside of the annual appropriations process, since lawmakers categorized them as "mandatory spending."

This means Social Security checks as well as reimbursements to health care providers for Medicare and Medicaid services should continue as normal.

One possible hitch is the salaries for people who run those programs are covered by annual appropriations bills, so there could be some staffing problems for the Social Security Administration and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, depending on their contingency plans.

The first Trump administration's shutdown guidance for the Social Security Administration showed 54,000 of 63,000 employees at that agency would have kept working. The CMS plan from 2020 shows that it intended to keep about 50% of its employees working in the event of a shutdown. Neither had a current plan as of Friday.

## **Will the Department of Veterans Affairs be able to keep providing health care and benefits?**

Veterans can expect health care to continue uninterrupted at VA medical centers and outpatient clinics in the event of a shutdown. Vets would also continue to receive benefits, including compensation, pension, education and housing, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs contingency planning for a funding lapse that is currently published on the department's website. It's unclear if the plan will be the one the Trump administration puts into action.

But a shutdown would affect other VA services. For example, the GI Bill hotline would close, and all in-person and virtual career counseling and transition assistance services would be unavailable.

Additionally, all regional VA benefits offices would shutter until Congress agreed to fund the government. The closures would include the Manila Regional Office in the Philippines that serves veterans in the Pacific region.

All department public outreach to veterans would also cease.

Will Hubbard, spokesperson for Veterans Education Success, said his advocacy organization is bracing for increased phone calls and emails from veterans who would normally call the GI Bill hotline.

"Questions are going to come up, veterans are going to be looking for answers, and they're not going to be able to call like they would be able to normally, that's going to be a big problem," Hubbard said.

"Most of the benefits that people are going to be most concerned about will not be affected, but the ones that do get affected, for the people that that hits, I mean, it's going to matter a lot to them. It's going to change the direction of their planning, and potentially the direction of their life," Hubbard said.

The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Office of Management and Budget did not respond to a request for current VA shutdown guidance.

## **What happens to immigration enforcement and immigration courts?**

As the Trump administration continues with its aggressive immigration tactics in cities with high immigrant populations, that enforcement is likely to continue during a government shutdown, according to the

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Department of Homeland Security's March guidance for operating in a government shutdown.

Immigration-related fees will continue, such as for processing visas and applications from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

And DHS expects nearly all of its U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement employees to be exempt — 17,500 out of 20,500 — and continue working without pay amid a government shutdown.

That means that ICE officers will continue to arrest, detain and remove from the country immigrants without legal status. DHS is currently concentrating immigration enforcement efforts in Chicago, known as "Operation Midway Blitz."

Other employees within DHS, such as those in Transportation Security Administration, will also be retained during a government shutdown. There are about 58,000 TSA employees that would be exempt and continue to work without pay in airports across the country.

DHS did not respond to States Newsroom's request for a contingency plan if there is a government shutdown.

Separately, a shutdown would also burden the overwhelmed immigration court system that is housed within the Department of Justice. It would lead to canceling or rescheduling court cases, when there is already a backlog of 3.4 million cases.

The only exceptions are immigration courts that are located within Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, detention centers, but most cases would need to be rescheduled. The partial government shutdown that began in December 2018 caused nearly 43,000 court cases to be canceled, according to a report by Syracuse University's Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, or TRAC.

And 28 states have an immigration court, requiring some immigrants to travel hundreds, or thousands, of miles for their appointment.

States that do not have an immigration court include Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

## **Will people be able to visit national parks or use public lands during a shutdown?**

Probably, but that may be bad for parks' long-term health.

During the 2018-2019 shutdown, the first Trump administration kept parks open, with skeleton staffs across the country struggling to maintain National Park Service facilities.

Theresa Pierno, the president and CEO of the advocacy group National Parks Conservation Association, said in a Sept. 23 statement the last shutdown devastated areas of some parks.

"Americans watched helplessly as Joshua Trees were cut down, park buildings were vandalized, prehistoric petroglyphs were defaced, trash overflowed leading to wildlife impacts, and human waste piled up," she wrote. "Visitor safety and irreplaceable natural and cultural resources were put at serious risk. We cannot allow this to happen again."

The National Park Service's latest contingency plan was published in March 2024, during President Joe Biden's administration. It calls for at least some closures during a shutdown, though the document says the response will differ from park to park.

Restricting access to parks is difficult due to their physical characteristics, the document said, adding that staffing would generally be maintained at a minimum to allow visitors. However, some areas that are regularly closed could be locked up for the duration of a shutdown.

But that contingency plan is likely to change before Tuesday, spokespeople for the Park Service and the Interior Department, which oversees NPS, said Sept. 25.

"The lapse in funding plans on our website are from 2024," an email from the NPS office of public affairs said. "They are currently being reviewed and updated."

Hunters and others seeking to use public lands maintained by Interior's Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service, which is overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will likely be able to continue to do so, though they may have to make alternative plans if they'd planned to use facilities such as campgrounds.

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Land Tawney, the co-chair of the advocacy group American Hunters and Anglers, said campgrounds, toilets and facilities that require staffing would be inaccessible, but most public lands would remain available.

"Those lands are kind of open and they're just unmanned, I would say, and that's not really gonna change much," he said. "If you're staying in a campground, you've got to figure something else out."

As with national parks, access to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service refuges and other hunting and fishing sites will differ from site to site, Tawney said. The Fish and Wildlife Service doesn't require permits for hunting on its lands, but access to some refuges is determined by a staff-run lottery drawing. If those drawings can't be held, access to those sites will be limited, Tawney said.

## **What happens to the Internal Revenue Service?**

How the Internal Revenue Service would operate during a government shutdown remains unclear.

When Congress teetered on letting funding run out in March, the nation's revenue collection agency released a contingency plan to continue full operations during the height of tax filing season.

The IRS planned to use funds allocated in the 2022 budget reconciliation law to keep its roughly 95,000 employees processing returns and refunds, answering the phones, and pursuing audits.

Ultimately Congress agreed on a stopgap funding bill to avoid a March shutdown, but much has changed since then.

The new tax and spending law, signed by Trump on July 4 and often referred to as the "one big beautiful bill," made major changes to the U.S. tax code.

Additionally, the agency, which processes roughly 180 million income tax returns per year, has lost about a quarter of its workforce since January. Top leadership has also turned over six times in 2025.

Rachel Snyderman, of the Bipartisan Policy Center, said workforce reductions combined with a string of leadership changes could factor into how the agency would operate during a funding lapse.

"It's really difficult to understand both what the status of the agency would be if the government were to shut down in less than a week, and also the impacts that a prolonged shutdown could have on taxpayer services and taxpayers at large," said Snyderman, the think tank's managing director of economic policy.

## **Do federal employees get back pay after a shutdown ends?**

According to the Office of Personnel Management — the executive branch's chief human resources agency — "after the lapse in appropriations has ended, employees who were furloughed as the result of the lapse will receive retroactive pay for those furlough periods."

The Government Employee Fair Treatment Act of 2019 requires furloughed government employees to receive back pay as a result of a government shutdown.

That law does not apply to federal contractors, who face uncertainty in getting paid during a shutdown.

## **What role does Congress have during a shutdown?**

The House and Senate must approve a stopgap spending bill or all dozen full-year appropriations bills to end a shutdown, a feat that requires the support of at least some Democrats to get past the upper chamber's 60-vote legislative filibuster.

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., and Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., control their respective chambers' calendars as well as the floor schedule, so they could keep holding votes on the stopgap bill Democrats have already rejected or try to pass individual bills to alleviate the impacts on certain agencies.

Neither Johnson nor Thune has yet to suggest bipartisan negotiations with Democratic leaders about funding the government. And while they are open to discussions about extending the enhanced tax credits for people who buy their health insurance from the Affordable Care Act Marketplace, they don't want that decision connected to the funding debate.

Democratic leaders have said repeatedly that Republicans shouldn't expect them to vote for legislation they had no say in drafting, especially with a health care cliff for millions of Americans coming at the end of the year.

Members of Congress will receive their paychecks regardless of how long a shutdown lasts, but the people who work for them would only receive their salaries after it ends.

Lawmakers must be paid under language in Article I, Section 6, Clause 1 of the Constitution as well as



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the 27th Amendment, which bars members of Congress from changing their salaries during the current session.

Lawmakers have discretion to decide which of their staff members continue working during a shutdown and which are furloughed.

A spokesperson for the U.S. Capitol Police, which is tasked with protecting members amid a sharp rise in political violence, said a shutdown "would not affect the security of the Capitol Complex."

"Our officers, and the professional staff who perform or support emergency functions, would still report to work," the spokesperson said. "Employees who are not required for emergency functions would be furloughed until funding is available."

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

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*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.*

## Supreme Court allows Trump to cancel \$4B in foreign aid already approved by Congress

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT-SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 6:17 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court on Friday reaffirmed its ruling from earlier this month that the Trump administration can withhold \$4 billion in foreign aid, though the order notes the decision "should not be read as a final determination on the merits" of the case.

White House budget director Russ Vought wrote on social media shortly after the order from the emergency docket was released that it represented a "Major victory."

The new nine-page order doesn't provide any additional details about why a majority of the Supreme Court is allowing the Trump administration to rescind the funding without congressional approval.

But it does include a dissent written by Justice Elena Kagan that was supported by Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson, highlighting the stakes in the case.

"This emergency application raises novel issues fundamental to the relationship between the President and Congress," Kagan wrote. "It arises from the refusal of the President and his officers to obligate and spend billions of dollars that Congress appropriated for foreign aid."

The case, she wrote, brings up an issue the Supreme Court has never addressed.

"Deciding the question presented thus requires the Court to work in uncharted territory," Kagan wrote. "And, to repeat, the stakes are high: At issue is the allocation of power between the Executive and Congress over the expenditure of public monies."

Kagan noted that since the case came to the justices on the emergency docket, they had less than three weeks to consider it.

"In a few weeks' time—when we turn to our regular docket—we will decide cases of far less import with far more process and reflection," Kagan wrote.

She goes on to disagree with the majority of the justices, saying the Supreme Court "should have denied this application, allowed the lower courts to go forward, and ensured that the weighty question presented here receives the consideration it deserves."

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## Trump administration actions found illegal by watchdog

The ruling the Supreme Court posted Friday is similar to the one it released in mid-September when Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. overturned a district court ruling that would have required the Trump administration to spend the money.

The case now largely revolves around whether the White House budget office has the authority to send Congress a rescissions request during the last 45 days of the fiscal year, a maneuver the Government Accountability Office has called illegal.

When the White House asks Congress to cancel previously approved spending through a rescission, lawmakers are supposed to have 45 days to approve, modify, or ignore the request.

But Vought believes that any rescissions request sent up during those 45 days allows the White House to unilaterally cancel the funding, regardless of whether lawmakers agree or not.

The Trump administration asked lawmakers to eliminate funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and various foreign aid programs this summer through a rescissions request.

Lawmakers mostly approved that proposal after preserving full funding for the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

The White House budget office then sent lawmakers a second rescissions request in late August, proposing they claw back billions of additional foreign aid dollars.

Neither the House nor the Senate has yet to vote on that proposal. But the Supreme Court's ruling allows the White House budget office to withhold the funding anyway.

## Democratic members of Congress react

House Appropriations Committee ranking member Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., and Senate Appropriations Committee ranking member Patty Murray, D-Wash., issued a joint statement after the court's ruling calling on their GOP colleagues to protect the institution's power over spending decisions.

"Congress can—and absolutely should—promptly reject President Trump and Russ Vought's illegal effort to do an end run around the people's elected representatives by passing a bill like the one we introduced last week," they wrote. "Republicans should join Democrats to stand up for our power of the purse, rather than allow a president and an unelected bureaucrat who do not respect Congress or the Constitution to continue attacking our power to fight for the people back home that we represent."

*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.*

## Comey says he's 'standing up to Donald Trump,' while Trump calls for more retribution

BY: JACOB FISCHLER-SEPTEMBER 26, 2025 11:13 AM

Former FBI Director James Comey proclaimed his innocence of federal obstruction charges and characterized the indictment against him as a consequence of "standing up to Donald Trump" in a video posted to social media, while current Director Kash Patel sought to allay concerns the prosecution was politically motivated.

Meanwhile, Trump in remarks to reporters on Friday morning continued to slam Comey and call for other enemies to be prosecuted as well.

Comey in the video urged a trial to prove he is innocent. "My heart is broken for the Department of Justice, but I have great confidence in the federal judicial system," Comey said in the late Thursday video posted to Instagram. "I'm innocent, so let's have a trial and keep the faith."

Comey, whom a federal grand jury in Virginia indicted on two charges Thursday, said he and his family "have known for years that there are costs to standing up to Donald Trump, but we couldn't imagine ourselves living any other way."

In a Sept. 20 social media post, Trump had publicly pushed Attorney General Pam Bondi to pursue

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charges against Comey — with whom he has long feuded — and other political opponents.

In the same post, Trump referenced the prosecutions against him to justify an investigation into his opponents. He also withdrew the nomination of a federal prosecutor in Virginia who reportedly resisted instructions to prosecute Comey and replaced him with Lindsey Halligan, an insurance lawyer who had worked for Trump in his personal capacity.

Trump celebrated the indictment in a Thursday evening post.

"JUSTICE IN AMERICA!" Trump wrote. "One of the worst human beings this Country has ever been exposed to is James Comey, the former Corrupt Head of the FBI."

Asked by a reporter Friday morning if others would face retribution, Trump said he hoped so.

"They weaponized the Justice Department like nobody in history," he said. "What they've done is terrible. And so I would, frankly, I hope there are others, because you can't let this happen to a country."

## Trump motives questioned

Trump's moves led Democrats and other Trump critics to describe Comey's prosecution as an act of retribution meant to punish the president's opponents, violating a longstanding norm separating the president from direct involvement in Justice Department activity.

In an early Friday post to X, Patel sought to counter that narrative, saying professionals handled the investigation.

"Career FBI agents, intel analysts, and staff led the investigation into Comey and others," he wrote. "They called the balls and strikes and will continue to do so. The wildly false accusations attacking this FBI for the politicization of law enforcement comes from the same bankrupt media that sold the world on Russia Gate- it's hypocrisy on steroids. Their baseless objections tell us now, more than ever, that we are precisely over the target and will remain on mission until completion."

Comey's initial court date is scheduled for Oct. 9 in Alexandria, Virginia, in front of U.S. District Judge Michael S. Nachmanoff, who was appointed by President Joe Biden.

His summons were served to Patrick Fitzgerald, a longtime federal prosecutor who is leading Comey's defense.

The grand jury charged Comey with lying to Congress and obstructing a proceeding of Congress related to his testimony to a Senate committee about whether he authorized FBI agents to leak information about a probe into Russia's involvement in the 2016 presidential election, which Trump won.

## Democrats blast indictment

In a lengthy statement Thursday, Jamie Raskin, the top Democrat on the U.S. House Judiciary Committee, called the indictment "blatantly fraudulent and vindictive."

"The rule of law was supposed to replace vendettas, blood feuds, and mad kings exacting vengeance on their perceived enemies," Raskin wrote. "This sordid episode is one more savage assault on justice in America."

Senate Judiciary Committee ranking Democrat Dick Durbin of Illinois called on Republicans to oppose Trump's involvement with the Justice Department.

"The Department of Justice has become a political tool of a vengeful President," Durbin said in a Friday morning statement. "President Trump wears his corruption like a badge of honor and defies anyone daring to challenge him. The Attorney General willingly complies with every order from the White House. Is there one Republican left in Washington who gives a damn?"

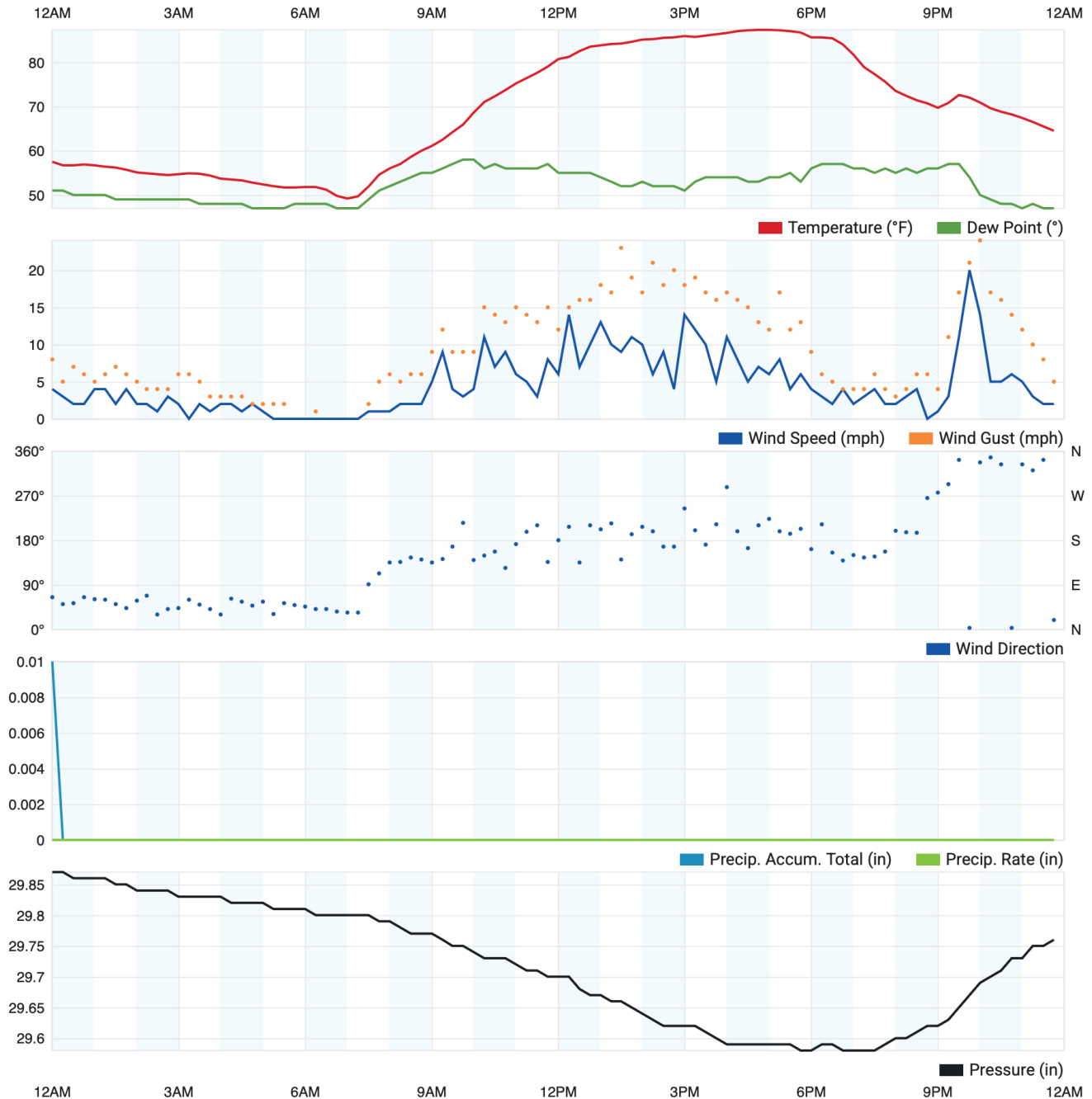
*Jacob covers federal policy and helps direct national coverage as deputy Washington bureau chief for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

September 26, 2025





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Today



High: 75 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 48 °F

Mostly Clear

Sunday



High: 81 °F

Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 60 °F

Mostly Clear

Monday



High: 85 °F

Partly Sunny

## Mild & Dry Weather Continues

Today

SMOKE



Highs:  
73-77°F

Tonight



Highs:  
78-87°F  
Lows:  
48-53°F

Sunday



Highs:  
83-88°F  
Lows:  
57-63°F

Sunday  
Night



Highs:  
80-85°F  
Lows:  
60-64°F



A little cooler today, with temperatures near normal. Temperatures are back above normal for Sunday with those conditions expected well into the work week. Chances for moisture are minimal for the latter half of next week.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 88 °F at 5:01 PM**

**Low Temp: 49 °F at 6:51 AM**

**Wind: 23 mph at 1:22 PM**

**Precip: : 0.00**

## Today's Info

Record High: 95 in 1952

Record Low: 22 in 1900

Average High: 70

Average Low: 42

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.79

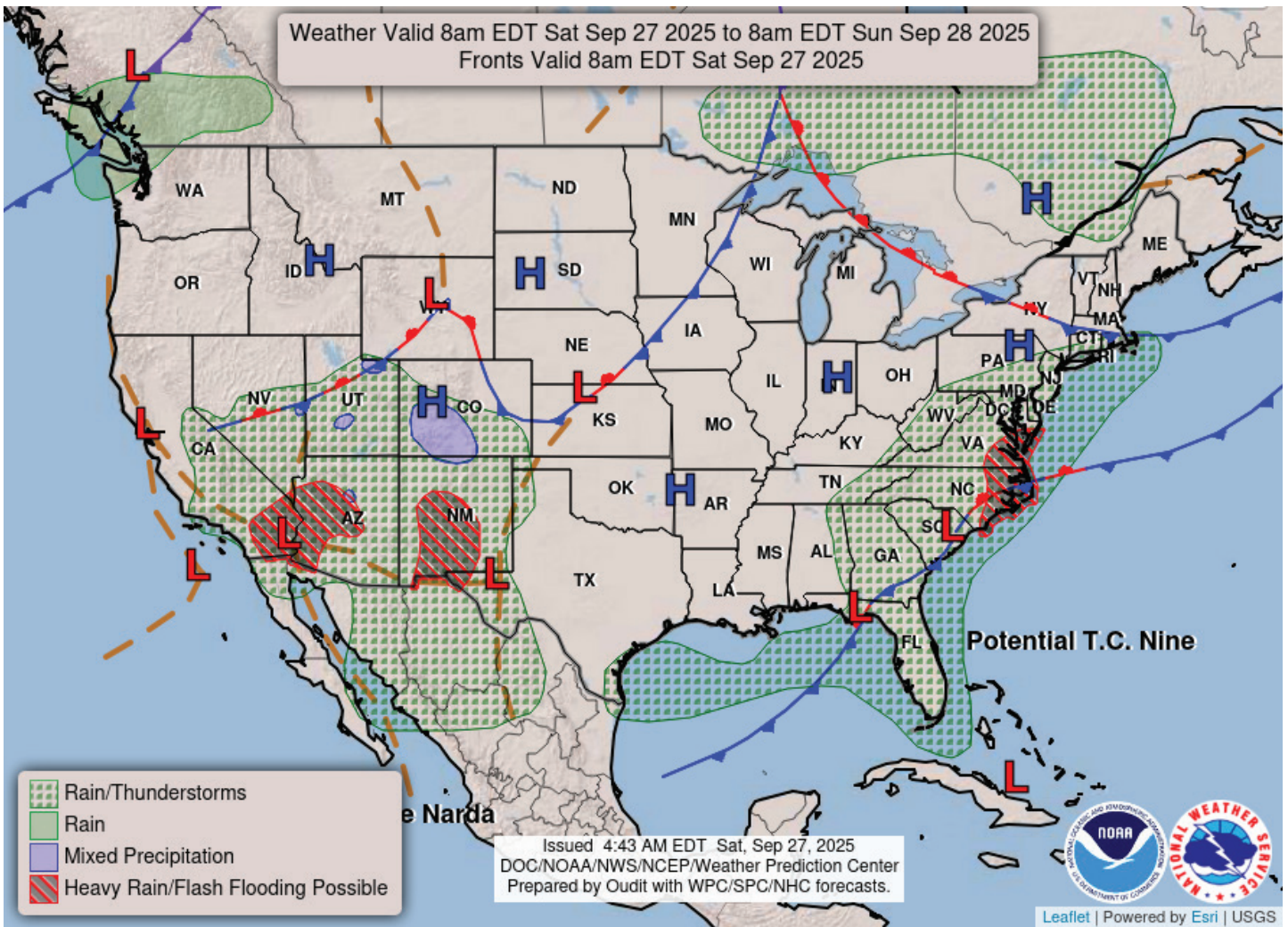
Precip to date in Sept.: 2.62

Average Precip to date: 18.13

Precip Year to Date: 22.92

Sunset Tonight: 7:20 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:27 am



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## **Today in Weather History**

September 27, 1983: Lightning caused a grass fire which burned 25,000 acres northwest of Reliance during the evening hours. At its peak, the fire was four miles wide by ten miles long.

