

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 1 of 76

[1- Upcoming Events](#)  
[2- 1440 News Headlines](#)  
[4- School Board Story](#)  
[7- Photos from Band Festival](#)  
[10- SD SearchLight: Protesters display paper dolls at SD Capitol to challenge benefit reduction for needy families](#)  
[11- SD SearchLight: A vital federal conservation effort faces threats as it turns 40](#)  
[13- SD SearchLight: Can states, and a little bit of faith, convert church land into affordable housing?](#)  
[17- SD SearchLight: Trump targets 'Democratic programs' as shutdown standoff heads for third week](#)  
[20- Weather Pages](#)  
[25- Daily Devotional](#)  
[26- Subscription Form](#)  
[27- Lottery Numbers](#)  
[28- Upcoming Groton Events](#)  
[29- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Wednesday, Oct. 15

Senior Menu: Chili with beans, tossed salad, peaches, corn bread/muffin.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.

School Lunch: Soup, ham and cheese sandwich.

Region 1A Cross Country Meet at Webster, 11 a.m.

6th Grade GBB, 6 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 5:30 p.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.

## Thursday, Oct. 16

Senior Menu: Baked meatballs with gravy, mashed potatoes, California blend, mixed fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Maple French toast bake.

School Lunch: Chicken tacos, Fiesta beans.

Emmanuel Lutheran: WELCA: 1:30 p.m. Final Day of packing LWR kits. Hostess: Potluck.

Volleyball hosts Deuel: (Gym: 7th-5, 8th-6; Arena: C-5, JV-6, V-7:15)

4th Grade GBB, 4 p.m.

3rd Grade GBB, 5 p.m.

MS Football hosts Sisseton at Doney Field, 4 p.m.



## Friday, Oct. 17

Senior Menu: Kielbasa with mac and cheese, Catalina blend, pears, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: Breakfast boats.

School Lunch: Garlic cheese bread, cooked carrots.

End of First Quarter

Football at Baltic, 7 p.m.

## Saturday, Oct. 18

Boys and Girls Soccer Second Round Playoffs.

C and JV VB Tournament at Northwestern

Varsity VB Tournament at Milbank

United Methodist North Highland Coat Give A Way, 9 a.m.

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

© 2025 Groton Daily Independent

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 2 of 76

# 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.**

## Caribbean Vessel Strike

The US military struck a small vessel accused of smuggling illegal drugs off the Venezuelan coast yesterday, killing at least six people. The incident marks the fifth such operation in the Caribbean Sea amid the Trump administration's crackdown on alleged drug traffickers.

President Donald Trump confirmed the strike occurred in international waters, based on US intelligence linking the vessel to narcotrafficking activities. Additional details were not disclosed. At least 27 people have been killed in total from US naval attacks on suspected drug-carrying vessels since last month. The Trump administration has said the actions are part of a "noninternational armed conflict" involving designated terrorist groups like Venezuela's Tren de Aragua.

The strike followed a failed effort in the Senate last week to limit such military actions. A War Powers Resolution introduced by Senate Democrats, which would have barred such strikes without congressional authorization, failed to advance by a 48-51 vote.

## Madagascar Military Takeover

Madagascar's armed forces took control yesterday, minutes after parliament voted to impeach President Andry Rajoelina, who has reportedly fled the country. Military leaders said a council of army and gendarmerie officers would oversee the transition and appoint a prime minister to lead a civilian government. The move ended Rajoelina's seven-year rule, which collapsed after he tried to dissolve parliament to block the impeachment.

The removal followed weeks of Gen Z-led protests that began over power and water cuts but quickly expanded to demands for government accountability, social reforms, and action on unemployment and educational access—about 80% of Madagascar's almost 32 million people live in poverty. Lawmakers accused Rajoelina of mishandling the unrest and ignoring the frustrations of the country's youth. Opposition leaders cautioned that the military takeover could threaten constitutional order.

Rajoelina rose to power in a 2009 coup. The island nation has seen multiple military-backed attempted coups since its independence from France in 1960.

## 'Pig Butchering' Scam

The Justice Department announced yesterday it seized roughly \$15B in bitcoin from a cyberfraud operation, marking the largest forfeiture in the department's history. The scheme is linked to Prince Holding Group, a Cambodia-based multinational conglomerate.

Authorities allege CEO and Chairman Chen "Vincent" Zhi forced trafficked workers to forge online relationships with victims before persuading them to transfer cryptocurrency into sham investment accounts—a tactic known as "pig butchering." Zhi was indicted yesterday in New York federal court on wire fraud and money laundering charges; he remains at large as of this writing. The US and the UK also imposed economic sanctions on Prince, with the US designating the company a transnational criminal organization.

