

Groton Daily Independent

Thursday, Oct. 2, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 120 ~ 1 of 72

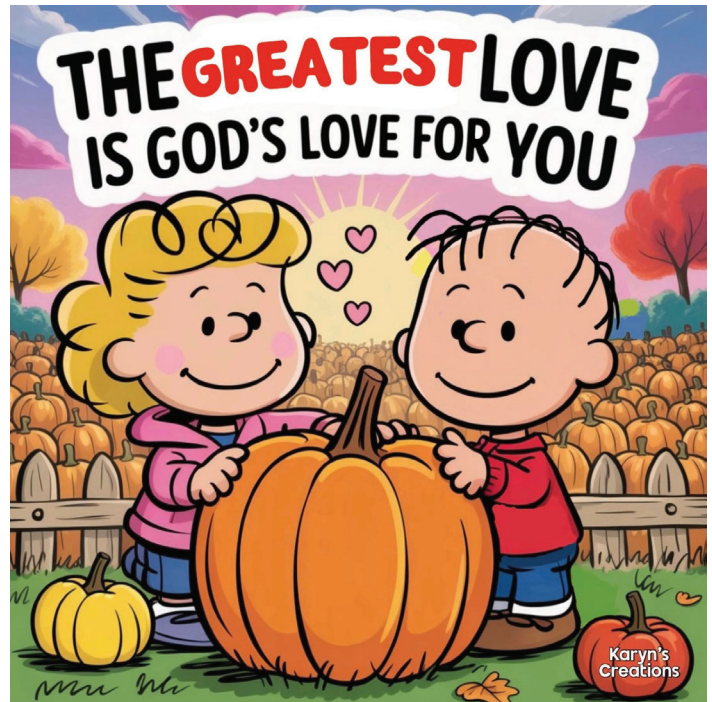
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Thursday, October 2nd:

Senior Menu: Chicken rice casserole, California blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Cereal.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.
School Lunch: Lasagna bake, peas.
- Cross Country @ Sisseton (4pm)
- JH VB vs. Milbank (7th grade @ 4pm, 8th grade @ 5pm)
- Girls Soccer @ Watertown (6pm)

Friday, October 3rd:

Senior Menu: Hamburger cabbage roll hotdish, mixed vegetables, pears, cornmeal muffin.
School Breakfast: Egg wraps.
School Lunch: Chicken fajita, santa fe corn.
- Football @ Roncalli (Dacotah Bank Stadium - 7pm)



Saturday, October 4th:

- Volleyball @ Redfield Tournament (9am vs. Redfield, 10am vs. North Central, 12pm vs. Madison, 3pm vs. Timber Lake)

Sunday, Oct. 5

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

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

United Methodist: Worship with communion at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 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 GBB, 4 p.m.

2nd Grade GBB Practice, 4 p.m.

Dance Team Practice, 5 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.

Qatar Security Guarantees

The White House published an executive order yesterday declaring any armed attack against Qatar a threat to the US. President Donald Trump pledged to use all necessary means—including the military—to defend the energy-rich nation, marking an unprecedented arrangement between the US and an Arab state.

The order, dated Monday, follows Israeli airstrikes three weeks ago targeting Hamas leaders in Qatar's capital, Doha. While Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu initially defended the strikes, he apologized to Qatar on a call Monday coordinated by Trump. Earlier this year, Trump announced at least \$1.2T in economic commitments with Qatar, which has been a major non-NATO ally since 2022. Preparations are also underway for a Qatari jet to be refitted as Air Force One. While this week's order resembles NATO security guarantees, it is not legally binding without Senate approval. That means Trump can choose how, and whether, the US responds.

Saudi Arabia, which has long sought and failed to secure security assurances from the US, signed a mutual defense pact with Pakistan last month.

Jane Goodall Dies

Jane Goodall has died at age 91, her institute revealed yesterday. The famed conservationist and primatologist was known for her groundbreaking research on chimpanzees and environmental advocacy.

In 1957, Goodall traveled from England to Nairobi, Kenya, where she worked as a secretary to paleoanthropologist Louis Leakey. Despite her lack of formal training, Leakey recruited Goodall to launch the first long-term study of wild chimpanzees, in an effort to better understand human evolution (the animals had been studied for decades in captivity but never in their natural habitat).

Goodall's first groundbreaking observation came when she witnessed chimpanzees use a grass blade to fish for termites, upending the prevailing belief that only humans could make and use tools. Goodall would go on to observe the animals hunting, forming social bonds, displaying emotion, adopting other chimpanzees, and even engaging in war.

Goodall parlayed her research into an appeal for conservation. See a documentary on her work [here](#).

'The Life of a Showgirl'

Taylor Swift releases her 12th studio album tonight at midnight ET. "The Life of a Showgirl" is slated to include 12 songs; see track list [here](#).

Swift is Spotify's most-streamed artist and one of the bestselling musicians of all time, with over 200 million records sold worldwide. Her 2023-24 Eras Tour grossed over \$1B—the highest-grossing music tour in history. The 14-time Grammy-winning artist is also the first and only person to have won four Album of the Year awards. She holds 80 records in all, according to Guinness World Records, including the greatest seismic activity caused by a music concert (equivalent to a 2.3-magnitude earthquake for her July 22-23, 2023, Seattle show).

The album will be accompanied by an AMC Theatres release. The 89-minute "The Official Release Party of a Showgirl" includes a music video screening and behind-the-scenes footage, and is expected to gross \$35M-\$40M.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

MLB Wild Card Series wraps tonight; see complete playoff bracket and schedule.

WNBA Finals matchup set after the Las Vegas Aces top the Indiana Fever in overtime; the Aces will take on the Phoenix Mercury for the WNBA title.

Colorado officials to review 2005 death of author and journalist Hunter S. Thompson at the request of his widow; Thompson's death was initially ruled a suicide.

Big Ten in talks with private capital group over \$2B deal that would include an extension of the media rights for the athletic conference's 18 universities through the 2046 season.

Science & Technology

Department of Energy takes 5% stake in Lithium Americas and its Nevada mining project, considered key to reducing US reliance on Chinese lithium for battery development.

Scientists confirm complex organic molecules in geysers on Saturn's moon Enceladus, offering further evidence the moon is habitable; Enceladus' underground oceans have long made it a prime candidate to host life beyond Earth.

Paleontologists analyzing 430-million-year-old fossil determine leeches emerged 200 million years earlier than previously thought, with the earliest species feeding on marine creatures instead of blood.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close up (S&P 500 +0.3%, Dow +0.1%, Nasdaq +0.4%) as weak private payrolls data spurs further rate-cut bets.

Attorneys general from five states sue Zillow, Redfin over alleged scheme to stifle online rental market competition; challenge follows similar FTC antitrust suit.

Supreme Court allows Lisa Cook to remain as Federal Reserve governor, will hear arguments in January on whether President Donald Trump can fire her from the independent agency.

Politics & World Affairs

Trump administration freezes \$26B for Democratic-leaning states—roughly \$18B for NYC transit projects and \$8B for green energy projects in 16 states—acting on threat to target Democratic priorities during government shutdown.

United Nations Security Council approves creation of 5,550-person force to help Haiti suppress gang violence; mandate for smaller and underfunded UN-backed mission led by Kenyan police expires today.

Israeli navy intercepts flotilla seeking to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza.

Three alleged Hamas members arrested yesterday on suspicion of plotting attacks against Israelis and Jews in Germany are set to appear in court today.

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GT on **Football**
Dacotah Stadium
Vs. Roncalli Cavaliers
Fri., Oct. 3, 7 p.m.

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE
YouTube
A production of the
Groton Daily Independent

For more info: GDILIVE.COM



GT on **Redfield Volleyball**
Tournament
vs. Redfield
Sat., Oct. 4, 9 a.m.

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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GT on **Redfield Volleyball**
Tournament
vs. North Central
Sat., Oct. 4, 10 a.m.

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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GT on **Redfield Volleyball**
Tournament
vs. Madison
Sat., Oct. 4, Noon

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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GT on **Redfield Volleyball**
Tournament
vs. Timber Lake
Sat., Oct. 4, 3 p.m.

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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GT on **Redfield Volleyball**
Tournament
Finals
Sat., Oct. 4, 4 p.m.

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

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Groton Chamber of Commerce September 3rd, 2025

12pm City Hall

- Members present: Brian Dolan, Katelyn Nehlich, Douglas Heinrich, Ashley Bentz, Carol Kutter, April Abeln, and Paul Kosel
 - The minutes from the previous meeting were approved by Heinrich and seconded by Nehlich, with the correction that the motion to sponsor GDI Live was seconded by Dolan, not Kosel. All members present voted aye.
 - The treasurer's report was given. Dacotah Bank checking account balance is \$17,324.29 in addition to the \$5,000 CD. The bucks account balance is \$2,804.80. The report was approved by Kutter and seconded by Heinrich. All members present voted aye. There is one outstanding check to Cutting Edge Lawn Solutions.
 - A scholarship thank you note was received from Axel Warrington.
 - Heinrich made a motion via email with a second from Karyn Babcock to donate \$20 in Chamber Bucks to Wage Memorial Library for their Homecoming scavenger hunt. All members present via email voted aye.
 - Abeln will find out the 2025 Chamber shirt profit and let President Bentz prior to seeking POET funding for our seesaw project. Possible logo placement was discussed.
 - Motion by Abeln and seconded by Kosel to apply for a PayPal Charity account so we have access to Venmo for donations. All members present voted aye. The discussion on creating fliers with a QR code for our Venmo, to be distributed to school-aged children, churches, and other outlets for the Seesaw fundraiser, will take place at the next meeting.
 - Motion by Abeln and seconded by Heinrich to offer 4 of the 6 ad spots on the Hwy 12 sign for sale in 2026 with information included in the due's notices mailed in October. Contracts will be \$5,000 for 5 years. All members present voted aye.
 - Abeln advised that volunteers are needed for this weekend's Groton Fly-In/Drive-In to load and unload airplane riders.
 - Motion by Abeln and seconded by Kutter to volunteer for the GHS PAC Concessions on December 30th. All members present voted aye. 6-8 volunteers are needed, and the Chamber will receive \$300 for doing so.
 - Nehlich announced that she donated her \$300 "Give Where You Live" Dacotah Bank money to the Chamber.
 - Abeln is working on our November/December advertisement for the Aberdeen and SD Magazines. She will send a draft via email. The GDI Live broadcast has begun, and the Chamber has received the first of five invoices.
- Calendars featuring our sponsorship, printed by the Groton Independent, are now available at City Hall and various other locations.
- Abeln will reach out to Show Queen coordinator Becca Johnson to see if she would like to attend our next meeting for sponsorship.
 - Motion by Kutter and seconded by Heinrich to donate \$300 to Pumpkin Fest. All members present voted aye.
 - Jamie Mitchek, owner of Raising Wildflowers, and Misty Maakestad, who offers facials at Karma Salon, have both been contacted regarding welcomes. Abeln will also reach out to Glow Bros, owned by Cole Simon and Lane Tietz, to schedule a welcome.
 - Next Meeting: October 1st, 12pm at City Hall

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GROTON

Chamber Of Commerce

The Groton Chamber of Commerce is in the process of raising funds to replace the old teeter totter at the City Park. The new teeter totter is expected to cost around \$10,000.



venmo



Support the Playground Upgrade! Donate through Venmo @GrotonChamber or drop off contributions at City Hall & Dacotah Bank.

South Dakota Mosquito



SD WNV (as of October 1):

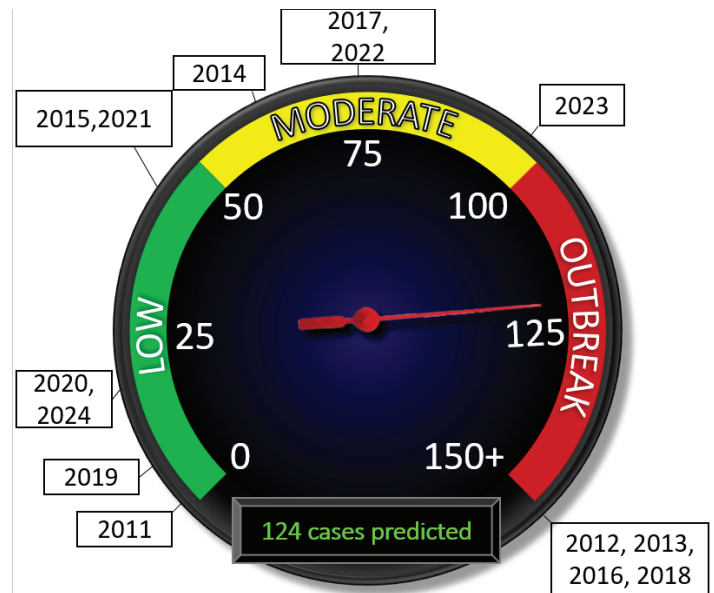
79 human cases (Aurora, Beadle, Bon Homme, Brookings, Brown, Corson, Codington, Charles Mix, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Gregory, Haakon, Hamlin, Hand, Hughes, Hutchinson, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marshall, Meade, Miner, Minnehaha, Pennington, Roberts, Sanborn, Stanley, Spink, Yankton, Walworth) and 4 deaths

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 30): 1324 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 October 1)



Mosquito Surveillance Summary for 2025

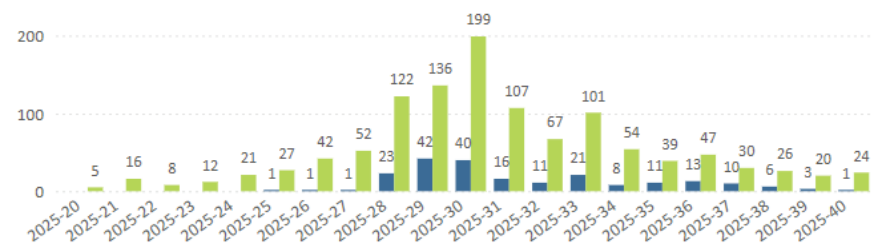
Total sites collecting mosquitoes: 57

Total mosquito pools tested: 1,363

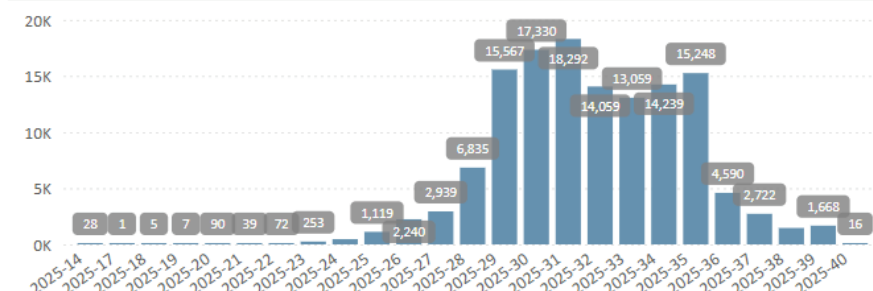
% positivity: 15.26%

Number of Mosquito Pools Tested by MMWR Week and Status

Test Status: ● Positive ● Negative



Culex Mosquitoes Collected by MMWR Week



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Names Released in Hughes County Fatal Crash

What: Mini-Van/Pedestrian fatal crash

Where: Highway 34, mile marker 231, Hughes County, SD

When: 8:43 p.m., Sunday, September 28, 2025

Driver 1: Taylor Reece Hanson, 27-year-old male from Rock Valley, IA, no injuries

Vehicle 1: 2014 Chrysler Town & Country

Pedestrian: Elvera Joan Driving Hawk, 23-year-old female from Kennebec, SD, fatal injuries

Hughes County, S.D.- A pedestrian was struck and died from injuries sustained in a single vehicle crash Sunday evening in Hughes County, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Taylor Reece Hanson, the driver of a 2014 Chrysler Town & Country, was traveling westbound on Highway 34 near mile marker 231 in Hughes County and struck a pedestrian. The pedestrian, Elvera Joan Driving Hawk, was pronounced deceased at the scene.

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

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

Word has been received that Virginia Spencer has died. Paul Kosel bought the Groton Independent from Morris and Virginia Spencer on October 1, 1986. A service will be held later in October at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel in Groton.

2026 State Park Entrance Licenses Available

PIERRE, S.D. – The 2026 annual park entrance license for South Dakota's state parks and recreation areas is now available for purchase. The license is valid from Oct. 1, 2025, through May 23, 2027.

A resident annual park entrance license is \$40 for one or \$60 for two. The license provides access to more than 60 state parks and recreation areas across South Dakota, although it does not cover camping costs.

"South Dakota State Parks have been connecting people to the outdoors for generations, offering places where families and friends can create lasting memories," said state parks director Jeff VanMeeteren. "We have a variety of overnight options for everyone with campsites, camping cabins, and modern lodging throughout the year."

Next year, state parks are celebrating their part in history as part of the America 250 initiative, which marks our country's 250th birthday. They will highlight not just historic figures and facilities, but individual stories--your first time tent camping, learning to fish with grandpa, or teaching your kids to build a campfire.

Entrance licenses can be purchased online at campsd.com, at local state park offices, or by calling 1.800.710.2267.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Federal shutdown leaves South Dakotans guessing as agencies offer uneven guidance

Mount Rushmore, Badlands, Wind Cave remain open with limitations; Jewel Cave and Minuteman Missile site close temporarily

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR-OCTOBER 1, 2025 5:09 PM

The federal government shutdown that began Wednesday created confusion for South Dakotans as communication about affected departments and services was inconsistent, with some agencies posting messages blaming the “radical left” and saying their websites won’t be updated until Congress approves additional funding.

The U.S. Senate was unable to advance two short-term government funding bills on Tuesday before the beginning of the new fiscal year, resulting in a shutdown beginning Wednesday morning.

About 750,000 federal workers are expected to be furloughed, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

Across South Dakota, federal offices provided uneven communication Wednesday.

Park Service, other impacts

Spokespeople for several National Park Service sites in the state declined to comment, referring inquiries to national or regional offices that didn’t respond to South Dakota Searchlight’s messages.

The state Department of Tourism ultimately provided information on the national park sites, saying Mount Rushmore National Memorial — which was first dedicated 100 years ago today — and Badlands National Park remain open with some limitations, including temporarily closed visitor centers at both locations. Only the above ground portion of Wind Cave National Park was open Wednesday, while Jewel Cave National Monument and Minuteman Missile National Historic Site both closed temporarily.

The National Park Service planned to furlough 9,300 of its 14,500 workers, according to its published contingency plan.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said its recreation areas on the Missouri River will remain open “contingent on available funding and staffing,” with critical operations such as dam maintenance and hydro-power production continuing.

“If or when appropriated funds are no longer available, USACE will execute orderly closures of USACE-owned and -operated campgrounds and other facilities,” the agency said in an emailed statement.

In federal court, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for South Dakota said in a written motion Wednesday that “the appropriation that had been funding the Department of Justice expired and the appropriations to the Department lapsed. The government was shut down, and the Department of Justice does not know when funding will be restored by Congress.

“Absent an appropriation, Department of Justice attorneys are prohibited from working, even on a voluntary basis, ‘except for emergencies involving the safety of human life or the protection of property.’”

The National Weather Service said critical forecasting will continue uninterrupted, but all public outreach has been suspended.

“The NWS will continue to provide critical forecast, watch, and warning information to protect life and property throughout the shutdown,” the service said on its website.

The Department of the Interior, which includes the National Park Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, among other agencies, shared that its website “is not being updated and will not be able to respond

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to inquiries until appropriations are enacted.”

Amid concerns about impacts to Native American tribes, which rely on treaties with the federal government for much of their revenue, KFF Health News reported that operations at the Indian Health Service would continue.

Troy Heinert, bison management chief with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, said he and many others have been furloughed.

“It’s hitting a lot of people and hitting a lot of programs,” said Heinert, a Democratic former state legislator from Mission.

Some agencies politicize messaging

Meanwhile, some federal websites took a political tone in describing the shutdown.

“The Radical Left in Congress shut down the government. HUD will use available resources to help Americans in need,” read a statement posted by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The website of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, which is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, displayed a similar message: “Due to the Radical Left Democrat shutdown, this government website will not be updated during the funding lapse. President Trump has made it clear he wants to keep the government open and support those who feed, fuel, and clothe the American people.”

Nearly half of all U.S. Department of Agriculture employees will be furloughed during the federal government shutdown, according to the department’s contingency plan, though key programs that support nutrition, forest preservation and wildfire prevention, the most pressing plant and animal diseases, and agricultural commodity assessments will continue.

Congressional delegates react; health care debate continues

South Dakota’s all-Republican congressional delegation took to social media Wednesday morning, posting messages that included criticism of Democrats.

Rep. Dusty Johnson called shutdowns “stupid,” adding Senate Democrats were responsible for the funding lapse. Sen. Mike Rounds said a Republican bill to keep the government open failed because “Democrat colleagues did not join us,” and he called the situation “unacceptable and fully avoidable.” Senate Majority Leader John Thune said “Democrats have bowed to the far left.”

Yet GOP lawmakers wrote their short-term funding bill behind closed doors and then expected Democrats to help advance it in the Senate, where bipartisanship is required for major legislation.

Democratic leaders have raised concerns for weeks about the end-of-year sunset of enhanced tax credits for people who buy their health insurance on the Affordable Care Act Marketplace, arguing a solution is needed now ahead of the open enrollment period starting on Nov. 1.

According to a national analysis from U.S. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Washington, the top marketplace insurer in South Dakota, Avera Health Plans, would increase premiums by 9%.

The last government shutdown that began in December 2018 and lasted until January 2019 led to a loss of about \$3 billion in gross domestic product that couldn’t be recovered, according to a CBO analysis.

States Newsroom’s D.C. Bureau contributed to this report.

Status of South Dakota national parks, monuments and memorials

- Badlands National Park: Scenic drives, trails, and overlooks remain open for visitors. Vault toilets are available throughout the park. The Ben Reifel Visitor Center and ranger-led programs are temporarily closed.

- Mount Rushmore National Memorial: The memorial grounds, parking structure, and concessions (including dining and gift shops) remain open. The visitor center, ranger talks, and evening lighting ceremonies are temporarily unavailable.

- Wind Cave National Park: The aboveground experience of the park is open for hiking, wildlife viewing, and enjoying the prairie landscape. The visitor center and cave tours are unavailable.

- Jewel Cave National Monument: Site is temporarily closed.

- Minuteman Missile National Historic Site: Site is temporarily closed.

- Missouri National Recreational River: Open for exploration. The visitor center is closed.

Source: South Dakota Department of Tourism

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.

New Corrections Commission leadership pledges closer oversight of prison operations

Board's role had weakened in recent years, and it had no part in new prison talks

BY: JOHN HULT-OCTOBER 1, 2025 4:45 PM

Members of the advisory board that oversees state prison operations want to meet more often, tour facilities and keep a closer eye on inmate work and rehabilitation programs.

The Corrections Commission met virtually a week and a day after lawmakers voted during a special legislative session to build a \$650 million, 1,500-bed men's prison in northeast Sioux Falls.

By law, the commission must approve any spending on prison industry programming. It's also meant to assist the Department of Corrections "in examining criminal justice issues and developing initiatives to address problems in corrections and the criminal justice system."

The group's scope of inquiry has narrowed considerably in recent years, however. The commission had no formal role in planning for the new men's prison, and corrections officials told its members and lawmakers in 2023 and 2024 that the body's only job was to approve prison industry spending.

Rep. Ernie Otten, R-Tea, who left the group earlier this year, said during a 2024 commission meeting that it's "the biggest waste of time I've ever had to endure."

Corrections Secretary Kellie Wasko did not take part in Wednesday's meeting. Wasko tendered her resignation to Gov. Larry Rhoden at the start of September, and will step down Oct. 20.

New members, new focus

Rep. Kady Wittman, D-Sioux Falls, and Rep. John Hughes, R-Sioux Falls, were each appointed to the commission this year. Wittman was elected to lead the group at its May meeting.

On Wednesday, both new members said the group needs to meet more than twice a year so it can dig deeper and keep a closer eye on operations.

"There's a lot of moving parts with the recent funding of the new prison," said Wittman, who noted Gov. Rhoden's intent to appoint a rehabilitation task force in the coming months. "Knowing that the next few years are going to be really focused on policy, this could be a great working group for us to keep our finger on the pulse of that conversation."

Wittman and Hughes both said they'd like to serve on the rehabilitation task force.

Rebranded prison industries

They also had operational questions for Rene Stolsmark, head of the prison system's in-house employer, Pheasantland Industries.

A year ago, Pheasantland took over commissary operations from Summit, a company founded in Sioux Falls, in a new contract with Union Supply of Texas. Commissary is the prison store, through which inmates can order snacks, toiletries, televisions and other consumer goods.