September 27, 1985: Snow fell across south-central South Dakota from the evening of the 27th until the early afternoon of the 28th. Three to five inches of snow occurred with up to 18 inches reported around Winner. Eight to 12 inches fell around Gregory and Burke.

1816 - A black frost over most of New England kills unripened corn in the north resulting in a year of famine. (David Ludlum)

1822: Using various documents and meteorological observations determined a hurricane moved ashore on this day in South Carolina. One account from Bull Island, South Carolina records the eye passing directly over that location.

1906: The second September storm of 1906 was one of great violence. On the 27th the hurricane reached the central Gulf Coast with destructive winds and unprecedented tides. At Pensacola, FL, the tide was 10 feet above normal. At Mobile, AL property damage was severe. An estimated 134 lives were lost from Pensacola, FL to Mississippi from this storm.

1911: The earliest photograph of a tornado in Australia occurred on this day. The estimated F3 tornado tore through Marong, Victoria, or about 150 km from Melbourne.

1959: Typhoon Vera was the strongest and deadliest typhoon on record to make landfall on the islands of Japan. Damage totals from this typhoon are estimated at \$4.85 billion (USD 2015). An estimated 4,000 deaths occurred from Typhoon Vera. This Category 5 Typhoon first made landfall on September 26 near Shionomisaki on Honshu. Vera transitioned to an extratropical cyclone on September 27, which continued to affect the island for an additional two days.

1959 - A tornado 440 yards in width traveled twenty miles from near Hollow, OK, to western Cherokee County KS. Although a strong tornado, it was very slow moving, and gave a tremendous warning roar, and as a result no one was killed. (The Weather Channel)

1970 - Afternoon highs of 103 degrees at Long Beach, CA, and 105 degrees at the Los Angeles Civic Center were the hottest since September records were established in 1963. Fierce Santa Ana winds accompanying the extreme heat resulted in destructive fires. (The Weather Channel)

1985: Hurricane Gloria swept over the Outer Banks then rushed across Long Island, New England, and Canada. It was the first significant hurricane to hit New England in twenty-five years and brought heavy rains and high winds to the Mid-Atlantic states as well.

1985 - A record early season snowstorm struck the Central High Plains Region. The storm left up to nineteen inches of snow along the Colorado Front Range, and as much as a foot of snow in the High Plains Region. (Storm Data)

1987 - While those at the base of Mount Washington, NH, enjoyed sunny skies and temperatures in the 70s, the top of the mountain was blanketed with 4.7 inches of snow, along with wind gusts to 99 mph, and a temperature of 13 degrees. Severe thunderstorms developed along a cold front in the south central U.S. A thunderstorm west of Noodle TX produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 70 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced large hail in southeastern Wyoming during the afternoon, with tennis ball size hail reported at Cheyenne. Strong winds ushering the cold air into the north central U.S. gusted to 59 mph at Lander WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Freezing temperatures were reported in the Great Lakes Region and the Ohio Valley. Houghton Lake MI reported a record low of 21 degrees. Thunderstorms in the western U.S. produced wind gusts to 50 mph at Salt Lake City UT, and gusts to 58 mph at Cody WY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2014: A squall line impacted central Arizona, including the Phoenix Metro area.



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## IN THE NAME OF THE LORD - PEACE

Bee researchers have discovered that there are more than 20,000 species of bees. Each species of bee has its own colony or community, and bees can be found in most parts of the world. Each species has three types of bees: the queen bee, the worker bee and the drone. Bees can see all colors but red and have a strong sense of smell that helps them find flowers to gather pollen that produces honey. The honey that bees produce has been prized for years because it is a source of sweetness and energy. Recently, however, honey has been identified as a resource that may be helpful to contribute to certain types of healing.

While information about bees may be interesting to some, most of us care only about their honey or the fear that we might be stung by one. At least that was the attitude of the Psalmist. When surrounded by his enemies he said, "They swarmed around me like bees, but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns." Obviously, he was terribly threatened by those who would destroy him, but his faith and trust in God put him at ease. "In the name of the Lord I cut them - my enemies - down."

Each day we face many "enemies." They come at us from every direction. Whether our "enemies" are doubts or fears, a life-threatening disease or the loss of a loved one, financial woes or being abandoned - you name it - enemies come in all sizes and shapes and from every direction.

No one is immune from the "sting" of an enemy. But, thank God, when we Christians are besieged by the hurts that come from the "stings" of life, the Lord will heal them.

Prayer: How grateful we are Lord, to know that when we are "swarmed" by the "bees" of life, You will rescue us! We are safe, protected by Your power. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: - They swarmed around me like bees, but they were consumed as quickly as burning thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them down. Psalm 118:12

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



# Groton Daily Independent

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.26.25

4 21 27 33 49 21

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$497,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.24.25

6 24 27 35 46 2

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$3,570,000**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 33 Mins 59 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.26.25

22 30 33 37 43 14

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 48 Mins 59 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.24.25

5 6 11 13 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$32,000**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 48 Mins 59 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.24.25

10 21 23 30 56 25

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 17 Mins 59 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.24.25

15 31 45 49 53 19

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$145,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 17 Mins 59 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

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

### **Thune says a shutdown can still be avoided if Democrats 'dial back' their demands**

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Majority Leader John Thune is rejecting Democratic demands on health care as unserious but says a government shutdown is still “avoidable” despite sharp divisions ahead of Wednesday’s funding deadline.

“I’m a big believer that there’s always a way out,” the South Dakota Republican said in an interview with The Associated Press on Thursday. “And I think there are off-ramps here, but I don’t think that the negotiating position, at least at the moment, that the Democrats are trying to exert here is going to get you there.”

Thune said Democrats are going to have to “dial back” their demands, which include immediately extending health insurance subsidies and reversing the health care policies in the massive tax bill that Republicans passed over the summer. Absent that, Thune said, “we’re probably plunging forward toward the shutdown.”

It’s just the latest standoff in Washington over government funding, stretching back through several administrations. President Donald Trump was the driving force behind the longest shutdown ever during his first term, as he sought money for a U.S.-Mexico border wall. This time it is Democrats who are making demands as they face intense pressure from their core supporters to stand up to the Republican president and his policies.

Democrats have shown little signs of relenting, just before spending runs out Wednesday. Their position remained the same even after the White House Office of Management and Budget on Wednesday released a memo that said agencies should consider a “reduction in force” for many federal programs if the government closes — meaning thousands of federal workers could be permanently laid off.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said the OMB memo was simply an “attempt at intimidation” and predicted the “unnecessary firings will either be overturned in court or the administration will end up hiring the workers back.”

Thune stopped short of criticizing the White House threat of mass layoffs, saying the situation remains “a hypothetical.” Still, he said no one should be surprised by the memo as “everyone knows Russ Vought,” the head of the Office of Management and Budget, and his longtime advocacy for slashing government.

“But it’s all avoidable,” Thune said. “And so if they don’t want to go down that path, there’s a way to avoid going down that path.”

One way to avoid a shutdown, Thune said, would be for enough Democrats to vote with Republicans for a stripped-down “clean” bill to keep the government open for the next seven weeks while negotiations on spending continue. That’s how Republicans avoided a shutdown in March, when Schumer and several other Democrats decided at the last minute to vote with Republicans — to great political cost when Schumer’s party then revolted.

A seven-week funding bill has already passed the House.

“What would eight Democrats be willing to support?” Thune asked. “In terms of a path forward, or at least understanding what that path forward looks like.”

Republicans in the 100-member Senate need at least seven Democrats to vote with them to get the 60 votes necessary for a short-term funding package, and they may lose up to two of their own — Republican Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska and Rand Paul of Kentucky both opposed it in preliminary votes last week. A competing bill from Democrats also fell well short of 60 votes.

Thune suggested some individual bipartisan bills to fund parts of the government for the next year could be part of a compromise, “but that requires cooperation from both sides,” he said.

Democrats say they are frustrated that Thune hasn’t approached them to negotiate — and that Trump abruptly canceled a meeting with Schumer and House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York



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that had been scheduled for this week. Trump wrote on social media, "I have decided that no meeting with their Congressional Leaders could possibly be productive."

Thune said he "did have a conversation with the president" and offered his opinion on the meeting, which he declined to disclose. "But I think the president speaks for himself, and I think he came to the conclusion that that meeting would not be productive," Thune said.

Still, he says he thinks Trump could be open to a negotiation on the expanded health care subsidies that expire at the end of the year if Democrats weren't threatening a shutdown. Many people who receive the subsidies through the marketplaces set up by the Affordable Care Act are expected to see a sharp rise in premiums if Congress doesn't extend them.

Some Republicans have agreed with Democrats that keeping the subsidies is necessary, but Thune says "reform is going to have to be a big part of it." Democrats are likely to oppose such changes.

By Monday, when the Senate returns to session, lawmakers will have just over 24 hours to avoid federal closures.

Thune said he intends to bring up the bills that were rejected last week. "They'll get multiple chances to vote," he said, before a government shutdown begins at midnight Wednesday.

He said he hopes "cooler heads will prevail."

"I don't think shutdowns benefit anybody, least of all the American people," Thune said.

## **Some people tape their mouths shut at night. Doctors wish they wouldn't**

By KENYA HUNTER AP Health Writer

Having your mouth taped shut is the stuff of nightmares — but some people are doing just that to themselves. And in an attempt to sleep better, no less.

Doctors say don't do it.

Some on social media say it's a hack for getting more and better sleep and to reduce snoring. The claims — which are not backed by science — are taking off on places like TikTok, sometimes pushed by people working for companies selling related products.

"The studies behind mouth tape are small, the benefits are modest and the potential risks are there," said Dr. Kimberly Hutchison, a neurologist and sleep medicine expert at Oregon Health & Science University. Some of those risks include making sleep disorders like sleep apnea worse, or even causing suffocation.

It is better to breathe through your nose most of the time

Mouth breathing in adults is not a major health problem, but it is better to breath through your nose, experts say. Your nose is a natural filtering system, trapping dust and other allergens before they can get to your lungs.

If you're breathing with your mouth open at night, you could wake up with a dry mouth and irritated throat, which can contribute to bad breath and oral health problems. Mouth breathing is also associated with more snoring.

Don't rush to use mouth tape

But even though breathing through your nose is better than breathing through your mouth, taping your mouth shut isn't the best way to fix the issue.

There's no strong evidence it helps improve sleep. A few studies have been conducted, most of which showed little or no impact, but they were so small experts say conclusions should not be drawn from them.

And meanwhile, there are the potential dangers to be avoided.

Dr. David Schulman, a sleep doctor at Emory University, said there are other things to try, like prescription mouth pieces that can open up your airway, or a CPAP machine. If you're a smoker or are overweight, for example, quitting smoking and losing weight can help.

Mouth breathing could be a sign of something serious — so find out

The safest approach is to figure out why exactly you are breathing with your mouth, because there could be something else going on.

You may be breathing through your mouth because you have obstructive sleep apnea, a sleep disorder where breathing repeatedly stops and starts during sleep because of a blocked airway. The disorder is linked to both open mouth breathing and snoring, and is typically treated with a CPAP machine.

"The reason sleep apnea can be bad is that any decrease in the quality of sleep can affect you day to day or over the course of your life," said Dr. Brian Chen, a sleep doctor at the Cleveland Clinic. "Depending on how bad the sleep is, you may just feel sleep deprived or require more sleep."

The best thing to do, Emory's Shulman says, is get a sleep test, some of which can be done at home. "It's always better to know than not know," he said. "And if you know that something's going on and you choose not to pursue therapy, at least you know you're making an educated decision."

## Why many young adults turn on TV or movie subtitles, according to a new poll

By JOCELYN NOVECK and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Taylor Heine, 35, is often multitasking when she watches TV shows or movies at home. "I'll be playing on the phone, loving on my animals, maybe cleaning, picking up," she says.

So she watches with the subtitles turned on.

"That way I can kind of switch back and forth, be able to listen to it or look back at the screen and I know what's going on," Heine says. "She can also catch up if she misses a piece of dialogue."

It benefits her fiancé, too.

"When he's cooking or banging around in the kitchen, that way I don't have to blare the TV," she says.

Closed captions or subtitles can be an acquired taste. Some people find them distracting, and even family members in the same household can be in disagreement, resulting in tussles for the remote. But Heine, who lives in Johnson City, Tennessee, is in good company, according to a new survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research: People under age 45 are more likely to use them than older adults.

The poll finds that about 4 in 10 adults under 45 use subtitles at least "often" when watching TV or movies, compared with about 3 in 10 adults older than 45. Those 60 and older are especially likely to say they "never" use subtitles.

The poll suggests many young adults use subtitles because they are watching in noisy environments, whereas older adults choose them to better hear or understand what is being said.

That makes sense to David Barber, a sound editor and mixer and president of the Motion Picture Sound Editors.

"Part of it is cultural," Barber says. "What the younger kids are doing is, a lot of them will multitask. They'll listen to music while they're watching a show. So they're catching bits and pieces of this, bits and pieces of that. I think they probably are half-listening and half-watching. It's an interesting phenomenon."

Subtitles help catch every word

Many people, regardless of age, use closed captions simply to better catch dialogue.

Most subtitle-users, 55%, say they use closed captions because they want to catch every word. About 4 in 10 say they do so because of difficulty understanding accents or because they are watching a foreign movie or show.

Ariaunna Davis, 21, says she typically uses subtitles if she is in an environment where she cannot hear the audio and does not want to blast the volume, or if she cannot understand a character's accent.

"If I want to know most of the words that are being said and the audio's a bit iffy, then that's the moment I'll mostly use captions," she says.

Adrian Alaniz, 31, of Midland, Texas, thinks his hearing was slightly damaged by the concerts he attended when he was younger. With subtitles, he can be sure he is understanding what is going on, particularly if he is eating something crunchy like a bag of chips.

In the animated shows Alaniz watches, the subtitles are particularly helpful for translation. There have been times, he says, when dubbed audio and subtitles do not match. "Sometimes the audio doesn't come

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across as clearly and the subtitles do help in that matter," he says.

Bad audio or background noise?

The poll found that about 3 in 10 U.S. adults use subtitles because they are watching in a noisy environment, while roughly one-quarter say they do so because of poor audio quality.

Barber says there are lots of reasons why dialogue can be hard to hear, including noise distractions in home-listening environments. He also notes that speakers are often on the back of a flat-screen TV and project toward the wall. "So you're not listening on a stellar sound system to start with," he says.

Another factor is performance-based.

Actors have "a more internal and close" style of emoting than they did decades ago, says sound designer Karol Urban, and sometimes that makes it difficult to discern dialogue.

And there is now simply a lot more sound competing with dialogue, Urban says. "Back in the day there were a lot less sound effects, less music swells," she notes. "When you add more things under dialogue, you're adding more frequencies and things that can interfere with dialogue."

Davis, of Tampa, Florida, points to the show "Game of Thrones" as one instance where she often turns on subtitles so she is not constantly adjusting the volume.

"A lot of times the speaking in that show is low and fits the dark environment if it's in a certain scene," she says. "Then the next scene will be just music and it's blasting through the walls."

Generation gap on multitasking

About one-quarter of subtitle users say they turn on captions because they are watching while multitasking. Fewer say the reason is a hearing impairment, trying to learn a new language or watching with the sound off.

Ask a younger or older adult, though, and you could get a very different justification.

Young adults who have used subtitles are more likely than those 45 and older to say they do this because they are watching in a noisy environment or watching while multitasking. Older subtitle users — those 45 and older — are more likely than younger adults to say they use closed captions because they have difficulty understanding accents or because of a hearing impairment.

About 3 in 10 adults 60 and older who use subtitles say they use closed captions because of a hearing impairment, compared with only 7% for younger adults.

Patricia Gill, 67, of Columbus, Tennessee, does not use closed captions. But when her grandson comes over, Gill often notices he has subtitles on his phone when watching movies.

"He's a typical almost-teenager, he just likes watching his phone," she says.

The two have different approaches when it comes to subtitles. If she is interested in a show and misses an important line, she goes back and rewinds it.

"I'm old school," she says. "I just like the regular, basic stuff."

## **Tropical weather in the Atlantic is slamming the Caribbean and may strike Southeast US next**

MIAMI (AP) — Dangerous tropical weather brewed Saturday in the Atlantic Ocean with Humberto intensifying into a powerful Category 4 hurricane and a weather system taking aim at the Southeast U.S.

Hurricane Humberto had maximum sustained winds of 145 mph (230 kph) Saturday, according to the Miami-based National Hurricane Center's latest advisory. The storm was located about 375 miles (605 kilometers) northeast of the northern Leeward Islands. It was moving west at 6 mph (9 kph).

Humberto could produce life-threatening surf and rip currents for the northern Leeward Islands, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Bermuda over the weekend, forecasters said.

Meanwhile, a weather system likely to develop into a tropical storm over the weekend was threatening parts of the Bahamas and Cuba with heavy rainfall and flash flooding. Parts of the Bahamas were under a tropical storm warning on Saturday.

That same system was on track to approach the Southeast U.S. early next week. Gradual strengthening into a tropical storm is expected by Sunday; forecasters said it would become a hurricane by late Monday.

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South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster declared a state of emergency over the storm Friday evening saying while there was uncertainty, the state needed to prepare. The declaration allows state emergency officials to begin coordination with local and federal governments and assures people will be eligible for federal aid.

On Friday, crews in Charleston, South Carolina, were getting sandbags together, checking high water vehicles and preparing pumps to get any floodwater out of the city.

"Even though this has not formed yet, we are treating it as if we are expecting some kind of impact. That's critical. We don't want to downplay the scenario," Chief Fire Marshal Michael Julazadeh said at an emergency Charleston City Council meeting.

The tropical disturbance has already brought heavy rains in the Dominican Republic on Friday, leading authorities to evacuate hundreds of people and declare a red alert in five provinces. Flooding of rivers, streams, and ravines left dozens of communities cut off by landslides and fallen bridges, including one that collapsed while a truck was crossing, killing the driver in the community of Yamasá.

Flooding in the southwestern province of Azua, one of the areas most affected by the rains, displaced at least 774 people, and 26 were being sheltered due to the overflowing of the Tábara River, Civil Defense spokesman Jensen Sánchez told The Associated Press.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency urged residents of coastal areas in the Southeast U.S. on Thursday to pay attention as that weather system continues to develop, saying its staff "is ready to respond swiftly, if needed."

In the eastern Atlantic, the center of post-tropical cyclone Gabrielle moved away from the Azores. A hurricane warning for the entire Portuguese archipelago was discontinued.

Some strengthening was forecast through Friday night, with weakening expected over the weekend, and Gabrielle was expected to approach the Portugal's coast by early Sunday. Swells expected to produce life-threatening surf and rip currents were expected to reach Portugal, northwestern Spain and northern Morocco on Saturday.

In the Pacific Ocean, Hurricane Narda was churning about 1,025 miles (1,650 kilometers) west-southwest of the southern tip of Baja California and heading west-northwest at 12 mph (19 kph). The Category 1 storm was expected to maintain its strength on Friday before weakening over the weekend.

Swells generated by Narda were affecting coastal Mexico and Baja California Sur, forecasters said. The swells that could bring life-threatening surf and rip current conditions were expected to reach southern California over the weekend.

## **Danish defense ministry reports renewed drone sightings at military facilities**

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — The Danish defense ministry said Saturday that "drones have been observed at several of Danish defense facilities" overnight Friday into Saturday. The renewed drone sightings come after there were several drone sightings in the Nordic country earlier this week, with some of them temporarily shutting down Danish airports.

The Danish defense ministry said in a statement that drone activity was noticed at Skrydstrup Air Base and the Jutland Dragoon Regiment.

Several local media reported that one or more drones were also seen near or above the military Karup Air Base, which is Denmark's biggest military base.

The Defense ministry refused to confirm the sighting at Karup and said later that "for reasons of operational security and the ongoing investigation, the Defense Command Denmark does not wish to elaborate further on drone sightings."

Danish public broadcaster DR reported that in Karup, there were drones in the air both inside and outside the fence of the air base at around 8 p.m., quoting Simon Skelkjær, the duty manager at the Central and West Jutland Police.

DR said that for a period of time the airspace was closed to civil air traffic, but that did not have much



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practical significance as there is currently no civil aviation in Karup.

The repeated unexplained drone activity, including over four Danish airports overnight Wednesday into Thursday and a similar incident at Copenhagen Airport, has raised concerns about security in northern Europe amid suspected growing Russian aggression.

The Copenhagen drones grounded flights in the Danish capital for hours on Monday night,

The goal of the flyovers is to sow fear and division, Danish Minister of Justice Peter Hummelgaard said Thursday, adding that the country will seek additional ways to neutralize drones, including proposing legislation to allow infrastructure owners to shoot them down.

For the upcoming European Union summit next week, the Danish defense ministry confirmed on X that the country's government had accepted an offer from Sweden to "lend Denmark a military anti-drone capability," without giving further details.