Americans lost at least \$10B last year to Southeast Asia-based scams, with operations like Prince playing a major role, according to the Treasury Department. A separate February analysis found deposits into pig butchering scams surged nearly 210% from 2023 to 2024, while scam revenues grew almost 40%.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 3 of 76

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

D'Angelo, four-time Grammy-winning R&B artist who helped pioneer neo-soul music, dies of cancer at age 51.

Defending champs UConn top women's basketball preseason AP Top 25 poll with South Carolina and UCLA rounding out the top three.

Spotify and Netflix announce partnership that will see select Spotify video podcasts streamed on Netflix beginning in early 2026.

## Science & Technology

Instagram to limit content shown to teenage users by applying PG-13 movie rating standards to accounts of individuals under 18 years old; feature expected to be fully rolled out in the US, the UK, Canada, and Australia by end of year.

Researchers excavate three Iron Age shipwrecks off the coast of Israel using advanced 3D modeling and digital mapping; discovery offers rare maritime evidence of Mediterranean trade from the 11th to sixth century BCE.

MRI brain scans show premature babies who regularly listen to recordings of their mothers' voices develop stronger language pathways; intervention could be used to mitigate risk of language delays often associated with premature birth.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.2%, Dow +0.4%, Nasdaq -0.8%) as Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell hints at interest rate cuts and US-China trade tensions escalate.

Stellantis to invest \$13B in US manufacturing over the next four years; plans to create five new vehicles, increase domestic production by 50%, and create 5,000 jobs at Midwestern plants.

Walmart enters partnership with OpenAI to let customers search for and purchase products directly from ChatGPT; retail giant's shares closed up 5%.

## Politics & World Affairs

Man who set fire to Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro's (D) home sentenced to at least 25 years in prison. Supreme Court rejects Infowars founder Alex Jones' appeal of nearly \$1.5B Sandy Hook defamation penalty.

President Donald Trump posthumously awards Charlie Kirk the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Congress remains at an impasse over spending proposals after House-passed measure fails to advance in the Senate for the eighth time.

Hamas returns the bodies of four more hostages after an Israeli military agency warned it would halve the number of aid trucks entering Gaza over concerns Hamas is returning bodies more slowly than agreed.

## Groton School Board Considers Long-Term Facilities Plan, Approves New Cooperative and Coaches

By Elizabeth Varin

With an eye toward the long-term needs of students and the community, the Groton Area School District Board spent Tuesday morning hearing proposals for a facilities master plan that will help shape the future of the district's buildings and programs.

Three architecture firms—JLG Architects, Co-Op Architects, and Architecture Incorporated—presented their qualifications, emphasizing their experience with K–12 educational planning.

After more than an hour of presentations and discussion with the three firms, the school board shared initial thoughts.

"I think they'd all do a good job," said board member Heather Lerseth-Fliehs. "I think the architecture part is not what would set each one apart."

While board members were confident each firm could create a workable facilities master plan, each offered unique advantages.

JLG Architects has worked with the district before and understands Groton's previous priorities. Both Co-Op Architects and Architecture Incorporated have former school administrators on staff to assist with broader aspects of the project.

Ultimately, the board voted to select Co-Op Architects, whose team includes former teacher, principal, superintendent, and state Department of Education secretary Tom Oster.

Having a former administrator on staff is a significant benefit, said board Vice President Nick Strom. Board President Grant Rix added that community outreach will be critical as the district explores funding options, and he believes Co-Op Architects will play an active role in securing that community support.

The vote was not unanimous—Marty Weismantel voted against the decision, saying he wanted more time to ask questions and gather feedback from other districts that have worked with the firms.

Superintendent Joe Schwan noted that a timely decision was essential. The project timeline requires a completed plan by the end of March, allowing the district to move forward with planning for the next few school years.

Board member Samantha Weber expressed concern that the community might hesitate to back projects from JLG Architects, as they were responsible for the elementary school proposal that voters previously rejected. Schwan acknowledged those sentiments.

"Fair or unfair, the perception is there," he said.

### New Cooperative and Coaches Approved

In other business, board members approved a resolution to formalize a wrestling cooperative with the Doland School District. For the past few years, Doland wrestlers have practiced with Groton's team under an informal agreement.

With the new cooperative, the arrangement will look familiar to most families, Schwan said. However, Doland wrestlers—currently one high school girl and one middle school boy—will now compete as part of the Groton team rather than under Doland's name.

The board also approved the hiring of coaches for the district's new girls' softball program, set to debut in the 2025–26 school year.

"It's important to start the program off on the right foot," Schwan said. "A bad start to the program could mean a bad finish for the program."

The board hired Amanda Bisbee as head coach and Sue Fjeldheim as assistant coach. Bisbee is a para-professional at the elementary school, and Fjeldheim is a fourth-grade teacher.