Inmates now manage the commissary inventory, packaging products that are shipped to the penitentiary warehouse from Union Supply into individual order bundles for delivery. Summit had previously done all that work with its own employees.

Hughes said he didn't understand the move to an out-of-state vendor and asked if there's a way to use local vendors for products in the commissary catalog. He also questioned the wisdom of generating income from the sale of "junk food."

Stolsmark explained that the new setup allows inmates to learn the kinds of skills they might be able

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to use upon release at an Amazon warehouse or similar distribution facility. Department of Corrections Finance Director Brittnei Skipper said the state's director of clinical services reviews all commissary items for nutritional value, and that some high-sodium items have been removed.

Wittman asked about the price differences between Summit and Union Supply, noting that inmates and their families have lodged complaints. Stolsmark said the commissary price hikes square with the increase in food prices outside the walls.

Stolsmark also told the commission about a November rebranding for Pheasantland. Too many people think it has something to do with hunting, she said. Inmates and staff worked together on a new name and logo for what will be called "DakotaCORE," which she said stands for Dakota Correctional Opportunities for Rehabilitation and Employment."

"We wanted a recommitment to everything that we're doing and who we are, why we were created," Stolsmark said.

Vocational programming

Angela Smith, the Department of Corrections' director of programs, told commissioners that the state's seventh cohort of inmates in a Southeast Technical College welding program recently started attending classes at the Sioux Falls facility.

The program is currently grant funded, Smith said, but that money will run out in September 2026. The state is preparing an application to the U.S. Department of Education in hopes of funding the coursework through Pell grants, Smith said. Those grants, typically associated with low-income students outside of prison, were made available for qualifying prison training programs during the Biden administration.

It will take at least a year to get through the process, Smith said. The state still hopes to start a diesel mechanics program in a now-empty prison shop in Sioux Falls, for which it's been unable to secure funding so far. The Pell grant program would be the mechanism for that.

"We're looking for about 12 months from now before we get full approval on either of those, and that is if nothing changes at the federal level," Smith told the commission.

Before adjourning, Wittman said she plans to call a commission meeting once more this year, in December. The group did not vote on how many more annual meetings it would hold in its normal course of business. Wittman asked that members "noodle on" the options and decide what might be feasible at the next meeting.

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

COMMENTARY

Book excerpt: The clash and synergy of Borglum, Black Elk and Mount Rushmore

'A Biography of a Mountain' explores the making and meaning of the national memorial
by MATTHEW DAVIS

One hundred years ago on Oct. 1, 1925, sculptor Gutzon Borglum conducted the first dedication of Mount Rushmore (fundraising was slow, leading to another dedication and the actual start of carving in 1927). The following is an excerpt from a new book being published in tandem with the first dedication's 100th anniversary: "A Biography of a Mountain: The Making and Meaning of Mount Rushmore," from St. Martin's Press by author Matthew Davis.

Even though Gutzon Borglum had been a presence in the Black Hills since 1925, there is little correspondence in his papers about the Lakota or Lakota affairs until 1931, when he provided Pine Ridge with food and clothing. Word must have spread that Borglum was a friend of the Lakota Nation, for his papers start to fill with requests for money, advocacy in Washington, D.C., or as a kind of intermediary with the federal

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prison system. It is impossible to know in what capacities, and with what degree of success, Borglum helped, but there was one particular letter among Borglum's papers that captured my attention.

"Dear Sir or Son," Black Elk wrote Gutzon Borglum on September 6, 1937, unsure who, exactly, would be receiving his missive. "I will write a few lines and will say that I have appreciated for your kindness in doing my son Benj Black Elk a favor." The Lakota holy man's handwriting is mostly legible, his cursive tight and controlled, his impeccable letters delicately balanced on the lined paper. He goes on to say, in sentences that are incomplete, that his son has been "released ... your account and I am grateful that he is coming back" and that his son, Benjamin Black Elk, has asked for a job at Mount Rushmore.

When Black Elk wrote Borglum this letter, he was in his mid-seventies (Borglum himself had just turned seventy) and had lived an unbelievable life that spanned an entire epoch of the American West. He and Crazy Horse were second cousins, and when Black Elk was nine years old, he became gravely ill, a sickness during which the Grandfathers gave him a vision he experienced at the top of Harney Peak. At twelve, Black Elk fought at Greasy Grass, and eventually followed his father's footsteps and became a Lakota holy man. He danced the Ghost Dance when it appeared at Pine Ridge and was one of the first people to witness the aftermath of the Wounded Knee Massacre. He participated in Buffalo Bill's traveling Wild West show in Europe and eventually returned to Pine Ridge, converted to Catholicism, and became an important catechist. All of this was remarkable enough, and yet there were more chapters left for Black Elk.

In August of 1930, just after the dedication of George Washington's unfinished portrait, the Nebraska poet laureate, John Neihardt, drove onto Pine Ridge looking for someone with knowledge of the Ghost Dance. Neihardt was in the middle of a five-part series of epic poetry about the American West, and his third part would feature the religious revival that had swept through the Native American West. Black Elk was offered as a possibility, and when the poet drove to see the holy man, the two established an almost mystical connection. Black Elk had only told one person about the vision the Grandfathers had given him when he was nine, a vision that was intended, he thought, to save his people, and after meeting Neihardt, he wanted to share it with him. Black Elk asked the poet to return the following spring.

Neihardt returned in May 1931 with a book contract from William Morrow & Company to write what would become *Black Elk Speaks*. The Lakota holy man and American poet spoke for over three weeks through the translation of Black Elk's son, Benjamin Black Elk. Black Elk focused on the lost ways of the Lakota. In his own language and literary style, Neihardt took Black Elk's words, life, thoughts, and experiences and created a text that was part autobiography, part history, part ethnography, and part spiritual manifesto. Central to the book was the Great Vision that Black Elk experienced atop the tallest mountain in the Black Hills, within shouting distance of Mount Rushmore. He had carried its promise and message throughout his entire life and now he was also carrying its failure, for he believed he had failed in saving his people. He didn't blame the vision or the Grandfathers, but he did blame himself. He hoped that, by sharing his vision with Neihardt, it would live on in the world when he passed away.

Black Elk Speaks was published the following year, 1932, to some acclaim but very modest sales. The book fell out of print until 1961, when it was rereleased and reappraised by the burgeoning field of Native American studies, rediscovered by the blossoming counterculture. And then, on April 27, 1971, a very old John Neihardt — wearing a black suit, his mass of curly white hair giving him a prophetic, near-mad look, his wrinkles and drooping jowls lighted as if by Caravaggio, his thick, dark-lensed glasses shielding his eyes — appeared on the popular *The Dick Cavett Show*. His conversation with Cavett sent book sales and translation requests soaring, and *Black Elk Speaks* has enjoyed a wide readership and wide influence ever since. Today, it is universally accepted as one of the foundational spiritual texts of the last century.

The most important aspect of the book's renaissance, the Lakota scholar Vine Deloria, Jr., wrote in a 1979 foreword, was its influence not on non-Natives "but upon the contemporary generation of young Indians who have been aggressively searching for roots of their own in the structure of universal reality. To them, the book has become a North American bible of all tribes. They look to it for spiritual guidance, for sociological identity, for political insight, and for affirmation of the continuing substance of Indian tribal life."

It has always struck me as a fascinating cultural juxtaposition to imagine Mount Rushmore and Black Elk

Speaks, two iconic works of art with very different spiritual and political significance, being created at the same time within a short distance from each other. That the cultures they represent engaged in conflict, that the victor of that conflict nearly extirpated the loser, and that the memorial is built in plain sight of the mountain peak where Black Elk had his vision, creates an artistic clash and synergy that neither obviously intended.

From A Biography of a Mountain, by Matthew Davis. Copyright © 2025 by the author, and reprinted with permission of St. Martin's Publishing Group.

Matthew Davis is the author of "When Things Get Dark: A Mongolian Winter's Tale." His work has appeared in the New Yorker, The Atlantic, The Los Angeles Review of Books and Guernica, among other places. (Photo credit: Anne Giebel)

White House warns of 'imminent' mass layoffs in government shutdown

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ARIANA FIGUEROA-OCTOBER 1, 2025 5:43 PM

WASHINGTON — Vice President JD Vance said Wednesday the administration is looking for ways to get a handful of additional U.S. Senate Democrats to vote for Republicans' stopgap spending bill to reopen government.

But, in the meantime, White House officials plan to lay off federal workers en masse, a dramatic and unsettling step that's not traditionally been taken during past shutdowns.

"We're going to have to take extraordinary measures to ensure the people's government operates — again not perfectly because it's not going to operate perfectly in the midst of a shutdown — but operates as well as it possibly can," Vance said.

Any Democrats concerned about the impacts of layoffs on federal programs or people's lives, Vance said, should vote to advance a seven-week stopgap spending bill that has stalled in the Senate. Senate and House Democrats say they will not support a GOP path to reopen the government unless Republicans agree to negotiate on rising health care costs.

Typically during a shutdown, some federal employees are categorized as exempt, meaning they work throughout the funding lapse. Others are furloughed. All receive back pay once Congress funds the government, under a 2019 law.

Widescale layoffs were not part of the 2013 shutdown or the 2018-2019 shutdown that took place during the first Trump administration.

Vance during the White House briefing placed blame for the shutdown on Democrats, as the Trump administration ramped up similar rhetoric, including on government agency websites that said the "radical left in Congress" is at fault.

"Three moderate Democrats joined 52 Republicans last night. We need five more in order to reopen the government and that's really where we're going to focus, is how to get those five additional Democrats," Vance said.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said during the same briefing that layoffs for federal employees are "imminent" but declined to say what percentage of workers would be let go or share any other details.

Leavitt indicated that White House budget director Russ Vought would release those details "soon," saying she didn't want to get ahead of that office.

"These (Reductions in Force) are unfortunately going to have to happen very soon," Leavitt said.

Effects on key programs

The administration expects several programs will be impacted by the shutdown, including new enrollees in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children, or WIC.

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Leavitt said the funding lapse means "1.3 million active duty troops will work now without pay; critical food assistance for low-income women, infants and children will now lapse, no new mothers or children are allowed to join this critical program because of the Democrats' decision to shut down the government; telehealth services for seniors and in-home treatment options for Medicare patients will now come to an end; nearly 50,000 members of the United States Coast Guard are going to have to work unpaid; over 13,000 air traffic controllers will work without pay as well as TSA agents, which will very likely create flight disruptions; and pay will now stop for over 150,000 federal law enforcement officers.

"These are not just numbers and statistics, these are real Americans who have families at home. And I saw some Democrat members today saying they're still going to accept their paychecks because they have three kids at home and they have mouths to feed. Well, so do these federal workers."

Members of Congress, the president and federal judges must receive their salary under various provisions in the Constitution. While some lawmakers have publicly asked for their paychecks to be withheld until the government reopens, that's not a legal option.

They could, however, donate their salaries to charity, which they can do regardless of whether the government is shut down.

'Mafia-style threat'

The threat to fire federal workers en masse has already prompted a lawsuit in a Northern California district court, arguing the executive branch has no statutory authority to fire federal workers during a government shutdown.

There were roughly 2.2 million federal workers throughout the country as of July 1, with large portions of them living in California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Texas and Virginia. Roughly 30% of the workforce is made up of veterans.

Maryland's Democratic Sen. Chris Van Hollen told States Newsroom on Wednesday morning that his office has not heard of any federal workers in his state being fired, and even if it were the case, "it's illegal."

"The president has no additional authority, in a shutdown, to fire people," Van Hollen said. "This is just a mafia-style threat and blackmail."

He didn't detail what plans Democrats have to prevent those potential firings, but called them unlawful and pointed to the lawsuit filed in California by labor unions representing more than 1 million federal employees. Those unions are the American Federation of Government Employees and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

Virginia Democratic Sen. Mark Warner made similar remarks, saying "the president has no enhanced powers during the shutdown so his ability to randomly and arbitrarily fire is not enhanced."

North Dakota Republican Sen. Kevin Cramer said Democrats "don't have the high ground in this situation" and need to pass the GOP stopgap bill so that the government can reopen.

But Cramer said he's concerned the White House budget office will go too far in implementing a shutdown, including mass layoffs, and could create challenges for Republican lawmakers.

"I worry a little bit that they could be counterproductive for us politically in the long run, because other things are going to require 60 votes again," Cramer said.

Legislation needs the support of at least 60 senators to advance toward final passage, a rule that typically leads to compromise and bipartisanship in that chamber.

Sen. Tim Kaine, Democrat of Virginia, said he hopes lawmakers can strike a deal to prevent the Trump administration from firing more federal workers. He said Congress has specifically carved out protections for federal workers, such as in 2019 when lawmakers included a provision to give back pay to furloughed federal workers.

"So it used to be we had to fight about back pay after the shutdown," he said. "Now everybody's guaranteed back pay, so they have that as a backstop that they can count (on)."

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries said during a press conference Wednesday President Donald Trump's administration "has been engaging in" the mass firings of federal workers since Trump took office on Jan 20.

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"The Trump administration has been killing jobs," the New York Democrat said. "This is a job-killing administration. Job creation is down, but you know what's up? Costs. They promised to lower costs on day one. Costs aren't going down. Costs are going up."

Here are department shutdown plans

The Trump administration has been steadily posting its plans for how many federal workers in each department will keep working without pay during a shutdown and which employees will be furloughed.

The plans, listed below, also detail which programs the Trump administration believes it can legally continue during a funding lapse without violating federal law.

They do not explain how many federal workers could be laid off and the White House declined to provide additional details about those plans or whether they'll be posted publicly following the briefing,

- Agriculture Department contingency plan
- Commerce Department contingency plan
- Defense Department contingency plan
- Education Department contingency plan
- Energy Department contingency plan
- Health and Human Services contingency plan
- Homeland Security Department contingency plan
- Housing and Urban Development contingency plan
- Interior Department contingency plan
- Labor Department contingency plan
- Justice Department contingency plan
- State Department contingency plan
- Social Security Administration contingency plan
- Transportation Department contingency plan
- Treasury Department contingency plan
- Veterans Affairs Department contingency plan

Attack banners

The Trump administration has taken a new approach to letting people visiting their websites know about the shutdown, adding banners laying the blame at Democrats' feet.

The Agriculture Department's website states that "(d)ue to the Radical Left Democrat shutdown, this government website will not be updated during the funding lapse. President Trump has made it clear he wants to keep the government open and support those who feed, fuel, and clothe the American people."

The website for the Department of Housing and Urban Development includes a pop-up and a banner on the homepage that reads, "The Radical Left in Congress shut down the government. HUD will use available resources to help Americans in need."

The Defense Department had a more measured message: "The most recent appropriations for the Department of War expired at 11:59 p.m. EDT on Sept. 30, 2025. Military personnel will continue in a normal duty status, without pay, until such time as a continuing resolution or appropriations are passed by Congress and signed into law. Civilian personnel not engaged in excepted activities will be placed in a non-work, non-pay status."

The message posted by the Department of Health and Human Services was similar.

"Mission-critical activities of HHS will continue during the Democrat-led government shutdown. Please use this site as a resource as the Trump Administration works to reopen the government for the American people."

The messages could be in violation of a longstanding rider in federal spending law that states "(n)o part of any funds appropriated in this or any other Act shall be used by an agency of the executive branch ... to support or defeat legislation pending before the Congress, except in presentation to the Congress itself."

Shauneen Miranda contributed to this report.

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congress-

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sional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families. Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.

Shutdown standoff in US Senate extends as thousands of federal workers are sent home

**BY: ASHLEY MURRAY, JENNIFER SHUTT AND SHAUNEEN MIRANDA-OCTOBER 1, 2025
4:24 PM**

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Democrats and Republicans remained at a stalemate Wednesday as government offices closed and hundreds of thousands of federal workers faced furloughs on the first day of a government shutdown that showed no sign of ending.

Proposals from each side of the aisle to fund and reopen the government failed again during morning Senate votes, mirroring the same vote breakdowns as Tuesday evening, when lawmakers could not reach a deal hours before the government ran out of money.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office projected up to 750,000 federal workers could be furloughed, leading to a \$400 million per day impact on the economy.

Locked in their positions, Republicans failed to pick up enough Democrats to reach the 60 votes needed to advance their plan to fund the government until Nov. 21.

Senators will break Thursday to observe Yom Kippur but will return Friday to again vote on the funding proposals.

Democratic Sens. Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada and John Fetterman of Pennsylvania, along with independent Angus King of Maine, again joined Republicans in the 55-45 vote for the House-passed stop-gap spending bill. GOP Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky voted no.

Democrats also failed to find support to move forward their bill to fund the government through Oct. 31, roll back GOP cuts on Medicaid and permanently extend subsidies that tie the cost of Affordable Care Act health insurance premiums to an enrollee's income level.

The Democrats failed to advance their plan in a party-line 47-53 vote. King, who caucuses with Democrats, voted in favor.

Shutdown tied to health care tax credits

Senate and House Democrats say they will not support a GOP path to reopen the government unless Republicans agree to negotiate on rising health care costs.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries said at a press conference that Democrats are "ready to sit down with anyone at any time and at any place in order now to reopen the government, to enact a spending agreement that meets the needs of the American people and to address the devastating Republican health care crisis that has caused extraordinary harm on people all across the country."

The New York Democrat pointed to harms in "rural America, working class America, urban America, small-town America, the heartland of America and Black and brown communities throughout America."

Democratic leaders blitzed Capitol Hill with their message on health care, holding press conferences and attending an evening rally Tuesday on the lawn outside the U.S. House.

They pointed to new data published this week showing annual insurance premiums could double on average in 2026 if the subsidies expire at year's end, according to an analysis from the nonprofit health policy research organization KFF.

Open enrollment for next year's ACA health insurance plans opens Nov. 1 in most states, and Oct. 15 in Idaho.

Uptake of ACA health insurance plans has more than doubled to over 24 million, up from 11 million, since the introduction of the subsidies in 2021, according to KFF.

During their own budget reconciliation deal in 2022, Democrats extended the insurance premium tax credits until the end of 2025. The majority of ACA enrollees currently rely on the credits.

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Democrats also want assurances that the White House and Senate Republicans will not cancel any more funds that have already been approved by Congress, as was the case this year when the administration and GOP lawmakers stripped funding for medical research, foreign aid and public broadcasting, among other areas.

'This can all end today'

GOP leaders in the House and Senate continued to blame Senate Democrats for the government shutdown at the expense of furloughed federal workers and Americans who rely on their services.

At a Wednesday morning press conference, House Speaker Mike Johnson said "troops and border patrol agents will have to go to work, but they'll be working without pay."

Johnson also claimed at the press conference that veterans benefits would stop. The claim is false, as Veterans Administration medical care will continue uninterrupted and vets will also continue to receive benefits, including compensation, pension, education and housing.

"As we speak here this morning, there are hundreds of thousands of federal workers who are getting their furlough notices. Nearly half of our civilian workforce is being sent home — these are hard-working Americans who work for our federal government," the Louisiana Republican said, flanked by fellow GOP leaders on the Upper West Terrace of the U.S. Capitol overlooking the National Mall.

Johnson decided in late September the House will be out until Oct. 6, canceling this week's votes.

The speaker said he will bring House members back next week, even if the government is still shut down.

"They would be here this week, except that we did our work — we passed the bill almost two weeks ago out of the House, sent it to the Senate," Johnson said. "The ball is literally in (Senate Minority Leader) Chuck Schumer's court, so he determines that."

Senate Majority Leader John Thune said "this can all end today" and "needs to end today."

The South Dakota Republican said the funding lapse can cease when Senate Democrats vote for the GOP's "clean" short-term funding bill.

"We will continue to work together with our House counterparts, with the president of the United States, to get this government open again on behalf of the American people," Thune said.

Bipartisan deal and Trump

Virginia Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine said later in the day that a bipartisan group huddled on the floor during votes to talk about a possible path forward on "health care fixes" and ensuring that if a bipartisan deal is brokered, the Trump administration will stick to it.

Republican senators, he said, could give Democrats assurances they won't vote for any more rescissions requests from the White House, which ask Congress to cancel already approved government spending. But other issues, like laying off federal workers by the hundreds or thousands, have to be a promise from the president.

"If I find a deal, should Congress have to follow it? Yes. Should the president have to follow it? Yes. Well, what if the president won't follow it? Oh, yeah, you got a problem," Kaine said. "So you know, rescission, impoundment, those are Senate words. But a deal is a deal — people get that."

Kaine also emphasized that it's not a "clean" stopgap funding bill if the Trump administration unilaterally cancels some of the spending.

"In the past, we voted for clean (continuing resolutions), but the president has shown that he'll take the money back," Kaine said, referring to the technical name for a short-term funding bill. "I mean, just in Virginia, canceling \$400 million to our public health, \$40 million economic projects just pulled off the table, firing more Virginians than any president.

"So we just want you to agree, if we do a deal, then you'll honor the deal," Kaine said. "It's not that much to ask."

'People are suffering'

North Carolina Republican Sen. Thom Tillis said he doesn't expect the shutdown will have long-term ramifications for senators' ability to negotiate bipartisan deals — a necessity in the upper chamber, which has a 60-vote threshold to advance legislation.

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"It's all transactional," Tillis said. "I think there's going to be opportunities for some bipartisan work, but none of that happens, you can't even really consider it when you're in a shutdown posture."

Cortez Masto, who voted to advance Republicans' seven-week stopgap bill, said the GOP "created this crisis" on health care and "need to address it."

"They have no moral standing — no moral standing — to say that this is all on the Democrats. They are in control. They've created this crisis," Cortez Masto said. "People are suffering and they need to come to the table."

Missouri Republican Sen. Josh Hawley, who was sworn in for the first time during the last shutdown, said he worries about longer-term effects.

"My concern is it's going to poison the well on negotiations going forward on a lot of things," Hawley said. "I can't speak for anybody but myself, but I would just say that these tactics are very destructive. And it's destructive, not just for relationships, but for real people."

Ariana Figueroa contributed to this report.

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

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What the government shutdown means for agriculture agencies

Nutrition programs, food safety, wildfire prevention among key programs that will persist

BY: CAMI KOONS-OCTOBER 1, 2025 2:13 PM

Nearly half of U.S. Department of Agriculture employees will be furloughed during the federal government shutdown, though key programs that support nutrition, forest preservation and wildfire prevention, the most pressing plant and animal diseases and agricultural commodity assessments will continue.

Many offices, including county USDA service centers, will be closed or operating with minimal staff until Congress agrees on a temporary spending package. Support, payment processing and other functions of these offices are also suspended during the shutdown.

Congress failed to pass a stopgap spending bill Tuesday which resulted in the start of a government shutdown at midnight and federal agencies had to implement the contingency plans required by the Office of Management and Budget.

According to the contingency plan filed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, only a handful of agency operations will continue during the shutdown. The primary objective is that agencies cannot incur financial obligations if the funding source has lapsed and any planned or in-the-works activities that would incur new obligations, must cease.

Activities that may continue during the shutdown include those that are financed by something other than current year appropriations, expressly authorized to continue, either by law or by necessary implication, necessary to the presidential duties and powers or related to emergencies that endanger human life or the protection of property.

According to the plan, more than 42,000 USDA employees are expected to be furloughed during the shutdown. That's about half of the more than 85,000 employees the agency said would be "on board" prior to the shutdown.

USDA programs that will continue despite the shutdown:

- Farm loan processing.
- Certain natural resources and conservation programs that are mandatory under the farm bill or to protect human life and private property, like the Emergency Watershed Protection Program, dam safety and rehab work, the National Water and Climate Center which tracks flooding and weather risks and the

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National Soil Survey Center.

- “Core” nutrition safety net programs. This includes SNAP and child nutrition programs which have funding appropriations through October. The Women Infants and Children, or WIC, program is set to continue through the shutdown “subject to the availability of funding.” According to the plan, WIC can “recover and reallocate” unused grant funding from previous years to cover gap in coverage.

- Food safety operations, like inspections and laboratory testing.
- Wildfire preparation and response.
- Activities like grading, assessment, inspection, import and export for farm commodities. These activities are supported by user fees and therefore not impacted by the shutdown.
- Emergency programs under USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service that address new world screwworm, highly pathogenic avian influenza, African swine fever, rabies and exotic fruit flies. Surveying for other plant and livestock diseases will cease during the shutdown.

- Prior obligations in the Section 521 rental housing agreement program. This is the program element of USDA Rural Development offices that will persist.

- Operational requirements like human resource policies, cybersecurity and critical IT infrastructure. Under the contingency plan, USDA functions like ongoing research, reports, outreach and technical assistance are suspended. The agency will also stop processing payments and disaster assistance.