In neighboring Germany, several drones were reported in the northern German state of Schleswig-Holstein, which borders Denmark, from Thursday into Friday night.

The state's interior minister, Sabine Sütterlin-Waack, said that "the state police are currently significantly stepping up their drone defense measures, also in coordination with other northern German states," German news agency dpa reported. She did not provide any further details, citing the ongoing investigations.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said that in regard to frequent attacks on infrastructure and data networks, "we are not at war, but we are no longer living in peace either." He did not allude to a certain country as the actor behind those attacks.

"Drone flights, espionage, the Tiergarten murder, massive threats to individual public figures, not only in Germany but also in many other European countries. Acts of sabotage on a daily basis. Attempts to paralyze data centers. Cyberattacks," he added during a speech at the Schwarz Ecosystem Summit in Berlin on Friday, dpa reported.

What became known as the "Tiergarten murder" in Germany refers to the case of Vadim Krasikov, who was convicted of the Aug. 23, 2019, killing of Zelimkhan "Tornike" Khangoshvili, a 40-year-old Georgian citizen who had fought Russian troops in Chechnya and later claimed asylum in Germany. Krasikov was returned to Russia as part of a massive prisoner swap between the U.S. and Russia in 2024.

## **A hungrier, poorer and more anxious Iran awaits 'snapback' of UN sanctions over its nuclear program**

By JON GAMBRELL and AMIR VAHDAT Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — As Iran's ailing economy braced Saturday for the reimposition of United Nations sanctions over its nuclear program, it is ordinary people who increasingly find themselves priced out of the food they need to survive and worried about their futures.

Iran's rial currency already sits at a record low, increasing pressure on food prices and making daily life that much more challenging. That includes meat, rice and other staples of the Iranian dinner table.

Meanwhile, people worry about a new round of fighting between Iran and Israel — as well as potentially the United States — as missile sites struck during the 12-day war in June now appear to be being rebuilt.

Activists fear a rising wave of repression within the Islamic Republic, which already has reportedly executed more people this year than over the past three decades.

Sina, the father of a 12-year-old boy who spoke on condition that only his first name be used for fear of repercussions, said the country has never faced such a challenging time, even during the deprivations of the 1980s Iran-Iraq war and the decades of sanctions that came later.

"For as long as I can remember, we've been struggling with economic hardship, and every year it's worse than the last," Sina told The Associated Press. "For my generation, it's always either too late or too early — our dreams are slipping away."

Iran sanctions set to 'snapback'

Early Sunday at 0000 GMT (8 p.m. Eastern), barring any last-minute diplomatic breakthrough, U.N. sanctions on Iran will be reimposed through "snapback," as the mechanism is called by the diplomats who

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negotiated it into Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Snapback was designed to be veto-proof at the U.N. Security Council, meaning China and Russia cannot stop it alone, as they have other proposed actions against Tehran in the past.

The measure will again freeze Iranian assets abroad, halt arms deals with Tehran, and penalize any development of Iran's ballistic missile program, among other measures.

France, Germany and the United Kingdom triggered snapback over Iran further restricting monitoring of its nuclear program and the deadlock over its negotiations with the U.S.

Iran further withdrew from the International Atomic Energy Agency monitoring after Israel's war on the country in June, which also saw the U.S. strike nuclear sites in the Islamic Republic. Meanwhile, the country still maintains a stockpile of uranium enriched up to 60% purity — a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90% — that is largely enough to make several atomic bombs, should Tehran choose to rush toward weaponization.

Iran has long insisted its nuclear program is peaceful, though the West and IAEA say Tehran had an organized weapons program up until 2003.

Tehran has further argued that the three European nations shouldn't be allowed to implement snapback, pointing in part to America's unilateral withdrawal from the accord in 2018, during the first term of President Donald Trump's administration.

"The Trump administration appears to think it has a stronger hand post-strikes, and it can wait for Iran to come back to the table," said Kelsey Davenport, a nuclear expert at the Washington-based Arms Control Association. "Given the knowledge Iran has, given the materials that remain in Iran, that's a very dangerous assumption."

Risks also remain for Iran as well, she added: "In the short term, kicking out the IAEA increases the risk of miscalculation. The U.S. or Israel could use the lack of inspections as a pretext for further strikes."

Iran on Saturday recalled its ambassadors to France, Germany and the U.K. for consultations ahead of the sanctions being reimposed, the state-run IRNA news agency reported.

Hunger and anxiety grow in Iran

The aftermath of the June war drove up food prices in Iran, putting already expensive meat out of reach for poorer families.

Iran's government put overall annual inflation at 34.5% in June, and its Statistical Center reported that the cost of essential food items rose over 50% over the same period. But even that doesn't reflect what people see at shops. Pinto beans tripled in price in a year, while butter nearly doubled. Rice, a staple, rose more than 80% on average, hitting 100% for premium varieties. Whole chicken is up 26%, while beer and lamb are up 9%.

"Every day I see new higher prices for cheese, milk and butter," said Sima Taghavi, a mother of two, at a Tehran grocery. "I cannot omit them like fruits and meat from my grocery list because my kids are too young to be deprived."

The pressure over food and fears about the war resuming have seen more patients heading to psychologists since June, local media in Iran have reported.

"The psychological pressure from the 12-day war on the one hand, and runaway inflation and price hikes on the other, has left society exhausted and unmotivated," Dr. Sima Ferdowsi, a clinical psychologist and professor at Shahid Beheshti University, told the Hamshahri newspaper in an interview published in July.

"If the economic situation continues like this, it will have serious social and moral consequences," she warned, with the newspaper noting "people may do things they would never think of doing in normal circumstances to survive."

Executions surge in 2025

Iran has faced multiple nationwide protests in recent years, fueled by anger over the economy, demands for women's rights and calls for the country's theocracy to change. The most recent came in 2022 over the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman who died after being detained by police allegedly for not wearing her hijab, or headscarf, to their liking.

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In response to those protests and the June war, Iran has been putting prisoners to death at a pace unseen since 1988, when it executed thousands at the end of the Iran-Iraq war. The Oslo-based group Iran Human Rights and the Washington-based Abdorrahman Boroumand Center for Human Rights in Iran put the number of people executed in 2025 at over 1,000, noting the number could be higher as Iran does not report on each execution.

"Political and civic space in Iran has shrunk to nothing, and outside Iran, civil society activists and dissidents face transnational repression," the center warned. "The Iranian people, millions of whom aspire to more than a closed and brutal theocracy, have tried every option within their reach. Their leaders have not."

## **FBI fires agents photographed kneeling during 2020 racial justice protest, AP sources say**

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The FBI has fired agents who were photographed kneeling during a racial justice protest in Washington that followed the 2020 death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers, three people familiar with the matter said Friday.

The bureau last spring had reassigned the agents but has since fired them, said the people, who insisted on anonymity to discuss personnel matters with The Associated Press.

The number of FBI employees terminated was not immediately clear, but two people said it was roughly 20.

The photographs at issue showed a group of agents taking the knee during one of the demonstrations following the May 2020 killing of Floyd, a death that led to a national reckoning over policing and racial injustice and sparked widespread anger after millions of people saw video of the arrest. The kneeling had angered some in the FBI but was also understood as a possible de-escalation tactic during a period of protests.

The FBI Agents Association confirmed in a statement late Friday that more than a dozen agents had been fired, including military veterans with additional statutory protections, and condemned the move as unlawful. It called on Congress to investigate and said the firings were another indication of FBI Director Kash Patel's disregard for the legal rights of bureau employees.

"As Director Patel has repeatedly stated, nobody is above the law," the agents association said. "But rather than providing these agents with fair treatment and due process, Patel chose to again violate the law by ignoring these agents' constitutional and legal rights instead of following the requisite process."

An FBI spokesman declined to comment Friday.

The firings come amid a broader personnel purge at the bureau as Patel works to reshape the nation's premier federal law enforcement agency.

Five agents and top-level executives were known to have been summarily fired last month in a wave of ousters that current and former officials say has contributed to declining morale.

One of those, Steve Jensen, helped oversee investigations into the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol. Another, Brian Driscoll, served as acting FBI director in the early days of the Trump administration and resisted Justice Department demands to supply the names of agents who investigated Jan. 6.

A third, Chris Meyer, was incorrectly rumored on social media to have participated in the investigation into President Donald Trump's retention of classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Palm Beach, Fla. A fourth, Walter Giardina, participated in high-profile investigations like the one into Trump adviser Peter Navarro.

A lawsuit filed by Jensen, Driscoll and another fired FBI supervisor, Spencer Evans, alleged that Patel communicated that he understood that it was "likely illegal" to fire agents based on cases they worked but was powerless to stop it because the White House and the Justice Department were determined to remove all agents who investigated Trump.

Patel denied at a congressional hearing last week taking orders from the White House on whom to fire and said anyone who has been fired failed to meet the FBI's standards.

## **Airstrikes and shooting kill at least 38 people in Gaza as Israel ignores demands for a ceasefire**

By WAFAA SHURAF and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israeli strikes and gunfire killed at least 38 people across Gaza, health officials said, as international pressure grows for a ceasefire but Israel's leader remains defiant about continuing the war.

Strikes in central and northern Gaza killed people in their homes in the early hours of Saturday morning, including nine from the same family in a house in the Nuseirat refugee camp, according to health staff at the Al-Awda hospital where the bodies were brought.

The attacks came hours after a defiant Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told fellow world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly Friday that his nation "must finish the job" against Hamas in Gaza.

Netanyahu's words, aimed as much at his increasingly divided domestic audience as the global one, began after dozens of delegates from multiple nations walked out of the U.N. General Assembly hall en masse Friday morning as he began speaking.

International pressure on Israel to end the war is increasing, as is Israel's isolation, with a growing list of countries deciding recently to recognize Palestinian statehood — something Israel rejects.

Countries have been lobbying U.S. President Donald Trump to press Israel for a ceasefire. On Friday, Trump told reporters on the White House lawn that he believes the U.S. is close to achieving a deal on easing fighting in Gaza that "will get the hostages back" and "end the war."

Trump and Netanyahu are scheduled to meet Monday, and Trump said on social media Friday that "very inspired and productive discussions" and "intense negotiations" about Gaza are ongoing with countries in the region.

Yet, Israel is pressing ahead with another major ground operation in Gaza City, which experts say is experiencing famine. More than 300,000 people have fled, but up to 700,000 are still there, many because they can't afford to relocate.

The strikes Saturday morning demolished a house in Gaza City's Tufah neighborhood, killing at least 11 people, more than half of them women and children, according to the Al-Ahly Hospital where the bodies were brought. Four other people were killed when an airstrike hit their homes in the Shati refugee camp, according to Shifa hospital.

Six other Palestinians were killed by Israeli gunfire while seeking aid in southern and central Gaza, according to Nasser and Al Awda hospitals where the bodies were brought.

Israel's army did not immediately respond about the airstrikes or the gunfire.

Hospitals and health clinics in Gaza City are on the brink of collapse. Nearly two weeks into the offensive, two clinics have been destroyed by airstrikes, two hospitals shut down after being damaged and others are barely functioning, with medicine, equipment, food and fuel in short supply.

Many patients and staff have been forced to flee hospitals, leaving behind only a few doctors and nurses to tend to children in incubators or other patients too ill to move.

On Friday, aid group Doctors Without Borders said it was forced to suspend activities in Gaza City amid an intensified Israeli offensive. The group said Israeli tanks were less than half a mile from its health care facilities and the escalating attacks have created an "unacceptable level of risk" for its staff.

Meanwhile, the food situation in the north has also worsened, as Israel has halted aid deliveries through its crossing into northern Gaza since Sept. 12 and has increasingly rejected U.N. requests to bring supplies from southern Gaza into the north, the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 65,000 people and wounded more than 167,000 others, according to the Gaza Health Ministry. It doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants, but says women and children make up around half the fatalities. The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government, but U.N. agencies and many independent experts consider its figures to be the most reliable estimate of



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wartime casualties.

Israel's campaign was triggered when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing around 1,200 people and taking 251 hostage. Forty-eight captives remain in Gaza, around 20 of them believed by Israel to be alive, after most of the rest were freed in ceasefires or other deals.

## **A year after losing its longtime leader, Hezbollah is beginning to regroup**

By BASSEM MROUE and ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Hezbollah suffered one blow after another during its most recent war with Israel, culminating in the killing of the militant group's longtime leader, Hassan Nasrallah, in massive Israeli airstrikes on a Beirut suburb.

The group was weakened militarily and politically. Many of its opponents declared that its days as a dominant regional and local player were over.

But one year later, many of Hezbollah's supporters, enemies and analysts agree in their assessment: It is regrouping.

"The loss of this leader was a very painful blow to Hezbollah," senior Hezbollah political official Mohammed Fneish told The Associated Press in the run-up to Saturday's anniversary of Nasrallah's death.

"However, Hezbollah is not a party in the usual sense that when it loses its leader, the party becomes weak," he said. "In a relatively short period of time, it was able to fill all the positions it lost when (leaders) were martyred, and it continued the confrontation."

An Israeli military official, speaking anonymously in line with regulations, said in a statement that Hezbollah's "influence has declined considerably" and that "the likelihood of a large-scale attack against Israel is considered low."

But the statement added that "the organization is attempting to rebuild its capabilities; efforts are limited but expected to expand." The military declined to comment on how much of Hezbollah's arsenal of missiles and drones Israel believes remains intact.

'They're rebuilding'

Despite losing most of its top leadership and key communications systems, Hezbollah continued to fight when Israeli troops invaded southern Lebanon last October.

After a U.S.-brokered ceasefire halted the fighting in late November, Israeli forces took control of more territory than they did during the war, and Israel has continued carrying out near-daily airstrikes that it says target Hezbollah militants and facilities.

Hezbollah also lost a key route for supplies from its backer, Iran, when the allied government of Bashar Assad in Syria fell in a rebel offensive in December, which Fneish acknowledged was a blow to Hezbollah's "strategic depth."

The Lebanese government, meanwhile, has said it will work on disarming the group by the end of this year, a key demand of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia before funding reconstruction and a decision Hezbollah has categorically rejected.

Political opponents say the group is in denial about its loss of power.

"Hezbollah's leadership is detached from reality," said Lebanese lawmaker Elias Hankash, a frequent critic of Hezbollah, who called on it to surrender its weapons and become solely a political party. "Hezbollah did not defend the Lebanese, nor itself, nor its weapons, nor its command."

But U.S. envoy Tom Barrack cautioned against underestimating the group in an interview with United Arab Emirates-based IMI Media Group: "The Lebanese think Hezbollah is not rebuilding. They're rebuilding."

The Israeli military official said, "Hezbollah is currently struggling to receive sufficient funding from Iran."

But Barrack asserted the group, which the U.S. designates a terrorist organization, is receiving as much as \$60 million per month from unknown sources. That is despite measures to cut off its funding, including a ban on flights from Iran.

"Hezbollah is our enemy, Iran is our enemy. We need to cut the heads off of those snakes and chop the

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flow of funds," Barrack said.

Fneish didn't address the group's funding sources, but said its financial situation is "normal" and its institutions are functioning as before, including healthcare and social services as well as its armed wing.

A post-Nasrallah identity

Founded in 1982, months after Israel invaded Lebanon and occupied parts of it, Hezbollah morphed into one of the region's most powerful armed groups, fighting several wars with Israel and spearheading a campaign that forced it to withdraw from southern Lebanon in 2000.

The latest conflict began the day after the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack on southern Israel that triggered the ongoing war in Gaza. Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel from Lebanon in a "support front" for Hamas and the Palestinians.

In September 2024, Israel expanded its attacks, starting with the detonation of thousands of pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah members. Days later, it launched a major wave of airstrikes that killed Hezbollah commanders and hundreds of civilians.

The biggest blow was Nasrallah's assassination, with the dropping of more than 80 1-ton bombs that destroyed an entire block under which Nasrallah and some of his top officials were meeting with an Iranian general.

Days later, Nasrallah's successor, Hashem Safieddine, was killed in airstrikes. The group later named Nasrallah's deputy, Naim Kassem, as the new leader, but the wide perception is that Kassem lacks Nasrallah's charisma.

"Nasrallah's assassination was an emotional shock that is destabilizing, but their identity finds continuity through the martyrdom culture," said Bashir Saade, a lecturer of politics and religion at the University of Stirling in Scotland who has written a book about the group.

Fneish said the group does not have an identity crisis.

"Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah was the representation of this identity; he was not himself the identity," he said.

Hezbollah, particularly its military wing, largely went underground after Nasrallah's death. Officials in the group said Hezbollah has been working to close the intelligence gaps that led Israel to successfully target its military and political officials. Hezbollah members now rely less on technology, an official with the group said on condition of anonymity because he was speaking about internal affairs.

The Hezbollah official said Israel used technology and spies to gather information and plan attacks.

Months before Nasrallah's assassination, the group detained a Lebanese man who had been suspiciously wandering around the area where Nasrallah was later killed. The man confessed to gathering information for Israel and is still detained by Hezbollah, he said.

The biggest breach, the official said, was Israel's infiltration of the group's internal cable communications network.

A catch-22 over weapons

Growing pressure within Lebanon for Hezbollah to give up its weapons and delays in reconstruction of war-battered areas have left many in its largely Shiite base feeling that there are attempts to marginalize them.

Lebanese political writer Sultan Suleiman said that feeling contributed to the base rallying and an overwhelming victory by Hezbollah and its allies in this year's municipal elections in its traditional political strongholds.

Some who originally favored disarmament have reassessed.

"There's a portion of this community that was psychologically worn down after this war, and started saying, fine, let's give up the weapons and we'll be able to relax," Lebanese journalist Jad Hamouch said. "But after they saw how Israel is behaving in the region, now they're saying, no, we want to keep the weapons."

Amira Jaafar, who lived in the border village of Kfar Kila before it was largely destroyed during the war, lost her son in the conflict. She said despite all of Hezbollah's losses, including the death of its "great leader" Nasrallah, "we are still strong and there are many, many young men" still "ready to fight until their last breath."

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A Western diplomat, who spoke on condition of anonymity in order to speak freely, said the Lebanese state is caught in a catch-22 regarding its decision to disarm the group.

The cash-strapped and understaffed Lebanese army, where many soldiers work second jobs to make ends meet, is ill-equipped to face a force of battle-hardened and better-paid fighters who also, in some cases, come from their own communities, he said.

"I don't see any coming back on this (decision), but I don't see how it will go forward either," he said.

## Full steam ahead as Britain marks the bicentenary of a world-changing rail journey

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The historic British train journey that laid the foundations for much of the modern age is being celebrated Saturday on the 200th anniversary.

On Sept. 27, 1825, the first steam powered railway engine to run on a public railway — George Stephenson's Locomotion No. 1 — made its 26-mile (42-kilometer) journey on the Stockton & Darlington Railway between Shildon and Stockton via Darlington in the northeast of England.

It was a small but significant milestone which augured rapid changes in the way Britain, and subsequently the world, lived, traded, traveled and communicated.

Though the Stockton & Darlington was not the first railway, it was the first to incorporate the standard-gauge, steam-hauled features that would become the foundation of railways around the world.

Railway enthusiasts have been marking the milestone at events across the U.K. over the year — but the highlight is undoubtedly taking place where it all started.

On Saturday thousands of people are expected to line the route when a newly restored replica of Locomotion No. 1 recreates the original journey to mark the bicentenary on sections of the Stockton and Darlington Railway line. The journey, which started Friday, runs through the weekend.

Prince Edward, King Charles III's youngest brother, was among the passengers on board a carriage Friday being pulled by the replica engine on its short journey to Shildon.

Doug Haynes, 81, a retired aircraft engineer, traveled around 100 miles (160 kilometers) to Shildon to witness the re-enactment on Friday.

"It was tremendous," he said. "The work that they have put in to make this happen has been well worthwhile. It was well worth the trip over for me."

There were equally joyous scenes 200 years ago when people including newspaper reporters traveled from all over the country to line the track. A holiday was even declared for Darlington.

Those enthusing then could not have possibly imagined what the ripple effects would be as they cheered the passing Locomotion No. 1 — how it would transform their lives, their communities and the future.

Rail soon enabled the rapid transportation of raw materials, like coal and iron ore, and industrial goods and undoubtedly sped up urbanization and transformed social lives, by freeing up time for leisure activities and opening up the country to tourism and the middle classes.

Overall, it played a pivotal role in Britain becoming the global industrial and economic powerhouse of the 19th century that helped fuel the rapid expansion of the British Empire.

"It was amazing to see it moving," said Louise Jones, 39, who watched the replica train begin its journey. "My dad used to work on the railways. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see what it would have looked like 200 years ago."

## Facing global isolation at UN, a defiant Netanyahu says Israel 'must finish the job' against Hamas

By JENNIFER PELTZ, ADAM GELLER and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Surrounded by critics and protesters at the United Nations, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told fellow world leaders on Friday that his nation "must finish the job" against

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Hamas in Gaza, giving a defiant speech despite growing international isolation over his refusal to end the devastating war. "Western leaders may have buckled under the pressure," he said. "And I guarantee you one thing: Israel won't."

Netanyahu's speech, aimed as much at his increasingly divided domestic audience as the global one, began after dozens of delegates from multiple nations walked out of the U.N. General Assembly hall en masse Friday morning as he began.

Responding to countries' recent decisions to recognize Palestinian statehood, Netanyahu said: "Your disgraceful decision will encourage terrorism against Jews and against innocent people everywhere."

As the Israeli leader spoke, unintelligible shouts echoed around the hall, while applause came from supporters in the gallery. Seats allotted to the United States — which has backed Netanyahu in his campaign against Hamas — and the United Kingdom were filled by low-level diplomats instead of senior ambassadors or officials. Many seats were vacant; by Iran's empty chairs stood a compilation of photos of children that Tehran said were killed during Israel's war there in June.

"Antisemitism dies hard. In fact, it doesn't die at all," said Netanyahu, who routinely accuses critics of antisemitism.

Netanyahu faces international isolation, accusations of war crimes and growing pressure to end a conflict he has continued to escalate. Friday's speech was his chance to push back on the international community's biggest platform.

He used it to cast Gaza as the lone remaining front in a wider war, listing recent military missions by Israel to target its enemies and contain threats to its security in Iran, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen.

Those efforts have "opened up possibilities for peace," he said, noting that Israel has begun negotiations with Syria to reach security arrangements with the new government in Damascus. The final challenge, Netanyahu said, is to root out what he called the "final remnants of Hamas."

He frequently praised U.S. President Donald Trump, his chief ally in his political and military approach in the region.