### Enrollment Drop Raises Concerns

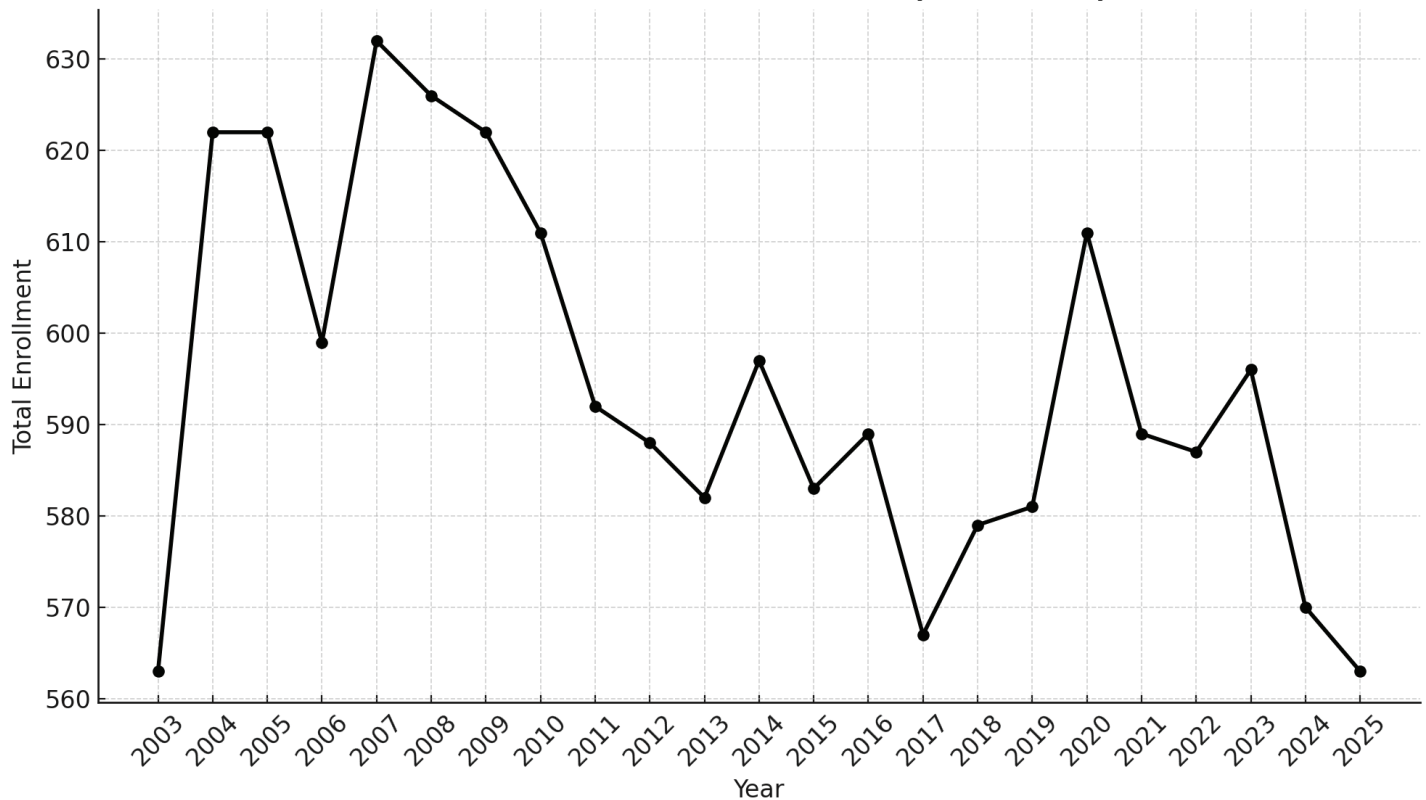
Fall enrollment totals submitted to the state show 266 elementary, 139 middle school, and 158 high school students, totaling 563 students in grades K–12—the district's lowest enrollment since 2003, according to state data.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 5 of 76

Groton Area School Enrollment (2003-2025)



Over the last two decades, enrollment has ranged from a low of 567 students in 2017 to a high of 632 in 2007.

Schwan said the district has seen a noticeable rise in students choosing online-only coursework, which has directly impacted enrollment and revenue.

"This is something we'll have to discuss moving forward," he said.

Business Manager Becky Hubsch reported that the district is more than \$64,000 below budget due to the enrollment drop. The shortfall affects not only general fund state aid but also capital outlay allocations.

Hubsch also noted that declining birth rates nationwide play a role in the trend. "The district will have to contend with how to move forward with this," she said.

## Special Education and Federal Program Outlook

Superintendent Schwan also provided an update on the district's special education services and potential changes in federal funding.