Trade negotiations, hazardous fuel treatments, special use permits, regulatory work, training and travel by USDA employees and agencies are also suspended.

According to the contingency plan, most functions are suspended for the Risk Management Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, Food and Nutrition Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Economic Research Service, National Agricultural Statistical Service, Rural Development, and staff offices.

Website updates are also suspended under the shutdown. A banner atop the USDA website informs visitors that the website will not be updated “due to the Radical Left Democrat shutdown.”

“President Trump has made it clear he wants to keep the government open and support those who feed, fuel, and clothe the American people,” the banner reads.

According to the plan, “all activities will cease” for the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and her office during the shutdown.

Approximately 67% of Farm Service Agency, or FSA, employees will be furloughed. According to the plan, selected leadership at headquarters and USDA offices will stay on during the shut down. This means county service centers, and the majority of the services they offer, will not be available during the shutdown.

Nearly all, 1135 out of 1237 employees, at the Food and Nutrition Service offices were projected to be furloughed during the shutdown, though according to the plan, enough employees remain to facilitate SNAP, child nutrition programs and WIC. WIC must make unspent funds from past years available in order to continue operations through October.

Close to 20,000 of the 32,390 Forest Service employees will continue to work on certain approved areas of agency work, like wildfire prevention, protection of federal land and federal directives to expand timber production. Public access to recreation sites managed by the department will be reduced, according to the plan.

A significant portion of Agricultural Marketing Service operations are funded by previous farm bill appropriations or by user fees, so services like the Federal Grain Inspection Service and dairy grading will continue, as will market news information.

Operations like country of origin labeling, the packers and stockyards program, the national organic program, shell egg surveillance and the pesticide data program will be suspended.

The plan calls for a number of reconsiderations in the event the shutdown persists longer than 5 days. This could include, for example a farm loan employee or other staff member on call at USDA service centers, or the reinstatement of some furloughed employees to deal with wildfire management.

Glenn “GT” Thompson, chair of the House Committee on Agriculture, blamed Democrats, who demanded

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extensions to the Affordable Care Act be added to the stopgap spending bill, for shutting down the government and putting "critical USDA services in jeopardy."

"These political games harm rural America through disruptions to farm payments, disaster relief, food assistance, and other critical services," the Republican from Pennsylvania said in a statement. "Performative photo ops at state fairs and lip service to the producers who feed, fuel, and clothe our country won't hide the truth—Democrats forcing a government shutdown only inflicts more pain on our agricultural economy."

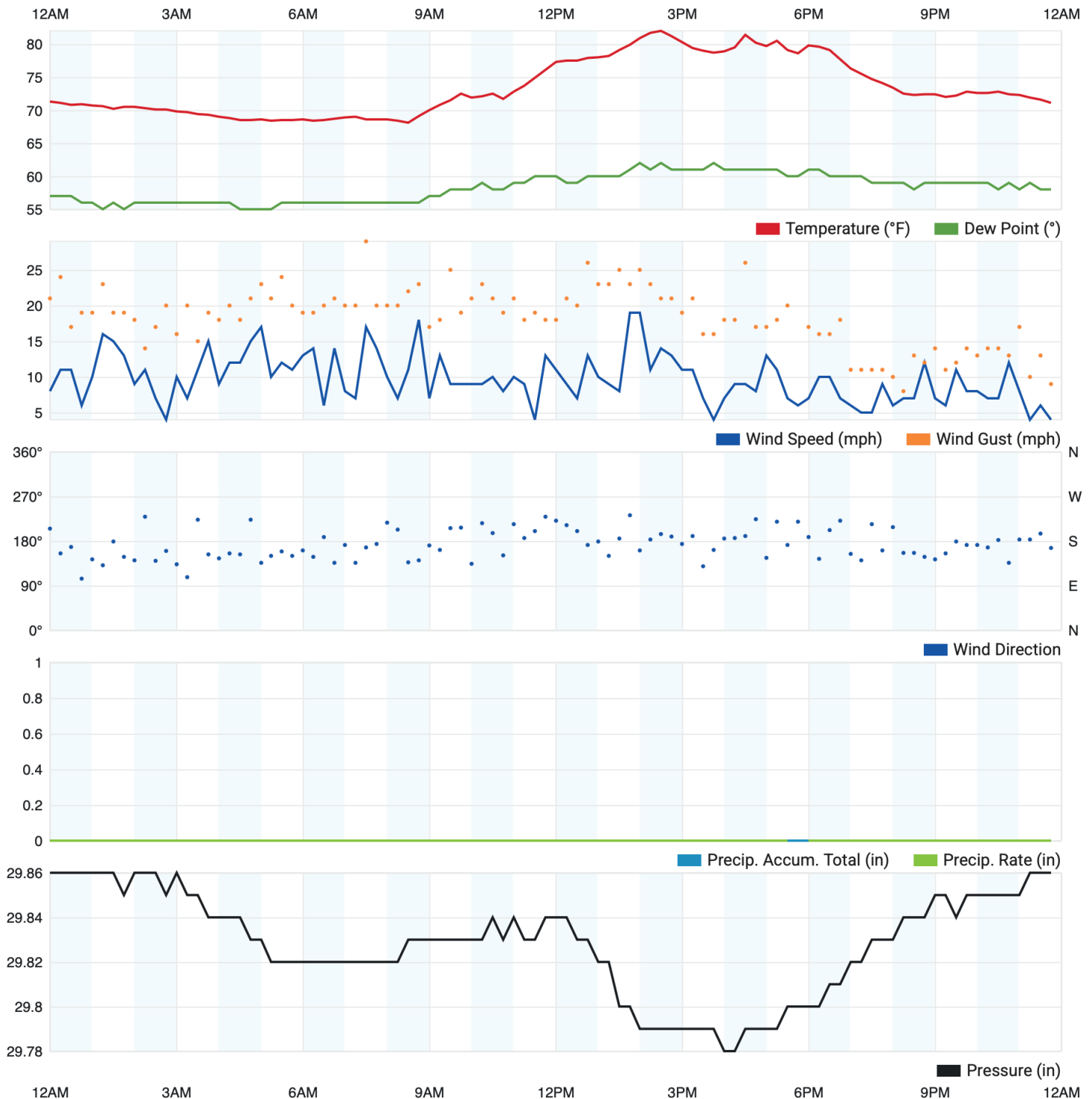
Cami Koons is an Iowa Capital Dispatch reporter covering agriculture and the environment. She previously worked at publications in Kansas and Missouri, covering rural affairs.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

October 1, 2025



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Today



High: 85 °F

Patchy Fog
then Sunny

Tonight



Low: 57 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 89 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Sunny
and Breezy

Friday Night



Low: 67 °F

Mostly Clear
and Breezy
then Partly
Cloudy

Saturday



High: 87 °F

Mostly Sunny



September 2025 Climate Summary

October 1, 2025
1:46 PM

Above Normal Temperatures & Above Normal Rainfall except for East Central SD



| | Aberdeen (since 1893) | Pierre (since 1933) | Mobridge (since 1911) | Watertown (since 1898) | Sisseton (since 1932) |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Avg Temp | 77.7° | 77.9° | 77.4° | 75.3° | 77.3° |
| Departure | +2.8° | +2.6° | +2.1° | +4.4° | +3.8° |
| Warmest | 87° (9/26) | 90° (9/12) | 91° (9/12) | 88° (9/29) | 93° (9/29) |
| Coldest | 33° (9/7) | 37° (9/7) | 34° (9/6) | 37° (9/7) | 36° (9/4) |
| Rainfall | 2.26" | 4.76" | 6.48" | 1.55" | 3.02" |
| Departure | +0.27" | +3.02" | +4.96" | -0.90" | +0.57" |
| Greatest Daily Rainfall | 1.06" (9/17) | 2.17" (9/17) | 2.21" (9/13) | 0.44" (9/19) | 1.10" (9/12) |



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

This past September saw above normal temperatures, that were at least, if not greater than, 2 degrees warmer than normal. There was also above normal rainfall for most of the climate sites, except for Watertown, which saw less than normal rainfall amounts.

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Windy Weekend Incoming

October 2, 2025
3:14 AM

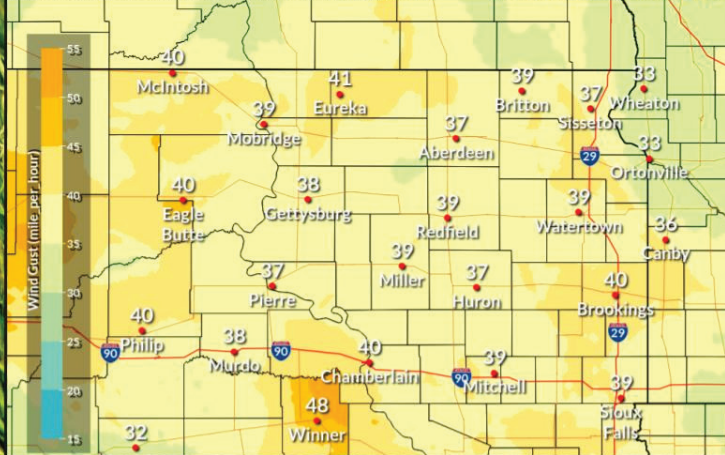
Strong wind gusts expected both Saturday and Sunday.

- Wind gusts of 40+ miles per hour may occur both Saturday and Sunday, with Sunday having stronger and more widespread strong winds.
- Winds will be out of the south on Saturday, before turning to the northwest Sunday behind a cold front.
- Strong winds are expected to move out of the area after Sunday evening.

Maximum Wind Gusts Sunday

Valid from 12 AM CDT Sunday, Oct 5 through 12 AM CDT Monday, Oct 6th

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Oct 02, 2025 2:55 AM CDT



| | Sat | | | | Sun | | | |
|-------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
| | 12am | 6am | 12pm | 6pm | 12am | 6am | 12pm | 6pm |
| McIntosh | 20↑ | 22↓ | 23↓ | 24↓ | 35↓ | 43↓ | 41↓ | 25↓ |
| Eagle Butte | 24↑ | 18↑ | 20↓ | 23↓ | 35↓ | 41↓ | 39↓ | 25↓ |
| Murdo | 29↑ | 22↑ | 21↓ | 23↓ | 31↓ | 39↓ | 39↓ | 26↓ |
| Mobridge | 29↑ | 17↑ | 20↓ | 22↓ | 30↓ | 40↓ | 40↓ | 28↓ |
| Pierre | 25↑ | 18↑ | 20↓ | 22↓ | 29↓ | 40↓ | 38↓ | 29↓ |
| Gettysburg | 30↑ | 22↑ | 21↓ | 23↓ | 28↓ | 39↓ | 39↓ | 28↓ |
| Eureka | 30↑ | 20↑ | 21↓ | 24↓ | 29↓ | 40↓ | 41↓ | 29↓ |
| Chamberlain | 29↑ | 32↑ | 41↑ | 39↑ | 38↓ | 39↓ | 40↓ | 30↓ |
| Miller | 31↑ | 31↑ | 32↑ | 29↑ | 30↓ | 39↓ | 39↓ | 29↓ |
| Redfield | 28↑ | 31↑ | 33↑ | 28↑ | 29↓ | 39↓ | 39↓ | 30↓ |
| Aberdeen | 29↑ | 28↑ | 28↑ | 26↑ | 28↓ | 37↓ | 38↓ | 28↓ |
| Britton | 35↑ | 33↑ | 31↑ | 29↑ | 32↓ | 40↓ | 39↓ | 31↓ |
| Clark | 32↑ | 35↑ | 38↑ | 36↑ | 36↓ | 39↓ | 39↓ | 31↓ |
| Webster | 32↑ | 35↑ | 35↑ | 31↑ | 33↓ | 40↓ | 39↓ | 32↓ |
| Watertown | 32↑ | 35↑ | 38↑ | 37↑ | 37↓ | 39↓ | 39↓ | 31↓ |
| Sisseton | 29↑ | 31↑ | 30↑ | 28↑ | 31↓ | 40↓ | 39↓ | 31↓ |
| Milbank | 28↑ | 31↑ | 32↑ | 33↑ | 33↓ | 38↓ | 36↓ | 30↓ |
| Wheaton | 25↑ | 26↑ | 26↑ | 28↑ | 29↓ | 35↓ | 35↓ | 30↓ |

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Winds both ahead and behind a cold front moving through this weekend will be strong, gusting to 40 miles per hour or higher. Sunday will have wider coverage of strong gusts, due in part to the cold front passing causing a shift in wind direction from south to northwest.

Awareness and preparedness are key during excessively dry periods that coincide with field work.



Help prevent fire and assist rapid response in the case of fire...

- **Check the weather forecast.** If conditions are expected to be dry and windy, wait.
- Ensure the address is clearly visible from the road.
- Know the exact field identification and location.
- Access to water, fire extinguishers, and fire blankets.
- Access to equipment to create potential fire breaks.
- Maintain, clean, and monitor equipment for fire potential.
- Smoke detectors in buildings with alerts connected to a phone.
- Have a plan for all livestock.



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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 82 °F at 2:22 PM

Low Temp: 68 °F at 8:32 AM

Wind: 29 mph at 7:31 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 91 in 1897

Record Low: 17 in 1974

Average High: 67

Average Low: 40

Average Precip in Oct.: .16

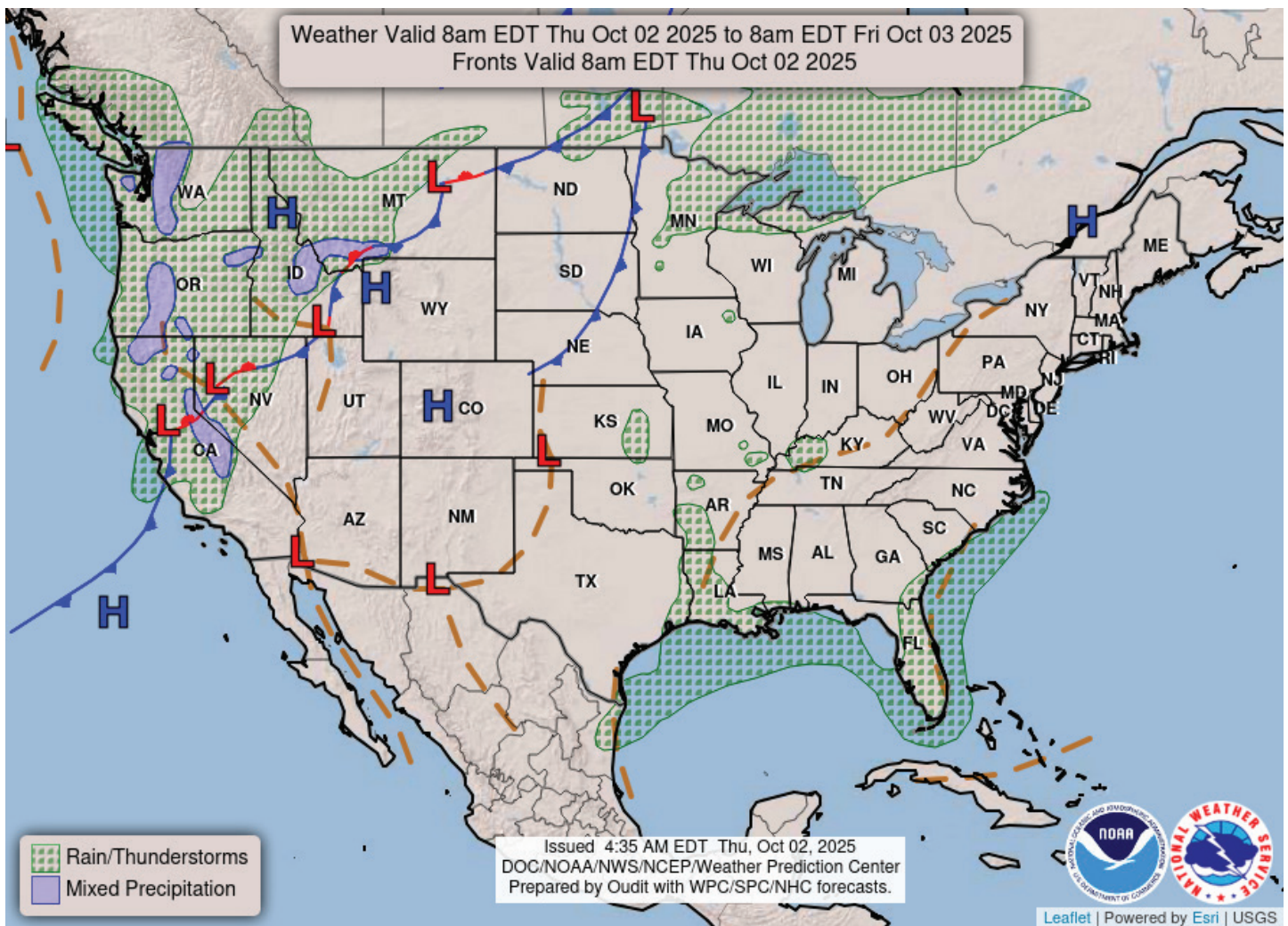
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 18.49

Precip Year to Date: 22.92

Sunset Tonight: 7:11 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:33 am



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Today in Weather History

October 2, 1971: Heavy wet snow of over a foot fell in the northern Black Hills. The heavy snow was accompanied by high winds which caused extensive damage to trees and utility lines. The power company said it was one of the worst storms they had experienced.

1858: The only hurricane to impact California struck San Diego on this day. Two researchers with NOAA Michael Chenoweth and Christopher Landsea reconstructed the path of the storm using accounts from newspapers of the high winds. They estimated that if a similar storm were to have hit in 2004, it would have caused around \$500 million in damage.

1882 - An early season windstorm over Oregon and northern California blew down thousands of trees and caused great crop damage in the Sacramento Valley. (David Ludlum)

1898: A Category 4 hurricane made landfall in Georgia on this day. This is the most recent major (Cat 3 or stronger) hurricane to make landfall in Georgia.

1894: A tornado passed over the Little Rock, Arkansas Weather Bureau office on this day.

1959 - A tornado struck the town of Ivy, VA (located near Charlottesville). Eleven persons were killed, including ten from one family. (The Weather Channel)

1980 - The temperature at Blue Canyon, CA, soared to 88 degrees, an October record for that location. (The Weather Channel)

1981 - Severe thunderstorms raked Phoenix, AZ, with heavy rain, high winds, and hail up to an inch and a half in diameter, for the second day in a row. Thunderstorms on the 1st deluged Phoenix with .68 inch of rain in five minutes, equalling their all-time record. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A fast moving cold front produced snow flurries from Minnesota to the Appalachian Mountains, and gale force winds behind the front ushered cold air into the Great Lakes Region. Valentine NE reported a record low of 25 degrees. Temperatures recovered rapidly in the Northern High Plains Region, reaching the lower 80s by afternoon. Jackson, WY, warmed from a morning low of 21 degrees to an afternoon high of 76 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Early morning thunderstorms in Georgia produced three inches of rain at Canton and Woodstock. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Flooding due to thunderstorm rains in the southeastern U.S. on the last day of September and the first day of October caused the Etowah River to rise seven feet above flood stage at Canton GA. Thunderstorms produced up to ten inches of rain in northeastern Georgia, with six inches reported at Athens GA in 24 hours. One man was killed, and another man was injured, when sucked by floodwaters into drainage lines. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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IT IS NOT ABOUT ADDING THE
FEAR OF GOD TO OUR LIVES,
BUT ABOUT LIVING LIFE AS
GOD SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED
IT TO BE,

**AND BEING AFRAID OF NOT
MEETING HIS
EXPECTATIONS.**

In other words, if I say it, I'll do it!

Unfortunately, there is usually a gap between what some of us say and what we do. For whatever reason, we are much more willing to make a promise than keep it. Perhaps we want others to think more highly of us than we actually are. So, we say, I'll be happy to do this or help you with that or count on me to be there when you need me. End of conversation and promise!

"Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man, who can find?"

There seems to be a sadness in this proverb that suggests a sense of disappointment in the heart of Solomon. Whether someone had betrayed him or failed to keep their word is not known. But what we do know is that he

contrasts the gap between words and deeds, saying and doing. There is an obvious difference between love professed and promised and love described and delivered.

The word faithful in this verse is the same word used when the writer spoke of God's faithfulness to honor His word in the promises He made to the nation of Israel. It also speaks of the love God expects from us when we say that we love Him and will be faithful to Him. When we say, "Father I love You" — might it bring into God's mind the later part of our verse: "But can I trust you to keep your word?"

This part of the verse obviously pained Solomon. It forces me to wonder what betrayal he might have experienced from his wife or children, friends or confidants. Words are inexpensive, but actions always cost something to the one who upholds or honors what he promises.

How blest we are to understand what faithfulness is all about because of our relationship with a loving, heavenly Father! He always honors His word. He has never broken a promise.

Today's Prayer: Thank You, Father, for Your love and the promise that You will never leave us nor forsake us. Thank You for giving and keeping Your word proving that Your care. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Today's Scripture: "Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man, who can find?" Proverbs 20:6

God's Word is meant to be shared. If this encouraged you, share it with someone else who could use a touch of His grace today.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 09.30.25

4 8 27 37 63 14

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$520,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 1 Mins
15 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.01.25

12 28 42 44 48 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$4,070,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 16 Mins
16 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.01.25

1 4 5 16 47 7

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 31 Mins
16 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.01.25

5 8 23 24 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$38,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 31 Mins
16 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.01.25

3 29 38 56 65 7

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 16
16 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.01.25

8 17 22 28 55 14

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$195,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 16
16 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

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Upcoming Groton Events

08/09/2025 Groton Legion 30th Anniversary Celebration
08/07/2025 Groton Firemen Summer Splash in the GHS Parking Lot 7:30-8:30pm
08/11/2025 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 3:30-6pm
08/23/2025 Glacial Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
09/05/2025 Homecoming Parade 1pm
09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
09/06-07/25 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
09/07/2025 Couples Sunflower Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
09/07/2025 9th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3-5pm
10/10/2025 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
10/11/2025 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2025 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/15/2025 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm
11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving 11:30am-1:30pm Community Center (Thanksgiving)
11/30/2025 Snow Queen Contest, 4 p.m.
12/06/2025 Olive Grove Holiday Party and Silent Live Auction Fundraiser

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

Democrats voted for a shutdown. Now they have to find a way out

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats kept their promise to reject any Republican spending bill that didn't extend or restore health care benefits, choosing instead to force a government shutdown. Now they have to figure out how to get out of it.

Just hours after the shutdown began, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said that if the Republicans work with them, "the shutdown could go away very quickly."

But that won't be easy. Republican leaders — Senate Majority Leader John Thune, House Speaker Mike Johnson and President Donald Trump — have said that they won't negotiate or be "held hostage" by Democrats demanding concessions to reopen the government. The bill Democrats voted against was a simple extension of funding for 45 days, legislation they say should be noncontroversial.

While that uncompromising Republican position may not last long — there were some early, informal talks on the Senate floor Wednesday — reaching a deal would be difficult. It's deeply uncertain, for now, if the two sides could find common ground on health care policy or sow enough trust for the Democrats to change their position.

At the same time, an extended shutdown could be increasingly painful for Democrats. The Trump administration has threatened to lay off thousands of workers and target Democratic-leaning states. On Wednesday, the White House announced it was putting a hold on subway and tunnel projects in Schumer's home state of New York.

"This Democrat shutdown is actually delaying progress on the issues that Democrats claim to be interested in," Thune, who represents South Dakota, said on the Senate floor Wednesday.

Some wavering Democrats emerge in shutdown saga

Republicans were encouraged Tuesday evening when three Democrats voted with them to keep the government open — Democratic Sens. John Fetterman of Pennsylvania and Catherine Cortez Masto of Nevada and Independent Sen. Angus King of Maine.

Republicans, who hold the majority, need eight Democrats to win the 60 votes needed for passage in the 53-47 Senate. Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul was the only Republican to vote with Democrats against the measure.

Thune is holding repeated votes on the measure, which failed 55-45 on Tuesday night and again Wednesday morning. He said he hopes that five Democrats will eventually feel the pressure and support the bill "when they realize that this is playing a losing hand."

Republicans are eyeing several moderate Democrats who appeared to be wavering before casting "no" votes on Tuesday night, including Sens. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire and Gary Peters of Michigan. Both voted to keep the government open in March, along with Schumer, while many of their colleagues voted for a shutdown.

But Shaheen and Peters each voted no on Tuesday after extensive negotiations with colleagues in both parties on the floor. Shaheen said afterward that "I have been in intensive conversations with colleagues from both sides of the aisle on how to find a path forward and I'm eager to work with my Republican colleagues to find common ground."