Visual aids and loudspeakers deployed

As he has often in the past at the United Nations, Netanyahu held up visual aids — including a map of the region titled "THE CURSE," which chronicles Israel's challenges in its neighborhood. He marked it up with a large marker. He wore -- and pointed out -- a pin with a QR code to a site about the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack that led to the war and about the Israeli hostages taken by the militants.

In what Netanyahu cast as an effort to reach captives still being held in Gaza, the Israeli government set up loudspeakers to blast the speech into the territory, though the military has pushed Palestinians away from its borders. The prime minister's office also claimed that the Israeli army had taken over mobile phones in Gaza to broadcast his message, though AP journalists inside Gaza saw no immediate evidence of such a broadcast.

In Wadi Gaza — near Gaza City, where Israel launched another major ground operation earlier this month — Palestinians who followed the speech responded with a mix of exhaustion and enduring commitment to their long-sought state.

"Whether he likes it or not, sooner or later, the Palestinian people will gain independence," said Moneir Talib, who has been displaced from Gaza City.

Amjad Abdel Daiym expressed similar feelings but added: "We are psychologically, physically, morally and financially tired from everything.... When he says that he wants to continue the war to eradicate Hamas members, or Hamas movement or the Hamas government, I only see that the war is continuing against poor people like us."

Hamas, meanwhile, accused Netanyahu of making false justifications to continue the war. "If he were truly concerned about his captives, he would have stopped his brutal bombardment, genocidal massacres and the destruction of Gaza City," Hamas said in a statement on its website. "Instead, he lies and continues to endanger their lives."

A closely watched speech



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Netanyahu's annual speech to the U.N. General Assembly is always closely watched, often protested, reliably emphatic and sometimes a venue for dramatic allegations. But this time, the stakes were higher than ever for the Israeli leader.

In recent days, Australia, Canada, France, the United Kingdom and others announced their recognition of an independent Palestinian state. The European Union is considering tariffs and sanctions on Israel. The assembly this month passed a nonbinding resolution urging Israel to commit to an independent Palestinian nation, which Netanyahu has said is a nonstarter.

The International Criminal Court has issued an arrest warrant accusing Netanyahu of crimes against humanity, which he denies. And the U.N.'s highest court is weighing South Africa's allegation that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza, which it vehemently refutes.

As Netanyahu spoke Friday, hundreds of pro-Palestinian protesters gathered a few blocks from the heavily secured United Nations.

"Israel has chosen a war against every conscientious human being in this world," said Nidaa Lafi, an organizer with Palestinian Youth Movement, prompting chants of "shame" from the growing crowd.

Netanyahu's message was simultaneously applauded by UN Watch, a non-governmental group long supportive of Israel. "His address had a dual tone: defiance in the face of terror, but also a vision for peace with Arab neighbors, and even with a free Iran one day," the group's executive director, Hillel Neuer, said in a statement.

Opposition to Netanyahu's approach is growing

At a special session of the U.N. Security Council this week, nation after nation expressed horror at the 2023 attack by Hamas militants that killed about 1,200 people in Israel, saw 251 taken hostage and triggered the war. Many of the representatives went on to criticize the response by Israel and call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and influx of aid.

Israel's sweeping offensive has killed more than 65,000 Palestinians in Gaza and displaced 90% of its population, with an increasing number now starving.

While more than 150 countries now recognize a Palestinian state, the United States has not, providing Israel with vociferous support. But Trump signaled Thursday there are limits, telling reporters in Washington that he wouldn't let Israel annex the occupied West Bank.

Israel hasn't announced such a move, but several leading members in Netanyahu's government have advocated for doing so. Officials recently approved a controversial settlement project that would effectively cut the West Bank in two, a move critics say could doom chances for a Palestinian state. Trump and Netanyahu are scheduled to meet Monday, and Trump said on social media Friday that "very inspired and productive discussions" and "intense negotiations" about Gaza are ongoing with countries in the region.

Later Friday, Netanyahu met with the Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the foreign minister of the United Arab Emirates. The UAE has signaled any Israeli annexation of the West Bank could impact the Emirates' diplomatic recognition deal with Israel known as the Abraham Accords.

Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas addressed the General Assembly via video on Thursday, welcoming the recent announcements of recognition but calling on the world to do more. Abbas leads the internationally recognized Palestinian Authority, which administers portions of the West Bank.

Israel captured the West Bank, east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Mideast war, then withdrew from Gaza in 2005. The Palestinians want all three territories to form their envisioned state — a process known as the two-state solution. Netanyahu maintains that creating a Palestinian state would reward Hamas.

In his speech, Netanyahu insisted that Israel is battling radical Islam on behalf of all nations.

"You know deep down," he said, "that Israel is fighting your fight."

## Trump's trade battle with China puts US soybean farmers in peril

By DIDI TANG and JOSH FUNK Associated Press

MAGNOLIA, Ky. (AP) — The leafy soybean plants reach Caleb Ragland's thighs and are ripe for harvest,



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but the Kentucky farmer is deeply worried. He doesn't know where he and others like him will sell their crop because China has stopped buying.

Beijing, which traditionally has snapped up at least a quarter of all soybeans grown in the U.S., is in effect boycotting them in retaliation for the high tariffs President Donald Trump has imposed on Chinese goods and to strengthen its hand in negotiations over a new overall trade deal.

It has left American soybean farmers fretting over not only this year's crop but the long-term viability of their businesses, built in part on China's once-insatiable appetite for U.S. beans.

"This is a five-alarm fire for our industry," said Ragland, who leads the American Soybean Association trade group.

The situation might even be enough to test farmers' loyalty to Trump, although he still enjoys strong support throughout rural America. If no deal is reached soon, they hope the government will come through with aid as it did during Trump's first term, but they see that only as a temporary solution. Trump said Thursday he is considering an aid package.

U.S. and Chinese officials have held four rounds of trade talks between May and September, with another likely in the coming weeks. No progress on soybeans has been reported.

Getting closer to harvest, "I'm honestly getting worried that the time is running out," said Jim Sutter, CEO of the U.S. Soybean Export Council.

Political pressure is growing

After Trump imposed tariffs on Chinese goods, China responded with tariffs of its own, which now total up to 34% on U.S. soybeans. That makes soybeans from other countries cheaper.

China's retaliatory tariffs also hit U.S. growers of sorghum, corn and cotton, and even geoduck divers have been affected. But soybeans stand out because of the crop's outsized importance to U.S. agricultural exports. Soybeans are the top U.S. food export, accounting for about 14% of all farm goods sent overseas.

And China has been by far the largest foreign buyer. Last year, the U.S. exported nearly \$24.5 billion worth of soybeans, and China accounted for more than \$12.5 billion. That compared with \$2.45 billion by the European Union, the second-largest buyer. This year, China hasn't bought beans since May.

With U.S. farmers hurting, the Trump administration is under growing pressure to reach a deal with China. As talks drag on, Trump appears ready to help.

"We're going to take some of the tariff money — relatively small amount, but a lot for the farmers — and we're going to help the farmers out a little bit" during this transition period, Trump said.

The only way most farmers survived Trump's trade war in his first term was with tens of billions of dollars in government payments. But that's not what most farmers want.

What farmers expect from Trump

"The American farmer, especially myself included, we don't want aid payments," said Brian Warpup, 52, a fourth-generation farmer from Warren, Indiana. "We want to work. We work the land, we harvest the land, the crop off the land. And the worst thing that we could ever want is a handout."

Farmers are looking to Trump for a long-term solution.

"Overwhelmingly, farmers have been in President Trump's corner," said Ragland, the president of the soybean association. "And I think the message that our soybean farmers as a whole want to deliver is: 'President Trump, we've had your back. We need you to have ours now.'"

He said farmers appreciate the willingness to provide some short-term relief, but what they ultimately need are strong, reliable markets. "Our priority remains seeing the United States secure lasting trade agreements — particularly with China — that allow farmers to sell their crops and build a sustainable future with long-term customers," he said.

Ragland, 39, hopes his three sons will become the 10th generation to till his 4,500 acres in Magnolia, Kentucky. Unless something changes soon, he worries that thousands of farmers may not survive.

Coming into this year, many farmers were just hoping to break even because crop prices were weak while their costs had only increased. Trump's tariffs, which helped make their crops uncompetitive around the world, drove prices down further. And tariffs on steel and fertilizer sent costs up even more.

Darin Johnson, president of the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association, said he still has faith in the

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Trump administration to reach a good trade deal with China.

"I think where the patience is probably wearing thin is the time," said Johnson, a fourth-generation farmer. "I don't think anybody thought that we were going to take this much time because we were told 90 deals, 90 deals in 90 days."

China's negotiating strategy

The U.S. soybean industry grew in response to Chinese demand starting back in the 1990s, when China began its rapid economic rise and turned to foreign producers to help feed its people. Protein-rich soybeans are an essential part of the diet.

While China relies on domestic crops for steamed beans and tofu, it needs far more soybeans for oil extraction and animal feed. In 2024, China produced 20 million metric tons of soybeans, while importing more than 105 million metric tons.

American farmers have come to count on China as their biggest customer, and this has "given the Chinese a point of leverage," Sutter said. By holding off on buying U.S. soybeans, China is seen as trying to leverage that purchasing power in the trade talks.

"I think that's the strategy," said Sutter of the U.S. Soybean Export Council. "I think that's why China is targeting soybeans and other agricultural products, because they know that farmers have a strong lobby and farmers are important to the U.S. government."

Liu Pengyu, spokesperson for the Chinese Embassy in Washington, didn't answer specific questions on soybean purchases but urged the U.S. to work with Beijing.

"The essence of China-U.S. economic and trade cooperation is mutual benefit and win-win," Liu said.

China turned to Brazil when Trump launched his first trade war in 2018. Last year, Brazilian beans accounted for more than 70% of China's imports, while the U.S. share was down to 21%, World Bank data shows. Argentina and other South American countries also are selling more to China, which has diversified to boost food security.

What American farmers are doing in response

U.S. farmers also are broadening their customer base, said Sutter, who recently traveled to Japan and Indonesia in search of new markets. Taiwan pledged to purchase \$10 billion worth of soybeans, corn, wheat and beef in the next four years.

"There's strong diversification efforts underway," Sutter said. But "China is so big, it's hard to replace them overnight."

Farmers are working to boost consumption at home, too. Growth in biodiesel production has taken in some of the soybeans that were once exported. Others are crushed to produce soybean oil and soybean meal. The United Soybean Board is investing in research into the benefits of using soybeans to feed dairy cows and hogs.

But Iowa farmer Robb Ewoldt, a director with the Soybean Board, knows that such domestic uses are growing gradually.

"We cannot replace a China in one shot," Ewoldt said. "It's not going to happen. We need to be realistic in that."

## Trump's vast federal cuts create distrust on Capitol Hill as shutdown risk grows

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — The money started drying up quickly, almost as soon as President Donald Trump began issuing his executive orders.

Head Start funds for early childhood programs. National Institutes of Health grants. Funding for the nation's public libraries and museums. Money from a landmark bipartisan infrastructure law to help schools renovate classrooms and states build electric vehicle charging stations. Federal Emergency Management Agency food and shelter assistance.

"There's a lot of fear out there," said Tommy Sheridan, deputy director of the National Head Start As-

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sociation, whose organization raised early concerns about funding delays that could impact children and families.

While the money is largely flowing again, he said, thanks in large part to Head Start's track record — celebrating its 60th anniversary this year — "Obviously, we need to make sure our funding is reliable."

All told, billions upon billions of dollars have been single-handedly stalled, scrapped or withheld by the Trump administration so far this year — with as much as \$410 billion at risk, by certain congressional estimates — in one of the most brazen affronts to the federal process in 50 years, since the budget laws were overhauled in the Nixon era.

Trump's funding cuts violate law, watchdog says

Trump's willingness to order the government agencies to simply halt spending that's already been approved by Congress and signed into law is a violation, according to a nonpartisan government watchdog. And it's creating a crisis on Capitol Hill and beyond, with an undercurrent of deep distrust as lawmakers clash over legislation to prevent a federal government shutdown.

"Every single one of us should be deeply alarmed by the lawless course the administration is charting here," Sen. Patty Murray, the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, said at a summer hearing with Trump's budget director, Russ Vought, a chief architect of Project 2025.

On the surface, the standoff between Congress and the White House looks like a governmental dispute over federal spending levels, and the Trump administration's desire to end so-called "woke" and wasteful programs across the nation, and the world.

But from DOGE's budget-slashing efforts under billionaire Elon Musk to the budget rescission packages Vought has sent to Capitol Hill, what's unfolding is a deeper debate over the separation of powers — raising stark questions over what happens if the White House moves more aggressively to cut House and Senate lawmakers out of the federal funding process.

This week, Trump's Office of Management and Budget under Vought directed agencies to prepare for mass firings — reductions in force — rather than simply furloughs of federal workers, in the event of a shutdown next week.

White House, Congress and the separation of powers

"This is a high point in presidential assertion over the spending power — it might be the highest point ever," said Kevin Kosar, a scholar at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute.

While past presidents challenged Congress before — Jimmy Carter simply vetoed dozens of spending bills, and George W. Bush used presidential signing statements to carve out sections of legislation he disagreed with — Kosar said what Trump is doing "really garbles the logic" of the entire budget process.

"The rules don't really apply much any more," he said.

And it's coming to an inflection point next week, Sept. 30, when Congress must pass legislation to keep the government from shutting down.

Vought's office did not respond to a request for an interview, but he has been vocal about his views — and what's to come.

From the pages of Project 2025

Writing in Project 2025, Vought explained that "the great challenge" facing a conservative president "is the existential need for aggressive use of the vast powers of the executive branch."

Vought said this will require a "boldness to bend or break the bureaucracy to the presidential will."

Since Trump took office in January, the federal watchdog, the Government Accountability Office, has issued a flurry of notices of violations in a rare reprimand of instances where the Trump administration has failed to unleash the money in accordance with the appropriation laws from Congress.

Among the dozens of investigations GAO opened this year, the funding uncertainty around Head Start, the NIH, museums and libraries, energy and transportation infrastructure programs and FEMA are among those that rose to become violations. More decisions are expected in the days ahead, before the Sept. 30 deadline for the federal government to get certain funds out the door.

Edda Emmanuelli Perez, the general counsel at GAO, which was created more than 100 years ago as a

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check on federal spending, said presidents have the ability to roll back spending, so long as it follows the process.

"The president has that authority to make these proposals," she said in an interview.

"If Congress then decides, yes, we agree, we're going to pass a law to cancel the funds, then the funds get cancelled," she said. "If Congress does not pass it, then that means the president has to, again, go back to the terms of the law and release those funds."

After Nixon cut funds, Congress created a new law — and it's now being challenged

That's outlined in the Impoundment Control Act, which Congress approved in 1974 after concerns over then-President Richard Nixon's refusal to allocate funds on programs he opposed. It requires the White House to notify Congress of its proposed rescissions. Congress then has 45 days, under a fast-track procedure, to vote on the president's proposal.

This summer, Congress, where Republicans hold the majority, approved Trump's request to claw back some \$9 billion in already approved funding for public broadcasting, including National Public Radio, and certain foreign aid programs, over the objections of Democrats.

But Vought is testing the limits of the impoundment law.

The White House late last month sent Congress a second rescissions package of \$4.9 billion in cuts to USAID foreign aid programs, bumping up against the Sept. 30 year-end deadline. If Congress fails to act before next Tuesday, the money would essentially go away, in a so-called "pocket rescission."

"The Trump Administration is committed to getting America's fiscal house in order by cutting government spending that is woke, weaponized, and wasteful," the White House said in a message to Congress announcing the rescissions proposal.

"Now, for the first time in 50 years, the President is using his authority under the Impoundment Control Act to deploy a pocket rescission, cancelling \$5 billion in foreign aid and international organization funding."

Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine, the powerful chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, has said the administration's attempt to rescind the funds without congressional approval would be "a clear violation of the law."

But late Friday, the Supreme Court, in a victory for Trump's reach, extended an order allowing the administration to keep the funds frozen.

## **Trump finds new trade targets -- pharmaceuticals, kitchen cabinets and heavy trucks**

By PAUL WISEMAN and MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — Naturepedic, a mattress and furniture company based outside Cleveland, has been planning to introduce an upscale upholstered headboard late this year or early in 2026.

But President Donald Trump has thrown those plans into disarray. On Thursday night, the president announced on social media that he was slapping a 30% tax on imported upholstered furniture. Naturepedic ships its headboards in from India and Vietnam.

So what is the company to do?

"Do we continue forth ... and hope for the best?" asked Arin Schultz, Naturepedic's chief growth officer. "Or do we feel like we're priced out and drop it altogether?" And if Naturepedic decides to continue with the rollout, "do we eat the cost or pass it on" to customers?

Across the United States, lots of executives were asking themselves similar questions as they came to work Friday morning.

Upholstered furniture, after all, wasn't the only import in Trump's crosshairs Thursday night. In addition, the president posted on his Truth Social platform, he's plastering import taxes – tariffs – of 100% on pharmaceutical drugs, 50% on kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities and 25% on heavy trucks.

And he's not waiting around to do it. The tariffs, he said, would take effect Wednesday.

Trump also raised eyebrows by justifying the levy on vanities and sofas as necessary for national security. "It's hard to see how a kitchen cabinet industry is essential to winning the next war," said Mary Lovely,



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senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

Thursday's social media barrage was just the latest in Trump's push to upend American trade policy, which for decades pushed for lower trade barriers around the world.

In place of an open market, Trump has built a tariff wall around the U.S. economy, slapping double-digit taxes on imports from almost every country on earth and targeting products (steel, aluminum, autos) with specific taxes of their own.

Trump says the tariffs will protect U.S. industries from foreign competition, encourage companies to bring production to the United States and raise money for the U.S. Treasury.

They certainly have become a moneymaker for the federal government. Since fiscal year 2025 began last Oct. 1, the U.S. Treasury has collected \$172 billion in customs duties, up by \$96 billion (or 126%) from the same period in fiscal 2024. Still, tariffs account for less than 4% of federal revenue.

Businesses, lawyers and trade analysts are still wondering what to make of Trump's Thursday night tariffs. "We've only seen the President's Truth Social posts," said Dan McCarthy, principal in McCarthy Consulting and a former official with the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative in the Biden administration. "We need to see the details."

For example, Naturepedic isn't sure whether the 30% levy on upholstered furniture will be stacked atop a separate and earlier 50% tariff on goods from India.

Here's what we know so far:

Luring drug production back to the U.S.

The president has been threatening tariffs of 200% or more on pharmaceuticals. "It's to force Big Pharma to move jobs and put new factories into the U.S.," said Barry Appleton, a senior fellow at the Center for International Law at New York Law School. "So it's industrial policy."

In recent decades, drugmakers have moved many operations overseas – to take advantage of lower costs in China and India and tax breaks in Ireland and Switzerland.

The COVID-19 experience – when countries were desperate to hang onto their own medicine and medical supplies – underscored the dangers of relying on foreign countries in a crisis, especially when a key supplier is America's geopolitical rival China.

The stock prices of pharmaceutical companies actually rose after Trump's announcement Thursday night. The 100% tariff was lower than it might have been. And Trump said the tariffs would not apply to companies "breaking ground" or being "under construction."

Several big drugmakers like Merck & Co. Inc., Eli Lilly and Co. and Johnson & Johnson have already announced U.S. expansion plans.

In his tariff announcement, Trump did not mention generic drugs, which account for the vast majority of U.S. prescriptions.

Still, analysts warn, the tariffs are likely to mean higher prices. "The people who are punished the most are Americans who need the drugs so badly, especially those who don't have full health care plans," Appleton said. He called the tariff a "simplistic but drastic" approach to a complicated problem. "We don't know how it's going to go, but it doesn't look like it's going to do well for consumers," he said.

A blow to homeowners and the housing market

The tariffs on kitchen cabinets, bathroom vanities and upholstered furniture come as the White House is investigating whether imports of lumber and other wood products pose a threat to U.S. national security. A report on that investigation is due Nov. 26 and could mean more and broader tariffs.

The levies are likely to hurt big furniture exporters China and Vietnam.

But they're also likely to drive up the cost of new homes and apartments and of do-it-yourself redecorating projects.

Homeowners are already scaling back due to high costs and a shaky economy. According to the Labor Department, the price of living room, kitchen and dining room furniture has risen nearly 10% over the past year.

"Adding significant costs to furniture, cabinets, vanities and building materials will make the American dream of owning a home significantly more expensive," said Jonathan Gold, the National Retail Federa-



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tion's vice president of supply chain and customs policy. "The speed at which these tariff announcements are made and implemented continues to wreak havoc on retail supply chains. The uncertainty makes it difficult for retailers to properly plan and mitigate the impact of tariffs."

A message to Mexico?

Charles Clevenger, a supply chain specialist at the consultancy UHY, said tariffs on pharmaceuticals make sense because so much production has shifted away from the United States to Europe and Asia. Likewise, North Carolina and other states in the American South have also lost furniture factories to cheaper competitors in the China.

But he was surprised by the tariffs on heavy trucks because "we do have a rather robust industry" – with manufacturers like Paccar (parent company of Peterbilt and Kenworth).

But Appleton at New York Law School suspects the tariff is aimed at Mexico, where many heavy trucks are made. The U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, a trade deal negotiated in Trump's first term, is coming up for negotiation. "I don't think that (the tariff) was done by accident, Appleton said. "They wanted to put some more pressure onto the Mexicans" to make concessions in the talks.

Using Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, Trump had launched investigations into whether imports of pharmaceuticals, lumber and heavy trucks posed a threat to U.S. national security.

He'd justified his broader tariffs another way: by declaring national emergencies under a 1977 law. But two courts have ruled that Trump overstepped his authority by invoking the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose import taxes. The Supreme Court is hearing the case on appeal.

Robert Lawrence, a professor of International trade and investment at Harvard University, said that using Section 232 gives the president a Plan B if the courts strike down his IEEPA tariffs. "He now has insurance and shows that he's going to be able to get away with raising tariffs, even if he loses that case."

But Ted Murphy, co-leader of the trade practice at the Sidley Austin law firm, said: "It's hard to discern much of a plan ... What the administration does is they identify a problem and then the solution is a big tariff. The question is whether that's really as nuanced or strategic as it could be. There could be a strategy but it's hard to discern from a tweet."

## Private equity sees profits in power utilities as electric bills rise and Big Tech seeks more energy

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Private investment firms that are helping finance America's artificial intelligence race and the huge buildout of energy-hungry data centers are getting interested in the local utilities that deliver electricity to regular customers — and the servers that power AI.

Billions of dollars from such firms are now flowing toward electric utilities in places including New Mexico, Texas, Wisconsin and Minnesota that deliver power to more than 150 million customers across millions of miles of power lines.