The district currently serves 112 students from birth through age 21 with special education and related services. Federal IDEA funding helps support the North Central Special Education Cooperative (NCSEC), which provides school psychology, speech therapy, and early childhood services for Groton and eight other member districts.

Local teachers and other contracted services, such as occupational and physical therapy, are funded through local tax effort, Schwan explained. The district does not receive state funding for special education.

"The professionals that we work with for technical assistance are based in Pierre," Schwan said. "We very rarely have any direct contact with anyone at the U.S. Department of Education."

He cautioned that it is too early to predict the impacts of potential federal changes but said a reduction in IDEA funding would likely require the district to fund more of the NCSEC's operations locally.

"From what we've heard from the South Dakota Department of Education, it doesn't sound like they've been given much guidance on how federal changes might flow down to the state level," Schwan said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 6 of 76

"My personal opinion is that we're more likely to see a difference in Title programs—like Title I or Title III (ELL)—than we are in special education."

## **Student Achievements and Programs**

In other reports, Middle/High School Principal Shelby Edwards highlighted the success of Groton Area HOSA students during a recent visit to Avera St. Luke's Hospital in Aberdeen. Students explored various healthcare departments, met with professionals, and received strong feedback.

"Our students are representing us very, very well in these places," Edwards said. "There are a lot of kids out doing good things."

Edwards also noted that five district staff members attended a literacy workshop at Northern State University to begin developing a district-wide blueprint for literacy improvement.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 7 of 76



**Photos from Lake Region  
Marching Band Festival  
submitted by Bruce Babcock**

**Groton Area Marching Band leads the Lake  
Region Marching Band Festival last Friday in  
Groton.**





# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 8 of 76



Fans and band members line Main St during the Marching Band Festival.





# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 9 of 76

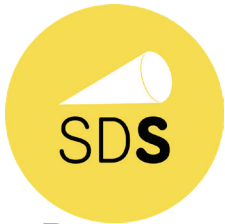


**The Groton Marching Band plays during the Lake Region Marching Band Festival awards ceremony at the Groton Football field.**



**The football stands are packed during the award ceremony following the band competition.**





## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Protesters display paper dolls at SD Capitol to challenge benefit reduction for needy families

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER-OCTOBER 14, 2025 5:31 PM

Protesters put 4,321 paper dolls on display Tuesday at the South Dakota Capitol in Pierre, representing the number of children affected by the state's funding reduction for a program benefiting low-income families.

Beth Davis, one of 264 people who helped decorate the paper dolls, put herself through college in the 1980s as a young, single mother raising her daughter with the help of Aid for Dependent Children, a precursor to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. She completed her degree and led a statewide nonprofit, Dakota Resources, for years.

"I was a good investment, and most of the women who are taking care of these kids and doing the best they can are a good investment," Davis said.

The Department of Social Services reduced TANF benefits by 10% during the summer, affecting families' September benefits and beyond. Recipients were expected to lose anywhere from \$32 to \$136 a month in benefits, depending on the size of their family. The average household was expected to lose \$51 a month. The department has not yet released a monthly TANF data report since the benefit reduction took effect.

The state will save about \$1.5 million annually. It distributed \$15.3 million in TANF benefits last fiscal year.

The move is part of a larger plan to gradually reduce benefits each year to the minimum state contribution needed to receive federal funding. That's about a 35% reduction, or \$180 less per month for the average household, according to department officials. The average household's monthly benefit payment last year was \$518.06.

TANF is a federal-state program most commonly used to provide financial assistance to low-income families with children, on the condition that the caregiver searches or trains for a job.

The protest group got permission from the Bureau of Human Resources and Administration to place the paper doll display around part of the Capitol building. Some paper dolls were decorated with Halloween costumes — like tigers or mummies — while others wore NFL team shirts, colored by children and adults.



**Over 260 South Dakotans colored 4,321 paper dolls to represent the number of children affected by the state's funding reduction for a program benefiting low-income families. The dolls were on display at the state Capitol in Pierre on Oct. 14, 2025.** (Courtesy of Cathy Brechtelsbauer)

Brechtelsbauer)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 11 of 76

Organizer Cathy Brechtelsbauer wants lawmakers to reinstate the funding and set a cost of living adjustment going forward. The display caught the attention of out-of-state visitors to the building, but Brechtelsbauer said she doesn't know if it caught Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden's attention.

"We're hoping the governor's response will be, 'That shouldn't have happened. I'll make sure these kids get the assistance for their basic needs they deserve and need,'" Brechtelsbauer said.

Rhoden was at a rural health care conference Tuesday in Sioux Falls. He told the media that the cuts are "sacrifices" caused in part by federal cuts to address the country's "deficit problem."