Democrats at a crossroad: To dig in or dig out?

As some Democrats are already looking for a way out, others say they need to dig in and fight.

"As Donald Trump's lawlessness grows during this shutdown, our spines should stiffen, not bend," Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut said in a social media post on Wednesday. "Let's stand for something. The American people don't want us to fund the destruction of their health care and the destruction of our democracy."

The divisions in the caucus pose a dilemma for Schumer, who was blasted by base voters and activists

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in March when he voted with Republicans to keep the government open. Many Democrats in the House and Senate have suggested that shutting down the government is their only leverage to fight Trump and push back on his policies, including health care and spending cuts.

"Standing up to (Trump) on this is sending a message to him on those other issues as well," said Connecticut Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn.

The politics of health care

Democrats have demanded that Republicans immediately extend health care subsidies for people who purchase coverage through the Affordable Care Act marketplaces. The expanded subsidies first put in place in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic are set to expire at the end of the year, raising premium costs for millions of people.

Many Republicans have said they are open to an extension, but they want to see changes. Other Republicans — especially in the House — see it as an unacceptable expansion of President Barack Obama's signature health care law, which Republicans have tried to eliminate or cut back since it was enacted 15 years ago.

Johnson has not committed to talks on the issue and said, "There has to be reform."

Obamacare "is a flawed system," Johnson said on CNBC.

Thune has repeatedly said that Republicans are willing to negotiate on the issue once the government reopens.

Even so, some Republicans began informal talks with Democrats on the Senate floor Wednesday about potentially extending the expanded subsidies for a year and then eventually phasing them out. The idea floated by Republican Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota would likely be rejected by many Republicans, but Democrats said they were encouraged that the two sides were talking at all.

"At least we're on the same page talking about the same problem," Sen. Peter Welch, D-Vt., said after the floor huddle. "So I see that as progress, but it's a long way from where we have to end up."

Lessons from the past

Past shutdowns show that it's hard to win major concessions by closing the government.

In 2018, the government shut down for three days as Democrats, led by Schumer, insisted that any budget measure come with protections for young immigrants known as "Dreamers" under the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. They voted to reopen after then-Majority Leader Mitch McConnell promised only a vote on the issue.

Later that year, Trump forced a shutdown over funding for his border wall and retreated after 35 days as intensifying delays at the nation's airports and missed paydays for hundreds of thousands of federal workers.

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, and House Republicans triggered a shutdown in 2013 over Obama's health care law. Bipartisan negotiations in the Senate finally ended the shutdown after 16 days, and Republicans did not win any major concessions on health care.

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

Police shoot man after stabbing incident at synagogue in Manchester; incident believed to be over

LONDON (AP) — Police say they believe they have shot a person suspected of stabbing a person at a synagogue in the north of Manchester.

In a series of posts on X, Greater Manchester Police said they were called to the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation Synagogue in Crumpsall shortly after 9:30 a.m. by a member of the public. The caller said he had witnessed a car being driven towards members of the public and that one man had been stabbed.

It said that minutes later shots were fired by firearms officers.

"One man has been shot, believed to be the offender," it added.

Andy Burnham, the mayor of the Greater Manchester area, told BBC Radio the "immediate danger ap-

pears to be over.”

Israeli navy intercepts most flotilla boats and arrests activists. A single boat stops nears Gaza

By IBRAHIM HAZBOUN and RENATA BRITO Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli navy soldiers boarded most of the vessels and detained dozens of activists aboard a flotilla attempting to break Israel’s blockade of Gaza. The organizers said one boat had managed to sail on but stopped near Gaza’s coast on Thursday morning before contact with the vessel was lost.

The Global Sumud Flotilla said that 39 of their boats were intercepted — or assumed intercepted as communication with the activists was lost — by Thursday morning in an Israeli operation that began the night before.

Unlike previous sea attempts, this flotilla was the largest yet to try and break the Israeli blockade of Gaza. The activists said they believed that with the sheer number of boats, it would be more difficult for Israeli authorities to intercept them all.

The organizers remained in contact with two vessels, though one was expecting that Israeli troops would board it imminently. They also lost contact with one remaining boat whose last coordinates showed it to be only a few miles from Gaza’s shores, inside territorial waters.

Supporters of the flotilla took to the streets in several major cities late Wednesday, after news of the interception broke — including Rome, Naples, Istanbul, Athens and Buenos Aires — to decry Israeli actions and the ongoing Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip. More protests were expected Thursday around the world. Italy’s largest union called for a one-day general strike on Friday.

The flotilla, which started out with more than 40 boats and 500 activists, was carrying a symbolic amount of humanitarian aid to Gaza.

It had been streaming its voyage online via live cameras aboard different boats, though connections were lost as Israeli authorities began intercepting them in international waters on Wednesday evening.

Activists and European lawmakers detained

Israeli soldiers detained and removed dozens of activists — including Greta Thunberg, former mayor of Barcelona Ada Colau, European parliament member Rima Hassan and others — from the flotilla.

Israel’s Foreign Ministry posted photos and videos of the activists, saying in a statement on X that they were “safe and in good health” and would be transferred to Israel for deportation procedures to Europe.

Earlier, live broadcasts overnight from the activists, showed Israeli boats approaching their vessels, spraying them with water canons and flashing bright lights before soldiers boarded the flotilla.

Anticipating the interceptions, activists wearing life jackets sat in circles and raised their hands in the air. Some managed to stream the moment live from their cell phones before tossing their devices into the sea.

The night-long operation that carried on as the sun rose appeared to be largely peaceful.

Governments around the world decry flotilla’s interception

Turkey, Colombia, Pakistan, Malaysia and others condemned Israel’s interception of the flotilla.

Italy and France, which had warned their activist not to continue the journey and avoid confrontation with Israel, said they were working with Israeli diplomatic authorities to ensure their citizens were transferred to land and deported home swiftly and peacefully.

Italy’s Premier Giorgia Meloni on Thursday slammed Italian unions for their decision to call a general strike on Friday in solidarity with the flotilla, accusing them of seeking to cause wide disruptions across the country.

“I continue to believe that all this brings no benefit to the Palestinian people. On the other hand, I understand that it will bring a lot of problems to Italian citizens,” Meloni told reporters upon her arrival in Copenhagen for an informal European Union summit.

Turkey’s Foreign Ministry described the interceptions as an “act of terrorism” and a severe breach of international law in a statement late Wednesday. The ministry said it was working to ensure the immediate release of Turkish citizens and other activists detained by Israeli forces.

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Colombia's President Gustavo Petro announced late Wednesday that his government will expel Israel's diplomatic delegation in the South American country over the interception. Two Colombian citizens are taking part in the flotilla.

Petro has repeatedly described Israel's siege of Gaza as genocide and broke diplomatic ties with Israel in May 2024 over the Israel-Hamas war.

The Colombian leader also announced he will terminate his country's free trade agreement with Israel over the flotilla's interception, which he said was Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's "new international crime."

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry on Thursday also condemned Israel's interception, calling it a violation of international law and a threat to civilian lives. The detention of activists was part of Israel's "ongoing aggression," it said, adding that Israel's blockade of Gaza had cause "immense suffering" for more than 2 million Palestinians in the strip.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, a strong supporter of Palestinians, said Israel's actions in blocking the flotilla from reaching Gaza show "utter contempt not only for the rights of the Palestinian people but also for the conscience of the world."

Rescuers turn to heavy machinery as hope fades of finding survivors of Indonesia school collapse

By NINIEK KARMINI and DITA ALANGKARA Associated Press

SIDOARJO, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian rescue authorities made the tough decision on Thursday to start using heavy machinery to move large sections of a collapsed school, with no more signs of life from beneath the rubble and nearly 60 teenage students still unaccounted for three days after the building caved in.

Indonesia's Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Cultural Affairs Pratikno told reporters on the scene in Sidoarjo that the decision had been made in consultation with the families of those still missing.

Five students were rescued Wednesday by workers who tunneled into the rubble using only hand tools. Pratikno said on Thursday work would proceed with extreme caution even though no more signs of life could be detected.

"In any case, we will be very, very careful when using the heavy machines," said Pratikno, who only goes by one name as is common in Indonesia.

The structure fell on top of hundreds of people on Monday in the prayer hall at the century-old al Khoziny Islamic boarding school in Sidoarjo, on the eastern side of Indonesia's Java island.

Authorities have said the building was two stories but two more were being added without a permit. Police said the old building's foundation was apparently unable to support two floors of concrete and collapsed during the pouring process.

Five people have been confirmed killed so far, and of about 105 who were injured, more than two dozen are still hospitalized, with many said to have suffered head injuries and broken bones.

The students were mostly boys in grades seven to 12, between ages 12-19. Female students were praying in another part of the building and managed to escape, survivors said.

Most rescues typically happen within 24 hours after such disasters, with chances of survival decreasing steadily as time progresses.

Nearly 220 workers were on the scene Thursday with ambulances on hand ready to take any survivors found quickly to the hospital. But authorities also brought in large quantities of body bags, a tacit acknowledgement that the odds of finding anyone left alive were rapidly diminishing.

"We are no longer considering the possibility of survivors remaining, but we will still proceed with caution," said Suharyanto, the head of Indonesia's National Disaster Mitigation Agency, who also goes by one name.

The numbers of missing have fluctuated widely over the course of the three-day recovery effort, and Suharyanto conceded that authorities are still not certain how many students may be buried, having made their estimate based on school attendance figures and information from families.

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"We really hope that these 59 people are not there under the rubble," he said. "It happened previously that parents reported their children missing but turned out that their children were somewhere else — I do hope and pray that they are not there."

On Wednesday evening, hundreds of family members still anxiously awaited news of their loved ones at the boarding school where they arrived after hearing about the incident on Monday. They filled the school's corridors with mattresses to sleep on, provided by the local government, and were given food, snacks and drinks.

"I can't give up, I have to believe that my son is still alive, he is a hyperactive boy ... he is very strong," said Hafiah, who uses one name.

Her son, Muhammad Abdurrohman Nafis, is 15 and in the ninth grade.

She recalled that he ate his favorite satay rice with gusto when she visited him on Sunday, a day before his friends told her that Nafis was among those in the collapsed building.

She said Nafis is to graduate from al Khoziny's junior high school in a few months and wants to continue his education at a mechanical engineering high school.

Hafiah spoke about how powerless she felt that she couldn't get to her son and help him. "I can't give up as the rescue team is currently trying to help our children out," she said.

How Syria's first elections since autocrat Assad's ouster are expected to unfold

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syria is set to hold parliamentary elections on Sunday for the first time since the fall of the country's longtime autocratic leader, Bashar Assad, who was unseated in a rebel offensive in December.

Under the 50-year rule of the Assad dynasty, Syria held regular elections in which all Syrian citizens could vote. But in practice, the Assad-led Baath Party always dominated the parliament, and the votes were widely regarded as sham elections.

Outside election analysts said the only truly competitive part of the process came before election day — with the internal primary system in the Baath Party, when party members jockeyed for positions on the list.

The elections to be held on Sunday, however, will not be a fully democratic process either. Rather, most of the People's Assembly seats will be voted on by electoral colleges in each district, while one third of the seats will be directly appointed by interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa.

Despite not being a popular vote, the election results will likely be taken as a barometer of how serious the interim authorities are about inclusivity, particularly of women and minorities.

Here's a breakdown of how the elections will work and what to watch.

How the system works

The People's Assembly has 210 seats, of which two-thirds will be elected on Sunday and one-third appointed. The elected seats are voted upon by electoral colleges in districts throughout the country, with the number of seats for each district distributed by population.

In theory, a total of 7,000 electoral college members in 60 districts — chosen from a pool of applicants in each district by committees appointed for the purpose - should vote for 140 seats.

However, the elections in Sweida province and in areas of the northeast controlled by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have been indefinitely postponed due to tensions between the local authorities in those areas and the central government in Damascus, meaning that those seats will remain empty.

In practice, therefore, around 6,000 electoral college members will vote in 50 districts for about 120 seats.

The largest district is the one containing the city of Aleppo, where 700 electoral college members will vote to fill 14 seats, followed by the city of Damascus, with 500 members voting for 10 seats.

All candidates come from the membership of the electoral colleges.

Following Assad's ouster, the interim authorities dissolved all existing political parties, most of which were closely affiliated with the Assad government, and have not yet set up a system for new parties to

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register, so all candidates are running as individuals.

Why no popular vote

The interim authorities have said that it would be impossible to create an accurate voter registry and conduct a popular vote at this stage, given that millions of Syrians were internally or externally displaced by the country's nearly 14-year civil war and many have lost personal documents.

This parliament will have a 30-month term, during which the government is supposed to prepare the ground for a popular vote in the next elections.

The lack of a popular vote has drawn criticism of being undemocratic, but some analysts say the government's reasons are legitimate.

"We don't even know how many Syrians are in Syria today," because of the large number of displaced people, said Benjamin Feve, a senior research analyst at the Syria-focused Karam Shaar Advisory consulting firm.

"It would be really difficult to draw electoral lists today in Syria," or to arrange the logistics for Syrians in the diaspora to vote in their countries of residence, he said.

Haid Haid, a senior research fellow at the Arab Reform Initiative and the Chatham House think tank said that the more concerning issue was the lack of clear criteria under which electors were selected.

"Especially when it comes to choosing the subcommittees and the electoral colleges, there is no oversight, and the whole process is sort of potentially vulnerable to manipulation," he said.

There have been widespread objections after electoral authorities "removed names from the initial lists that were published, and they did not provide detailed information as to why those names were removed," he said.

Questions about inclusivity

There is no set quota for representation of women and religious or ethnic minorities in the parliament.

Women were required to make up 20% of electoral college members, but that did not guarantee that they would make up a comparable percentage of candidates or of those elected.

State-run news agency SANA, citing the head of the national elections committee, Mohammed Taha al-Ahmad, reported that women made up 14% of the 1,578 candidates who made it to the final lists. In some districts, women make up 30 or 40% of all candidates, while in others, there are no female candidates.

Meanwhile, the exclusion of the Druze-majority Sweida province and Kurdish-controlled areas in the northeast as well as the lack of set quotas for minorities has raised questions about representation of communities that are not part of the Sunni Arab national majority.

The issue is particularly sensitive after outbreaks of sectarian violence in recent months in which hundreds of civilians from the Alawite and Druze minorities were killed, many of them by government-affiliated fighters.

Feve noted that electoral districts had been drawn in such a way as to create minority-majority districts.

"What the government could have done if it wanted to limit the number of minorities, it could have merged these districts or these localities with majority Sunni Muslim districts," he said. "They could have basically drowned the minorities which is what they didn't do."

Officials have also pointed to the one-third of parliament directly appointed by al-Sharaa as a mechanism to "ensure improvement in the inclusivity of the legislative body," Haid said. The idea is that if few women or minorities are elected by the electoral colleges, the president would include a higher percentage in his picks.

The lack of representation of Sweida and the northeast remains problematic, Haid said — even if al-Sharaa appoints legislators from those areas.

"The bottom line is that regardless of how many people will be appointed from those areas, the dispute between the de facto authorities and Damascus over their participation in the political process will remain a major issue," he said.

Activists say Israeli navy has begun intercepting a Gaza-bound aid flotilla

By RENATA BRITO and IBRAHIM HAZBOUN Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Activists on board a flotilla of vessels sailing toward Gaza said late Wednesday that the Israeli navy had intercepted at least 19 of its boats as they approached the besieged Palestinian territory. Israeli authorities said the activists on board, including Greta Thunberg, were safe and being transferred to Israel.

The Global Sumud Flotilla, composed of nearly 50 boats and 500 activists, is carrying a symbolic amount of humanitarian aid to Gaza. The Sirius, Alma and Adara boats were intercepted some 70 nautical miles (80 miles) from the coast of Gaza, according to organizers who shared live positions of the flotilla. The group, which includes Nelson Mandela's grandson, Mandla Mandela, former Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau and several European lawmakers, said it remained undeterred in its mission to break the Israeli blockade and bring aid to Palestinians.

Just before dawn, organizers said on their official Telegram channel that 19 of 43 boats had been intercepted and said the remaining vessels would keep sailing toward Gaza.

Greg Stoker, an American veteran aboard the Ohwayla, one of the boats in the flotilla, said that around a dozen naval vessels with their transponders off had approached it. "They are currently hailing our vessels, telling us to turn off our engines and await further instructions or our boats will be seized and we will face the consequences," he said in a shaky video posted on Instagram. Israeli authorities used water cannons against some of the boats, Stoker and other activists reported on social media.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry posted a video on X showing Thunberg sitting on a ship's deck being handed a water bottle and raincoat.

It said that several boats "have been safely stopped and their passengers are being transferred to an Israeli port. Greta and her friends are safe and healthy."

Italy's Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said the Israeli operation was expected to take 2-3 hours. He told state TV Rai that the boats would be towed to Israel's port of Ashdod and the activists would be deported in the coming days. He also said Israeli forces have been told "not to use violence."

Turkey's Foreign Ministry condemned Israel's interception of the boats denouncing it as an "act of terrorism" and severe breach of international law. In a statement, the ministry said it was taking initiatives to ensure the immediate release of Turkish citizens and other passengers detained by the Israeli forces.

Colombia President Gustavo Petro said late Wednesday he would expel Israel's diplomatic delegation in the South American country if the Israeli military intercepted the flotilla. He said he will also terminate his country's free trade agreement with Israel.

Petro has repeatedly described Israel's siege of Gaza as genocide. He broke diplomatic ties with Israel in May 2024 over the Israel-Hamas war, prompting the departure of Ambassador Gali Dagan, but an unspecified number of consular services staff remain in Colombia.

The flotilla enters a 'danger zone'

The vessels were sailing in international waters north of Egypt and had entered what activists and others called a "danger zone." While still in international waters, it is an area where the Israeli navy has stopped other boats attempting to break its blockade in the past and which the flotilla has been warned not to cross.

After a tense encounter with two Israeli military vessels in the early hours of Wednesday, activists had resumed their journey and were broadcasting their voyage on livestreams from several of the boats. Some activists held up messages of solidarity with people in Gaza and chanted "Free Palestine!" on camera. Music could be heard playing in the background.

As night fell, they detected via radar several unidentified vessels approaching them and put their life vests on ahead of the Israeli military's imminent arrival. Some activists were able to broadcast the moment Israeli forces approached them live from their smartphones before tossing their devices into the water.

The flotilla, which began its journey from the Spanish port of Barcelona a month ago, was to reach the shores of Gaza by Thursday morning, organizers had said earlier.

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Activists had acknowledged that scenario was unlikely and were expecting Israeli authorities to try to stop them at any moment, as they have done in past attempts.

But this flotilla, with dozens of boats, was the largest attempt yet to break the Israeli maritime blockade of the Gaza strip that has been ongoing for 18 years.

Israel and other governments had warned them to turn back

The Israeli navy had reached out to the flotilla earlier Wednesday warning them that they were approaching an "active combat zone" and asking them to change course, the Israeli foreign ministry said, reiterating its offer to transfer the aid to Gaza through other channels. Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar called the flotilla a provocation.

Israel's government has accused some of the flotilla members of being linked to Hamas, while providing little evidence to support the claim. Activists have strongly rejected the accusations and said Israel was trying to justify potential attacks on them.

European governments, including Spain and Italy, which had sent their navy ships to escort the flotilla during part of its journey, urged the activists to turn back and avoid confrontation. But while Italy's Premier Giorgia Meloni said late Tuesday the flotilla's actions risked undermining U.S. President Donald Trump's recent proposal for resolving the war in Gaza, Spain's prime minister defended them.

"We must remember it is a humanitarian mission that wouldn't be taking place if the Israeli government had allowed for the entry of aid," Pedro Sánchez told reporters on Wednesday. Spaniards taking part would benefit from full diplomatic protection, he added.

"They present no threat nor danger to Israel," he said.

What international maritime law says

The U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea stipulates that a state only has jurisdiction up to 12 nautical miles (19 kilometers) from its shores. In general, states don't have the right to seize ships in international waters, though armed conflict is an exception to this.

Yuval Shany, an expert on international law at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, said that as long as Israel's blockade of Gaza is "militarily justified" — meant to keep out weapons — and the ship intended to break the siege, Israel can intercept the vessel after prior warning. Whether the blockade is militarily justified and the legality of the blockade is a point of contention.

But the flotilla argues they are a civilian, unarmed group and that the passage of humanitarian aid is guaranteed in international law.

Omer Shatz, an Israeli international law expert who teaches at Sciences Po University in Paris and co-litigated a previous flotilla case before the Israeli supreme court, told The Associated Press that even if the disputed siege of Gaza was considered lawful, "international law paves a humanitarian road from the high seas to Gaza — both in international and national waters off Gaza," he said.

"If the basic needs of the population are not provided by the occupying power, there is a right to provide humanitarian aid, albeit under certain conditions," Shatz said. Israel, for example, would have a right to board and search the vessels carrying aid to verify its cargo, similarly to what it does with aid trucks crossing into Gaza by land.

In Black columnist's firing, advocates fear decreasing diversity, vital perspectives in news media

By JAYLEN GREEN Associated Press

As the founding global opinion editor for The Washington Post, Karen Attiah believed her job had always been about assessing world affairs in a way that elevated a diverse range of perspectives.

"I'm not just a columnist," she recently said.

But last week, the Post's only Black female opinion writer revealed she had been fired over posts on Bluesky about violent white men in the wake of Charlie Kirk's killing that the newspaper said violated its social media policy. After offering what she called an "honest reflection on the state of violence in America," her 11 years at the Post came to an abrupt end.

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"Being pushed out of the Washington Post for expressing myself — for not even expressing myself, for doing my job as a journalist — is really a deep, sort of cruel 180," she told The Associated Press.

The firing of Attiah, the last Black full-time member on the Post's opinion desk, worries media professionals and advocacy organizations about the wider implications for journalistic freedom and diversity. The potential fallout, they say, could make journalists of color hesitant to express opinions or address injustices, effectively muting those perspectives.

The National Association of Black Journalists, the nation's largest professional advocacy organization for journalists of color, said Tuesday that Attiah's firing had "raised an alarm about the erosion of Black voices across the media."

"The absence of Black journalists doesn't just harm us — it impoverishes the entire profession," said NABJ President Errin Haines. "When our voices are missing, stories go untold, perspectives go unchallenged, and the truth remains incomplete."

After a meeting Monday with Washington Post Executive Editor Matt Murray, NABJ leadership said it had assurances that the news outlet is working to retain diversity among its staff and to expand access to careers for journalists of color.

A Washington Post spokesperson declined the AP's request to comment on Attiah's firing. Attiah has announced plans to dispute the Post's decision in court.

"It's more sort of about this chilling precedent that it sets for journalists, for educators, for researchers, for anyone who writes on gender and violence. If they think it's going to stop with me just because I was a Black woman saying this, it never stops with just Black people," Attiah said.

Firing alarms diversity advocates, Black journalists association

Attiah's firing comes among dozens of others across various professions stemming from comments about Kirk's assassination, igniting a debate over First Amendment rights as President Donald Trump has vowed retribution for remarks he considers disparaging.

"The removal of vital voices like Karen Attiah's — whose reporting helps our communities understand the political context we're in — is a dangerous and deliberate act of erasure by media owners," the Media 2070 Project, a nonpartisan organization advocating for a free press and exchange of ideas, said in a statement.

The president of the Washington Association of Black Journalists, of which Attiah is a member, said the firing is a "chilling moment in news media," particularly for Black journalists, whose voices have historically been targeted.

"This firing sends a message to other Black journalists and writers that our perspectives aren't valued unless we align with the status quo," WABJ President Philip Lewis told the AP.

For many media diversity advocates, Attiah's firing reflects a history of excluding Black women and their perspectives from white owned and run news outlets — like journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett, whose reporting on lynchings of Black Americans in the 1890s was dismissed and attacked by mainstream papers.

"Often, it's the people who get left out of the frame and left out of the division of the nation that are the ones saying, 'Actually, we can think about this better,'" said Khadijah Costley White, associate professor of journalism and media studies at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, who specializes in writing and commentary on race, social movements, news and politics.

"When you disappear people from spaces, you lose those valuable discussions that help our nation really process who we are and what kind of country we want to be," she said.

Eric Deggans, the Knight Chair in Journalism and Media Ethics at Washington and Lee University, said the Post's loss of Attiah is glaring at a time when "there's a lot of other public figures out there criticizing Black women unfairly."

"I don't understand why the most extreme punishment is the first punishment," said Deggans, who is also a critic at large for NPR. "I don't understand why there's not an attempt to sort of talk with the employee and let them know what they did wrong."