"The reason is very simple: because there's a lot of money to be made," said Greg Brown, a University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill professor of finance who researches private equity and hedge funds.

Private investment firms that have done well investing in infrastructure over the last 15 years now have strong incentives to add data centers, power plants and the services that support them at a time of rapid expansion and spiking demand ignited by the late 2022 debut of OpenAI's ChatGPT, Brown said.

BlackRock's CEO Larry Fink said as much in a July interview on CNBC, saying infrastructure is "at the beginning of a golden age."

"We believe that there's a need for trillions of dollars investing in infrastructure related to our power grids, AI, the whole digitization of the economy" and energy, Fink said.

Deals are in the works

In recent weeks, private equity firm Blackstone has sought regulatory approval to buy out a pair of utilities, Albuquerque-based Public Service Company of New Mexico and Lewisville, Texas-based Texas New

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Mexico Power Co.

Wisconsin earlier this year granted the buyout of the parent of Superior Water, Light and Power and the owner of Northern Indiana Public Service Co. last year sold a 19.9% stake in the utility to Blackstone.

However, a fight has erupted in Minnesota over the buyout of the parent of Duluth-based Minnesota Power and the outcome could determine how such firms expand their holdings in an industry that's a nexus between regular people, gargantuan data centers and the power sources they share.

Under the proposed deal, a BlackRock subsidiary and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board would buy out the publicly traded Allete, parent of Minnesota Power, which provides power to 150,000 customers and owns a variety of power sources, including coal, gas, wind and solar.

Both sides of the fight have attracted influential players ahead of a possible Oct. 3 vote by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. Raising the stakes is the potential that Google could build a data center there, a lucrative prospect for whoever owns Minnesota Power.

Opponents of the acquisition suspect that BlackRock is only interested in squeezing bigger profits from regular ratepayers. Allete makes the opposite argument, that BlackRock can show more patience because it is free of the short-term burdens of publicly traded companies.

More buyouts worry opponents

Opponents also worry that a successful Minnesota Power buyout will launch more such deals around the U.S. and drive up electric bills for homes.

"It's no secret that private equity is extremely aggressive in chasing profits, and when it comes to utilities, the profit motive lands squarely on the backs of ratepayers who don't have a choice of who they buy their electricity from," said Karlee Weinmann of the Energy and Policy Institute, which pushes utilities to keep rates low and use renewable energy sources.

The buyout proposals come at a time when electricity bills are rising fast across the U.S., and growing evidence suggests that the bills of some regular Americans are rising to subsidize the rapid buildout of power plants and power lines to supply the gargantuan energy needs of Big Tech's data centers.

Mark Ellis, a former utility executive-turned-consumer advocate who gave expert testimony against the Minnesota Power buyout, said he's talked to private equity firms that want to get into the business of electric utilities.

"It's just a matter of what's the price and will the regulator approve it," Ellis said. "The challenge is they're not going to come up for sale very often."

That's because electric utilities are seen as valuable long-term investments that earn around 10% returns not on the electricity they deliver, but the upcharge that utility regulators allow on capital investments, like upgrading poles, wires and substations.

That gives utility owners the incentive to spend more so they can make more money, critics say.

Big players on both sides

The fight over Minnesota Power resembles some of the battles erupting around the U.S. where residents don't want a data center campus plunked down next to them.

Building trades unions and the administration of Democratic Gov. Tim Walz, who appointed or reappointed all five utility commissioners, are siding with Allete and BlackRock.

On the other side are the state attorney general's office and the industrial interests that buy two-thirds of Minnesota Power's electricity, including U.S. Steel and other owners of iron ore mines, Enbridge-run oil pipelines and pulp and paper mills.

In its petition, Allete told regulators that, under BlackRock's ownership, Minnesota Power's operations, strategy and values wouldn't change and that it doesn't expect the buyout price — \$6.2 billion, including \$67 a share for stockholders at a 19% premium — to affect electric rates.

In essence, Allete — which solicited bids for a buyout — argues that BlackRock's ownership will benefit the public because, under it, the utility will have an easier time raising the money it needs to comply with Minnesota's law requiring utilities to get 100% of their electricity from carbon-free sources by 2040.

Allete has projected needing to spend \$4.3 billion on transmission and clean energy projects over five

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years.

However, opponents say Allete's suggestion that it'll struggle to raise money is unfounded, and undercut by its own filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission in which it says it is "well positioned" to meet its financing needs.

Skepticism from regulators

It hasn't been smooth sledding for BlackRock.

In July, an administrative law judge, Megan J. McKenzie, recommended that the commission reject the deal, saying that the evidence reveals the buyout group's "intent to do what private equity is expected to do – pursue profit in excess of public markets through company control."

In recent days, a utility commission staff analysis echoed McKenzie's concerns.

They suggested that private investors could simply load up Minnesota Power's parent with massive debts, borrow at a relatively low interest rate and turn a fat profit margin from the utility commission granting a generous rate of return.

"For the big investors in private equity, this is a win-win," the staff wrote. "For the ratepayers of the highly leveraged utility, this represents paying huge profits to the owners if the private equity 'wins' and dealing with a bankrupt utility provider if it loses – it is a lose-lose."

## **Tropical weather in the Atlantic is slamming the Caribbean and may strike Southeast US next**

MIAMI (AP) — Dangerous tropical weather brewed Friday in the Atlantic Ocean with Humberto intensifying into a powerful Category 4 hurricane and a system forecasters dubbed "Potential Tropical Cyclone Nine" striking the Caribbean and taking aim at the Southeast United States.

Hurricane Humberto had maximum sustained winds of 145 mph (230 kph) Friday night, according to the Miami-based National Hurricane Center's latest advisory. The storm was located about 390 miles (630 kilometers) northeast of the northern Leeward Islands.

Humberto could produce life-threatening surf and rip currents for the northern Leeward Islands, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Bermuda over the weekend, forecasters said.

Meanwhile, a tropical storm warning associated with Potential Tropical Cyclone Nine was issued for the Central Bahamas. The center of the tropical disturbance was about 145 miles (235 kilometers) northwest of the eastern tip of Cuba, forecasters said. It had top winds of 35 mph (55 kph). A tropical storm watch was issued for portions of the northwestern Bahamas.

The hurricane center said the potential cyclone was likely to become a tropical depression — the next name in the alphabet would be Imelda — on Saturday. By Sunday, it could be a tropical storm.

The forecast put the system on track to approach the Southeast U.S. over the weekend and into early next week.

South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster declared a state of emergency over the storm Friday evening saying while there was uncertainty, the state needed to prepare. The declaration allows state emergency officials to begin coordination with local and federal governments and assures people will be eligible for federal aid.

Earlier in the day, crews in Charleston, South Carolina, were getting sandbags together, checking high water vehicles and preparing pumps to get any floodwater out of the city.

"Even though this has not formed yet, we are treating it as if we are expecting some kind of impact. That's critical. We don't want to downplay the scenario," Chief Fire Marshal Michael Julazadeh said at an emergency Charleston City Council meeting.

The tropical disturbance has already brought heavy rains in the Dominican Republic on Friday, leading authorities to evacuate hundreds of people and declare a red alert in five provinces. Flooding of rivers, streams, and ravines left dozens of communities cut off by landslides and fallen bridges, including one that collapsed while a truck was crossing, killing the driver in the community of Yamasá.

Flooding in the southwestern province of Azua, one of the areas most affected by the rains, displaced at least 774 people, and 26 were being sheltered due to the overflowing of the Tábara River, Civil Defense

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spokesman Jensen Sánchez told The Associated Press.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency urged residents of coastal areas in the Southeast U.S. on Thursday to pay attention as that weather system continues to develop, saying its staff "is ready to respond swiftly, if needed."

In the eastern Atlantic, the center of post-tropical cyclone Gabrielle moved away from the Azores. A hurricane warning for the entire Portuguese archipelago was discontinued. On Friday afternoon, the storm was about 245 miles (395 kilometers) east-northeast of Lajes Air Base in the Azores. The hurricane center stopped issuing advisories for the system.

Some strengthening was forecast through Friday night, with weakening expected over the weekend, and Gabrielle was expected to approach the Portugal's coast by early Sunday. Swells expected to produce life-threatening surf and rip currents were expected to reach Portugal, northwestern Spain and northern Morocco on Saturday.

In the Pacific Ocean, Hurricane Narda was churning about 970 miles (1,560 kilometers) west-southwest of the southern tip of Baja California and heading west-northwest at 13 mph (20 kph). The Category 1 storm was expected to maintain its strength on Friday before weakening over the weekend.

Swells generated by Narda were affecting coastal Mexico and Baja California Sur, forecasters said. The swells that could bring life-threatening surf and rip current conditions were expected to reach southern California over the weekend.

## **ICE arrests leader of Iowa's largest school district, says he was living and working in US illegally**

By HANNAH FINGERHUT and RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Federal immigration agents targeted the well-liked leader of Iowa's largest school district in a traffic stop Friday and arrested him after he fled into the woods, leaving educators and community members stunned.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement said Des Moines Public School Superintendent Ian Roberts was in the country illegally and had no work authorization. Roberts, who is from Guyana in South America, was considered an ICE fugitive because he was subject to a final removal order issued in 2024, the agency said.

ICE said that it targeted Roberts for arrest by initiating a traffic stop on Friday while he was driving in his school-issued vehicle. After he fled, officers discovered his vehicle abandoned near a wooded area. He was eventually located and taken into ICE custody with the help of Iowa State Patrol officers. Roberts was brought to Woodbury County's jail in northwest Iowa late Friday afternoon, according to jail and ICE records. It was unclear if Roberts had an attorney to represent him.

Phil Roeder, the district's spokesperson, said he was supposed to meet Roberts at a school event Friday morning, but Roberts sent a text saying he could not make it. Roeder said he got a video call from Roberts soon after and watched officials detain him.

Roeder told The Associated Press that the district has seen "nothing that would suggest that he's not a citizen." The district said Friday afternoon that a third party was hired to conduct a comprehensive background check on Roberts and that Roberts completed an I-9, which requires workers to present documents showing that they were authorized to work. District officials also stated they had no knowledge of an order of removal issued in 2024.

Roberts, who has described himself as a longtime gun owner and hunter, was in possession of a loaded handgun, \$3,000 in cash and a fixed-blade hunting knife when arrested, ICE said.

"This should be a wake-up call for our communities to the great work that our officers are doing every day to remove public safety threats," ICE enforcement and removal operations regional official Sam Olson said in a statement. "How this illegal alien was hired without work authorization, a final order of removal, and a prior weapons charge is beyond comprehension and should alarm the parents of that school district."

Roberts is an experienced educator



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Des Moines school officials said that they were still gathering information about the situation, which they called legally complex. They described Roberts as a dynamic leader who connected with students of all backgrounds.

Jackie Norris, school board president, said Roberts has been an "integral part of our school community" who has "shown up in ways big and small."

A longtime leader at school districts across the nation, the 54-year-old began his term as superintendent of Des Moines schools in July 2023. In that position, he oversaw a district that serves more than 30,000 students and nearly 5,000 employees. The state board of educational examiners issued Roberts a professional administrator license in 2023, which remains active.

He earned a \$270,000 annual base salary, according to his first contract with the district, which was in effect until June 30 this year.

Republican Gov. Kim Reynolds was made aware Friday morning that Roberts was in custody, according to her spokesperson Mason Mauro. Reynolds was in contact with state and federal authorities.

In a joint statement, the presidents of unions representing teachers and other school employees in Des Moines and across the state said they were shocked by Roberts' detention. They described his compassion for all students of all backgrounds as "a beacon of light in one of the state's most diverse school districts."

Before coming to Iowa, Roberts had previously worked as superintendent of the Millcreek Township School District in Pennsylvania. The district said in an email they were aware of the reports but declined further comment.

Roberts is the son of immigrant parents from Guyana

A biography for Roberts listed on the district's website says he was born to immigrant parents from Guyana and spent much of his childhood in Brooklyn, New York.

Coppin State University's website features an alumni profile of Roberts, who graduated from the school in Baltimore in 1998. In it, Roberts said his father immigrated to the United States in the 1980s, and his mother immigrated in the early 2000s.

ICE said that Roberts entered the U.S. on a student visa in 1999. The next year, he competed for Guyana in the Olympics in track and field.

Pleaded guilty to a gun infraction

ICE pointed to a prior weapons charge for Roberts but provided no details.

Court records in Pennsylvania show that Roberts pleaded guilty in January 2022 to a minor infraction for unlawfully possessing a loaded firearm in a vehicle, and was fined \$100 plus court costs. The case stemmed from a citation in Erie County issued the prior month by a Pennsylvania Game Commission officer, who stopped Roberts as he was finishing a day of deer hunting on state lands.

Roberts said at the time he was a longtime licensed hunter and gun owner, and that he left his hunting rifle on the seat of his vehicle in plain view to ensure the officer did not feel threatened during their interaction. He said that he was shocked when the officer cited him for doing so, but that he pleaded guilty to avoid any distraction. He questioned whether his dark skin may have played a role in the case.

"I may not appear to be the 'type of man' who would enjoy deer season in Pennsylvania, in fact, I am and have been hunting for more than 20 years," Roberts wrote on a social media post then.

Roeder said the district was aware of the 2022 charge and it had been addressed early on.

It was the second time in two days that an aggressive action by ICE shocked local officials in Iowa. On Thursday, agents in plain clothes who only identified themselves as "federal agents" tackled a man at a grocery store in downtown Iowa City, pinning him to the floor and handcuffing him as shocked shoppers looked on.

A crowd of people gathered Friday evening outside the federal building in downtown Des Moines to protest Roberts' detention. People also gathered Friday in Iowa City to protest the detention of the man in Iowa City.



## Assata Shakur, a fugitive Black militant sought by the US since 1979, dies in Cuba

By PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

Assata Shakur, a Black liberation activist who was given political asylum in Cuba after her 1979 escape from a U.S. prison where she had been serving a life sentence for killing a police officer, has died, her daughter and the Cuban government said.

Shakur, who went by Joanne Deborah Chesimard before changing her name, died Thursday in the capital city of Havana due to "health conditions and advanced age," Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. Shakur's daughter, Kakuya Shakur, confirmed her mother's death in a Facebook post.

Officials in New Jersey, where Shakur had been arrested, convicted and imprisoned, said she was 78.

A member of Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army, Shakur's case had long been emblematic of the fraught relations between the U.S. and Cuba. American authorities, including President Donald Trump during his first term, demanded her return from the communist nation for decades.

The FBI put Shakur on its list of "most wanted terrorists," but, in her telling — and in the minds of her supporters — she was pursued for crimes she didn't commit or that were justified.

On May 2, 1973, Shakur and two others were pulled over by New Jersey State Police troopers because the car they were driving had a broken taillight.

A gunfight ensued and one of the troopers, Werner Foerster, was killed and another was wounded. One of Shakur's companions was also killed.

The New York City native fled but was eventually apprehended. She was found guilty of murder, armed robbery and other crimes in 1977 and was sentenced to life in prison. Shakur was charged with additional bank robberies and in the nonfatal shootings of two other police officers, but most of those charges were dismissed or resulted in her acquittal.

Shakur's prison stint was short-lived, though. In November 1979, members of the Black Liberation Army, posing as visitors, stormed the Clinton Correctional Facility for women, took two guards hostage and commandeered a prison van to break her out.

Shakur disappeared before eventually emerging in 1984 in Cuba, where Fidel Castro granted her asylum.

Offering Shakur safe harbor was one of the most famous examples of Cuba aligning itself with what it describes as revolutionary forces struggling against the oppressive capitalist empire to the north.

Much like Cuba supported anti-colonial and left-wing forces in Africa, Central and South America, the Cuban government saw the armed Black liberation movement in the U.S. as part of a global revolutionary struggle.

New Jersey officials decry her asylum

New Jersey State Assemblyman Michael Inganamort, who sponsored a resolution last year calling on Cuba to extradite Shakur, lamented Friday that "justice was never served" in Foerster's death, while the labor union representing New Jersey officers dismissed Shakur "for her crime and cowardice."

New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy and State Police Superintendent Patrick Callahan said they would "vigorously oppose" any attempt to repatriate Shakur's remains to the U.S.

"Sadly, it appears she has passed without being held fully accountable for her heinous crimes," they said in a joint statement. "Unlike his killer, Trooper Foerster never had a chance to live out his days in peace."

Sundiata Acoli, who was also convicted in Foerster's killing, was granted parole in 2022.

In her writings over the years, Shakur has maintained she didn't shoot anyone and had her hands in the air when she was wounded during the gunfire.

Shakur's writings became a rallying cry

More recently, her writings became a rallying cry during the Black Lives Matter movement, though opponents criticized her words as being influenced by Marxist and communist ideology.

"It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win," Shakur wrote in "Assata: An Autobiography," originally published in 1988. "We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains."

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Black Lives Matter Grassroots Inc., a collective of racial justice activists from around the U.S., vowed to "fight in her honor and memory."

Malkia Amala Cyril, an early organizer of the BLM movement, expressed sorrow because Shakur died during a time of rising authoritarianism.

"The world in this era needs the kind of courage and radical love she practiced if we are going to survive it," said Cyril, whose late mother had been part of the Black Panthers in New York alongside Shakur.

Shakur's influence extended into the music world. She was famously close to the family of late rapper Tupac Shakur, who had considered her a godmother.

Public Enemy, the political hip-hop group and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees, are thought to be the first major artists to reference Shakur. The 1988 song "Rebel Without a Pause," from the album *It Takes A Nation*, includes the lyrics "supporter of Chesimard," referring to her legal name.

Rapper Common told Shakur's story in his 2000 song "A Song for Assata." The Grammy award-winner's invitation to a White House poetry event in 2011, during the Obama administration, drew outrage from conservatives and law enforcement groups who felt it was disrespectful to Foerster's family and police officers broadly.

## **DNA evidence links a dead man to the 1991 killings of 4 girls at Texas yogurt shop**

By JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Police named a dead man Friday as a new suspect in the 1991 unsolved killings of four teenage girls at an Austin yogurt shop, saying DNA evidence led to a "significant breakthrough" in the brutal crime that has haunted Texas' capital and stumped investigators for decades.

In a statement, Austin police said DNA tests led investigators to Robert Eugene Brashers, who died by suicide in 1999 during a standoff with law enforcement. He has since then been linked to several killings and rape in other states.

The announcement came amid renewed attention on the case with the release last month of "The Yogurt Shop Murders," an HBO documentary series. Police said the case remains open and scheduled a Monday news conference to detail their findings.

The murders stunned Texas' capital city and became known as one of the area's most notorious crimes. Austin police investigators and prosecutors had stumbled over the case for years as they waded through thousands of leads, several false confessions and badly damaged evidence from the burned-out crime scene.

"Our team never gave up working this case," Austin police said.

Amy Ayers, 13; Eliza Thomas, 17; and sisters Jennifer and Sarah Harbison, ages 17 and 15, were bound, gagged and shot in the head at the "I Can't Believe It's Yogurt" store where two of them worked. The building was then set on fire.

Investigators have said that around closing time, someone entered the store through the back door, attacked the girls and set the fire. The bodies were found when firefighters were still battling the blaze.

The autopsy report offered glimpses of the lives of teenage sisters and friends: Ayers wore small, white earrings. Sarah Harbison was wearing a gold necklace and a Mickey Mouse watch. Jennifer Harbison wore a high school ring and a Timex watch.

It also suggested the horror: their hands were tied with underwear and mouths were gagged with cloth. Ayers was shot twice.

In 1999, authorities arrested four men on murder charges. Two of them, Robert Springsteen and Michael Scott, were teenagers at the time of the murders. They initially confessed and implicated each other. But both men quickly recanted and said their statements were made under pressure by police.

Still both were tried and convicted. Initially Springsteen was sent to death row, but his sentence was then reduced to life in prison.

Their convictions were overturned and they were set for retrial a decade later.

A judge ordered both men freed in 2009 when prosecutors said new DNA tests that weren't available

in 1991 had revealed another male suspect.

In 2018, Missouri authorities said DNA evidenced linked Brashers to the strangulation of a South Carolina woman in 1990, and the shooting of a mother and daughter in Missouri in 1998. The evidence also connected him to the 1997 rape of a 14-year-old girl in Tennessee.

Brashers died in 1999 when he shot himself during an hours-long standoff with police at a motel in Kennett, Missouri.

## **Sara Jane Moore, who tried to assassinate President Gerald Ford in 1975, dies at 95**

By TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Sara Jane Moore, who was imprisoned for more than 30 years after she made an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate President Gerald Ford in 1975, has died. She was 95.

Moore died Wednesday at a nursing home in Franklin, Tennessee, according to Demetria Kalodimos, a longtime acquaintance who said she was informed by the executor of Moore's estate. Kalodimos is an executive producer at the Nashville Banner newspaper, which was first to report the death.

Moore seemed an unlikely candidate to gain national notoriety as a violent political radical who nearly killed a president. When she shot at Ford in San Francisco, she was a middle-aged woman who had begun dabbling in leftist groups and sometimes served as an FBI informant.

Sentenced to life, Moore was serving her time at the Federal Correctional Institution in Dublin, California, when she was unexpectedly paroled Dec. 31, 2007. Federal officials gave no details on why she was set free.

She lived largely anonymously in an undisclosed location after that, but in broadcast interviews she expressed regret for what she had done. She said she had been caught up in the radical political movements that were common in California in the mid-1970s.

"I had put blinders on, I really had, and I was listening to only ... what I thought I believed," she told San Francisco television station KGO in April 2009. "We thought that doing that would actually trigger a new revolution."

Two would-be assassins

Moore was often confused with Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, a disciple of cult murderer Charles Manson who aimed a semiautomatic pistol at Ford in Sacramento, California, on Sept. 5, 1975. A Secret Service agent grabbed the gun before any shots could be fired, and the president was unharmed.

Just 17 days later, on Sept. 22, Moore shot at Ford as he waved to a crowd outside the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco's Union Square. Oliver Sipple, a 33-year-old former Marine, knocked the .38-caliber pistol out of her hand as she fired, causing the shot to go astray and hit a building.

"I'm sorry I missed," Moore said during an interview with the San Jose Mercury News seven years later. "Yes, I'm sorry I missed. I don't like to be a failure."

But in later interviews, before and after her release, she repeatedly said that she regretted her actions, saying she was convinced that the government had declared war on the left.

Asked by KGO in 2009 what she would say to Ford if that had been possible, she replied that she would tell him, "I'm very sorry that it happened. ... I'm very happy that I did not succeed." Ford died in 2006, about a year before her release.

Her family did not publicly comment on her death. Geri Spieler, who wrote a biography of Moore titled "Housewife Assassin," said she had abandoned her children and was estranged from all her living relatives.