"We're being as vigilant as we can at making these cuts, as appropriate as possible, and we're always open to input as far as how we can do better," Rhoden said. "But this is the hand we're dealt and we're doing the best we can to make sure that we're acting in the most appropriate way, making the most appropriate cuts."

While some federal funding for the state is being reduced, Sioux Falls Democratic Rep. Erik Muckey said the TANF cuts made by Rhoden's administration "had nothing to do with the feds." The One Big Beautiful Bill Act, which made cuts to programs such as Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, did not impact TANF.

"The decision made by the Department of Social Services went against the will of the Legislature with what we budgeted," Muckey said.

Muckey tried unsuccessfully to persuade lawmakers on the legislative Rules Review Committee to reject the cuts. Muckey said he and other legislators on the budget committee believed a \$5.3 million state funding cut would be replaced with unspent TANF funds from previous years.

Davis, who helped color the paper dolls but wasn't able to attend the event on Tuesday, said that although there might be cuts to address state budget needs — due to federal changes or tight revenues — the state should find that money in other places rather than taking it away from low-income families.

"If the state Legislature can't figure out another place, then we're in deep trouble," Davis said. "We don't balance a budget on the backs of poor women and children."

The display was up for Tuesday only, but Brechtelsbauer said a few paper dolls were left at the Capitol for Rhoden.

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

## COMMENTARY

### A vital federal conservation effort faces threats as it turns 40

**Trump administration layoffs and the federal shutdown are impeding the Conservation Reserve Program**

by **BRAD JOHNSON**

It's harvest time in South Dakota and for nearly 140,000 pheasant hunters, it is an opportunity to wander fields of grass, edges of wetlands and pockets of overgrown weeds.

All across the state, farmers are growing and selling corn, wheat, soybeans, cattle and other products, contributing billions of dollars to the state's economy.

Hunters this fall will likely harvest more than 1.3 million pheasants, 47,000 deer, 220,000 ducks, and 300,000 geese in South Dakota, along with antelope, elk, grouse, turkey, rabbits and other wildlife. Our beautiful landscape and abundant wildlife provide a huge boon to local communities as hunters fill hotel rooms and restaurants.

These twin economic pillars — farming and tourism — both benefit greatly from the federal farm bill and its voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs. These programs provide farmers with funds and advice needed to put in place much-needed systems that conserve our soil, water and wildlife.

In South Dakota, about 80% of the land is privately owned, which means the vast majority of sportsmen



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 12 of 76

and women are hunting in habitat on private lands.

Most landowners want to be good stewards, but many do not have resources to create or restore wildlife habitat. Through the farm bill, the U.S. Department of Agriculture can help provide those resources.

In July, Congress extended four major farm bill conservation programs, and in a big win for wildlife, increased the long-term funding for the programs by about 50%.

Congress also extended some smaller programs like the Voluntary Public Access & Habitat Incentives Program that has supported our state's Walk-in Area Program, which provides hunting access on more than 1.25 million acres.

Unfortunately, the Conservation Reserve Program — which turns 40 years old this year — was the one major farm bill conservation program that did not get extended in July. It and many other farm bill programs expired on Sept. 30.

Until Congress finishes the work to write a new farm bill or extends the current one, USDA will be unable to enroll any new acres in CRP contracts. CRP is a popular and effective tool that helps farmers protect existing grassland or plant marginal cropland with grasses, shrubs and trees. The program has three major purposes: soil conservation, wildlife habitat and water quality.

According to a March 2024 report on pheasant management by the state Department of Game, Fish and Parks, "the CRP represents one of the most successful conservation programs ever implemented in the United States."

To complicate matters, when Congress failed to pass a funding bill before Oct. 1 and the government shut down, USDA sent 96% of its conservation employees home and closed offices around the country.

USDA even stopped issuing checks, like the annual CRP payments to landowners that were supposed to go out Oct. 1. USDA has already lost nearly one-quarter of its conservation staff since the new administration took over in January, and the government shutdown will put USDA employees even further behind and make life more difficult for farmers.

South Dakota's hunters, anglers, farmers and ranchers are some of the top beneficiaries of CRP in the country, with over 2.6 million acres enrolled in the program. CRP contracts bring over \$145 million annually to more than 14,000 South Dakota landowners. That doesn't include the myriad other benefits from the program, like the boost in the outdoor economy that comes from the wildlife produced on those lands.

Over 542,000 acres of CRP contracts in South Dakota are wetlands, providing nesting and migratory habitat for ducks, geese and other waterfowl. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates CRP acres in the northern Great Plains add about 2 million ducks to the fall flight every year.

Despite the popularity and success of CRP, Congress is considering proposals that would reduce the program's benefits for producers, outdoors enthusiasts and wildlife. The program doesn't need a major overhaul. It just needs a few common-sense improvements.