Experts warn that a lack of diversity gives rise to misinformation and bias

According to the Pew Research Center's most recent survey of the news media, just 6% of all report-

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ing journalists were Black in 2022, even though 12% of the U.S. total population is Black. By comparison, 76% of all reporting journalists were white, though the white population makes up 61% of the U.S. total.

Diversity can help encourage public debate, according to University of Michigan journalism professor Daniel K. Brown, an analyst of media representation and narrative change. Opinion pieces often attract more social engagement because they're clear, singular viewpoints that help readers understand what is happening and spark discussion, he said.

"Probably one of the biggest consequences of not having lots of diversity in this space — or more diversity in the space — is its potential to also just misinform the public, which is already a little confused about what opinion writing is and what it's supposed to do in the first place," Brown said.

But a columnist's personal social media presence and institutional role can also create tensions or jeopardize an outlet's credibility and trust with the public, said Daniel Kreiss, a professor of political communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He suggests that being transparent about one's personal views allows the public to understand the lens through which the opinion columnist is writing.

"Public opinion is not a static thing," Kreiss said. "It changes when people bring arguments and ideas into the public sphere — whether by persuading others, winning supporters, or simply prompting people to consider something they've never thought about before."

Attiah said she has been consistent about her views on issues of race and has been making appearances since her firing to share her perspective on the current political climate.

"I hate to be Debbie Dark Cloud, but if you think things are really bad, they can and they will, and they're trying to make it worse," Attiah said during a panel on Black women in media at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's annual conference last week.

But Attiah also struck a note of optimism about the potential the moment brings for Black thinkers, leaders and organizers.

"I think this is also a time for profound creativity, being like water rising and like water moving around the cracks and actually, over time, eroding and undoing," she said.

Trump uses government shutdown to dole out firings and political punishment

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has seized on the government shutdown as an opportunity to reshape the federal workforce and punish detractors, by threatening mass firings of workers and suggesting "irreversible" cuts to programs important to Democrats.

Rather than simply furlough employees, as is usually done during any lapse of funds, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said layoffs were "imminent." The Office of Management and Budget announced it was putting on hold roughly \$18 billion of infrastructure funds for New York's subway and Hudson Tunnel projects — in the hometown of the Democratic leaders of the U.S. House and Senate.

Trump has marveled over the handiwork of his budget director.

"He can trim the budget to a level that you couldn't do any other way," the president said at the start of the week of OMB Director Russ Vought, who was also a chief architect of the Project 2025 conservative policy book.

"So they're taking a risk by having a shutdown," Trump said during an event at the White House.

Thursday is day two of the shutdown, and already the dial is turned high. The aggressive approach coming from the Trump administration is what certain lawmakers and budget observers feared if Congress, which has the responsibility to pass legislation to fund government, failed to do its work and relinquished control to the White House.

Vought, in a private conference call with House GOP lawmakers Wednesday afternoon, told them of layoffs starting in the next day or two. It's an extension of the Department of Government Efficiency work under Elon Musk that slashed through the federal government at the start of the year.

"These are all things that the Trump administration has been doing since January 20th," said House

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Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries, referring to the president's first day in office. "The cruelty is the point."

With no easy endgame at hand, the standoff risks dragging deeper into October, when federal workers who remain on the job will begin missing paychecks. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated roughly 750,000 federal workers would be furloughed on any given day during the shutdown, a loss of \$400 million daily in wages.

The economic effects could spill over into the broader economy. Past shutdowns saw "reduced aggregate demand in the private sector for goods and services, pushing down GDP," the CBO said.

"Stalled federal spending on goods and services led to a loss of private-sector income that further reduced demand for other goods and services in the economy," it said. Overall CBO said there was a "dampening of economic output," but that reversed once people returned to work.

"The longer this goes on, the more pain will be inflicted," said House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., "because it is inevitable when the government shuts down."

Trump and the congressional leaders are not expected to meet again soon. Congress has no action scheduled Thursday in observance of the Jewish holy day, with senators due back Friday. The House is set to resume session next week.

The Democrats are holding fast to their demands to preserve health care funding, and refusing to back a bill that fails to do so, warning of price spikes for millions of Americans nationwide. The Kaiser Family Foundation estimates insurance premiums will more than double for people who buy policies on the Affordable Care Act exchanges.

The Republicans have opened a door to negotiating the health care issue, but GOP leaders say it can wait, since the subsidies that help people purchase private insurance don't expire until year's end.

"We're willing to have a conversation about ensuring that Americans continue to have access to health care," Vice President JD Vance said Wednesday at the White House.

With Congress as a standstill, the Trump administration has taken advantage of new levers to determine how to shape the federal government.

The Trump administration can tap into funds to pay workers at the Defense Department and Homeland Security from what's commonly called the "One Big Beautiful Bill" that was signed into law this summer, according to CBO.

That would ensure Trump's immigration enforcement and mass deportation agenda is uninterrupted. But employees who remain on the job at many other agencies will have to wait for government to reopen before they get a paycheck.

Already Vought, from the budget office, has challenged the authority of Congress this year by trying to claw back and rescind funds lawmakers had already approved — for Head Start, clean energy infrastructure projects, overseas aid and public radio and television.

The Government Accountability Office has issued a series of rare notices of instance where the administration's actions have violated the law. But the Supreme Court in a ruling late last week allowed the administration's so-called "pocket rescission" of nearly \$5 billion in foreign aid to stand.

Israel orders Palestinians to leave Gaza City, saying those who stay will be considered militants

By WAFAA SHURAF, SAMY MAGDY and BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — Israel's defense minister on Wednesday ordered all remaining Palestinians to leave Gaza City, saying it was their "last opportunity" and that anyone who stayed would be considered a militant supporter and face the "full force" of Israel's latest offensive.

At least 21 Palestinians were killed across the territory, according to local hospitals, as Hamas weighed a new proposal from U.S. President Donald Trump aimed at ending the war and returning the remaining captives taken in Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack that triggered it.

A senior Hamas official told The Associated Press that there are some points in the proposal that are

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unacceptable and must be amended, without elaborating. He said the official response will only come after consultations with other Palestinian factions.

Around 400,000 Palestinians have fled famine-stricken Gaza City since Israel launched a major offensive last month aimed at occupying it, but hundreds of thousands remain, many because they cannot afford to leave or are too weak to make the journey to tent camps in the south.

"This is the last opportunity for Gaza residents who wish to do so to move south," Defense Minister Israel Katz wrote on X. "Those who remain in Gaza will be (considered) terrorists and terror supporters."

The road south was packed as Palestinians fled, with hastily loaded trucks and cars driving alongside people on foot carrying their belongings.

"We left barefoot," Hussein al-Del said. The Israelis "were striking at random, with no mercy for anyone. We left behind our food, our furniture, blankets, and everything. We left only with our souls," he said.

Strike hits school-turned-shelter in Gaza City

At least seven people, including first responders, were killed when two Israeli strikes minutes apart hit a school sheltering displaced people in Gaza City, according to Al-Ahli Hospital, where the casualties were taken. Officials there said more than three dozen people were wounded.

Five Palestinians were killed later in a strike on people gathered around a drinking water tank elsewhere in Gaza City, the hospital said. Shifa Hospital said a man was killed in a strike on his apartment. Strikes in central Gaza killed another eight people, according to Al-Awda Hospital.

Another strike hit a tent in the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central town of Deir al-Balah, seriously wounding two people, according to hospital officials.

Earlier on Wednesday at the same hospital, dozens of people attended a funeral service for a Palestinian freelance journalist, Yahya Barzaq. He was killed Tuesday along with five other people in an airstrike while working for Turkish broadcast outlet TRT.

More than 189 Palestinian journalists and media workers have been killed by Israeli fire in Gaza since the outbreak of the war, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on Wednesday's strikes or the strike that killed Barzaq. Israel states it tries to avoid harming civilians and blames Hamas for their deaths, saying its militants are embedded in populated areas.

The military said at least seven projectiles were launched into Israel from Gaza, all of which were either intercepted or fell in open areas. There were no reports of casualties. Hamas' military capabilities have been vastly depleted, but it still manages to carry out sporadic attacks.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 66,000 Palestinians and wounded nearly 170,000 others, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and militants in its toll, but has said women and children make up around half the dead.

The ministry is part of the Hamas-run government. U.N. agencies and many independent experts view its figures as the most reliable estimate of wartime casualties.

The Hamas-led attack on southern Israel nearly two years ago killed some 1,200 people and 251 others were abducted. Most of the hostages have been freed under previous ceasefire deals, but 48 are still held in Gaza — around 20 believed by Israel to be alive.

Trump's peace proposal

On Wednesday, Egypt's Foreign Minister Bader Abdelatty said Trump's proposal requires more negotiations on certain elements, echoing remarks made by Qatar a day earlier.

The comments by Qatar and Egypt, two key mediators, appeared to reflect Arab countries' discontent over the text of the 20-point plan that the White House put out after Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced they had agreed on it Monday.

The Hamas official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief media about the ongoing talks, said Hamas had conveyed its concerns to Qatar and Egypt, and had requested more time to discuss the proposal.

The plan, which has received wide international support, requires Hamas to release hostages, leave power in Gaza and disarm in return for the release of Palestinian prisoners and an end to fighting. The plan

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guarantees the flow of humanitarian aid and promises reconstruction in Gaza, placing it and its more than 2 million Palestinians under international governance. However, it sets no path to Palestinian statehood.

The Palestinian Authority in the occupied West Bank, led by rivals of Hamas, has welcomed the plan, as have Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates.

Israel intercepts Gaza-bound flotilla

The Israeli military said that starting at midday Wednesday, it would only allow Palestinians to flee south from Gaza City and not to head north on the only north-south route still open.

Around 90% of Gaza's population has been displaced in the war, often multiple times, and finding food is a daily struggle for many. On Wednesday, the International Committee of the Red Cross said intensifying warfare in Gaza City forced it to suspend its operations there and relocate staff to southern Gaza.

Meanwhile, a widely watched flotilla of activists carrying a symbolic amount of humanitarian aid bound for Gaza said the Israeli navy was beginning to intercept their vessels as has happened in past such flotilla attempts.

The activists aboard the Global Sumud Flotilla of about 50 vessels have described their effort as the largest attempt to date to break Israel's maritime blockade of the strip. The core vessels set sail from Barcelona, Spain, on Sept. 1.

Israeli authorities have warned the boats would not be allowed to reach Gaza.

Thursday is Yom Kippur — the high Jewish holiday of the Day of Atonement — when stores, businesses, public transportation and broadcasting shut down in Israel, beginning around sundown on Wednesday.

Rescuers desperately search for survivors of earthquake in the Philippines that killed at least 72

By JOEAL CALUPITAN and AARON FAVILA Associated Press

BOGO, Philippines (AP) — Rescuers used backhoes and sniffer dogs to look for survivors in collapsed houses and other damaged buildings in the central Philippines after an earthquake killed at least 72 people and injured more than 200 others.

The death toll was expected to rise from the 6.9 magnitude quake that hit about 10 p.m. Tuesday and trapped an unspecified number of residents in the hard-hit city of Bogu and outlying rural towns in Cebu province. Sporadic rain and damaged bridges and roads have hampered the race to save lives.

A dangerous quake

On Wednesday night, rescuers in orange and yellow hard hats used spotlights, a backhoe and bare hands to sift through the rubble of concrete slabs, broken wood and twisted iron bars for hours in a collapsed building in Bogu city. No survivor was found.

"We're still in the golden hour of our search and rescue," Office of Civil Defense deputy administrator Bernardo Rafaelito Alejandro IV said in a Wednesday morning news briefing in Manila, the country's capital. "There are still many reports of people who were pinned or hit by debris."

The earthquake occurred at a dangerously shallow depth of 5 kilometers (3 miles) and was centered about 19 kilometers (12 miles) northeast of Bogu, a coastal city of about 90,000 people in Cebu province where officials reported about half of the known deaths.

The Philippine government is considering whether to seek help from foreign governments based on an ongoing rapid damage assessment, Alejandro said.

A desperate search

Workers were trying to transport a backhoe to hasten search and rescue efforts in a cluster of shanties in a mountain village hit by a landslide and boulders, Bogu city disaster-mitigation officer Rex Ygot told The Associated Press early Wednesday.

"It's hard to move in the area because there are hazards," said Glenn Ursal, another disaster mitigation officer, who added that some survivors were brought to a hospital from the mountain village.

Deaths also were reported from the outlying towns of Medellin and San Remigio, where three coast

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guard personnel, a firefighter and a child were killed separately by collapsing walls and falling debris while trying to flee to safety from a basketball game in a sports complex that was disrupted by the quake, town officials said.

The earthquake was one of the most powerful to batter the central region in more than a decade and it struck while many people slept or were at home.

A traumatized region

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology briefly issued a tsunami warning and advised people to stay away from the coastlines of Cebu and the nearby provinces of Leyte and Biliran, but the warning was lifted within hours with no waves reported.

Still, thousands of traumatized residents refused to return home and chose to stay in open grassy fields and parks overnight despite intermittent rains.

Cebu and other provinces were still recovering from a tropical storm that battered the central region on Friday, leaving at least 27 people dead mostly due to drownings and falling trees, knocking out power in entire cities and towns and forcing the evacuation of tens of thousands of people.

Schools and government offices were closed in the quake-hit cities and towns while the safety of buildings were checked. More than 600 aftershocks have been detected after Tuesday night's temblor, Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology director Teresito Bacolcol said.

Rain-soaked mountainsides were more susceptible to land- and mudslides in a major earthquake, he warned.

"This was really traumatic to people. They've been lashed by a storm then jolted by an earthquake," Bacolcol said. "I don't want to experience what they've gone through."

The Philippines, one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, is often hit by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic faults around the ocean. The archipelago is also lashed by about 20 typhoons and storms each year.

Jane Goodall, the celebrated primatologist and conservationist, has died

By HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

Jane Goodall, the intellectual, soft-spoken conservationist renowned for her groundbreaking, immersive chimpanzee field research in which she documented the primates' distinct personalities and use of tools, has died. She was 91.

The environmental advocate became a beloved household name who transcended generations through her appearances in documentaries and on television, as well as her travels to address packed auditoriums around the world.

The Jane Goodall Institute announced the primatologist's death Wednesday in an Instagram post. According to the Washington, D.C.-based institute, Goodall died of natural causes while in California on a U.S. speaking tour.

Her discoveries "revolutionized science, and she was a tireless advocate for the protection and restoration of our natural world," it said.

While living among chimpanzees in Africa decades ago, Goodall documented them doing activities previously believed to be exclusive to humans. Her observations and subsequent magazine and documentary appearances in the 1960s transformed how the world perceived not only humans' closest living biological relatives but also the emotional and social complexity of all animals, while propelling her into the public consciousness.

"Out there in nature by myself, when you're alone, you can become part of nature and your humanity doesn't get in the way," she told The Associated Press in 2021. "It's almost like an out-of-body experience when suddenly you hear different sounds and you smell different smells and you're actually part of this amazing tapestry of life."

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Goodall never lost hope for the future

She had been scheduled to meet with students and teachers on Wednesday to launch the planting of 5,000 trees around wildfire burn zones in the Los Angeles area. Organizers learned of her death as the event was to begin at EF Academy in Pasadena, said spokesperson Shawna Marino. The first tree was planted in Goodall's name after a moment of silence.

"I don't think there's any better way to honor her legacy than having a thousand children gathered for her," Marino said.

Goodall in her later years devoted decades to education and advocacy on humanitarian causes and protecting the natural world. In her British accent, she was known for balancing the grim realities of the climate crisis with a sincere message of hope for the future.

From her base in the British coastal town of Bournemouth, she traveled nearly 300 days a year, even after she turned 90, for public speeches. Between more serious messages, her speeches often featured her whooping like a chimpanzee or lamenting that Tarzan chose the wrong Jane.

Tributes from animal rights organizations, political leaders and admirers poured in following news of her death.

"I'm deeply saddened to learn about the passing of Jane Goodall, our dear Messenger of Peace. She is leaving an extraordinary legacy for humanity & our planet," said United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres.

Nature broadcaster Chris Packham reflected on her relentless advocacy until the very end.

"In many ways Jane just died on the job," he said. "The job that her life became. And that was protecting life on earth."

Living among the chimpanzees

While first studying chimps in Tanzania in the early 1960s, Goodall was known for her unconventional approach. She didn't simply observe them from afar but immersed herself in every aspect of their lives. She fed them and gave them names instead of numbers, which some scientists criticized.

Her findings were circulated to millions when she first appeared on the cover of National Geographic in 1963 and then in a popular documentary. A collection of photos of Goodall in the field helped her and even some of the chimps become famous. One iconic image showed her crouching across from the infant chimpanzee named Flint. Each has arms outstretched, reaching for the other.

In 1972, the Sunday Times published an obituary for Flo, Flint's mother and the dominant matriarch. Flint died soon after showing signs of grief and losing weight.

"What the chimps have taught me over the years is they're so like us. They've blurred the line between humans and animals," she said in 1997.

University of St. Andrews primatologist Catherine Hobaiter, who studies communication in chimpanzees, said that when she first heard Goodall speak, it transformed her view of science.

"It was the first time as a young scientist working with wild apes and wild chimpanzees that I got to hear that it was OK to feel something," she said.

Goodall earned top civilian honors from a number of countries. She was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2025 by then-U.S. President Joe Biden and in 2021 won the prestigious Templeton Prize, which honors individuals whose life's work embodies a fusion of science and spirituality.

The Humane World for Animals said Wednesday that Goodall's influence on the animal protection community was immeasurable.

"Her work on behalf of primates and all animals will never be forgotten," said Kitty Block, president and CEO of the group formerly the Humane Society of the United States and Humane Society International.

Charting a course from an early age

Born in London in 1934, Goodall said her fascination with animals began around when she learned to crawl. In her book, "In the Shadow of Man," she described an early memory of hiding in a henhouse to see a chicken lay an egg. She was there so long her mother reported her missing to police.

She bought her first book — Edgar Rice Burroughs' "Tarzan of the Apes" — when she was 10 and soon made up her mind about her future: Live with wild animals in Africa.

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That plan stayed with her through a secretarial course when she was 18 and two different jobs. By 1957, she accepted an invitation to travel to a farm in Kenya.

There she met the famed anthropologist and paleontologist Louis Leakey at a natural history museum in Nairobi. He gave her a job as an assistant secretary.

Three years later, despite Goodall not having a college degree, Leakey asked if she would be interested in studying chimpanzees in what is now Tanzania. She told the AP that he chose her "because he wanted an open mind."

The beginning was filled with complications. British authorities insisted she have a companion, so she brought her mother. The chimps fled if she got within 500 yards (460 meters) of them. She also spent weeks sick from what she believed was malaria.

Eventually she gained the animals' trust. By the fall of 1960 she observed the chimpanzee named David Greybeard make a tool from twigs to fish termites from a nest. It was previously believed that only humans made and used tools.

She also found that chimps have individual personalities and share humans' emotions of pleasure, joy, sadness and fear. She documented bonds between mothers and infants, sibling rivalry and male dominance. She found there was no sharp line between humans and the animal kingdom.

In later years, she discovered chimpanzees engage in a type of warfare, and in 1987 she and her staff observed a chimp "adopt" a 3-year-old orphan that wasn't closely related.

Becoming an activist

Her work moved into global advocacy after she watched a disturbing film of experiments on laboratory animals in 1986.

"I knew I had to do something," she said. "It was payback time."

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020 and halted her in-person events, she began podcasting from her childhood home in England. Through dozens of "Jane Goodall Hopecast" episodes, she talked with guests including U.S. Sen. Cory Booker, author Margaret Atwood and marine biologist Ayana Elizabeth Johnson.

"If one wants to reach people; If one wants to change attitudes, you have to reach the heart," she said during her first episode. "You can reach the heart by telling stories, not by arguing with people's intellects."

In later years, she pushed back on "gloom and doom" messaging and aggressive tactics by climate activists, saying they could backfire.

Her advice: "Focus on the present and make choices today whose impact will build over time."

Bondi and Hegseth rally federal agents and troops in Memphis as part of crime task force

By ADRIAN SAINZ and TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, Attorney General Pam Bondi and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller on Wednesday rallied members of a federal law enforcement task force that has begun operating in Memphis as part of President Donald Trump's crime-fighting plan for the city.

The officials met with Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee, a Republican who has supported the project, before touring a staging area for the Memphis Safe Task Force and then speaking to a group of federal, state and local law enforcement officers and Tennessee National Guard members.

Miller called the task force an "all of government, unlimited support operation" that would make the city "safer than any of you could ever possibly imagine." He predicted that "businesses and investment are going to pour in, and Memphis will be richer than ever before."

"We're not here to second guess you," Hegseth told them. "We're here to have your back — to unleash you to do your jobs so you come home safely."

Democratic U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen, who represents Memphis in Congress, said he was disappointed to learn about the visit in the media. In a letter to Hegseth and Bondi, he urged them to be more collaborative and expressed concern about the "wartime rhetoric" coming from the Trump administration.

"Memphians are not enemies; they are Americans," Cohen said. "They are entitled to constitutional

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rights, not their government working to 'intimidate, demoralize, hunt and kill' them. We are not a training ground or target practice."

The task force is part of a larger effort by Trump to use National Guard troops and surge federal law enforcement in cities, particularly ones controlled by Democrats. Following troop deployments in the District of Columbia and Los Angeles, he referred to Portland, Oregon, as "war-ravaged" and threatened apocalyptic force in Chicago. Speaking Tuesday to U.S. military leaders in Virginia, Trump proposed using cities as training grounds for the armed forces.

Arrests begin in Memphis

Bondi said in a social media post earlier in the day that the task force has made more than 50 arrests over a two-day period. More than 200 officers have been deputized, including personnel from immigration and drug enforcement. They are serving criminal arrest warrants and teaming with state agencies on traffic stops.

Memphis should expect to see an increase in warrant enforcement, especially for violent criminals, Supervisory Deputy U.S. Marshal Ryan Guay said in an email. The Marshals Service will release periodic updates that include arrest numbers, types of charges and participating agencies, he said.

Tennessee National Guard troops will help Memphis Police, Lee has said, but it is unclear how soon that will begin. Lee does not expect more than 150 National Guard members to be sent to Memphis. The city has said there will be no tanks, and the governor said troops will not make arrests or be armed unless local authorities request it.

Memphis has experienced high numbers of violent crimes such as carjackings and homicides in recent years, but both Democratic and Republican officials have noted decreases this year in some crime categories.

Opponents of the deployment say it is an unnecessary federal occupation of a majority-Black city that instead needs more funding to address poverty and other drivers of crime. Supporters see it as a welcomed infusion of law enforcement for a city that still needs help battling violence.

Troops reporting for duty in Oregon

Across the country in Oregon, meanwhile, members of that state's National Guard reported for duty Wednesday. The troops were "preparing to support U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other U.S. Government personnel who are performing federal functions, including the enforcement of federal law, and to protect federal property in Oregon," the Pentagon said in a statement.

It could be several days before they are deployed to federal buildings, the Oregon Military Department's director for government and legislative affairs, Russell Gibson, told state lawmakers Tuesday. The troops will come from a military police company and an infantry company, he said.

Oregon Attorney General Dan Rayfield is attempting to block the deployment, with a hearing in the case scheduled for Friday.

Immigration arrests in Chicago

Federal agents have conducted hundreds of immigration arrests in Chicago since last month, primarily through traffic stops and targeting day laborers and homes in predominantly Latino and immigrant-heavy neighborhoods.

At least 37 people were arrested early Tuesday at an apartment building in the predominantly Black South Shore neighborhood. The location was chosen due to alleged connections to the Tren de Aragua gang, the Department of Homeland Security said.

Immigrant rights activists called it further escalation of an operation that has seen armed Border Patrol agents make arrests at famous downtown landmarks. Illinois leaders say they are also bracing for the administration to dispatch military troops.

A prolonged US government shutdown could impact your travel plans

By RIO YAMAT AP Airlines and Travel Writer

If a U.S. government shutdown goes on long enough, it could throw a wrench in travel plans, potentially

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leading to longer airport wait times, flight delays and even cancellations.

The shutdown began Wednesday after President Donald Trump and Congress failed to reach a deal to continue funding government services and operations. That means a vast majority of employees who keep U.S. airports and air travel running are working without pay until the government reopens.

"The longer a shutdown drags on, the more likely we are to see longer TSA lines, flight delays and cancellations, national parks in disrepair and unnecessary delays in modernizing travel infrastructure," Geoff Freeman, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, warned in a statement.

Here's what to know about the shutdown and its potential impacts on your travel plans.

Flying during a shutdown

Travelers can still fly despite the lapse in funding, and early on in the shutdown, they might not even notice any issues at the airport.