Multiple marriages, name changes, unclear motives

Moore was born Sara Jane Kahn on Feb. 15, 1930, in Charleston, West Virginia. Her confusing background, which included multiple failed marriages, name changes and involvement with both leftist political groups and the FBI, baffled the public and even her own defense attorney during her trial.

"I never got a satisfactory answer from her as to why she did it," retired federal public defender James F. Hewitt once said. "There was just bizarre stuff, and she would never tell anyone anything about her background."

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Ford insisted that the two attempts on his life should not prevent him from having contact with the people, saying, "If we can't have the opportunity of talking with one another, seeing one another, shaking hands with one another, something has gone wrong in our society."

His other attacker, Fromme, also was freed from prison eventually. She had no comment as she left a federal lockup in Texas in August 2009 at age 60.

Working with leftist groups but also the FBI

It was in 1974 that Moore began working for People in Need, a free food program for poor people established by millionaire Randolph Hearst as ransom after his daughter Patty was kidnapped by the radical Symbionese Liberation Army.

Moore soon became involved with leftists, ex-convicts and other members of San Francisco's counter-culture. At this time, she became an FBI informant.

Moore said she shot at Ford because she thought she would be killed once it was disclosed that she was an FBI informant. The agency ended its relationship with her about four months before the shooting.

"I was going to go down anyway," she said in the 1982 interview with the San Jose Mercury News. "And if I was going to go down, I was going to do it my way. If the government was going to kill me, I was going to make some kind of statement."

A failed prison escape

Moore was sent to a West Virginia women's prison in 1977. Two years later she escaped but was captured several hours later.

She was later transferred to a prison in Pleasanton, California, before going to Dublin.

In 2000 she sued the warden of her federal prison to prevent him from taking keys given to inmates to lock themselves in as a security measure.

In an interview after the July 2024 assassination attempt on President Donald Trump, Moore told the Nashville Banner that part of what motivated her was that Ford, who became president after Richard Nixon resigned, was not elected president.

"He wasn't elected to anything. He was appointed," Moore said. "It wasn't a belief, it was a fact. It was a fact that he was appointed."

## **Listeria found in Walmart, Trader Joe's meals may be linked to deadly fettuccine outbreak**

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

Federal health officials are warning consumers not to eat certain heat-and-eat pasta meals sold at Walmart and Trader Joe's because they may be contaminated with listeria bacteria previously linked to a deadly outbreak.

The U.S. Agriculture Department updated a public health alert Friday to include Trader Joe's Cajun Style Blackened Chicken Breast Fettuccine Alfredo sold in 16-ounce plastic trays. The products have best-by dates of Sept. 20, Sept. 24 and Sept. 27 and still may be in customers' refrigerators. The affected meals have the number P- 45288 inside the USDA inspection mark.

Late Thursday the USDA issued a warning for Marketside Linguine with Beef Meatballs & Marinara Sauce sold at Walmart in refrigerated 12-ounce clear plastic trays. Those products have best-by dates of Sept. 22 through Oct. 1. The affected meals contain the establishment numbers "EST. 50784" and "EST. 47718" inside the USDA mark of inspection on the label. They were sent to Walmart stores nationwide.

Additional products may be identified, according to USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service.

No recall has been issued, but FreshRealm, a large food producer that distributed the products, said they advised Walmart this week to pull the meals from store shelves. Walmart officials said they put a stop on sales and removed the products from stores.

The meals may be contaminated with the same strain of listeria that caused an outbreak tied to chicken fettuccine Alfredo sold at Walmart and Kroger stores. Four people were killed and at least 20 were sickened in the outbreak updated by federal health officials on Friday evening. The outbreak led to a large



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recall this summer.

FreshRealm conducted tests that detected the listeria in linguine used in the meatball dish, company officials said. The strain matched the listeria identified in the chicken fettuccine Alfredo outbreak, the company said.

"We have long maintained that the source of the listeria was likely an ingredient supplied by a third party," the company said in a statement.

The pasta came from Nate's Fine Foods of Roseville, California. The company did not immediately respond to questions.

Listeria infections can cause serious illness, particularly in older adults, people with weakened immune systems and those who are pregnant or their newborns. Symptoms include fever, muscle aches, headache, stiff neck, confusion, loss of balance and convulsions.

About 1,600 people get sick each year from listeria infections and about 260 die, the CDC says. Federal officials in December said they were revamping protocols to prevent listeria infections after several high-profile outbreaks, including one linked to Boar's Head deli meats that led to 10 deaths and more than 60 illnesses last year.

## **Europe rides its best to another commanding Ryder Cup lead. US stars get blanked**

By DOUG FERGUSON AP Golf Writer

FARMINGDALE, N.Y. (AP) — Bryson DeChambeau, the ultimate showman, stared into the crowd to prepare it to be entertained in the Ryder Cup. Only that wasn't the indelible image from Friday at Bethpage Black, not even close.

Neither was the sight of Air Force One flying low over the 15th fairway for President Donald Trump to make his grand entrance, only to leave earlier than he planned.

It was Jon Rahm making putts from everything. It was Tommy Fleetwood pointing to his teammates after a clutch birdie. It was Rory McIlroy making two late birdies that assured Europe winning both sessions.

The star of the show turned out to be Europe's best, who showed that blue points are far more valuable than panache in building a 5 1/2-2 1/2 lead after the opening day.

"Massive," European captain Luke Donald said of the performance of his best players.

They all helped Team Europe silence the crowd at Bethpage Black and reminded the Americans that playing at home won't make it any easier to get their hands on that 17-inch gold trophy.

McIlroy could have made the deficit even greater except for missing a 12-foot birdie putt for the win on the final match. No matter. Europe faced a tough task and delivered, as it so often seems to do.

"It's a great day for Europe," McIlroy said. "We would have absolutely taken this."

The two biggest American stars, Scottie Scheffler and DeChambeau, lost both their matches.

Scheffler didn't reach the 17th hole in either of his losses. He became the first No. 1 player since Tiger Woods in 2002 at The Belfry to lose both his matches on opening day of the Ryder Cup.

"We gave ourselves plenty of opportunities," Scheffler said. "It really just came down to me not holing enough putts."

U.S. captain Keegan Bradley remained so confident in his team he sent out most of the same foursomes teams that got hammered in the morning.

That includes Harris English and Collin Morikawa, who were 5 down after eight holes against McIlroy and Fleetwood. Also playing again were Scheffler and Russell Henley, who won only two of the 15 holes they played.

"We have a plan. We're going to stick to it," Bradley said. "I really like how the players are falling out, and we've got to just go out there tomorrow and make a few more putts and it'll be a whole different story."

Trump became the first sitting U.S. president to attend the Ryder Cup. He was behind protective glass at first, then walked to the first tee for the afternoon session with DeChambeau. He left a little earlier than planned, perhaps not liking what he saw.

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Any U.S. hopes for a fast start faded quickly.

Bradley was on the first tee some 90 minutes before the matches even got started, trying to rile up the crowd that had filled the massive grandstand surrounding the first tee and 18th green before sunrise. He sent out DeChambeau for the first shot, and the two-time U.S. Open champion nearly drove the green to set up a birdie for the first red American score.

The idea was to deliver a message. Europe didn't flinch. It delivered points.

"The morning, although it was great, it was just one part of a long race," Rahm said. "We started great and we have to keep it going. That's what we did."

Rahm went 2-0, with Tyrrell Hatton in foursomes and Sepp Straka in fourballs, and his putting was sublime. In the fourballs match, he made five birdies of at least 9 feet, none bigger than his 20-footer on the 15th on top of Scheffler's 25-foot birdie that appeared — briefly — to give the Americans some hope.

The Spaniard is now unbeaten in 11 of his last 12 matches in the Ryder Cup, a streak that began with his singles win over Woods in Paris in 2018.

Fleetwood, coming off his first win on U.S. soil to capture the FedEx Cup at the Tour Championship, partnered with McIlroy in the morning and one of his English heroes, Justin Rose, in the afternoon.

It was Fleetwood's 18-foot birdie putt on the 16th in the afternoon — which DeChambeau failed to match — that paved the way for another European point.

"The scoreboard is what counts," Fleetwood said. "We obviously feel very prepared, and we've been looking forward to this day for a long time now. So to have got off to a good start feels great. Their team is stacked with amazing players, so whoever it is, the match going to be difficult, and the points mean so much."

The crowd felt like it belonged at a New York Yankees game, making the occasional insult but rarely a lasting wave of noise because the Americans gave them so little to cheer. McIlroy and Robert MacIntyre had to back off shots when someone from the gallery yelled as they stood over the ball.

Someone yelled, "Fore, right!" just as Rahm was to take the club away on his first shot.

Europe played through the heckling, match by match building a lead that surely got the Americans' attention going into another day of eight team matches.

There were a few bright spots for the Americans. Patrick Cantlay helped avoid a shutout in the opening session when he partnered with new father Xander Schauffele for a 2-up win in foursomes. And he nearly carried Sam Burns to victory in the final match, settling for a halve.

Cameron Young, who won a New York State Open at Bethpage Black when he was in college, returned home to his native state and hammered his way with Justin Thomas to the shortest match of the day, a 6-and-5 fourballs win.

But it's still a three-point deficit to a European team that looks strong as ever.

"We've only played 28% of the points," Bradley said. "This is first quarter. We've still got three quarters to go. I've got a lot of faith in my boys."

## Former national park superintendents urge Trump administration to close parks in case of shutdown

By MATTHEW DALY and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A group of former national park superintendents is calling on the Trump administration to close the parks to visitors in case of a government shutdown.

Past shutdowns in which parks remained open led to vandalism of iconic symbols, destroyed wildlife habitat and endangered visitors, 40 former superintendents said in a letter to Interior Secretary Doug Burgum.

A shutdown now could be even worse as parks are already under strain from a 24% reduction in staff and severe budget cuts, the former park officials said in their letter Thursday. A secretarial order by Burgum directing parks to remain open has led parks to neglect trash collection and other routine maintenance work, the ex-officials said.

The April directive was issued as Burgum came under criticism for staffing cuts across the country amid

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efforts by Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency to slash federal spending. Burgum directed national parks to "remain open and accessible" despite job cuts and said his department and the National Park Service "are committed to ensuring that all Americans have the opportunity to visit and enjoy our Nation's most treasured places."

Democratic Gov. Jared Polis of Colorado on Friday urged federal officials to keep national parks open and staffed, or create some mechanism for the state to help make that happen. Colorado and other states where national parks are major tourist draws lobbied to keep them open during past shutdowns.

But the former superintendents said poorly staffed parks are a danger to the public and the parks themselves.

"Leaving parks even partially open to the public during a shutdown with minimal — or no — park staffing is reckless and puts both visitors and park resources at risk," the former officials wrote.

"National parks don't run themselves. It is hardworking National Park Service employees that keep them safe, clean and accessible," they said. "If sufficient staff aren't there, visitors shouldn't be either."

Park staff manage everything from routine maintenance of buildings and trails to educational programs that teach visitors how to safely engage with nature and guided tours, they said. Long-term projects and research are also in jeopardy during a shutdown, they said.

"We don't leave museums open without curators, or airports without air traffic controllers, and we should not leave our national parks open without NPS employees," said Emily Thompson, executive director of the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks, which helped organize the letter.

If there is a shutdown starting Wednesday, "safety must come first," she added.

Polis said in a statement to The Associated Press that he would be willing to use "limited" state money to keep Rocky Mountain National Park open. It receives about 75% of the more than 1.6 million visits annually to national parks in Colorado, officials said.

"I urge the Administration to prioritize the operations of the national parks that so many people love and are a huge economic driver for our rural communities, especially during leaf peeping season," Polis said.

The Interior Department and the National Park Service declined comment Friday.

During a 35-day government shutdown in 2018 and 2019, in President Donald Trump's first term, many national parks stayed open. But with limited staffing, problems quickly emerged: Visitors cut new trails in sensitive soil, pried open park gates while no one was watching, and one off-roader even mowed down an iconic twisted-limbed Joshua tree in California.

During a 2013 shutdown, the park service under former President Barack Obama turned away millions of visitors to its more than 400 parks, national monuments, and other sites. The service estimated that the shutdown led to more than \$500 million in lost visitor spending nationwide. That also caused economic damage to gateway communities that border national parks and are heavily dependent on the visitors they draw.

Hoping to minimize the economic damage, officials in Utah reached an agreement with federal officials to donate \$1.7 million in 2013 to keep its national parks open. Arizona, Colorado, New York, South Dakota and Tennessee also donated money to keep parks staffed and open. Several states made similar deals in the 2018-2019 shutdown.

State money hasn't been used to keep national parks open in Montana because they are a federal responsibility, said Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte's spokesperson, Kaitlin Price.

A spokesperson for Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs in Arizona, Liliana Soto, said the state under the Trump administration cannot afford to keep open its national parks, which include the Grand Canyon.

## **Trump says he's ordered the declassification and release of all government records on Amelia Earhart**

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump announced Friday that he has ordered the declassification and public release of all government records about aviator Amelia Earhart, noting that her disappearance

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in 1937 as she attempted to fly around the world has "captivated millions."

Trump called her fate an "interesting story" and said people have been asking him about declassifying and making public everything the government has on her. Trump returned to office earlier this year promising to declassify and release government records on several high-profile figures, though Earhart's was not among the names mentioned.

The Republican president's administration since has released thousands of pages of records about President John F. Kennedy, his brother Robert F. Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. All were assassinated during the 1960s and the files revealed no blockbuster information.

Both the FBI and the National Archives and Records Administration already have released batches of documents about Earhart. Some who have doggedly researched her disappearance nearly 90 years ago doubt there is much more the government has on her that it can release.

Earhart was an aviation pioneer and first woman to pilot a solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. She disappeared in the South Pacific while trying to become the first woman to circumnavigate the globe.

"Amelia made it almost three quarters around the World before she suddenly, and without notice, vanished, never to be seen again," Trump wrote on his social media site. "Her disappearance, almost 90 years ago, has captivated millions. I am ordering my Administration to declassify and release all Government Records related to Amelia Earhart, her final trip, and everything else about her."

Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan, vanished while flying from New Guinea to Howland Island as part of her attempt to become the first female pilot to fly around the world. She had radioed that she was running low on fuel. The Navy searched but found no trace.

The U.S. government's official position has been that Earhart and Noonan went down with their plane. She was declared legally dead in 1939.

Since then, theories have abounded, with some veering into the absurd, including abduction by aliens, or Earhart living in New Jersey under an alias. Others speculate she and Noonan were executed by the Japanese or died as castaways on an island.

Ric Gillespie, executive director of the International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery, who has studied Earhart for decades, doubted that much more information on the famed aviator remains to be released. He cited the document dumps by the FBI and the National Archives.

"There's nothing still classified by the U.S. government on Amelia Earhart," Gillespie said in a telephone interview.

But Mindi Love Pendergraft, executive director of the Amelia Earhart Hangar Museum, said in an email that Trump's action "is sure to pique the interest of those dedicated to uncovering the mystery of Earhart's disappearance."

"If these records shed any light on Earhart's fate, it is a welcome action for Earhart historians and enthusiasts," she said.

## Nexstar and Sinclair bring Jimmy Kimmel's show back to local TV stations

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS and ANDREW DALTON Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Nexstar Media Group and Sinclair Broadcast Group brought Jimmy Kimmel's late-night talk show back to their local TV stations on Friday night, ending a dayslong TV blackout for dozens of cities across the U.S.

The companies suspended the program on Sept. 17 over remarks the comedian made in the wake of conservative activist Charlie Kirk's killing. Disney-owned ABC suspended Kimmel the same day, following threats of potential repercussions from the Trump-appointed head of the Federal Communications Commission.

The companies' dual moves Friday mean "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" will return to local TV on Nexstar's 28 ABC affiliates, from Topeka, Kansas, to New Orleans, along with Sinclair's 38 local markets, from Seattle



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to Washington D.C.

Kimmel's suspension lasted less than a week, while the affiliate blackout stood for just over a week.

When the boycott began, Sinclair, which is known for its conservative political content, called on Kimmel to apologize to Kirk's family and asked him to "make a meaningful personal donation" to Turning Point USA, the nonprofit that Kirk founded.

When Kirk was killed, Kimmel called it a "senseless murder" and shared a message of support for his family and other victims of gun violence on social media, which he reiterated during his Tuesday return.

Kimmel's original comments didn't otherwise focus on Kirk. He instead lambasted President Donald Trump and his administration's response to the killing. On his first show back, the comedian did not apologize, but did say "it was never my intention to make light of the murder of a young man" and acknowledged that to some, his comments "felt either ill-timed or unclear or maybe both."

He also used a blend of humor and pointed messages to emphasize the importance of free speech.

Maryland-based Sinclair and Texas-based Nexstar continued to preempt the show for three days even after ABC and Disney returned it to national airwaves.

New episodes of the show air Monday through Thursday. Friday night's rerun will be of Tuesday's show — so the previously blacked-out stations will air Kimmel's emotional return to the show. Viewers will have to wait until Monday to get the host's take on the new developments.

In its statement Friday, Sinclair pointed to its "responsibility as local broadcasters to provide programming that serves the interests of our communities, while also honoring our obligations to air national network programming."

The company added that it had received "thoughtful feedback from viewers, advertisers and community leaders," and noticed "troubling acts of violence," referencing the shooting into the lobby of a Sacramento station.

Sinclair said its proposals to Disney to strengthen accountability, feedback and dialogue and appoint an ombudsman had not yet been adopted.

In a similar statement Friday, Nexstar said it appreciated Disney's approach to its concerns and that it "remains committed to protecting the First Amendment" while airing content that is "in the best interest of the communities we serve."

Both companies said their decisions were not affected by influence from government or anyone else.

Disney representatives declined comment.

As a result of the boycott, viewers in cities representing roughly a quarter of ABC's local TV affiliates had been left without the late-night program on local TV. The blackouts inflamed a nationwide uproar around First Amendment protections — particularly as the Trump administration and other conservatives police speech after Kirk's killing. They also cast a spotlight on political influence in the media landscape, with critics lambasting companies that they accuse of censoring content.

Ahead of his suspension, Kimmel took aim at the president and his "MAGA gang" of supporters for their response to Kirk's killing, which Kimmel said included "finger-pointing" and attempts to characterize the alleged shooter as "anything other than one of them."

These remarks angered many supporters of Kirk — as well as FCC Chairman Brendan Carr, who accused Kimmel of appearing to "directly mislead the American public" with his remarks about the man accused of the killing. He warned that Disney and ABC's local affiliates could face repercussions if the comedian was not punished.

Carr later applauded Sinclair and Nexstar, for their decisions to preempt the show.

Sinclair Vice Chairman Jason Smith on the day the blackout began called Kimmel's comments "inappropriate and deeply insensitive," and said that ABC's suspension wasn't enough, calling instead for "immediate regulatory action."

While local TV affiliates broadcast their own programming, such as local news, they also contract with larger national broadcasters — and pay them to air their national content, splitting advertising revenue and fees from cable companies.

Matthew Dolgin, senior equity analyst at research firm Morningstar, said he wasn't surprised by Kimmel's return to the local stations.

"The relationship with Disney is far too important for these firms to risk," Dolgin said. And setting aside legal rights from either side, he added, "Disney would've been free to take its affiliate agreements elsewhere in 2026 if these relationships were too difficult. That scenario would be devastating to Nexstar and Sinclair."

## Trump escalates retribution campaign with charges against Comey and threats against liberal groups

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — President Donald Trump's unprecedented retribution campaign against his perceived political enemies reached new heights as his Justice Department brought criminal charges against a long-time foe and he expanded his efforts to classify certain liberal groups as "domestic terrorist organizations."

Days after Trump publicly demanded action from his attorney general and tapped his former personal lawyer to serve as the top federal prosecutor in Virginia, former FBI Director James Comey, a longtime target of Trump's ire, was indicted by a grand jury for allegedly lying to Congress during testimony in 2020.

Hours earlier Thursday, Trump signed a memorandum directing his Republican administration to target backers of what they dubbed "left-wing terrorism" as he alleged without evidence a vast conspiracy by Democrat-aligned nonprofit groups and activists to finance violent protests.

The developments marked a dramatic escalation of the president's extraordinary use of the levers of presidential power to target his political rivals and his efforts to pressure the Justice Department to pursue investigations — and now prosecutions — of those he disdains. It's a campaign that began soon after Trump returned to office and one that critics see as an abuse of power that puts every American who dares to criticize the president at risk of retaliation.

"Donald Trump has made clear that he intends to turn our justice system into a weapon for punishing and silencing his critics," said Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee. The Comey indictment came less than a week after Trump installed a former White House aide and confidant to the role of U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Virginia. The president had forced the ouster of his previous pick because he wasn't sufficiently responsive to calls from Trump to bring charges against his longtime targets.

"This kind of interference is a dangerous abuse of power," Warner said. "Our system depends on prosecutors making decisions based on evidence and the law, not on the personal grudges of a politician determined to settle scores."

An escalation in retribution

The first former president convicted of a felony — for falsifying business records to hide hush-money payments to conceal an alleged affair — Trump won the White House despite a host of other legal troubles over his alleged retention of classified information after leaving the White House in 2021 and his role in stoking denials of his 2020 electoral defeat that culminated in the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol.

Thursday's moves were the latest in a concerted effort by Trump to wield the vast powers of his office in unparalleled ways to punish his enemies since returning to the Oval Office in January. During his campaign, Trump made clear this was his intention if he returned to office.

"In 2016, I declared: I am your voice," he said in 2023. "Today, I add: I am your warrior. I am your justice. And for those who have been wronged and betrayed, I am your retribution."

Earlier this week, he signed an order designating a decentralized movement known as antifa — short for "anti-fascists" — as a domestic terrorist organization, a move testing broad First Amendment protections enjoyed by organizations operating within the United States.

The Thursday memo went further, targeting liberal-leaning groups and donors, and "represents a significant abuse of power where the government is either changing the law or bending definitions to try and investigate and punish their political opponents in a way that is really unprecedented," said Caitlin Legacki, of Americans Against Government Censorship, which was founded to fight the Trump administra-

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tion's weaponization of the federal government against its political rivals.

As for Comey, she said, "It reeks of selective prosecution, it reeks of vindictive targeting and calls into question the integrity of many of the charges being brought by the office."

Trump, meanwhile, denied Friday that he's on a campaign of retribution.

"It's about justice, really. It's not revenge, it's about justice. It's also about the fact that you can't let this go on," he told reporters. "They are sick, radical left people and they can't get away with it."

Asked who is next on his list, he responded: "It's not a list, but I think there'll be others."