Thankfully, Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, and Senators Amy Klobuchar, D-Minnesota, Jerry Moran, R-Kansas, and Tina Smith, D-Minnesota, recognize the benefits of the program and



**Brad Johnson hunts for pheasants with his dog, Frisco, on Conservation Reserve Program land near Brookings in 2024.**

(Courtesy of Brad Johnson)



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 13 of 76

its value. They introduced the Conservation Reserve Improvement and Flexibility Act, which would add to the program's ability to meet producer needs.

The bill would streamline the application process for CRP State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement, an increasingly popular option in South Dakota where over 235,000 acres are planted to grass species that benefit pheasants and other grassland birds.

Their bill would provide federal payments for fencing and water facilities to encourage sounder grazing of CRP acres and would increase the annual limit on CRP payments that has not been raised since CRP was created in 1985.

The CRP Transition Incentives Program has already helped more than 2,900 farmers acquire over 400,000 acres of expiring CRP land nationwide, but the program could do even more to help new and beginning farmers if Congress would prioritize them in awarding new CRP contracts as it now does for other USDA conservation programs. With some minor changes, CRP could also be a stronger tool for establishing and maintaining migratory corridors for wildlife.

As members of Congress consider these and other changes to the program, they should ensure there are no cuts. We need more CRP acres, not less.

*Brad Johnson is a certified general real estate appraiser and longtime journalist. He is past president of South Dakota Lakes and Streams Association, president of the South Dakota Wildlife Federation, a member of the National Wildlife Federation's board of directors, and served 16 years on the South Dakota Board of Water and Natural Resources. He lives in Rapid City and Watertown.*

## Can states, and a little bit of faith, convert church land into affordable housing?

**People of faith have a mission to serve.**

**The 'Yes in God's Backyard' movement offers a way.**

**BY: ROBBIE SEQUEIRA-OCTOBER 14, 2025 9:03 AM**

Growing up in a religious family, Florida Republican state Sen. Alexis Calatayud has seen how many church communities are no longer anchored to a single building in the way they used to be. Her small prayer groups take place over chats these days, not necessarily in person or sitting shoulder-to-shoulder in pews.

With churches in her Miami-Dade County district grappling with shrinking membership and aging buildings, Calatayud thinks those institutions can do good with their unused land, by acting as anchors of new housing rather than as bystanders in neighborhood redevelopment.

"When you look at someone sitting on a small church, on a 10-acre property with a dwindling congregation, the question becomes, 'How can this entity continue to be the beating heart of the community?'" Calatayud said in an interview.

"I think it's to create a village, where we can create more housing and even centralize other needs in the community on that land."

This year, Florida enacted a measure, sponsored by Calatayud, allowing multifamily residential development on land that is both owned by a religious institution and occupied by a house of worship, so long as at least 10% of the new units are affordable. Some housing advocates believe the zoning override has the potential to unlock roughly 30,000 parcels statewide.

Florida's new law is part of a growing movement known as YIGBY — Yes in God's Backyard. Touted by many faith leaders, lawmakers and developers, the movement imagines a connection between a religious mission to serve and the very real hurdles of building affordable housing.

If the U.S. is to meet the nation's demand for new apartments, developers are going to need land, experts say, and parcels owned by faith-based organizations are starting to become a part of the solution for some states. At the same time, some skeptics question whether the movement could strip local communities of having a say in neighborhood development.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 14 of 76

Places of worship are found in every corner of the United States. Land owned by faith-based organizations makes up 84 million square feet in New York City, for example, with enough land for 22,000 units on just the vacant lots and surface parking lots of those organizations, according to the Furman Center of New York University. Elsewhere, HousingForward Virginia says faith-based organizations own 74,000 acres in the state, nearly twice the size of Richmond.

California enacted what is considered the first statewide YIGBY law in 2023. It cleared the way for churches and other places of worship, as well as nonprofit universities, to create affordable housing on their land. It allows landowners to bypass public hearings, discretionary votes by city councils or planning boards, and certain environmental reviews so long as they meet affordability requirements, with at least 75% of the homes affordable for low-income households.

Several states — Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York and Texas — have considered YIGBY legislation this year, though none has passed. And a bill filed last month in Congress would allow rental properties to be built on currently unused church land with federal assistance.

Opponents of the Colorado bill frame it as state overreach on local zoning decisions and worry about a potential pathway for religious landowners to bypass Fair Housing Act protections for housing applicants who may not share that faith, according to a position paper opposing Colorado's YIGBY legislation.

Beverly Stables, a lobbyist for the Colorado Municipal League, told Stateline that local governments worry YIGBY bills could undermine constitutional home-rule authority and saddle towns with unfunded state mandates.