Control towers and airport security checkpoints will still be staffed, with about 13,200 air traffic controllers and more than 61,000 Transportation Security Administration employees expected to remain on the job.

But as more time passes for the workers since their last paycheck, travelers could start to see longer lines at security and flight interruptions, said Jeffrey Price, professor of aviation at the Metropolitan State University of Denver.

"The system does become a little bit more brittle, and the longer this goes, the more the traveler is going to notice it," Price said.

That's what happened in 2018 and 2019, when Trump led the country into its longest shutdown ever for 35 days during his first term.

About three weeks into that shutdown, some unpaid security screeners started calling in sick, and air traffic controllers sued the government in a bid to get their paychecks. Miami International Airport had to temporarily close one of its terminals because TSA officers were calling in sick at twice the airport's usual rate.

The latest shutdown is unfolding at a time when both the TSA and the Federal Aviation Administration are already facing staffing shortages, including a shortage of about 3,000 air traffic controllers.

If the system can't handle the number of flights that are scheduled, the FAA will slow down landings and take offs and passengers will see more delays and cancellations.

Safety at airports and in the air

Nick Daniels, president of the union that represents air traffic controllers, said a shutdown weakens the aviation safety system by adding stress on controllers and taking away many of the workers who support them and maintain the outdated system they rely on.

"They're out there working right now with critical staffing — the lowest staffing we've had in decades of only 10,800, where there should be 14,633. And on top of that, they're working with unreliable equipment," Daniels said.

During the 35-day shutdown during Trump's first term, controllers in the busiest U.S. air traffic facilities reported working as much as 60 hours per week, and an increasing number of TSA agents also quit their jobs.

"This is more than just an inconvenience to the traveler," Price said of the shutdown. "This is definitely going to bring up safety and security issues, if it really starts to go into the long term."

Travel by train

Amtrak says its passenger trains will continue running. It operates more than 300 trains daily in 46 states, the D.C. area and three Canadian provinces.

In a statement, the country's rail operator said that passengers planning to travel on its trains "in the coming days and weeks can be assured that Amtrak will remain open for business."

International travel into the U.S.

Ports of entry into the country are expected to stay open for international travelers, according to the Department of Homeland Security's contingency plan.

The department estimated that about 63,000 workers at Customs and Border Protection would still report to work. They include employees who are responsible for protecting the country's borders and

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monitoring traffic coming into the U.S. at official border crossings, like airports and land crossings from Canada and Mexico.

Passports and visas

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the agency responsible for overseeing the naturalization process, is primarily funded by application fees, meaning a lapse in funding at the federal government has minimal impacts on most passport and visa processing.

Agency spokesperson Matthew Tragesser said in a statement, however, that the shutdown does temporarily shutter the agency's E-Verify program, a free online system that employers can use to confirm their new employees are authorized to work in the U.S.

Museums and national parks

Smithsonian museums, research centers and the National Zoo were scheduled to stay open to the public through at least Oct. 6. Further updates will be posted on the Smithsonian website.

The Smithsonian is the world's largest museum complex, with 17 museums and its zoo located in the Washington, D.C. area, as well as two museums in New York City.

National Parks will remain mostly open during the shutdown.

The National Park Service's contingency plan says park roads, lookouts, trails and open-air memorials will "generally remain accessible to visitors." But parks without "accessible areas" will be closed, and additional sites could shutter if damage is done to park resources or garbage builds up during the shutdown.

The park service oversees 400 sites, including large national parks such as Yellowstone and Grand Canyon, national battlefields and national monuments like the Statue of Liberty.

The US military has long been an engine of social change. Hegseth's approach runs counter to that

By GARY FIELDS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Historically, the U.S. military has been an engine for cultural and social change in America. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's vision for the armed forces he leads runs counter to that.

In comments Tuesday to hundreds of military leaders and their chief enlisted advisers, Hegseth made clear he was not interested in a diverse or inclusive force. His address at the Marine Corps base in Quantico, Virginia, verbalized what Hegseth has been doing as he takes on any program that can be labeled diversity, equity or inclusion, as well as targeting transgender personnel. Separately, the focus on immigration also is sweeping up veterans.

For too long, "the military has been forced by foolish and reckless politicians to focus on the wrong things. In many ways, this speech is about fixing decades of decay, some of it obvious, some of it hidden," Hegseth said. "Foolish and reckless political leaders set the wrong compass heading, and we lost our way. We became the woke department, but not anymore."

Hegseth's actions — and plans for more — are a reversal of the role the military has often played.

"The military has often been ahead of at least some broader social, cultural, political movements," said Ronit Stahl, associate professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley. "The desegregation of the armed forces is perhaps the most classic example."

President Harry S. Truman's desegregation order in 1948 came six years before the Supreme Court ordered school desegregation in the Brown vs. Board of Education case — and, Stahl said, "that obviously takes a long time to implement, if it ever fully is implemented."

It has been a circuitous path

Truman's order was not a short progression through American society. Although the military was one of the few places where there was organizational diversity, the races did not mix in their actual service. Units like the Tuskegee Airmen, the Navajo Code Talkers and the Buffalo Soldiers, formed in 1866, were segregated until the order opened the door to integrated units.

Women were given full status to serve in 1948 with the Women's Armed Services Integration Act. There were restrictions on how many could serve and they were generally not allowed to command men or serve

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in combat. Before then, they had wartime roles and they did not serve in combat, although hundreds of nurses died and women were pilots, including Women Airforce Service Pilots, or WASPs.

The WASPs and Tuskegee Airmen were among the first groups this year to be affected when Hegseth issued his DEI order. The Air Force removed training videos of the airmen along with ones showing the World War II contributions of the WASPs at the basic training base in San Antonio. The videos were restored after widespread bipartisan outcry over their removal.

Other issues over time have included "don't ask, don't tell," the policy that allowed gay and lesbian service members to serve as long as their sexual orientation was not public. That was repealed during the Obama administration. Women were allowed to serve on combat aircraft and combat ships in the early 1990s — then all combat positions after a ban was lifted in 2015.

"The military has always had to confront the question of social change and the question of who would serve, how they would serve and in what capacity they would serve. These are questions that have been long-standing back to the founding in some ways, but certainly in the 20th century," said David Kieran, distinguished chair in Military History at Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia. "These are not new questions."

Generally the answer has come down to what "the military writ large" has concluded. "How do we achieve our mission best?" Kieran said. "And a lot of these things have been really hotly debated."

Part of a larger, longer debate

Kieran offered one example: changes the Army made in the 1960s when it was dealing with a climate of racism and racial tensions. Without that, he said, "the military can't fight the war in Vietnam effectively."

The same considerations were given to how to address the problem of sexual harassment. Part of the answer involved what was morally right, but "the larger issue is: If soldiers are being harassed, can the Army carry out its mission effectively?"

While "it is important to see these actions as part of a longer history and a larger debate," Kieran said, "it's certainly also true that the current administration is moving at a far more aggressive and faster pace than we've seen in earlier administrations."

Michael O'Hanlon, director of research in the foreign policy program at the Brookings Institution, questioned some of the actions that Trump's Defense Department has taken, including replacing the chairman of the joint chiefs, Air Force Gen. CQ Brown Jr.

"He was a fine Air Force officer," O'Hanlon said. Even if he got the job in part because of his race, "it wouldn't be disqualifying in my book, unless he was unqualified — and he wasn't."

Matthew Delmont, a professor of history at Dartmouth College, said the current attitudes he is seeing toward the military suggest a misunderstanding of the armed forces and why the changes have been made.

"The military, for more than seven decades now, has been more on the leading edge in terms of figuring out how to put together an organization that tries to take advantage of the talents and capacities of all Americans," Delmont said. Since Truman signed his executive order, "the military has moved faster and farther than almost any other organization in thinking about issues of racial equality, and then later thinking about the issues related to gender and sexuality."

Delmont said bias, prejudice and racism remain in the military, but the armed services have done more "than a lot of corporations, universities, other organizations to try to address those head-on."

"I wouldn't say it was because they were particularly interested in trying to advance the social agenda," he said. "I think they did it because they recognized you can't have a unified fighting force if the troops are fighting each other, or if you're actively turning away people who desire to serve their country."

Wall Street sets more records, but bond yields drop following discouraging data on the job market

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks rose to more records on Wednesday, as Wall Street still doesn't care much about the shutdown of the U.S. government, but yields sank in the bond market following the latest discouraging signals on the economy.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.3% to top its prior all-time high, which was set last week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 43 points, or 0.1%, to its own record set the day before, while the Nasdaq composite rose 0.4%.

The action was stronger in the bond market, where Treasury yields dropped after a report suggested hiring may have been much weaker across the country last month than economists expected.

Employers outside the government actually cut 32,000 more jobs than they added, according to the survey by ADP Research, with the Midwest taking particularly hard hits. What's worse, the survey also revised down its numbers for employment in August, to a loss of 3,000 jobs from a previously reported gain of 54,000.

Usually, traders on Wall Street wait for a more comprehensive jobs report that comes from the U.S. government each month to suss out how the job market is doing. The U.S. government gets its data from a larger sample of employers than the ADP survey, which does not have a perfect track record predicting what the more comprehensive report will say each month.

But the next Labor Department report, scheduled for Friday, is likely to be delayed because of the shutdown of the U.S. government that began just after midnight.

"Whether this is an accurate statistic or not, people in the markets believe that it signals something," according to Carl Weinberg, chief economist at High Frequency Economics. "The signal from today's headline will not be a good one."

The hope on Wall Street has been that the job market will continue to slow by a very precise amount: enough to convince the Federal Reserve to keep cutting interest rates, but not by so much that it brings a recession.

That's a delicate balance to achieve, and every economic report from the U.S. government that gets delayed only increases the uncertainty about whether it's possible. Stocks have already run to records on expectations for coming cuts to rates, so a lack of them could send the market lower.

To be sure, the stock market and economy have typically powered through past shutdowns, particularly if they are short in duration. But this shutdown could be different in a couple ways, including the threat that the White House may use it to push for large-scale firings of federal workers.

On Wall Street, Nike rose 6.4% after blowing past analysts' expectations for profit in the latest quarter. The athletic giant reported strong growth for apparel sold in North America.

Lithium America's stock that trades in the United States jumped 23.3% after the Canadian company said the U.S. government agreed to let it draw from a previously announced \$2.26 billion loan. As part of the agreement, the U.S. Department of Energy will take an ownership stake in the Vancouver-based company.

Lithium Americas is developing a lithium project in Nevada with General Motors, and it follows Intel and other companies where the U.S. government has recently taken an ownership stake.

On the losing side of the market was Peloton Interactive, which dropped 3.7%. It got a cold reception to its unveiling of an AI and computer vision system, along with other equipment designed for cross training.

Corteva sank 9.1% after announcing a plan to split into two companies, each with its own stock. One will hold onto the company's seed business, while the other will focus on crop protection.

Cal-Maine Foods fell 1.2% after the egg company's profit and revenue for the latest quarter fell short of analysts' expectations.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 22.74 points to 6,711.20. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 43.21 to 46,441.10, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 95.15 to 22,755.16.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose in Europe following a mixed finish in Asia.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury sank to 4.10% from 4.16% late Tuesday.

Yields fell as the weaker-than-expected payroll report from ADP firmed expectations for coming cuts to rates by the Fed. So did another report showing that U.S. manufacturing was weaker last month than economists expected.

Several manufacturers told the Institute for Supply Management's surveyors that they're still feeling pain because of tariffs.

"Steel tariffs are killing us," one manufacturer said.

Sentencing hearing begins for man convicted of killing 8 people in metro Phoenix in 2017

By JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — A man convicted of killing eight people in metro Phoenix in 2017 waived his presence in court Monday at the start of the sentencing portion of his trial, where prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

Cleophus Cooksey Jr., 43, was found guilty last week of murder, kidnapping, armed robbery and attempted sexual assault charges in attacks over a three-week span that targeted random victims and his own mother and stepfather.

The victims in Phoenix and nearby Glendale also included two men found dead in a parked car, a security guard shot while walking to his girlfriend's apartment and a woman who was kidnapped, her body found in an alley. Police alleged the woman was sexually assaulted. Authorities say they linked Cooksey to the slayings through evidence found at his mother's apartment in the aftermath of her killing. That evidence included a gun used in several of the killings, vehicle keys belonging to another victim and a victim's necklace that Cooksey was wearing when he was arrested, investigators said.

Authorities never offered a motive.

Cooksey, an aspiring musician, knew some of the victims but he wasn't acquainted with others, police said. He has maintained his innocence.

It will be up to the jury to decide whether an aggravated circumstance exists and Cooksey is eligible for the death penalty.

In making his case, prosecutor Josh Maxwell pointed out to jurors that Cooksey was convicted of multiple counts of first-degree murder stemming from the 2017 killing spree and had previous armed robbery and manslaughter convictions. Prosecutors also alleged that some victims in the 2017 case were killed in an especially cruel manner.

Questions posed by a defense attorney to a forensic pathologist who reviewed autopsy reports focused heavily on whether the victims felt pain and were conscious before their deaths.

The killings started four months after Cooksey was released from prison on a manslaughter conviction for his participation in a 2001 strip club robbery in which an accomplice was fatally shot.

The first victims, Parker Smith, 21, and Andrew Remillard, 27, were found Nov. 27, 2017. They had been fatally shot while sitting in a vehicle in a parking lot. Five days later, security guard Salim Richards, 31, was shot to death while walking to his girlfriend's apartment.

Over the next two weeks, Latorrie Beckford, 29, and Kristopher Cameron, 21, were killed in separate shootings at apartment complexes in Glendale, and the body of Maria Villanueva, 43, was found naked from the waist down in an alley in Phoenix. Authorities said Cooksey's DNA was found on her body.

Finally, on Dec. 17, 2017, Cooksey answered the door when officers responded to a shots-fired call at his mother's apartment. He told officers who had noticed a large amount of blood that he had cut his hand and was the only one home. Police say when an officer tried to detain him, Cooksey threatened to slit the officer's throat. Rene Cooksey, 56, and Edward Nunn, 54, were found dead.

Cooksey's arrest followed two other serial shooting cases in metro Phoenix.

In 2015, 11 shootings occurred on Phoenix-area freeways between late August and early September. No one was seriously injured, and charges were later dismissed against the only person charged.

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The next case occurred over nearly a one-year period ending in July 2016. Bus driver Aaron Juan Saucedo was arrested in April 2017 and charged with first-degree murder in attacks that killed nine people.

Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty against Saucedo, with a trial scheduled for December. He has declared his innocence. ____ This story has been updated to correct one of Cooksey's convictions to attempted sexual assault.

Trump administration puts on hold \$18 billion in funding for New York City infrastructure projects

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's administration, citing the government shutdown, said Wednesday it was putting a hold on roughly \$18 billion to fund a new rail tunnel beneath the Hudson River between New York City and New Jersey and an extension of the city's Second Avenue subway.

The White House budget director, Russ Vought, said on X that the step was taken due to the Republican administration's belief the spending was based on unconstitutional diversity, equity and inclusion principles.

In a statement, Trump's Transportation Department said it had been reviewing whether any "unconstitutional practices" were occurring in the two massive infrastructure projects but that the shutdown, which began Wednesday, had forced it to furlough the staffers conducting the review.

The suspension of funds is likely meant to target Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer of New York, whom the White House is blaming for the impasse. He said the funding freeze would harm commuters.

"Obstructing these projects is stupid and counterproductive because they create tens of thousands of great jobs and are essential for a strong regional and national economy," he said on X.

The spending hold was a preview of how the messy the politics of the shutdown could get, with Vought later posting on X that \$8 billion in funding for green energy projects in Democratic-led states would be canceled. The administration has shown a willingness to use its control of federal dollars to apply pressure on Democrats to reopen the government, with commuters and thousands of jobs hanging in the balance.

The agency working on the subway line said it was blindsided by the announcement. "For now, it looks like they're just inventing excuses to delay one of the most important infrastructure projects in America," read a statement from John McCarthy, policy chief and spokesperson for the New York state-controlled Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

At a news conference in New York City about the federal government shutdown, Gov. Kathy Hochul, D-N.Y., told reporters, "The bad news just keeps coming."

"That's what a partnership with Washington looks like as we're standing here. We've done our part. We're ready to build. It's underway," she said. "And now we realize that they've decided to put their own interpretation of proper culture ahead of our needs, the needs of a nation."

The Hudson River rail tunnel is a long-delayed project whose path toward construction has been full of political and funding switchbacks. It's intended to ease the strain on a more than 110-year-old tunnel connecting New York and New Jersey. Hundreds of Amtrak and commuter trains carry hundreds of thousands of passengers per day through the tunnel, and delays can ripple up and down the East Coast between Boston and Washington.

In a 2023 interview with The Associated Press, Schumer said he and then-President Joe Biden were both "giddy" over the project.

Amtrak and the NJ Transit commuter rail system referred questions about the White House's announcement to the Gateway Development Commission, which is overseeing the tunnel project. Commission CEO Thomas Prendergast said the agency remains "focused on keeping the project on scope, schedule and budget."

The commission did not address questions about the specifics of the funding suspension or what it means for the project.

The Trump administration specifically targeted New York City in putting a hold on the funding, but the move could also influence this year's election for governor in New Jersey.

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The Democratic nominee, Rep. Mikie Sherrill, said on X that if elected, she would “fight this tooth-and-nail and sue the Trump administration to finish this critical, job-creating infrastructure project to reduce congestion and improve quality of life in New Jersey.”

Republican challenger Jack Ciattarelli’s campaign said Sherrill owns the consequences of the shutdown. “If Mikie Sherrill did her job as a congresswoman, we wouldn’t be in this mess,” Ciattarelli campaign consultant Chris Russell said by email.

Sherrill countered in a statement that “Washington Republicans must come to the table immediately to find a bipartisan consensus on a plan that reopens the government.”

The Second Avenue subway was first envisioned in the 1920s. The subway line along Manhattan’s Second Avenue was an on-again, off-again rail until the first section opened on Jan. 1, 2017. The MTA is working toward building the line’s second phase, which is to extend into East Harlem.

What to know about Arizona serial killings that resulted in 8 murder convictions

PHOENIX (AP) — An Arizona man was convicted Thursday on eight murder charges for a string of fatal shootings in Phoenix and neighboring Glendale after a trial that spanned several months.

A jury in Phoenix found Cleophus Cooksey Jr., 43, guilty in the killings of eight people that targeted random victims and the defendant’s mother and stepfather over a three-week span in 2017. He was also found guilty of other crimes including kidnapping, attempted sexual assault and armed robbery.

Authorities never offered a motive. Cooksey maintained his innocence at trial.

The sentencing portion of the trial begins Monday, and prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

Here’s a timeline of the serial killings:

Nov. 27, 2017

Andrew Remillard, 27, and Parker Smith, 21, are found dead with gunshot wounds to the head inside a parked car in Phoenix.

Dec. 2, 2017

Salim Richards, 31, is shot and killed while walking in west Phoenix. His 9 mm Glock handgun and a necklace are missing.

Dec. 13, 2017

Latorrie Beckford, 29, is found shot twice in the head in the common area of a Glendale apartment complex.

Dec. 15, 2017

Kristopher Cameron, 21, is shot and killed upon arriving at a Glendale apartment complex to complete a drug transaction with Cooksey, police say.

Dec. 15, 2017

About 90 minutes after Cameron was shot, Maria Villanueva, 43, parks her car at another complex 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) away. Surveillance cameras show an unknown man approach her and then drive away in Villanueva’s car with her in the front passenger seat. She is found partially nude and shot to death in a Phoenix alley the next morning.

Dec. 17, 2017

Police responding to gunfire at a central Phoenix apartment find Cooksey at the scene and, after a brief altercation, take him into custody. They find the bodies of his mother, Rene Cooksey, 56, and her husband, Edward Nunn, 54, behind the front door. Both had been shot to death.

Investigators said they found Richards’ gun, which was later linked to the killings of Beckford, Cameron and Villanueva. The keys to Villanueva’s vehicle also were found there, and police say Cooksey was wearing Richards’ necklace when he was arrested.

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Government shutdown takes hold with mass layoffs looming and no end in sight

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The federal government was thrown into a shutdown Wednesday with no easy endgame in sight, as Democrats held firm to their demands to salvage health care subsidies that President Donald Trump and Republican in Congress have dismissed as something to possibly discuss later.

The White House threatened mass layoffs of federal workers, rather than simply the normal furloughs, in a matter of days, seizing the chance to slash government. Blame was being cast on all sides. No new talks were scheduled after the president failed this week to secure a deal with congressional leaders.

"Let's be honest, if this thing drags on," warned Vice President JD Vance during a visit to the White House briefing room, "we are going to have to lay people off."

Roughly 750,000 federal workers were expected to be furloughed, and some fired, by Trump's Republican administration. Many offices will be shuttered, perhaps permanently, as the president promises to zero in on programs Democrats like. Trump's deportation agenda is likely to run full speed ahead, while education, environmental and other services sputter. The economic fallout could ripple across the nation.

Democrats believe their health care campaign is what House Leader Hakeem Jeffries called a "moral" issue, but cracks are emerging within the party. A Senate vote on the GOP plan to fund the government without the health subsidies failed, but it drew some Democratic support.

"I certainly pray they will come to their senses," House Speaker Mike Johnson said, flanked by GOP leaders at the Capitol.

This is the third time Trump has presided over a federal funding lapse and the first since his return to the White House this year. His record underscores the polarizing divide over budget priorities in a political climate that rewards hard-line positions rather than more traditional compromises.

Plenty of blame, but no exit strategy

The Democrats picked this fight, which was unusual for the party that prefers to keep government running, but their voters are eager to challenge the president's second-term agenda. Democrats are demanding funding for health care subsidies that are expiring for millions of people under the Affordable Care Act, causing the insurance premiums to spike nationwide.

Republicans have encouraged Trump to steer clear of any talks. At the White House meeting, he gave the congressional leaders "Trump 2028" caps. Afterward, the president posted a cartoonish fake video mocking the Democratic leadership that was widely viewed as unserious and racist.

"President Trump's behavior has become more erratic and unhinged," Democratic leaders Jeffries and Sen. Chuck Schumer said in a joint statement. "Instead of negotiating a bipartisan agreement in good faith, he is obsessively posting crazed deepfake videos."

Asked about the depiction of Jeffries with a mustache and a sombrero, Vance dismissed it as "funny."

What neither side has devised is an easy off-ramp to prevent what could become a protracted closure. The ramifications are certain to spread beyond the political arena, upending the lives of Americans who rely on the government for benefit payments, work contracts and the many services being thrown into turmoil.

Trump's Office of Management and Budget, headed by Russ Vought, directed agencies to execute plans not just for furloughs, which are typical during a federal funding lapse, but mass firings of federal workers. Vought told House Republicans during a private conference call Wednesday of layoffs coming in the next couple of days, according to a person granted anonymity to discuss it.

Economic fallout expected to ripple nationwide

An economic jolt could be felt in a matter of days. The government is expected Friday to produce its monthly jobs report, which may or may not be delivered.

Wall Street veered toward losses before the opening bell Wednesday as the shutdown went into effect just after midnight, but stocks hit more record highs later in the day.

Across the government, stoppages were getting underway.

What's staying open and shutting down

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The Medicare and Medicaid health care programs are expected to continue, though staffing shortages could mean delays for some services. The Pentagon would still function. And most employees will stay on the job at the Department of Homeland Security.

But Trump has warned that the administration could focus on programs that are important to Democrats, "cutting vast numbers of people out, cutting things that they like, cutting programs that they like."

As agencies sort out which workers are essential, or not, Smithsonian museums are expected to stay open at least until Monday. A group of former national park superintendents urged the administration to close the parks to visitors, arguing that poorly staffed parks are a danger to the public and put resources at risk.

Health care costs expected to soar

Ahead of Wednesday's start of the fiscal year, House Republicans had approved a temporary funding bill, over opposition from Democrats, to keep government running into mid-November while broader budget talks continue.

But that bill has failed repeatedly in the Senate, including Wednesday, on a 55-45 vote. It needs 60 votes to advance, which requires cooperation in a chamber where the GOP has a 53-47 majority. A Democratic bill also failed.

Divisions within the Democrats are apparent, as three senators again crossed over to join Republicans. One Republican opposed the GOP plan.

During the roll call, an widening group of senators engaged in an intense conversation, including GOP Sen. Mike Rounds of South Dakota, who has been talking with colleagues about the idea of a one-year extension of the expiring health care subsidies.

"It's just one thought, and there are other ideas that are out there," Rounds said afterward.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, who has said Republicans are happy to discuss the health care issue — but not as part of talks to keep the government open — is working to peel off more Democrats to his side.