A widespread pressure campaign

Beyond Comey, Trump has also pressured prosecutors to bring mortgage fraud charges against New York Attorney General Letitia James, who brought a massive civil fraud case against the president. Attorney General Pam Bondi last month named a special prosecutor to investigate mortgage fraud allegations against James and Democratic U.S. Sen. Adam Schiff of California, another top Trump target. Both have denied wrongdoing.

The Justice Department has also begun examining mortgage fraud allegations against Lisa Cook, the Federal Reserve governor who's won success in lower courts in challenging Trump's effort to remove her from her job in a move she says is designed to erode the central bank's independence. Trump has appealed to the Supreme Court to allow him to oust her.

On Friday, Trump called on Microsoft to fire former Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco, whom he has long held a grudge against, from her position as president of global affairs.

"Monaco's having that kind of access is unacceptable, and cannot be allowed to stand," he wrote. Trump previously stripped her of her security clearance, along with numerous others.

He has also stripped Secret Service protection from a slew of former officials, including his 2024 Democratic rival, Kamala Harris, members of former President Joe Biden's family, and people who've fallen from favor, including his onetime national security adviser John Bolton and his former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Trump has also targeted major institutions, revoking security clearances for attorneys at law firms he disfavors, pulling billions of dollars in federal research funds from elite universities, and securing multimillion-dollar settlements against media organizations in lawsuits that were widely regarded as weak cases.

Earlier this week, he threatened ABC over the network's decision to allow late-night host Jimmy Kimmel to return to the airwaves.

"I think we're going to test ABC out on this. Let's see how we do. Last time I went after them, they gave me \$16 Million Dollars. This one sounds even more lucrative," Trump crowed.

And his administration has fired or reassigned federal employees for their earlier work, including prosecutors who worked on cases against him. The Justice Department also fired Comey's daughter, Maurene Comey, from her job as a prosecutor in the Southern District of New York. She has since sued, saying the termination was politically motivated.

Trump celebrates the indictment

Trump, meanwhile, cheered the Comey indictment, saying "JUSTICE IN AMERICA!" had been served, even as Comey denied wrongdoing and expressed confidence in being acquitted at trial.

The indictment was the culmination of a pressure campaign that burst into public view over the weekend when Trump aired his frustrations with Bondi on his social media site and demanded she move forward with charges against Comey, James and Schiff.

"We can't delay any longer, it's killing our reputation and credibility," he wrote on Truth Social Saturday. "JUSTICE MUST BE SERVED, NOW!!!" He said he would nominate Lindsey Halligan, his former personal lawyer and a White House aide, to serve as U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia to quicken the pace after the ouster of chief prosecutor Erik Siebert, who resigned under pressure to bring charges against James.

The charges against Comey came even as prosecutors in the office had written a memo detailing concerns about the pursuit of an indictment and their likelihood of success at trial.

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The former FBI director said in a video he's innocent but knew "standing up to Donald Trump" would come with costs.

"My heart is broken for the Department of Justice, but I have great confidence in the federal judicial system, and I am innocent," Comey said.

## Tennessee governor says more federal agents to join fight against crime in Memphis next week

By JONATHAN MATTISE and TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — For two weeks, Memphis has been bracing for an influx of National Guard troops after President Donald Trump announced his intention to deploy them to the city. On Friday, residents finally learned more about that plan, and it looks to be very different from the deployments in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee said Friday that the troops will be part of a surge of resources to fight crime in the city that includes 13 federal agencies and state troopers. The National Guard troops will be from Tennessee, and they will be deputized by the U.S. Marshals Service to support local law enforcement in the majority Black city.

The Republican governor said the troops will not make arrests and will not be armed unless local law enforcement officials request it. Lee has previously said he doesn't think there will be more than 150 Guard members deployed to Memphis, but he later said the number is still in the planning stages.

A post on the city's website says, "Guardsmen and women will be easily identifiable in their standard uniforms that they wear every day. The guardsmen and women will not be wearing masks." It continues: "Armored tanks will not be a resource used in this mission."

"The story of crime in Memphis is about to be a story of the past," Lee said at a news conference in Memphis where he stood with city, state and federal officials including the Memphis mayor and police chief.

Arriving in phases

The "Memphis Safe Task Force" will begin operations next week, Lee said. He could not give an exact timeline for when each agency would start to deploy resources to the city, saying it will occur in phases. He said agents from the FBI, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Drug Enforcement Administration will arrive next week.

He said he will not declare a state of emergency.

While the Republican governor has embraced federal intervention, Memphis Mayor Paul Young has taken a pragmatic approach. Young, who is a Democrat, has said he never asked for National Guard troops but recognized they will come regardless of his opinion.

"My goal is to make sure that as resources come into our community, we find ways to use them effectively and for the benefit of the residents of our great city," he said at the news conference.

While discussing the deployment, both Republican and Democratic officials have noted recent decreases in some Memphis crime metrics. Young noted that crime rates in Memphis have been falling but "we have a lot of work to do to get crime at a level where people really, really feel it."

Both Young and Lee emphasized that the surge of resources is not intended to be a quick fix but rather a sustained effort.

"It will operate as long as it takes," Lee said.

"Success looks like Memphis being a safe city, Memphis being a place where people have no concerns about going out with their family, about locating their business," he said, adding, "When people recognize the city of Memphis as one of the safest places in America, that'll be success."

Reinforcements and funding

In addition to the federal troops and agents, Lee said the state will provide \$100 million to Memphis for public safety initiatives as well as 300 state troopers. That will allow 100 troopers to be on the ground at any one time. Lee said that's a significant increase for Shelby County, where Memphis is located. For its part, the Memphis Police Department has more than 2,000 full-time police officers. The Shelby County



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Sheriff's Office has more than 600 law enforcement deputies, with hundreds more who work in corrections.

Lee and other officials have said federal authorities were already focusing on Memphis. That includes an operation the FBI says has resulted in approximately 500 arrests and about 101 federal indictments of violent criminals since May.

Other cities

Trump first deployed troops to Los Angeles in early June over Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom's objections by putting the California National Guard under federal jurisdiction to protect federal property from protests over immigration raids. The guard later helped protect officers during immigration arrests.

Alongside 4,000 guard members, 700 active duty Marines were also sent. California sued over the intervention.

In Washington, about 2,000 members of the National Guard were part of Trump's surge of law enforcement in the capital that began last month.

Trump has veered back and forth on sending troops to Chicago — at times insisting he would act unilaterally to deploy them and at other points suggesting he would rather send them to New Orleans, Portland, Oregon, or a city in a state where their governor "wants us to come in." Last week, he said Chicago is "probably next" after Memphis.

On Thursday, Trump renewed his vow to send troops to Portland, where an ongoing protest outside the ICE facility has drawn his attention. The nightly protests take place outside the city's ICE facility, which is well outside the city's downtown. On a recent night, there were a couple of dozen protesters.

City groups and officials have sought to highlight Portland's recovery since 2020, when sustained protests and the pandemic deeply impacted the city's downtown. This summer was reported to be the busiest for pedestrian traffic in downtown Portland since before the pandemic, and overall violent crime from January through June decreased by 17% this year compared to the same period in 2024, a recent report from the Major Cities Chiefs Association found.

Trump announced on Fox News on Sept. 12 that he would next send the National Guard to Memphis. He signed an order setting up the task force of law enforcement agencies for the mission on Sept. 15.

Trump has said he selected Memphis after Union Pacific CEO Jim Vena — who regularly visited Memphis as a member of the FedEx board — urged him to address crime there.

## Wall Street rises and snaps out of its 3-day losing streak

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks climbed Friday and trimmed their losses for the week after a report showed that inflation is behaving roughly as economists expected, even if it's still high.

The S&P 500 rose 0.6% and broke its three-day losing streak. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 299 points, or 0.7%, and the Nasdaq composite added 0.4%. All three indexes pulled closer to the all-time highs they set at the start of the week.

Stocks got some help from a report showing that inflation in the United States accelerated to 2.7% last month from 2.6% in July, according to the measure of prices that the Federal Reserve likes to use. While that's above the Fed's 2% target, and it's more painful than any household would like, it was precisely what economists had forecast.

That offered some hope that the Fed could continue cutting interest rates in order to give the economy a boost. That's critical for Wall Street because it's already sent U.S. stocks on a blistering run to records from a low in April in large part because of expectations for a string of rate cuts.

Without such cuts, growing criticism that stock prices have become too expensive by rising too quickly would become even more powerful. The Fed just delivered its first rate cut of the year last week but is not promising more because they could worsen inflation.

One factor threatening to push inflation higher is President Donald Trump's tariffs, and he announced a set of more late Thursday. They include taxes on imports of some pharmaceutical drugs, kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities, upholstered furniture and heavy trucks starting on Oct. 1.

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Details were sparse about the coming tariffs, as is often the case with Trump's pronouncements on his social media network. That left analysts unsure of their ultimate effects, and the announcement created ripples in the U.S. stock market instead of huge waves.

Paccar, the company based in Bellevue, Washington, that's behind the Peterbilt and Kenworth truck brands, revved 5.2% higher, for example.

Big U.S. pharmaceutical companies nudged higher. Eli Lilly rose 1.4%, and Pfizer added 0.7%.

Several companies that sell home furnishings, which could be hurt by higher prices for imports, swung between gains and losses. Williams-Sonoma went from an initial loss of 2.5% to a modest gain and back to a loss before rising 0.1%. RH dropped 4.2% following its own back and forth.

On the losing end of Wall Street was Costco Wholesale, which fell 2.9% even though it reported a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Renewal rates for its membership slowed a touch, while an important measure of underlying revenue growth at its stores fell short of analysts' expectations.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 38.98 points to 6,643.70. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 299.97 to 46,247.29, and the Nasdaq composite gained 99.37 to 22,484.07.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose in Europe after slumping in Asia.

France's CAC 40 climbed 1%, while South Korea's Kospi tumbled 2.5% for two of the world's bigger moves.

Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 0.9% as Sumitomo Pharma Co.'s shares lost 3.5% and Chugai Pharmaceutical sank 4.8%.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury held steady at 4.18%, where it was late Thursday.

A report said sentiment among U.S. consumers was weaker than economists expected. The survey from the University of Michigan said consumers are frustrated with high prices, but their expectations for inflation over the coming 12 months also ticked down to 4.7% from 4.8%.

One notable exception was among Americans who own plenty of stocks, who have benefited from Wall Street's run to records even as the job market slows. Sentiment for them held steady in September, while falling for households with smaller or no stock investments.

The next big event for Wall Street could be a looming shutdown of the U.S. government, with a deadline set for next week. But investors have experience with such political impasses, and they have had limited impact on the market before.

"The market and broader macroeconomic effects of a shutdown, even lengthy ones, are often mere blips on the charts," according to Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management.

## **After massive shrimp recalls, the FDA finds radioactive contamination in spices too**

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

Federal regulators have detected possible radioactive contamination in a second food product sent to the U.S. from Indonesia, even as recalls of potentially tainted shrimp continue to grow. The discovery adds to questions about the source of the unusual problem.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration officials last week blocked import of all spices from PT Natural Java Spice of Indonesia after federal inspectors detected cesium 137 in a shipment of cloves sent to California.

That follows the import alert imposed in August on the company PT Bahari Makmuri Sejati, or BMS foods, which sends millions of pounds of shrimp to the U.S. each year.

Here's what you need to know about potential cesium 137 contamination:

What is cesium 137?

Cesium 137 is a radioactive isotope created as a byproduct of nuclear reactions, including nuclear bombs, testing, reactor operations and accidents. It's widespread around the world, with trace amounts found in the environment, including soil, food and air.

What have U.S. officials found?

U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials detected cesium 137 in shipping containers of shrimp sent by PT Bahari Makmur Sejati to several U.S. ports. CBP officials flagged the potential contamination to the

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FDA, which tested samples of the shrimp and detected cesium 137 in one sample of breaded shrimp.

The company has sent about 84 million pounds (38 million kilograms) of shrimp to U.S. ports this year, according to data from Import Genius, a trade data analysis company. It supplies about 6% of foreign shrimp imported in the U.S.

This month, FDA officials detected cesium 137 in one sample of cloves exported by PT Natural Java Spice, which sends spices to the U.S. and other countries. Records show the company sent about 440,000 pounds (200,000 kilograms) of cloves to the U.S. this year.

What are the health risks?

No food that triggered alerts or tested positive has been released for sale in the U.S., FDA officials emphasized.

But hundreds of thousands of packages of imported frozen shrimp sold at Kroger and other grocery stores across the U.S. have been recalled because they may have been manufactured under conditions that allowed them to be contaminated, the agency said.

Although the risk appears to be small, the foods could pose a "potential health concern" for people exposed to low levels of cesium 137 over time.

The levels of contamination detected are far below the level that could trigger the need for health protections, but long-term exposure could raise the risk of certain cancers.

Where did the contamination come from?

It's not clear whether there's a common source of contamination for the shrimp and the spices. FDA and CBP officials said their investigations are continuing. The two processing facilities appear to be about 500 miles (800 kilometers) apart in Indonesia.

Contaminated scrap metal or melted metal at an industrial site near the shrimp processing plant in Indonesia may be the source of the radioactive material, according to the International Atomic Energy Agency. Nuclear regulators in Indonesia said they detected the radioactive isotope at the site outside Jakarta.

It's possible that that type of contamination could come from recycling old medical equipment that contained cesium 137, according to Steve Biegalski, a nuclear medicine expert at the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Contaminated transport containers or shipping methods, such as trucks, boats or shared materials could also be a source, he said.

What should consumers do?

For now, consumers should avoid eating or serving shrimp recalled for possible cesium 137 contamination, the FDA said.

To date, four firms have issued recalls of shrimp since August, including those listed here.

1. Aug. 21, 2025: Southwind Foods, LLC Recall
2. Aug. 22, 2025: Beaver Street Fisheries, LLC Recall
3. Aug. 27, 2025: AquaStar (USA) Corp Recall – Kroger Brand
4. Aug. 28, 2025: AquaStar (USA) Corp Recall – Aqua Star Brand
5. Aug. 29, 2025: Southwind Foods, LLC Recall – Expansion of original recall
6. Sept. 19, 2025: AquaStar (USA) Corp Recall – Expansion of original recall
7. Sept. 23, 2025: Southwind Foods, LLC Recall – Expansion of original recall
8. Sept. 23, 2025: Lawrence Wholesale, LLC Recall – Kroger Brand

## **European defense ministers agree to press on with 'drone wall' project as airspace violations mount**

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — European defense ministers agreed on Friday to develop a "drone wall" along their borders with Russia and Ukraine to better detect, track and intercept drones violating Europe's airspace.

The decision comes after a spate of incidents in which Europe's borders and airports have been tested

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by rogue drones. Russia has been blamed for some of them but denies that anything was done on purpose or that it played a role.

"Russia is testing the EU and NATO, and our response must be firm, united and immediate," EU Defense Commissioner Andrius Kubilius said after chairing a virtual meeting of 10 countries on Europe's eastern flank. Ukrainian and NATO officials also took part in the talks.

Kubilius said the drone shield could take a year to build, and that envoys from the countries would meet soon to develop "a detailed conceptual and technical roadmap" on the way ahead. The top priority is an "effective detection system," he said.

The drone wall is likely to be discussed by EU leaders at a summit in Copenhagen next week, and later again in October when they meet in Brussels. Kubilius said that Europe's defense industry would also be brought onboard.

"Today's meeting was a milestone – now we focus on delivery," he said.

Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland have been working on a drone wall project, but in March, the European Commission, the EU's executive branch, rejected a joint Estonia-Lithuania request for funds to set one up.

Things have changed this month, though.

NATO jets scrambled on Sept. 10 to shoot down a number of Russian drones that breached Polish airspace, in an expensive response to a relatively cheap threat. Airports in Denmark were temporarily closed this week after drones were flown nearby.

"The hybrid war is ongoing and all countries in the European Union will experience it," Polish Defense Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz told reporters in Warsaw after the drone wall talks. "The threat from the Russian Federation is serious. We must respond to it in a very radical manner."

He urged all EU partners to get involved in the project, saying that the incidents at Danish airports in recent days made it clear that "the threat is not only to the eastern flank, that the launch of drones may occur from a ship or vessel that is nearby."

On Thursday, in a social media post addressed to the nation, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said the drone incidents in her country were part of a new reality facing Europe, in which hybrid attacks were fiercer and more frequent.

She said that Danish authorities still have not determined who was behind the incidents, but that Russia was currently the primary threat to European security.

Neighboring Sweden has offered to loan Denmark a military anti-drone system ahead of the two summits involving dozens of EU leaders in Copenhagen next week, Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson told broadcaster TV4.

He said the system has the capability to "shoot down drones." It was not immediately clear whether Denmark accepted the offer.

The 27 EU leaders meet on Wednesday, with the drone security threat likely to be high on their agenda. They will be joined by more than a dozen other leaders for a European Political Community summit on Thursday.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said earlier this month that Europe "must heed the call of our Baltic friends and build a drone wall."

"This is not an abstract ambition. It is the bedrock of credible defense," von der Leyen told EU lawmakers.

It should be, she said, "a European capability developed together, deployed together, and sustained together, that can respond in real time. One that leaves no ambiguity as to our intentions. Europe will defend every inch of its territory."

Von der Leyen said that 6 billion euros (\$7 billion) would be earmarked to set up a drone alliance with Ukraine, whose armed forces are using the unmanned aerial vehicles to inflict around two-thirds of all military equipment losses sustained by Russian forces.



## Scientists find new bite-resistant wetsuits can reduce shark bite injuries

By PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Australian scientists tested the strength of bite-resistant wetsuits by allowing sharks to chomp the materials at sea and found that the suits can help keep swimmers safe.

Fatal shark bites are vanishingly rare, with less than 50 unprovoked shark bites on humans worldwide in 2024, according to the International Shark Attack File at the Florida Museum of Natural History. But increased sightings of large sharks in some parts of the world have swimmers, surfers and divers looking for new ways to stay safe.

Scientists with Flinders University in Adelaide, South Australia, tested four bite-resistant materials and found they all reduced the amount of damage from shark bites. They performed the work by dragging samples of the materials behind boats and allowing white and tiger sharks to bite the samples.

The bites from such large sharks can still cause internal and crushing injuries, but the materials showed effectiveness beyond a standard neoprene wetsuit, the scientists said. The research found that the bite-resistant materials “can reduce injuries sustained from shark encounters,” said Flinders professor Charlie Huveneers, a member of the Southern Shark Ecology Group at Flinders and a study co-author.

“Bite-resistant material do not prevent shark bites, but can reduce injuries from shark bites and can be worn by surfers and divers,” Huveneers said.

There were small differences between the four tested materials, but they all “reduced the amount of substantial and critical damage, which would typically be associated with severe hemorrhaging and tissue or limb loss,” said Tom Clarke, a researcher with the science and engineering college at Flinders and a study co-author.

Chainmail suits to resist shark bites have existed for decades, but lack in flexibility for aquatic activities like surfing and diving, the scientists said in research published in the journal *Wildlife Research* on Thursday. Newer wetsuits can be designed to provide flexibility as well as protection.

The scientists tested the efficacy of wetsuit materials Aqua Armour, Shark Stop, ActionTX-S and Brewster. The scientists said in their paper that they found that all of the materials “offer an improved level of protection that can reduce severe wounds and blood loss, and should be considered as part of the toolbox and measures available to reduce shark-bite risk and resulting injuries.”

The promise of effective shark resistant wetsuits is encouraging for people who spend a lot of time in areas where there are large sharks, said Nick Whitney, a senior scientist and chair of the Fisheries Science and Emerging Technologies Program at the New England Aquarium’s Anderson Cabot Center for Ocean Life in Boston. That includes surfers and spearfishers, he said.

Whitney, who was not involved in the study, said it’s also encouraging that the materials are unlikely to make a person “feel invincible” and engage in risky behaviors around sharks.

“I also like it because it’s not relying on any impact on the shark’s behavior,” Whitney said. “It’s basically very, very simple. In the extremely rare event that you get bitten by a shark, this material will hopefully make you bleed less than you would if you were not wearing this.”

The researchers said the suits do not eliminate all risks from sharks, and precautions still need to be taken around the animals.

They are hopeful their research will help the public “make appropriate decisions about the suitability of using these products,” Huveneers said.

## Train stabbing spurs outcry over Black-on-white violence, but data shows such occurrences are rare

By AARON MORRISON and TERRY TANG Associated Press

After a Ukrainian woman who fled war in her home country was stabbed to death on a commuter train in North Carolina, the alarming act of violence ignited bitter racial and political rhetoric about crime victims and perpetrators in America.

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The fatal attack last month, in which the alleged perpetrator was identified as a Black man, evoked such visceral reactions partly because it was caught on surveillance video that went viral online. On Tuesday, North Carolina's Legislature passed a criminal justice package named after the victim to limit defendants' eligibility for bail and to encourage them to undergo mental health evaluations.

Rhetoric about the attack, including claims about "Black-on-white-crime," has spread from social media and broadcast airwaves to the halls of Congress and the White House. Some of it leverages cherry-picked cases and ill-framed crime statistics to reproduce age-old harmful narratives about Black criminality and threats to white populations.

It comes at a time when Republicans, including President Donald Trump, have been hyping the rhetoric as part of a focus on cities with reputations of violence. But despite the rhetoric, the data shows that in most U.S. communities, victims of violence and offenders are usually the same race or ethnicity.

Violent incidents where the offenders and the victims are of different races "is extremely uncommon," said Charis Kubrin, a criminology professor at the University of California, Irvine. It is "the exception rather than the rule."

People are more likely to be victimized by people they know and interact with regularly in their social sphere, she added.

The most recent breakdown of federal crime statistics bears that out. Black offenders were involved in about 15% of violent victimizations of white people between 2017 and 2021, according to data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, which publishes multiyear crime trend reports every few years. White offenders were involved in over half of violence against other white people, the statistics show.

The report showed similar trends when it came to violent crimes committed against Black victims. White offenders were involved in about 12% those crimes against Black people, while Black offenders were involved in 60% of violence against other Black people.

What happened in Charlotte and the rhetoric around it

The Aug. 22 killing of 23-year-old Ukrainian refugee Iryna Zarutska became a flashpoint in online discussions about crime victims and race after surveillance video of the attack in Charlotte, North Carolina, circulated widely online.

Zarutska was knifed to death on the city's Lynx Blue Line light rail. Footage showed the alleged attacker pacing through the train and spreading the woman's blood on the floors of the train car.

Decarlos Brown Jr., a Black man, has been charged with first-degree murder and faces federal charges of committing an act causing death on a mass transportation system.