"Our members have worked successfully with schools and churches on housing projects already," she said. "The question is, what problem are we really trying to solve?"

The Rev. Patrick Reidy, an associate professor of law at Notre Dame who has studied the relationship between housing and faith-based organizations, says states and cities are eager to partner with faith-based organizations to use their land.

It's not an easy decision for faith leaders to switch the purpose of their land from a devoted congregation space to housing, he said.

"The decision to change the way church land has been used historically for decades or even centuries is not easy for a place of worship to make, so lawmakers should meet faith communities where they are," said Reidy, who also is co-director of Notre Dame's Church Properties Initiative.

"It's more an understanding that the way places of worship approach housing is from a moral mission to serve, so things like financing, zoning and legal know-how to create housing requires some walk-through for faith-based organizations," Reidy said.

"The real challenge is learning to speak each other's language."



**St. John's Lutheran Church in Madison, Wis., is being converted into a 10-story high-rise that will combine a worship space with more than 100 affordable apartments. Lawmakers see the potential for much-needed housing on church-owned land, but opponents worry local communities could lose their authority over neighborhood development.** (Video screenshot courtesy of St. John's Lutheran Church)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 15 of 76

## 'Right in the middle'

Every afternoon at 3:22, members of St. John's Lutheran Church in Madison, Wisconsin, pause what they are doing and pray. Whether they are working, at home, watching baseball's Milwaukee Brewers or sitting in a temporary worship space, they pray at that exact time.

It isn't random: "322" is the address where the German Lutheran church has stood downtown at East Washington Avenue and North Hancock Street — just a block from the state Capitol — for 170 years, the Rev. Peter Beeson said.

Congregation members no longer worship there because the site could be set for the biggest transformation in its history: trading in stained-glass windows and church pews for a 10-story high-rise that will combine a worship space with more than 100 affordable apartments.

Beeson told Stateline that the congregation moved out of the building in the fall of 2023 for a ground-breaking later that same year.

"Our current building was built in 1905, and was nearing the end of its useful life, with many additions and renovations over the years," Beeson said. "And it made sense to sacrifice our existing building to build affordable housing plus worship and community space as a way of serving our mission — providing much needed affordable housing for 130 or so families, and providing a home for the congregation for the next 150 years."

The congregation, founded in 1856 by German Lutherans, has evolved with the needs of its community.

The church hosted a men's homeless shelter for more than 20 years, ran a drop-in center for people with mental illness and offered small-scale aid for residents seeking anything from bus tickets to steel-toed work boots to child care, Beeson said.

Before construction could get underway on the housing project, though, Beeson and the church ran into a familiar issue that constrained housing across the country in 2023 — rapidly increasing construction costs and skyrocketing interest rates.

Beeson said he isn't deterred. Other projects have taken 10 to 15 years to break ground, he said. "So keeping that timeline in mind, we are right in the middle."

He believes the project, which has received sizable donations from community members via GoFundMe, is a God-ordained mission to provide a service for its community.

"We are continuing to move forward with the project. There have been setbacks and challenges along the way," Beeson said. "However, like God led the Israelites through the wilderness with a pillar of fire by day and a pillar of clouds by night, God continues to open doors and pave pathways to bring this project to completion."

## Ceding local control

The economic realities surrounding homebuilding are among many hurdles challenging congregations that want to develop new housing.

In states such as Colorado, local governments worried that a proposed statewide development measure that would give preferential treatment to faith-based organizations could undermine local control and even potentially open the door to religious discrimination.

"Not suggesting it from all entities," said Stables, of the Colorado Municipal League, "but we were concerned about the potential for discrimination, and potential violations of Fair Housing Act requirements."

Stables also thinks this year's legislation was premature, just a year after Colorado lawmakers made sweeping changes to land use rules — including new laws removing parking minimums and encouraging transit-oriented developments and accessory dwelling units — that she said haven't had time to take effect or be meaningfully implemented locally.

She also said the bill would have stripped local governments of zoning authority while offering no new resources. More than 200 municipalities opted into an affordable housing fund created through a 2022 ballot initiative, Stables said, but the legislature has been sweeping out some of that money for other budgetary needs, leaving cities under-resourced to deliver on those housing goals.

In the end, Colorado's legislation passed the House but died in the Senate after supporters concluded



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 16 of 76

it didn't have the votes to pass.

YIGBY supporters elsewhere have had to balance the tension between state goals and local zoning authority. A 2019 Washington law requires cities and counties to offer density bonuses for affordable housing on religious land — an incentive, but not a legal override of zoning laws.

In Minnesota, state Sen. Susan Pha, a Democrat, told Stateline she modeled some aspects of her YIGBY proposal off the California law. She also tailored aspects of her bill — such as a focus on middle-housing options like small studios — to find solutions that work specifically for her state.