The standoff is a political test for Schumer, who has drawn scorn from a restive base of left-flank voters pushing the party to hold firm in its demands for health care funding.

Johnson sent lawmakers home nearly two weeks ago but said they would be back next week.

Trump, during his meeting with the congressional leaders, expressed surprise at the scope of the rising costs of health care, but Democrats left with no path toward talks.

During Trump's first term, the nation endured its longest-ever shutdown, 35 days, over his demands for funds Congress refused to provide to build his promised U.S.-Mexico border wall.

In 2013, the government shut down for 16 days during the Obama presidency over GOP demands to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. Other closures date back decades.

Arizona jury convicts man in string of shootings that killed 8 in metro Phoenix

By JACQUES BILLEAUD and SEJAL GOVINDARAO Associated Press

Phoenix (AP) — An Arizona man was convicted Thursday on eight murder charges for a string of fatal shootings that targeted random victims and his own mother and stepfather over a three-week span.

The crimes in late 2017 happened during a time of unease in metro Phoenix when people were scared to go out at night or drive on freeways because of two other serial shooting cases in the summer of 2015.

While details trickled out on those cases, the killings Cleophus Cooksey Jr. was accused of generated no publicity until his arrest in 2018 — a surprising development given that the public hadn't been told about investigators trying to find a serial killer.

Cooksey, 43, is now facing the death penalty when he is sentenced Monday on murder convictions, as well as on kidnapping, attempted sexual assault and armed robbery in a trial that has spanned months.

Cooksey's victims in Phoenix and nearby Glendale included two men found dead in a parked car, a security guard shot while walking to his girlfriend's apartment and a woman who was kidnapped, her body

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found in an alley. Police alleged the woman was sexually assaulted.

Cooksey, an aspiring musician, knew some of the victims but wasn't acquainted with others, police said. Authorities never offered a motive.

Cooksey looked down at the defense table as the verdicts were read. He has maintained his innocence. 'He took my mom'

Adriana Rodriguez, the daughter of victim Maria Villanueva, said after the verdict that her family was finally getting closure, a day they had feared would never come.

"He took my mom, the only support system that I had," Rodriguez added as she broke into tears.

The killings started four months after Cooksey was released from prison on a manslaughter conviction for his participation in a 2001 strip club robbery in which an accomplice was fatally shot.

A friend of Cooksey's mother, Rene Cooksey, and stepfather, Edward Nunn, said the defendant deserved a death sentence. Eric Hampton said he watched Cooksey grow up and attended Thursday's hearing to see if the defendant showed sympathy for his victims.

"I thought maybe he had a little heart. But he doesn't have any heart at all, you know, to actually do these things to people and actually the worst part, kill your own mom," Hampton said outside the courthouse.

"He's a monster, and I'm just hoping that when the sentencing phase of this is over that, you know, that they put him to sleep," he added.

The Maricopa County Attorney's Office, which prosecuted Cooksey, declined to comment on the verdict.

The Associated Press left phone and email messages for Robert Reinhardt, an attorney for Cooksey.

A trail of victims

The first victims, Parker Smith, 21, and Andrew Remillard, 27, were found Nov. 27, 2017. They had been fatally shot while sitting in a vehicle in a parking lot. Five days later, security guard Salim Richards, 31, was shot to death while walking to his girlfriend's apartment.

Over the next two weeks, Latorrie Beckford, 29, and Kristopher Cameron, 21, were killed in separate shootings at apartment complexes in Glendale, and the body of Villanueva, 43, was found naked from the waist down in an alley in Phoenix. Authorities said Cooksey's DNA was found on her body.

Finally, on Dec. 17, 2017, Cooksey answered the door when officers responded to a shots-fired call at his mother's apartment. He told officers who had noticed a large amount of blood that he had cut his hand and was the only one home. Police say when an officer tried to detain him, Cooksey threatened to slit the officer's throat. Rene Cooksey, 56, and Nunn, 54, were found dead.

On the sofa in the living room, investigators said they found Richards' gun, which was later linked to the killings of Beckford, Cameron and Villanueva. The keys to Villanueva's vehicle also were found there, and police say Cooksey was wearing Richards' necklace when he was arrested.

Police also suspected Cooksey of a ninth killing — that of his ex-girlfriend's brother. But prosecutors ultimately declined to charge him in the December 2017 shooting death of Jesus Real at his home in Avondale.

Cooksey's trial was repeatedly delayed by the pandemic. In a January 2020 handwritten letter to a judge, Cooksey said he was in a hurry to prove "my charges are no more than false accusations." He said he was not a rapist or murderer: "I am a music artist."

Earlier serial shootings in Phoenix

Cooksey's arrest followed two other serial shooting cases in metro Phoenix.

In 2015, 11 shootings occurred on Phoenix-area freeways between late August and early September. No one was seriously injured, and charges were later dismissed against the only person charged.

The next case occurred over nearly a one-year period ending in July 2016. Bus driver Aaron Juan Saucedo was arrested in April 2017 and charged with first-degree murder in attacks that killed nine people.

Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty against Saucedo with a trial scheduled for December. He has declared his innocence.

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Inside 'Alligator Alcatraz,' where detainees' uniform color is based on criminal history

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

Detainees arriving at the immigration detention center in the Florida Everglades known as "Alligator Alcatraz" are given color-coded uniforms and wrist-bands, then segregated based on their criminal history and whether they're considered a flight risk, according to a handbook given to detainees.

The handbook presents strict rules on hygiene and dress, portraying an environment inside the remote detention center that starkly contrasts with the deplorable conditions detainees described shortly after it opened in July. The handbook was made public as part of a lawsuit over whether detainees have proper access to attorneys.

The court case is one of three lawsuits filed by environmental and civil rights groups over conditions at the detention center, which was built this summer by the state of Florida and operated by private contractors and state agencies.

A federal judge in Miami ordered in August that the facility must wind down operations within two months, agreeing with environmental groups that the remote airstrip site wasn't given a proper environmental review before it was converted into an immigration detention center. But operations continued after the judge's preliminary injunction was put on hold in early September by an appellate court panel.

President Donald Trump toured the facility in July and suggested it could be a model for future lockups nationwide as his administration pushes to expand the infrastructure needed to increase deportations.

Civil rights groups on Monday asked a federal judge in Fort Myers for an injunction that would stop the facility from holding detainees. They argued that the federal law doesn't allow state agencies or private contractors to carry out immigration detention since that's a function of the Department of Homeland Security alone, and that the facility was set up "outside the normal channels for immigration detention, without regard for multiple limits and safeguards in federal law."

"As a result, the facility is beset by a host of previously unthinkable problems," they said in a motion for a preliminary injunction. "Physical conditions are atrocious."

But the handbook submitted last week by the state of Florida in the separate legal-access lawsuit suggests that detainees are warned that guards would enforce strict rules on dress, hygiene and behavior.

Detainees must watch an orientation video upon arrival. They are allowed only to keep prayer books, glasses, dentures, wedding rings and small personal religious items like a rosary, and they wear sandals with their uniform. They're given soap, shampoo, deodorant, toothpaste and a toothbrush, as well as sheets, a blanket, mattress and towel. Among items considered contraband are recording devices, like cameras and cell phones, and identity documents such as passports and birth certificates, since Immigration and Customs Enforcement may use the documents as evidence, according to the handbook.

Detainees' uniform shirts can never be removed in housing units or recreational areas, and they can't place their hands in the waistband of their pants regardless of weather conditions, or they face discipline, according to the handbook.

During regular head counts, detainees aren't allowed to move or talk. If they do, they can be punished, along with everyone in their dorm, with being locked in their housing unit. Breakfasts start at 5:30 a.m. Meals are served in a dining hall where food is forbidden from being removed. Detainees who are segregated from the general population are served in their cells.

Barbering services are available, and detainees are expected to bathe regularly and keep their hair clean. "Personal hygiene is essential," the handbook said. However, detainees reported in July that toilets sometimes don't flush, flooding floors with fecal waste, and detainees go days without showering.

The facility has a law library, and detainees can spend up to five hours a week there.

In a separate court filing, an official with a private contractor overseeing how detainees can access lawyers disputed the arguments of civil rights groups that detainees aren't getting confidential access for attorney-client communications that should be protected. Every detainee request for an attorney meeting, either in person or via videoconference, has been granted, said Mark Saunders of The Nakamoto Group.

The handbook also informs detainees that the facility has zero tolerance for sexual assault or abuse and has hired a full-time investigator trained in sexual assault investigations. While saying sexual assault is never the victim's fault, the handbook also lists ways detainees can avoid it, such as not accepting gifts or favors from others and by appearing confident.

"Many attackers choose victims who look like they won't fight back or who they think is emotionally weak," the handbook said.

What to know about the blast that blew a 20-story chunk out of a Bronx building

NEW YORK (AP) — An explosion at a New York City apartment building blew off a massive chimney that ran up the side of the high-rise, leaving residents to wait for clearance to return to their apartments as officials investigate what caused the blast.

A plume of dust covered the block in the aftermath of the explosion, which left a huge pile of bricks around the building's base and on a nearby playground. The building stood with a 20-story gash in its side.

As residents and officials wait for more answers, here is what to know about the collapse.

No injuries despite pile of rubble

No injuries or deaths were reported in the collapse of the chimney, which vents exhaust from the boiler room that provides heat to the Bronx building.

Residents reported hearing a blast just after 8 a.m. Investigators were trying to determine if there was a gas leak or whether something else triggered the explosion, Mayor Eric Adams said.

Apartments in the building weren't seriously damaged, though some had their air conditioners ripped from windows by the falling bricks. Firefighters sifted through the rubble and sent rescue dogs bounding over the pile to look for any victims, but found none.

"We avoided a major disaster here," Bronx Borough President Vanessa Gibson said at a news conference.

Still, some apartments were evacuated as a precaution while inspectors assessed the damage.

Aging public housing

The building was part of New York City's huge and aging public housing system. Buildings in the system average roughly 60 years old, according to the New York Housing Authority. The complex of buildings where the collapse occurred was built in 1966.

A 2023 Physical Needs Assessment conducted by the city's housing authority estimated that the Mitchell Housing complex would need nearly \$726 million in repairs over the next 20-years. The highest infrastructure need was listed as "Heating."

Around half a million New Yorkers live in the aging buildings run by housing authority, which is the country's largest public housing system. Tenants have complained for decades about dangerous or unsanitary conditions, including rodents, mold, and heat and hot water outages.

In 2019, a federal monitor was appointed to address chronic problems like lead paint, mold and lack of heat. When he wrapped his five-year term in 2024, the monitor, Bart Schwartz, noted that the overarching issue for residents remained the "poor physical state of NYCHA's buildings."

Investigation and recovery underway

City officials are investigating what went wrong.

The city's Emergency Management Commissioner, Zach Iscol, said building inspectors are checking the building's foundations and the apartments to make sure they are sound.

"Right now we're kicking into the next phase of this, which is recovery," Iscol said, adding that the city was working to restore heat and hot water services to the building. The mayor said the building will be repaired.

Iscol said that the city opened up a reception center for impacted residents to receive resources like food and other necessities.

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AOL's dial up internet takes its last bow, marking the end of an era

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It's official: AOL's dial-up internet has taken its last bow.

AOL previously confirmed it would be pulling the plug on Tuesday (Sept. 30) — writing in a brief update on its support site last month that it “routinely evaluates” its offerings and had decided to discontinue dial-up, as well as associated software “optimized for older operating systems,” from its plans.

Dial-up is now no longer advertised on AOL's website. As of Wednesday, former company help pages like “connect to the internet with AOL Dialer” appeared unavailable — and nostalgic social media users took to the internet to say their final goodbyes.

AOL, formerly America Online, introduced many households to the World Wide Web for the first time when its dial-up service launched decades ago, rising to prominence particularly in the 90s and early 2000s.

The creaky door to the internet was characterized by a once-ubiquitous series of beeps and buzzes heard over the phone line used to connect your computer online — along with frustrations of being kicked off the web if anyone else at home needed the landline for another call, and an endless bombardment of CDs mailed out by AOL to advertise free trials.

Eventually, broadband and wireless offerings emerged and rose to dominance, doing away with dial-up's quirks for most people accessing the internet today — but not everyone.

A handful of consumers have continued to rely on internet services connected over telephone lines. In the U.S., according to Census Bureau data, an estimated 163,401 households were using dial-up alone to get online in 2023, representing just over 0.13% of all homes with internet subscriptions nationwide.

While AOL was the largest dial-up internet provider for some time, it wasn't the only one to emerge over the years. Some smaller internet providers continue to offer dial-up today. Regardless, the decline of dial-up has been a long time coming. And AOL shutting down its service arrives as other relics of the internet's earlier days continue to disappear.

Microsoft retired video calling service Skype just earlier this year — as well as Internet Explorer back in 2022. And in 2017, AOL discontinued its Instant Messenger — a chat platform that was once lauded as the biggest trend in online communication since email when it was founded in 1997, but later struggled to ward off rivals.

AOL itself is far from the dominant internet player it was decades ago — when, beyond dial-up and IMs, the company also became known for its “You've got mail” catchphrase that greeted users who checked their inboxes, as famously displayed in the 1998 film starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan by the same name.

Before it was America Online, AOL was founded as Quantum Computer Services in 1985. It soon re-branded and hit the public market in 1991. Near the height of the dot-com boom, AOL's market value reached nearly \$164 billion in 2000. But tumultuous years followed, and that valuation plummeted as the once-tech pioneer bounced between multiple owners. After a disastrous merger with Time Warner Inc., Verizon acquired AOL — which later sold AOL, along with Yahoo, to a private equity firm.

AOL now operates under the larger Yahoo name. A spokesperson for Yahoo didn't have any additional statements about the end of AOL's dial-up when reached by The Associated Press on Wednesday — directing customers to its previous summer announcement.

At the time Verizon sold AOL in 2021, an anonymous source familiar with the transaction told CNBC that the number of AOL dial-up users was “in the low thousands” — down from 2.1 million when Verizon first moved to acquire AOL in 2015, and far below peak demand seen back in the 90s and early 2000s. But beyond dial-up, AOL continues to offer its free email services, as well as subscriptions that advertise identity protection and other tech support.

Supreme Court lets Lisa Cook remain as a Federal Reserve governor for now

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed Lisa Cook to remain as a Federal

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Reserve governor for now, declining to act on the Trump administration's effort to immediately remove her from the central bank.

In a brief unsigned order, the high court said it would hear arguments in January over Republican President Donald Trump's effort to force Cook off the Fed board.

The court will consider whether to block a lower-court ruling in Cook's favor while her challenge to her firing by Trump continues.

The high-court order was a rare instance of Trump not quickly getting everything he wants from the justices in an emergency appeal.

Cook will be able to take part in the remaining two Fed meetings in 2025, including the next meeting of its interest rate-setting committee in late October.

Separately, the justices are hearing arguments in December in a separate but related legal fight over Trump's actions to fire members of the boards that oversee other independent federal agencies. The case concerns whether Trump can fire those officials at will.

But a second issue in the case could bear directly on Cook's fate: whether federal judges have the authority to prevent the firings or instead may only order back pay for officials who were wrongly dismissed.

Trump had sought to oust Cook before the September meeting of the Fed's interest rate-setting committee. But a judge ruled that the firing was illegal, and a divided appeals court rejected the Trumps administration's emergency appeal.

A day after the meeting concluded with a one-quarter of a percentage point reduction in a key interest rate, the administration turned to the Supreme Court in a new emergency appeal.

The White House campaign to unseat Cook marks an unprecedented bid to reshape the Fed board, which was designed to be largely independent from day-to-day politics. No president has fired a sitting Fed governor in the Fed's 112-year history.

"President Trump lawfully removed Lisa Cook for cause from the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. We look forward to ultimate victory after presenting our oral arguments before the Supreme Court in January," White House spokesman Kush Desai said.

The court already has suggested that it will view the Fed differently from other independent agencies and Wednesday's order is another demonstration of that distinction, said Lev Menand, a professor at Columbia Law School and author of a book on the Fed.

The justices have allowed other firings to take effect while legal challenges proceed, including in the case that will be argued in December involving Rebecca Slaughter, whom Trump fired from the Federal Trade Commission.

"The court seems to be steering a different course here," Menand said. "It has the effect of freezing the status quo that is in favor of Fed independence."

Cook, who was appointed to the Fed board by Democratic President Joe Biden, has said she will not leave her job and won't be "bullied" by Trump. Her lawyers said in a statement Wednesday that the court's decision "rightly allows Governor Cook to continue in her role on the Federal Reserve Board, and we look forward to further proceedings consistent with the Court's order."

Separately, Senate Republicans recently confirmed Stephen Miran, Trump's nominee to an open spot on the Fed's board. Both Cook and Miran took part in last month's meeting. Miran was the sole dissenting vote, preferring a larger cut.

Trump has accused Cook of mortgage fraud because she appeared to claim two properties, in Michigan and Georgia, as "primary residences" in June and July 2021, before she joined the Fed board. Such claims can lead to a lower mortgage rate and smaller down payment than if one of them was declared as a rental property or second home.

"Put simply, the President may reasonably determine that interest rates paid by the American people should not be set by a Governor who appears to have lied about facts material to the interest rates she secured for herself — and refuses to explain the apparent misrepresentations," Solicitor General D. John Sauer wrote in his Supreme Court filing.

Cook has denied any wrongdoing and has not been charged with a crime. According to documents

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obtained by The Associated Press, Cook specified that her Atlanta condo would be a "vacation home," according to a loan estimate she obtained in May 2021. In a form seeking a security clearance, she described it as a "2nd home." Both documents appear to undercut the administration's claims of fraud.

U.S. District Judge Jia Cobb ruled that the administration had not satisfied a legal requirement that Fed governors can only be fired "for cause," which she said was limited to misconduct while in office. Cook joined the Fed's board in 2022.

Cobb also held that Trump's firing would have deprived Cook of her due process, or legal right, to contest the firing.

By a 2-1 vote, a panel of the federal appeals court in Washington rejected the administration's request to let Cook's firing proceed.

Trump's lawyers have argued that even if the conduct occurred before her time as governor, her alleged action "indisputably calls into question Cook's trustworthiness and whether she can be a responsible steward of the interest rates and economy."

What happens now that a government shutdown is underway

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Washington is bracing for what could be a prolonged federal shutdown after lawmakers deadlocked and missed the deadline for funding the government.

Republicans supported a short-term measure to fund the government generally at current levels through Nov. 21, but Democrats blocked it, insisting the measure address their concerns on health care. They want to reverse the Medicaid cuts in President Donald Trump's package of tax breaks and spending reductions from the summer and they want to extend tax credits that make health insurance premiums more affordable for millions of people who purchase through the marketplaces established by the Affordable Care Act.

Republicans called the Democratic proposal a nonstarter that would cost taxpayers more than \$1 trillion.

Neither side shows any signs of budging.

Here's what to know about the shutdown that began Wednesday:

What happens in the shutdown?

Now that a lapse in funding has occurred, the law requires agencies to furlough their "nonexcepted" employees. Excepted employees, who include those who work to protect life and property, stay on the job but do not get paid until after the shutdown ends.

The White House Office of Management and Budget begins the process with instructions to agencies that a lapse in appropriations has occurred and they should initiate orderly shutdown activities. That memo went out Tuesday evening.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates roughly 750,000 federal employees could be furloughed each day of the shutdown, with the total daily cost of their compensation at roughly \$400 million.

What government work continues during a shutdown?

A great deal, actually.

FBI investigators, CIA officers, air traffic controllers and agents operating airport checkpoints keep working. So do members of the armed forces.

Those programs that rely on mandatory spending generally continue during a shutdown. Social Security payments still go out. Those relying on Medicare coverage can still see their doctors and health care providers can be reimbursed.

Veteran health care continues during a shutdown. Veterans Affairs medical centers and outpatient clinics will be open, and VA benefits will be processed and delivered. Burials will continue at VA national cemeteries.

Will furloughed federal workers get paid?

Yes. In 2019, Congress passed a bill enshrining into law the requirement that furloughed employees get retroactive pay once operations resume.

While they eventually will be paid, the furloughed workers and those who remain on the job may have to go without one or more of their regular paychecks, depending upon how long the shutdown lasts.

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Service members would also receive back pay for missed paychecks once federal funding resumes.

Will I still get mail?

Yes. The U.S. Postal Service is unaffected by a government shutdown. It's an independent entity funded through the sale of its products and services, not by tax dollars.

What closes during a shutdown?

All administrations get some leeway to choose which services to freeze or maintain in a shutdown.

The first Trump administration worked to blunt the impact of what became the country's longest partial shutdown in 2018 and 2019. But on Tuesday, Trump threatened the possibility of increasing the pain that comes with a shutdown.

"We can do things during the shutdown that are irreversible, that are bad for them and irreversible by them," Trump said of Democrats. "Like cutting vast numbers of people out, cutting things that they like, cutting programs that they like."

Each federal agency develops its own shutdown plan. The plans outline which workers would stay on the job during a shutdown and which would be furloughed.

In a provocative move, Trump's budget office threatened the mass firing of federal workers in a shutdown. An office memo said those programs that didn't get funding through Trump's bill this summer would bear the brunt of a shutdown.

Agencies should consider issuing reduction-in-force notices for those programs whose funding expires, that don't have alternative funding sources and are "not consistent with the President's priorities," the memo said.

That would be a much more aggressive step than in previous shutdowns, when furloughed federal workers returned to their jobs once the shutdown was over. A reduction in force would not only lay off employees but eliminate their positions, which would trigger another massive upheaval in a federal workforce that's already faced major rounds of cuts due to efforts from the Department of Government Efficiency and elsewhere in Trump's Republican administration.

What agencies are planning

The Department of Health and Human Services will furlough about 41% of its staff out of nearly 80,000 employees, according to a contingency plan posted on its website.

As part of that plan, the Atlanta-based Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would continue to monitor disease outbreaks, while activities that will stop include research into health risks and ways to prevent illness.

Meanwhile, research and patient care at the National Institutes of Health would be upended. Patients currently enrolled in studies at the research-only hospital nicknamed the House of Hope will continue to receive care. Additional sick patients hoping for access to experimental therapies can't enroll except in special circumstances, and no new studies will begin.

At the Food and Drug Administration, its "ability to protect and promote public health and safety would be significantly impacted, with many activities delayed or paused." For example, the agency would not accept new drug applications or medical device submissions that require payment of a user fee.

The National Park Service plans to furlough about two-thirds of its employees while keeping parks largely open to visitors during the federal shutdown, according to a contingency plan released Tuesday night. The plan says "park roads, lookouts, trails, and open-air memorials will generally remain accessible to visitors."

The plan also allows parks to enter into agreements with states, tribes or local governments willing to make donations to keep national park sites open. The park service has more than 400 sites, including large national parks such as Yellowstone and Grand Canyon, national battlefields and historic sites.

Sites could close if damage is being done to park resources or garbage is building up.

Many national parks including Yellowstone and Yosemite stayed open during a 35-day shutdown during Trump's first term. Limited staffing led to vandalism, gates being pried open and other problems including an off-roader mowing down one of the namesake trees at Joshua Tree National Park in California.

For the Smithsonian Institution, museums, research centers and the National Zoo will remain open

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through at least Monday.

Nutritional assistance

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as food stamps, will continue at least for the month of October.

The Department of Agriculture's contingency plan says a nutrition program for women, infants and children, also known as WIC, has the ability to reallocate unused grant award funds from the previous budget year. The National WIC Association, an advocacy group, says it anticipates that the program has enough funding on hand to remain open for the short term, likely one week to two weeks.

Impact on the economy

Phillip Swagel, director of the Congressional Budget Office, said a short shutdown doesn't have a huge impact on the economy, especially since federal workers, by law, are paid retroactively. But "if a shutdown continues, then that can give rise to uncertainties about what is the role of government in our society, and what's the financial impact on all the programs that the government funds."

"The impact is not immediate, but over time, there is a negative impact of a shutdown on the economy," he added.

Markets haven't reacted strongly to past shutdowns, according to Goldman Sachs Research. At the close of the three prolonged shutdowns since the early 1990s, equity markets finished flat or up even after dipping initially.

Indonesian rescuers race to find dozens of students in rubble of collapsed school

By NINIEK KARMINI and EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

SIDOARJO, Indonesia (AP) — Rescue workers continued to search on Wednesday for dozens of missing students suspected of still being buried under the rubble of a collapsed school in the province of East Java.

The death toll following the incident on Monday has risen to six, according to Yudhi Bramantyo, Deputy Chief of Operations National Search and Rescue Agency.