Conservative activists, including Trump political ally Charlie Kirk, were quick to call out what they decried as a double-standard in reporting on such crimes by the mainstream media. Kirk once said on his popular podcast, "prowling Blacks go around for fun to target white people."

Speaking about the Charlotte attack, Kirk said: "If a random white person on a subway took out a knife and stabbed a Black girl senselessly to death, there would be massive media coverage."

"There would be policy changes. ... We saw this in George Floyd," the 31-year-old said on his podcast a day before he was killed on a Utah university campus.

North Carolina Republicans also weighed in, some blaming what they called Democrats' "woke policies" on crime, including cashless bail, as the reason presumably dangerous people like Zarutska's alleged attacker were roaming free to pose threats to the public.

The North Carolina chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a civil rights group that primarily advocates against anti-Muslim sentiments, said: "We also condemn those using this crime to resurrect racist talking points about the Black community."

"This selective outrage is dangerous, hypocritical, and racially motivated, especially given that white supremacists fall silent about other stabbings, mass shootings, hate crimes, financial crimes, rapes and various other misconduct committed by people of all races and backgrounds," the group said in a statement.

Comparing Black-on-white crime to white-on-Black crime

Some criminologists caution against relying on raw count crime numbers as it relates to the race of victims and offenders because population size matters. Non-Hispanic Black people made up roughly 13%

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of the U.S. population in 2024, according to census estimates. Non-Hispanic white people make up the largest racial group in the U.S. — an estimated 56% of the total population in 2024 — so “there are just more white people that could be potential offenders,” Kubrin said.

Black-on-white and white-on-Black violence are both extremely rare, she added.

The National Criminal Victimization Survey conducted in 2023 by the Justice Department gathered data on nearly 6 million violent incidents reported by law enforcement. Their findings show over 3.5 million involved a white victim; white offenders were involved in more than half of those crimes, while only one-tenth involved Black offenders.

When a killing or violent interaction between people of different races grabs the headlines and social media — especially if there is video — it is tempting to use that as confirmation of preconceived notions that Black-on-white crime or vice-versa are suddenly spiking, Kubrin said. But in reality, they make up a small share of hundreds of thousands of violent crimes mostly involving people of the same race, she said.

Brett Tolman, executive director of Right on Crime, a conservative criminal justice group, thinks people should not focus on race but rather where violent crimes are happening the most. Even if data shows crime has been on a downward trend, that can be of little comfort if people constantly feel unsafe, he said.

“Let’s start making it about communities that want to feel safe,” Tolman said. “I hear from just as many that are living in inner cities, regardless of their politics, that they want safety and security.”

Examining Black-on-Black crime

Black-on-Black crime is a flawed premise, according to criminologists, because people of all racial groups experience crime due to their social networks and proximity to each other.

But in discussions about systemic racism in policing and the criminal justice system, it’s frequently argued that Black-on-Black crime should be the chief concern of Black communities — more than police brutality or racial profiling — because homicide has been a leading cause of death among Black men.

Even as crime rates have fallen dramatically for white and Black populations over time, misinformed rhetoric around crime and violence perpetuates racialized narratives on the issues, said Trymaine Lee, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who recently published a book about gun violence, “A Thousand Ways to Die.”

“When you have a nation so bound by violence as the United States, it’s only a matter of time that that binding snaps and lashes at us all,” he said, adding that violence “isn’t the domain of Black Americans alone.”

“Even though the politics of the moment might suggest differently, this is a stark reminder that no American is out of reach of American violence.”

## **Always a showman, Netanyahu again turns to props and visual aids as he fends off critics at the UN**

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — In his speeches to the United Nations when world leaders gather, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has quite the history of turning to props and visual aids to hammer his points home. But even by the Israeli leader’s elevated standards of showmanship, this year’s address took things to a new level.

Moments into the speech Friday morning, Netanyahu unfurled a map — titled “THE CURSE” (the all-caps were his) — in which he methodically used a fat marker to check off the countries where Israel has killed its enemies during a nearly two-year nationwide war.

He then addressed the audience with a pair of multiple-choice questions, depicted on a large card. “Who shouts ‘Death to America?’” he asked as he read off the names of Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah and Yemen’s Houthi militia. The answer, familiar to anyone who has taken a standardized test: “All of the above.”

It was vintage Netanyahu, who over the years has shared maps, photos and, in one instance, a crude cartoon of an atomic bomb as he railed against Iran’s nuclear program.

Then there was the QR code. He showed up wearing a huge button bearing one of the codes often used by advertisers and popularized by restaurants who used them during the COVID pandemic era to avoid

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asking contagion-fearing customers to touch menus. The code linked to a website about the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks by Hamas, the hostages they took and Israel's point of view about it all.

Even before he took to the podium, Netanyahu's office said it had set up massive loudspeakers on trucks along the Gaza border to blare the speech to the people inside. He said his intended audience included the Israeli hostages held captive in Gaza. "We have not forgotten you," he said.

His office later claimed the Israeli army had hacked the phones of people of Gaza, including Hamas operatives, to make sure they heard his words. Inside Gaza, Palestinians said they could not hear the speech, and there were no immediate reports of phones being hacked.

And at the U.N. General Assembly, it is doubtful that many minds were changed. Dozens of diplomats walked out of the hall before his speech to protest the Gaza war, leaving the hall largely empty, save for a small but loud group of aides and supporters to cheer him on.

But Netanyahu had other audiences on his mind — namely his base of supporters in a deeply divided Israel and President Donald Trump, whom he is to meet on Monday at the White House.

With a colorful and defiant speech rejecting international criticism of Israeli policies, Netanyahu portrayed himself to his supporters as a master showman, communicator and statesman at a time that the country is increasingly seen as a pariah. And a long list of compliments for Trump could help clear the way for a smooth meeting on Monday.

By those measures, for Netanyahu, the speech was a success.

## **Hurricane Helene hit the reset button on one town's goal of becoming an outdoor tourism mecca**

By ALLEN G. BREED and BRITTANY PETERSON Associated Press

OLD FORT, N.C. (AP) — Morning mist is still burning off the surrounding mountains when they appear: Small groups of helmeted riders on one-wheeled, skateboard-like contraptions, navigating the pitched streets, past the 30-foot granite Arrowhead Monument on the town square.

They are among the 400 or so people converging on this Blue Ridge foothills town for FloatLife Fest, which bills itself as "the ORIGINAL and LONGEST RUNNING" gathering dedicated to motorized Onewheel boards. Swelling Old Fort's normal population by half, the mid-September festival is injecting much needed money and hope into a town still recovering a year after it was inundated by the remnants of Hurricane Helene.

"We should definitely come back again," says Jess Jones, a 34-year-old marine biologist from Edinburgh, Scotland. "The vibe and the welcome that we got there was really nice."

That the festival occurred at all is a tribute to the area's natural beauty, and the resilience of its people.

Signs of progress are mixed with still-visible scars from Helene in this town about 24 miles (39 kilometers) east of Asheville. Most of Old Fort's shops have reopened, even as workers continue clawing away at a debris pile downtown and some homes remain unlivable.

Like other businesspeople in this tourist-dependent mountain region, bike shop owner Chad Schoenauer has been banking on a strong fall leaf-peeping season to help get him back on track after Helene. But many seem to assume Old Fort is still a wasteland.

"Oh, I didn't know that you were open," he says is a typical reaction.

Helene's floods and landslides interrupt outdoor tourism makeover

When Helene swept through, Old Fort was well on its way to remaking itself as an outdoor destination, especially after furniture manufacturer Ethan Allen laid off 325 workers when it converted its factory there into a distribution center in 2019.

"When the Ethan Allen layoff happened, local leaders started coming together and saying, 'How do we use these beautiful natural assets that we have to diversify the manufacturing economy?'" says Kim Effler, president and CEO of the McDowell Chamber of Commerce.

Named for a Revolutionary War-era stockade, the town decided to become a world-class destination for hiking, running, horseback riding and, most notably, mountain biking.

"We have a red clay that makes some of the best trails in the country," FloatLife founder Justyn Thomp-



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son says. "The trails are epic."

In 2021, the G5 Trail Collective — a program led by the nonprofit Camp Grier outdoors complex — got the U.S. Forest Service to agree to 42 miles (68 kilometers) of new multi-purpose trails. The effort began paying dividends almost immediately.

"For every trail that we were able to open, we saw a new business open up in town," says Jason McDougald, the camp's executive director.

The collective had just completed the 21st mile (34th kilometer) of trail when Helene, in Schoenauer's words, hit "the reset button" by washing away trails and damaging businesses.

When the storm blew through on Sept. 27, 2024, the Catawba River converged with the normally placid Mill Creek, leaving much of downtown under several feet of muddy water.

Schoenauer, who opened his Old Fort Bike Shop in 2021, says it took two days before he could make it to town to assess damage to the business housed in a refurbished 1901 former general store.

"I was numb coming all the way here," he says. "And as soon as I got off the exit, I started crying."

The water rose more than 3 feet (1 meter) inside the shop, leaving behind a 10-inch (25-centimeter) layer of reddish-brown mud. The beautiful heart pine floors buckled.

Schoenauer says he suffered about \$150,000 in uninsured losses.

At the Foothills Watershed mountain biking complex along the Catawba, the storm took 48 large shade trees and an 18,000-square-foot (1,672-square-meter) track built with banks and jumps.

"We had a septic field, a brand-new constructed septic field for the business that was destroyed," says Casey McKissick, who spent the last three years developing the bike park. "Never been used; not even turned on yet. And it all went right down the river."

McKissick says the business didn't have flood insurance because it was too costly, and the threat of a catastrophic event seemed too remote.

The damage amounted to \$150,000. Worse yet was the loss of eight months of business, including last year's foliage season.

"We lost that really critical fourth quarter of the year, which is a beautiful fall," McKissick says.

Blue Ridge Parkway closure slows visitors' return

Gov. Josh Stein recently announced that travelers had spent a record \$36.7 billion in the state last year. But that boom eluded the counties worst hit by Helene.

Visitor spending in Buncombe County — home to Asheville — was down nearly 11% last year compared to 2023, according to the state Department of Commerce.

In McDowell, tourist spending dropped nearly 3% in that same period. Effler says this June and July, foot traffic at the county's largest visitor center was down 50% from last year.

She blames much of that on damage to the Blue Ridge Parkway, which is consistently one of the most-visited of the national parks. About 35 miles (56 kilometers) of the North Carolina route — including long stretches in McDowell County — aren't slated to reopen until fall 2026.

McDougald says nearly every trail in the Old Fort complex was damaged, with landslides taking out "300-foot sections of trail at a time."

They've managed to reopen about 30 miles (48 kilometers) of trail, but he says about that many miles remain closed.

Schoenauer reopened his shop in December, but traffic was down by about two-thirds this summer.

"My business, revenue-wise, has shifted more to the repair side," he says. "People trying to still recreate, but use the bike that they have just to keep it going and have some fun."

The Watershed complex opened in June, but without the planned riverfront gazebo and performance stage. And they've moved the bike jumps to higher ground.

"It's changed our way of looking at the floodplain, for sure," McKissick says.

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## From Ralphie to Uga, live animal mascots inspire fans and create deep connections with their teams

By PAT GRAHAM AP Sports Writer

BOULDER, Colo. (AP) — The newest star for the Colorado Buffaloes loves molasses-based treats, drinking straight from the water hose at her ranch and galloping in front of a stadium full of fans.

Ralphie VII made her much-anticipated debut last weekend, the year-old, 700-pound ball of bison energy bursting out of her end-zone stall as "Heeeeere comes Ralphie" blared from the Folsom Field speakers.

With her romp just past midfield, one of the GOATs of live animal mascots in college football was back. More than symbols; these beloved animals inspire fans, foster a deep connection with their teams and are cherished game-day traditions. Ralphie, whose presence was missing from the opening two home games as the newest version got up to speed, is just one of the most recognizable.

There's Uga, the English bulldog from Georgia; Bevo, the longhorn steer at Texas; Mike the Tiger from LSU; the war eagle of Auburn, and the list goes on and on. Navy's Bill the Goat; Renegade, the Appaloosa horse from Florida State; Rameses, the ram at North Carolina, and Traveler, the white horse at USC. There's Nova and her fellow falcon friends at Air Force; Smokey, the bluetick coonhound at Tennessee; and Tusk, a Russian boar at Arkansas.

Horses and tigers and boars, indeed.

"There are very few things that people are as passionate about as their love of their favorite college football team. These mascots are just the living symbols of that," said Ricky Brennes, executive director of the Silver Spurs Alumni Association that oversees the care of Bevo. "They mean a whole lot."

The live mascot

The live animal mascot has been a part of college life since the late 1800s.

According to legend, what would become known as Yale's Handsome Dan I arrived around 1889 when a student bought him for \$5 from a New Haven, Connecticut, blacksmith. The bulldog — believed to be one of the first live college mascots — was led across the field before the start of football and baseball games. The school now has Handsome Dan XIX on the sideline.

Live mascots remain a familiar sight on the field, from dogs (Reveille, Texas A&M's rough collie; Dubs, Washington's Alaskan malamute) to birds (Sir Big Spur, the rooster at South Carolina) to mules (Army) to Rambouillet sheep (Colorado State's "CAM the Ram").

Not all live mascots take the field.

Mike the Tiger has a view of Tiger Stadium in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, from his expansive habitat, a roughly 15,000-square foot home complete with two pools, a stream, a comfort rock that's cold in the summer, warm in the winter, and a night house. A version of Mike stopped showing up inside the stadium on game days in 2015.

This is the seventh rendition of Mike since 1936. He's a Bengal-Siberian mix and checks in at approximately 400 pounds. He has 158,000 followers on Instagram.

"I would say the most common question we get is, 'Is Mike outside?'" said Ginger Guttner, the communications manager for LSU's school of veterinary medicine who also creates social media posts on Mike's behalf. "I don't think I've ever been there when there's been no one there."

The veterinarian students who care for Mike VII make "meat art" in the shape of the opponent's logo for game days. The one of him devouring the Gators logo before the Tigers' win over Florida received nearly 13,000 likes.

Here comes Ralphie VII

Colorado retired Ralphie VI just before the season after she showed an indifference toward running. A version of Ralphie leading the team out has been part of the school's tradition for the past 58 years, but Ralphie VII needed time to ramp up.

"I hung the football schedule up in her barn and she just didn't seem to care (the opener) was on the 29th (of August)," joked Taylor Stratton, program director of Colorado's Ralphie Live Mascot Program.

Stratton and the Ralphie Handlers started her out slow, letting her get comfortable with them and earn-

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ing her trust. Three days before her first run, they took Ralphie VII to Folsom Field for an under-the-lights dress rehearsal. With music blaring, she "did her job perfectly," Stratton said.

It carried over to game night. Stratton was like a doting parent after Ralphie VII's inaugural two fast and furious runs last Saturday — one before the game vs. Wyoming and again at halftime.

"It's a great opportunity to inspire fans," Stratton said. "It's something cool that people can get behind."

The young bison earned rave reviews from coach Deion Sanders.

"Ralphie did a wonderful job," Sanders said, "of doing the doggone thing that she does."

Bevo XV

The University of Texas retired Bevo XIV in 2015 after he got sick with bovine leukemia. The Longhorns went half a season without their beloved live mascot.

Bevo XV was a national grand champion show steer who won out after a tryout of sorts. The steers were taken to a band practice to test their mettle. Bevo XV made his debut as "Baby Bevo" against Notre Dame in 2016. Now he's 10 years old and weighs 2,100 pounds.

He had a famous run-in with Uga at the Sugar Bowl on Jan. 1, 2019, during a pregame meet-and-greet. "Bevo" went through his barricade toward "Uga" before order was restored.

Over the decades, a version of Bevo has been invited to presidential inaugurations, weddings, funerals, birthday celebrations, corporate events and meetings with celebrities (see: Adam Sandler). Bevo's appearance helps raise funds for education programs.

"Everybody's always super-excited to see him," Brennes said. "It really gives you a sense of how much the animal means to people."

## Fed's favored inflation gauge accelerates slightly in August

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Federal Reserve's favored inflation gauge accelerated slightly in August from a year earlier.

The Commerce Department reported Friday that its personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index was up 2.7% in August from a year earlier, a tick higher from a 2.6% year-over-year increase in July and most since February.

Excluding volatile food and energy prices, so-called core PCE inflation showed a 2.9% increase in prices from August 2024, same as in July. The increases were what forecasters had expected.

Prices rose 0.3% from July, compared to a 0.2% increase the month before. Core prices rose 0.2%, same as in July.

Separately, the report showed that inflation-adjusted consumer spending rose a healthy 0.4% from July, same as the month before, largely on a 0.7% increase in spending for goods; spending on services such as travel and dining out rose just 0.2%.

"The resilience of the US consumer was on show once again," Michael Pearce of Oxford Economics wrote, though he cautioned that spending "is being driven by households at the top of the income distribution."

Incomes rose 0.4%, same as the month before inflation. Income for the self-employed and business owners rose 0.9% for the second straight month. Wages and salaries rose 0.3% from July, dipping from a 0.5% increase the month before.

Inflation has come down since rising prices prompted the Fed to raise its benchmark interest rate 11 times in 2022 and 2023. But annual price gains remain stubbornly above the central bank's 2% target.

Last week, the Fed went ahead and reduced the rate for the first time this year, lowering borrowing costs to help a deteriorating U.S. job market. But it's been cautious about cutting, waiting to see what impact President Donald Trump's tariffs have on imports have on inflation and the broader economy.

For months, Trump has relentlessly pushed the Fed to lower rates more aggressively, calling Fed Chair Jerome Powell "Too Late" and a "moron" and arguing that there is "no inflation."

Last month, Trump s ought to fire Lisa Cook, a member of the Fed's governing board, in an effort to gain greater control over the central bank. She has challenged her dismissal in court, and the Supreme

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Court will decide whether she can stay on the job while the case goes through the judicial system.

The Fed tends to favor the PCE inflation gauge that the government issued Friday over the better-known consumer price index. The PCE index tries to account for changes in how people shop when inflation jumps. It can capture, for example, when consumers switch from pricier national brands to cheaper store brands.

## **Israeli strikes on Yemen's capital kill at least 9 people and injure scores, the Houthi rebels say**

By AHMED AL-HAJ Associated Press

ADEN, Yemen (AP) — Yemen's Houthi rebels said Friday that at least nine people were killed by Israeli strikes on the country's rebel-held capital of Sanaa the previous day, the latest in an increase in exchanges between Israel and the Iranian-backed rebels over the war in Gaza.

The strikes on Thursday afternoon came a day after a drone launched by the Houthis wounded 22 people in the southern Israeli city of Eilat, a rare breach of Israel's air defenses.

According to the health ministry in the Houthi-controlled northern half of Yemen, which includes Sanaa, four children, two women and three older people were among the dead. Rebel officials also said 59 children, 35 women and 80 older people were among the wounded.

Medics were still searching for victims believed to be trapped under rubble, the rebels said, indicating the casualty tolls could rise.

The Israeli military said Thursday it carried out strikes in Yemen, with dozens of aircraft targeting Houthi military command headquarters, military camps and security and intelligence facilities.

A Houthi spokesperson, Omar el-Bekhety, said Thursday the Israeli strikes targeted residential neighborhoods and electricity facilities and claimed the Houthis' defense systems had thwarted a "large part of the attack."

"These crimes will not deter our people or break their will but will increase their steadfastness and resilience in confronting the Zionist crimes and continuing to support and back the honorable, oppressed, free people of Gaza," he added.

According to Sanaa residents, one of the strikes hit a building in a densely populated area in Sanaa, believed to have housed a Houthi leader. The Associated Press could not independently verify the claim.

Ahmed al-Mahweity said Friday that the strikes set off intense explosions that damaged several houses in the neighborhood. Selim Rageh, another resident, said several cars were also damaged.

"Everyone in the area came out covered in dust as if they came out from graves," said Salem al-Qasab, a shop owner. "Thick dust rose from the ground due to the intensity of the explosions. It was a terrifying scene, with the skies turning to clouds of black smoke and dust."

Akram al-Adeiny said Thursday the explosion was so intense it brought down the ceiling of his house, though no one was injured. His colleague in a cellphone shop lost his wife and child in one of the attacks, he said.

The Sanaa residents spoke to the AP over the phone.

Israel has launched previous airstrikes in response to the Houthis firing missiles and drones at Israel. The Houthis have launched missiles and drones toward Israel and targeted ships in the Red Sea for over 22 months, saying they are attacking in solidarity with Palestinians during the war in Gaza.

## **Today in History: September 27, Taliban take power in Afghanistan**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Sept. 27, the 270th day of 2025. There are 95 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Sept. 27, 1996, the Taliban, the extremist Islamic movement in Afghanistan, drove the government of President Burhanuddin Rabbani out of Kabul, the capital, and executed former President Najibullah.

Also on this date:



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In 1779, John Adams was named by Congress to negotiate the Revolutionary War's peace terms with Britain.

In 1939, Warsaw, Poland, surrendered after weeks of resistance to invading forces from Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union during World War II.

In 1940, Germany, Italy and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact, formally allying the World War II Axis powers.

In 1964, the government publicly released the report of the Warren Commission, which concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in assassinating President John F. Kennedy.

In 1979, Congress gave its final approval to forming the U.S. Department of Education.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush announced in a televised address that he was eliminating all U.S. ground-launched battlefield nuclear weapons and called on the Soviet Union to match the gesture.

In 2013, President Barack Obama and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani spoke by telephone, the first conversation between American and Iranian leaders in more than 30 years.

In 2018, Christine Blasey Ford testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee that she was "100 percent" certain that she was sexually assaulted by Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh when they were teenagers, and Kavanaugh then told senators that he was "100 percent certain" he had done no such thing. Kavanaugh was confirmed on Oct. 6 of that year.

In 2021, R&B singer R. Kelly was convicted in a sex trafficking trial in New York after numerous allegations of misconduct with young women and children; a federal appeals court upheld the convictions and his 30-year prison sentence in 2025.

In 2023, NASA astronaut Frank Rubio sets a U.S. record of 371 days in space, returning to Earth from the International Space Station with Russian cosmonauts Sergey Prokopyev and Dmitri Petelin.

Today's Birthdays: Musician Randy Bachman (Bachman-Turner Overdrive) is 82. Actor Liz Torres is 78. Baseball Hall of Famer Mike Schmidt is 76. Singer and actor Shaun Cassidy is 67. Comedian and podcaster Marc Maron is 62. Actor Gwyneth Paltrow is 53. Actor Indira Varma is 52. Musician-actor Carrie Brownstein is 51. Actor Anna Camp is 43. Rapper Lil Wayne is 43. Musician Avril Lavigne (AV'-rihl la-VEEN') is 41. Actor Jenna Ortega is 23.