Five survivors were successfully rescued after a tunnel was dug at the base of the building to their location.

"Their conditions were better as they were detected yesterday. They can communicate since yesterday while their bodies are covered by concrete. We have been able to provide food and drink support since yesterday," Bramantyo said.

Rescuers are racing against the clock in the search for other survivors, with dozens of students still unaccounted for, he added.

The structure fell on top of hundreds of people at about 2:30 p.m. on Monday in a prayer hall at the century-old al Khoziny Islamic boarding school in Sidoarjo, on the eastern side of Indonesia's Java island.

The students were mostly boys in grades seven to 12, between ages 12 and 18. Female students were praying in another part of the building and managed to escape, survivors said.

Most rescues typically happen within 24 hours after such disasters, with chances of survival decreasing each day after. More than 300 workers continued to work to try and reach those who have been detected to be still alive and trapped below.

"We hope that we can complete this operation soon," Mohammad Syafii, head of Indonesia's National Search and Rescue Agency, told reporters. "We are currently racing against time because it is possible that we can still save lives of those we have detected within the golden hours."

In a sign of hope, rescuers pulled one boy out alive on Wednesday afternoon, loading him gently onto a stretcher to be taken to a hospital. His condition was not immediately known.

Of the approximately 100 injured, more than two dozen are still hospitalized, with many said to have suffered head injuries and broken bones, authorities said.

Before Wednesday's rescue, Syafii's agency said at least six children were alive under the rubble, but the search has been complicated with the slabs of concrete and other parts of the building remaining unstable. Heavy equipment is available but is not currently being used due to concerns that could cause

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further collapse.

Rescuers in hardhats crawled through tight passages made of concrete blocks, steel bars and rubble collapsed in the debris, chipping away at it with hammers and hand-held power tools to try and reach those still underneath.

Oxygen, water and food has been sent through narrow gaps to those still trapped under the debris to keep them alive. Search teams have also used detectors and thermal drones to detect potential survivors who could be rescued.

The Islamic boarding school was undergoing an unauthorized expansion to add two new levels when it collapsed during afternoon prayers, authorities said. The prayer hall was two stories high but two more were being added without a permit, according to authorities. Police said the old building's foundation was apparently unable to support two floors of concrete and collapsed during the pouring process.

Authorities initially said 38 people were missing, but revised that upward on Tuesday after consulting attendance lists and talking with families.

"In the early stages there will inevitably be some confusion about the data," said Suharyanto, the head of the National Disaster Mitigation Agency, who only goes by one name as is common in Indonesia.

Brian Snitker, who managed Braves to 2021 World Series title, won't return to dugout next season

By CHARLES ODUM AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — When in doubt, Brian Snitker turned to Bobby Cox for advice.

It was only natural for Snitker to once again seek counsel from Cox, through Cox's wife Pam, when considering if this was the right time to step down as Atlanta Braves manager. Snitker received reassurance that following his career as a manager, Cox relished serving the same advisory role that Snitker now assumes.

Snitker, who managed the Braves to the 2021 World Series championship as the highlight of almost a half-century with the organization, will not return to the dugout next season.

The Braves announced Wednesday that the 69-year-old Snitker will be inducted into the team's hall of fame next year.

"I talked with Pam yesterday," Snitker said at a news conference. "She did tell me once he got the hang of this position he really loved it."

Cox was Snitker's mentor. Snitker continued to visit Cox regularly after Cox was hospitalized in 2019 following a stroke. Cox, 84, returned to Truist Park on Aug. 22 for a 30-year celebration of the Braves' 1995 World Series title.

The news conference to announce Snitker's decision was described as a celebration by Braves chairman Terry McGuirk and general manager Alex Anthopoulos. Snitker was emotional at times as he described his late-season uncertainty about his desire to manage another year and how he finally concluded it was time to step down.

"I said I'm going to need a little time after that last out to decide what I'm going to do," said Snitker, who was joined by his wife, Ronnie, at the news conference. "After I got home and decompressed a little bit I did decide this was the best move."

Snitker has been with the organization for 49 years as a minor league player and manager and major league coach and manager.

Snitker led Atlanta to 811 wins, six NL East division titles, one wild-card berth and the 2021 World Series championship in his 10 seasons as manager.

"Honestly I never thought I'd manage one day in the major leagues, much less 10 years," Snitker said. "I never thought I'd hoist a trophy."

Snitker paused to collect his emotions before referring to players at the news conference and his joy to "be around a group of guys that makes this so special."

Braves players who attended the news conference included Ozzie Albies, Spencer Strider, Joe Jiménez,

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Reynaldo López, Austin Riley, Michael Harris II and Drake Baldwin.

McGuirk presented Snitker with keys to a new Ford truck and announced the team was sending Snitker and his wife on a vacation to Hawaii.

"Today we celebrate and honor not only one of the most accomplished managers in the history of our franchise but also one of the finest people to ever wear the uniform," McGuirk said. "You will always be a Brave, a Brave forever, and this organization will always be your home."

Snitker said he looked forward to his new role.

"I'm still going to be here," he said. "I'm going to be in spring training. I'm excited about this new role."

Cox was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame in 2014. His No. 6 was retired by the Braves.

Snitker, who signed with the team as an undrafted free agent catcher in 1977, spent 20 seasons with the organization as a minor league manager. He was named Atlanta's interim manager on May 17, 2016, and was given the title of permanent manager following the season.

He posted a record of 811-688 as manager and ranks third in franchise history in wins, trailing only Cox (2,149) and Frank Selee (1,004).

Anthopoulos and McGuirk did not address a plan to find Snitker's replacement. Braves bench coach Walt Weiss is Colorado's former manager. Third base coach Fredi González is a former manager with Atlanta and the Marlins.

The Braves finished 76-87 this season, which was the final year of Snitker's current contract.

The Braves are the fifth MLB team to move on from their managers since the regular season ended Sunday. The Los Angeles Angels announced on Tuesday that Ron Washington, 73, would not return. Washington was a former Braves coach.

San Francisco fired Bob Melvin and Minnesota fired Rocco Baldelli on Monday before Bruce Bochy and the Texas Rangers mutually decided Bochy won't return to the dugout.

Washington, the 70-year-old Bochy and Snitker were the three oldest managers in the majors.

Florida was a top destination for immigrants who came to the US under Biden

By GISELA SALOMON Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — After Paola Freites was allowed into the U.S. in 2024, she and her husband settled in Florida, drawn by warm temperatures, a large Latino community and the ease of finding employment and housing.

They were among hundreds of thousands of immigrants who came to the state in recent years as immigration surged under former President Joe Biden.

No state has been more affected by the increase in immigrants than Florida, according to internal government data obtained by The Associated Press. Florida had 1,271 migrants who arrived from May 2023 to January 2025 for every 100,000 residents, followed by New York, California, Texas and Illinois.

The data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which must verify addresses of everyone who is allowed to enter the U.S. and stay to pursue an immigration case, shows Miami was the most affected metropolitan area in the U.S. with 2,191 new migrants for every 100,000 residents. Orlando ranked 10th with 1,499 new migrants for every 100,000 residents. Tampa ranked 17th, and Fort Myers was 30th.

Freites and her husband, who had fled violence in Colombia with their three children, moved to Apopka, an agricultural city near Orlando, where immigrants could find cheaper housing than in Miami as they spread throughout a community that already had large populations of Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Her sister-in-law owned a mobile home that they could rent.

"She advised us to come to Orlando because Spanish is spoken here and the weather is good," Freites, 37, said. "We felt good and welcomed."

Migration changed after the COVID-19 pandemic

The CBP data captured the stated U.S. destinations for 2.5 million migrants who crossed the border, including those like Freites who used the now-defunct CBP One app to make an appointment for entry.

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The data covered the period when the Biden administration ended COVID-19 restrictions on asylum to when President Donald Trump began his second term and declared a national emergency at the border.

CBP released millions of people in the U.S. at the border during Biden's presidency to pursue cases in U.S. immigration court, lifting the immigrant population to all-time highs as many people made their way to the U.S. by walking through the once-impenetrable Darién Gap on the border of Colombia and Panama. This year, the Border Patrol released only seven migrants from February through July, as Trump suspended the asylum system and thrust the military into a central role in deterring illegal border crossings.

Freites said she was tortured and raped in Colombia and her father and 8-month-old baby killed. The family requested asylum, and she and her husband obtained work permits.

She is now a housekeeper at a hotel in Orlando, a tourist destination with more than a dozen theme parks, including Walt Disney World, Universal Orlando and SeaWorld. Her husband works at a plant nursery.

"We came here looking for freedom, to work. We don't like to be given anything for free," said Freites, who asked that the AP identify her by her middle name and second last name for fear of her mother's safety in Colombia, which has endured more than a half century of conflict. "We are good people."

She, her husband and their three children — ages 16, 13 and 7 — live in a two-bedroom mobile home. The children attend school and she attends a Catholic church that offers Mass in Spanish, the only language she speaks.

Orlando absorbed new immigrants who came

Historically, Central Florida's immigrant population was mainly from Mexico and Central America, with a handful of Venezuelan professionals and business owners coming after socialist Hugo Chávez became president in 1999. In 2022, more Venezuelans began to arrive, encouraged by a program created by the Biden administration that offered them a temporary legal pathway. That same program was extended months later to Haitians and Cubans, and their presence became increasingly visible in Central Florida. The state also has a large Colombian population.

Many immigrants came to Florida because they had friends and relatives there.

In Orlando, they settled throughout the area, not just certain neighborhoods. Businesses catering to newer arrivals opened in shopping areas with Mexican and Puerto Rican shops. Venezuelan restaurants selling empanadas and arepas opened in the same plaza as a Mexican supermarket that offers tacos and enchiladas. Churches began offering more Masses in Spanish and in Creole, which Haitians speak.

As the population increased, apartments, shopping centers, offices and warehouses replaced many of the orange groves and forests that once surrounded Orlando.

The economy grew as more people arrived

New immigrants found work in the booming construction industry, as well as in agriculture, transportation, utilities and manufacturing. Many work in restaurants and hotels and as taxi drivers. Some started their own businesses.

"It's just like a very vibrant community," said Felipe Sousa-Lazaballet, executive director at Hope Community Center, a group that offers free services to the immigrant community in Central Florida. "It's like, 'I'm going to work hard and I'm going to fight for my American dream,' that spirit."

Immigrants' contributions to Florida's gross domestic product — all goods and services produced in the state — rose from 24.3% in 2019 to 25.5% in 2023, according to an American Immigration Council analysis of the Census Bureau's annual surveys. The number of immigrants in the workforce increased from 2.8 million to 3.1 million, or 26.5% to 27.4% of the overall population. The figures include immigrants in the U.S. legally and illegally.

"Immigration has made this area better, more diverse," said Laudi Campo, director of the Hispanic Federation in Florida. "Immigrants have brought an amazingly economic force and great workforce to the area."

Immigrants looked for advice

Groups that help immigrants also increased in size.

"We got hundreds of calls a week," said Gisselle Martinez, legal director at the Orlando Center for Justice. "So many calls of people saying 'I just arrived, I don't know anybody, I don't have money yet, I don't have a job yet. Can you help me?'"

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The center created a program to welcome them. It grew from serving 40 people in 2022 to 269 in 2023 and 524 in 2024, Melissa Marantes, the executive director, said.

In 2023, the Hispanic Federation launched a program to teach doctors, nurses, and engineers from South America and Haiti how to prepare and dress for job interviews and how to answer questions in English. They also expanded their free English language program and offered another to help parents navigate the school system. In 2021, about 500 immigrants attended a fair that provided free dental, medical, and legal services. By 2024, there were 2,500 attendees.

Sousa-Lazaballet, the executive director at Hope, said his group went from serving 6,000 people in 2019, to more than 20,000 in 2023 and 2024.

"People were welcomed," Sousa-Lazaballet, the executive director at Hope, said. "It was an incredible moment, when people were coming, people were settling because they have work permits. They could work."

Many now fear being detained

After Trump took office, anxiety spread through many immigrant communities. Florida, a Republican-led state, has worked to help the Trump administration with its immigration crackdown and has enacted laws targeting illegal immigration. That includes a measure banning people living in the U.S. illegally from entering the state that some law enforcement officers enforced after a judge halted it.

Blanca, a 38-year-old single mother from Mexico who crossed the border with her three children in July 2024, said she came to Central Florida because four nephews who were already living in the area told her it was a peaceful place where people speak Spanish. The math teacher, who has requested asylum in the U.S. insisted on being identified by her first name only because she fears deportation.

In July 2025, immigration officials told her to go to their Orlando office ahead of an October immigration court hearing. There, they placed an electronic bracelet on her ankle to monitor her.

Because a friend of hers was deported after submitting a work permit request, she has not asked for one herself, she said. Blanca gets paid under the table by cleaning and cooking for neighbors. Her children ask her not to take them to or from school for fear that the police will see her electronic bracelet and stop and detain her on the street.

"It's scary," she said. "Of course it is."

Morgan Wallen denied throwing chair off bar roof to police in 2024, footage shows

By JONATHAN MATTISE and KRISTIN M. HALL Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Country music star Morgan Wallen denied to police that he threw a chair off a Nashville honky-tonk bar roof before and after he was arrested and charged with reckless endangerment in 2024, police video obtained by The Associated Press shows.

Roughly two weeks after his April 2024 arrest, Wallen commented on social media: "I'm not proud of my behavior, and I accept responsibility" and said he "made amends" with Nashville law enforcement and others. Then in December, he pleaded guilty to two counts.

The Metro Nashville Police Department released the footage of Wallen's arrest, captured by several officers' body and cruiser cameras, in response to a public records request from the AP. A previously released arrest affidavit did not get into the details of what Wallen told officers.

A broken chair by Chief's

A police car camera shows two officers, who were standing outside, react to something apparently falling from above on a late Sunday night. And one officer's body camera video begins with a shot of a broken chair in the road near his parked police cruiser, close to Chief's on Broadway, in the city's entertainment district.

Then, as Wallen and his bodyguard team come down to the main entrance on Broadway, one of the men with Wallen is shouting, "He didn't see anything. You don't have witnesses, you are accusing!"

"He didn't throw nothing, he didn't throw nothing," the bodyguard continues, and accuses two bar work-

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ers of "being aggressive."

When an officer asks Wallen what happened, the musician replies, "I don't know."

He later tells another officer, "We've not tried to cause no problems, man. I don't know what they are — I don't know why."

That officer said police were figuring out what happened after a chair came flying off the roof and landed by his patrol car. Wallen replied, "As you should."

Calling Eric Church

At one point, Wallen is on his cellphone, then points it at the officer and says, "Eric Church is on the phone." Church, another country star, co-owns Chief's. During the call, Wallen had used an expletive to describe the officers he said were "trying to take me to jail outside of your (expletive) bar."

Church, who can't be heard on the police recording, recommended to the officer that Wallen wait in a private space instead of standing on the public sidewalk, said a representative for Church.

The officer responds: "It's not really something we can do. Law enforcement have to enforce the laws. Figure out what happened. We've got a supervisor coming to the scene. Gotta treat it like we would with anybody else."

Representatives for Wallen did not respond to requests for comment.

Back in the bar, police were in an office watching security footage from the roof, body camera footage shows. The security video was not clear from the officers' body cameras and a police spokesperson said there was no security camera footage from the bar in the case files.

The officers return outside and a sergeant, who says he watched security video of Wallen throwing a chair off the roof, handcuffs him.

Another officer talks to two witnesses. One, referring to the chair, says she saw Wallen "lift it up and throw it off" and laugh.

Throughout the hour-and-a-half ordeal, Wallen makes apologetic comments to officers without explicitly admitting to anything, including: "I truly didn't mean no harm," "Sorry to cause problems, I didn't mean to," and "God damn it, I am sorry man."

"He didn't admit to it, but we got him on camera doing it," one sergeant says after Wallen was cuffed, also noting police had witness statements.

Some fans took notice as Wallen stood surrounded by police in Nashville's busy tourist hub. One yells, "We love you Morgan!" Once Wallen is in the back of the police car, he says to the officer, "Get us out of here," noting that people were videotaping him.

Born and raised in Sneedville, Tennessee, the two-time Grammy nominee is one of the biggest names in contemporary popular music, loved for his earworm hooks and distinctive combination of bro country, dirt-rock and certain hallmarks of hip-hop. 2023's "One Thing at a Time" broke Garth Brooks' record for longest running No. 1 country album, and this year's "I'm The Problem" spent 12 weeks at No. 1.

Wallen's career has been marked by several other controversies, including a 2020 arrest on public intoxication and disorderly conduct charges after being kicked out of Kid Rock's bar in downtown Nashville. In 2021, after a video surfaced of him using a racial slur, he was disqualified or limited from several award shows and received no Grammy nominations for his massively popular "Dangerous: The Double Album."

A Thomas Rhett sing-along

Wallen was talkative in the cruiser, the footage shows, saying, "I ain't done nothing wrong," and pressing the officer for his favorite country musicians.

"I can tell you my top three right now," the officer replies. "You're honestly one of them." One of Wallen's songs with Thomas Rhett comes on from the officer's playlist.

"This is me and Thomas Rhett! Turn it up. That's me and TR! That's me right there," Wallen says, before singing a couple of the words from the song.

"TR is one of the best dudes in the world. He would definitely not be getting arrested," Wallen adds.

Wallen pleaded guilty in December 2024 to two misdemeanor counts of reckless endangerment. He was sentenced to spend seven days in a DUI education center and be under supervised probation for two years.

When the judge asked how he would plead, he said, "Conditionally guilty." His attorney has said the

charges will be eligible for dismissal and expungement after he completes probation.

Wallen's own Nashville honky tonk, not far from Chief's, opened less than two months after his arrest.

Taylor Swift's 'The Life of a Showgirl' is almost here. Here's what to know

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Lights, camera, action. Taylor Swift's 12th studio album, "The Life of a Showgirl," arrives Friday. Are you ready for it?

Swift announced her latest era back in August, when she began teasing the release.

Here's everything you need to know ahead of its drop date: how to stream, which variants exist, and of course, how the album came together. Enjoy the show!

How to listen to Swift's "The Life of a Showgirl"

"The Life of a Showgirl" will be available to stream on all major platforms, including Spotify, Apple Music and Amazon Music.

Fans can pre-save the album ahead of its release on Oct. 3. Pre-saving ensures the new music automatically appears in a fan's library the moment it is available. It is also a way for an artist to promote streams ahead of the drop date.

On Monday, Spotify announced that Swift's album surpassed five million pre-saves on their platform to become the most pre-saved album in its history. The previous title holder? Her 2024 album "The Tortured Poets Department."

In addition to the many streaming options, there will also be a digital-download variant of "The Life of a Showgirl" available via iTunes, featuring a new cover image and a nearly three-minute "exclusive video from Taylor herself detailing inspirations behind the album" labeled "A Look Behind the Curtain."

What physical variants are there?

Target is once again a major partner with Swift. Their stores will carry three CD variants, titled as "It's Frightening," "It's Rapturous" and "It's Beautiful" editions. There is also an exclusive vinyl release, "The Crowd Is Your King" edition in "summertime spritz pink shimmer vinyl." Many Target locations will remain open past midnight on the day of release for superfans to pick up in real time.

There are a number of other vinyl variants as well: "The Tiny Bubble in Champagne Collection," which features two vinyl variants described as "under bright lights pearlescent vinyl" and "red lipstick & lace transparent vinyl."

There is also "The Baby That's Show Business Collection," in two colorways: "lovely bouquet golden vinyl" and "lakeside beach blue sparkle vinyl."

Then there's "The Shiny Bug Collection" in "violet shimmer marbled vinyl" and "wintergreen and onyx marbled vinyl."

And of course, there is the standard LP and cassette, in "sweat and vanilla perfume Portofino orange vinyl."

Artwork varies throughout.

What do we know about the album so far?

Swift partially announced her 12-track new album "The Life of a Showgirl" on the "New Heights" podcast hosted by Travis Kelce — Swift's fiancé and Kansas City Chiefs tight end — and his brother, Jason Kelce, the former Philadelphia Eagles center.

In the full episode, Swift revealed she worked on the album in Sweden while she was on the "Eras Tour" — flying between dates to record, truly embodying the album's title, "The Life of a Showgirl." The entire album was completed with producers Max Martin and Shellback, who Swift previously collaborated with on 2012's "Red," 2014's "1989" and 2017's "Reputation." Her frequent producing partner Jack Antonoff was not mentioned.

She described the release as full of "bangers." "I care about this record more than I can even overstate," she said, agreeing with Travis Kelce when he described the release as "a lot more upbeat" than 2024's

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"The Tortured Poets Department."

Across the album, there is only one feature listed: the title track, "The Life of a Showgirl," will include Sabrina Carpenter.

South Korea says US agrees to let Koreans work at sites with short-term visas and visa waivers

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The United States has agreed to allow South Korean workers on short-term visas or a visa waiver program to help build industrial sites in America, Seoul's Foreign Ministry said Wednesday.

The announcement came weeks after South Korea flew home more than 300 of its nationals who had been detained in a massive immigration raid at a battery factory being built on Hyundai's sprawling auto plant campus near Savannah, Georgia.

The roundup, along with U.S. video footage showing Korean workers shackled at the hands, ankles and waist, fueled public outrage and a sense of betrayal in South Korea — a key U.S. ally that had pledged hundreds of billions of dollars in U.S. investments just weeks earlier in hopes of avoiding the Trump administration's steepest tariffs.

The incident also triggered pent-up frustrations in Seoul over Washington's failure to act on its long-standing request to improve the visa system for skilled Korean workers, even as the United States presses its ally to expand industrial investments.

South Korean companies have been mostly relying on short-term visas or a visa waiver program called the Electronic System for Travel Authorization, or ESTA, to send workers needed to launch manufacturing sites and handle other setup tasks, a practice that had been largely tolerated for years.

After bilateral visa talks Tuesday in Washington, South Korea's Foreign Ministry said their American counterparts reaffirmed that South Korean companies can use B-1 short-term business visas or ESTAs to send workers to install, service and repair equipment needed for their projects in the United States. The statement was consistent with earlier remarks by South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun, who, after traveling to Washington to negotiate the workers' release, said that U.S. officials had agreed to allow them to return later to complete their work.

South Korea has called for more fundamental steps, such as creating a new visa category to expand access for skilled workers. But U.S. officials at the Washington meeting said major changes would be difficult because of legislative constraints, according to a statement from the South Korean ministry.

Most of the Korean workers detained in Georgia were employed by LG Energy Solution and its subcontractors and held ESTAs as well as other visas.

LG said in a statement that it will "thoroughly prepare and work diligently to normalize the construction and operation of our factories in the United States."

Today in History: October 2, Marshall joins Supreme Court

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Oct. 2, the 275th day of 2025. There are 90 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 2, 1967, Thurgood Marshall joined the U.S. Supreme Court as its first African American justice; he would serve on the bench for 24 years until his retirement in 1991.

Also on this date:

In 1919, President Woodrow Wilson had a serious stroke at the White House that left him paralyzed on his left side.

In 1942, the RMS Queen Mary, an ocean liner carrying thousands of American soldiers as a converted troop ship during World War II, accidentally rammed and sank the escort ship HMS Curacoa in the North Atlantic, killing over 300 crew members aboard the Curacoa.

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In 1944, German troops crushed the 2-month-old Warsaw Uprising, during which a quarter of a million people were killed.

In 1970, one of two chartered twin-engine planes flying the Wichita State University football team to Utah crashed into a mountain near Silver Plume, Colorado, killing 31 of the 40 people on board.

In 2006, an armed milk truck driver took a group of girls hostage in an Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, killing five of them and wounding five others before taking his own life.

In 2016, Hall of Fame baseball broadcaster Vin Scully signed off for the last time, ending 67 years behind the mic for the Dodgers as he called a 7-1 loss to the Giants in San Francisco.

In 2018, U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a critic of Saudi Arabia's government, was killed by Saudi Arabian officials at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, Turkey.

In 2020, stricken by COVID-19, President Donald Trump was injected with an experimental drug combination at the White House before being flown to a military hospital, where he was given Remdesivir, an antiviral drug.

Today's Birthdays: Film critic Rex Reed is 87. Singer-songwriter Don McLean ("American Pie") is 80. Fashion designer Donna Karan (KA'-ruhn) is 77. Actor Avery Brooks is 77. Photographer Annie Leibovitz is 76. Singer-actor Sting is 74. Actor Lorraine Bracco is 71. R&B singer Freddie Jackson is 69. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Ressa is 62. Singer-songwriter Gillian Welch is 58. Actor-talk show host Kelly Ripa is 55. Actor Efren Ramirez is 52. Musician Brittany Howard (Alabama Shakes) is 37.