Pha said some of her big battles have been around the allowances of small lot sizes, such as 220-square-foot studio units, which she said the state “really needs” in order to make a dent in its housing shortage.

“The obstacle really is zoning,” Pha said. “If we can change some of those zoning requirements, we could produce more affordable housing and leverage the space and the dedicated work these faith-based organizations already do.”

Pha's bill failed to reach a floor vote.

Other YIGBY-like policies have passed in localities including Atlanta; Montgomery County, Maryland; and Seattle. Atlanta's program aims for the creation of at least 2,000 units of affordable housing over eight years.

When New York City passed its City of Yes housing initiative in December 2024, it permitted faith-based organizations to convert underused properties into housing by lifting zoning, height and setback requirements.

## Unlocking land, a bit at a time

In an interview with Stateline, Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens pointed out that some of the city's historic churches sit on prime land with underused parking lots that at one time were filled by many of the churchgoers' cars.

Unlike many developers who might flip properties after short-term affordability requirements expire, Dickens said, churches may offer stability, since their mission is to serve “the least, the less and the lost” — meaning they might be less likely to sell off the property due to market pressure.

Atlanta is working with financial partners such as Enterprise and Wells Fargo to guide faith-based institutions that need that help, he said.

“Churches are usually on great corners, and they're hallmarks of the community with land that's underutilized, and their mission aligns perfectly with affordable housing,” Dickens said. “We've got churches that say, ‘Teach us how to develop. We have no idea what we're doing.’”

The potential is vast, experts say. California faith-based organizations and nonprofit colleges own about 170,000 acres of land, equivalent in size to the city of Oakland, and much of it could be developed under the state's YIGBY law, according to a 2023 report by the Turner Center for Housing Innovation at the University of California, Berkeley.

In North Carolina, congregations have had small successes. A Presbyterian church in Charlotte turned an unused education wing into 21 units of permanent housing, and an Episcopal church in Chapel Hill built three tiny homes on its property for a trio of formerly homeless residents.

Eli Smith, the director of the nonprofit Faith-Based Housing Initiative, argues that state YIGBY laws should ease affordability requirements for small infill projects such as those in North Carolina and allow them to get built more quickly. Otherwise, he said, small churches' projects “can't get off the ground.”

“Think of it as a cottage neighborhood tucked behind a sanctuary — people know each other, it's beautiful, it's meaningful,” Smith said. “The future of this movement isn't in [high-rise apartment] towers; it's in small, intentional communities that fit their surroundings.”

*Stateline reporter Robbie Sequeira can be reached at [rsequeira@stateline.org](mailto:rsequeira@stateline.org).*

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

*Robbie Sequeira is a staff writer covering housing and social services for Stateline.*



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 17 of 76

## Trump targets 'Democratic programs' as shutdown standoff heads for third week

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT AND ARIANA FIGUEROA-OCTOBER 14, 2025 5:57 PM

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Senate returned to Capitol Hill on Tuesday following a four-day weekend, but neither Republicans nor Democrats appeared ready to work toward ending the government shutdown following another failed vote to advance a short-term funding bill.

President Donald Trump and administration officials also didn't seem inclined toward compromise anytime soon, if ever, previewing more spending cuts and layoffs as soon as this week.

"We are closing up programs that are Democratic programs that we wanted to close up or that we never wanted to happen and now we're closing them up and we're not going to let them come back," Trump said. "We're not closing up Republican programs because we think they work."

Trump said his administration will release a list of projects it's cancelled or plans to eliminate funding for on Friday — another step that's unlikely to bring about the type of bipartisanship and goodwill needed to end the shutdown.

The White House's Office of Management and Budget posted on social media it will try to alleviate some of the repercussions of the funding lapse and reduce the size of government while waiting for at least five more Senate Democrats to break ranks to advance a stopgap spending bill.

"OMB is making every preparation to batten down the hatches and ride out the Democrats' intransigence," agency staff wrote. "Pay the troops, pay law enforcement, continue the RIFs, and wait."

RIFs refers to Reductions in Force, the technical term for layoffs. The administration announced Friday it sent notices to employees at several departments, including Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, and Treasury telling them they would soon not have jobs.

Labor unions representing hundreds of thousands of federal workers filed a lawsuit to block the layoffs from taking effect. The judge overseeing that case scheduled a Wednesday hearing to listen to arguments before deciding whether to grant a temporary restraining order.

### Back pay in question

The Trump administration has made several moves during the shutdown that are not typically taken during prolonged funding lapses.

Trump and Office of Management and Budget Director Russ Vought have indicated they may not provide back pay to furloughed federal workers after the shutdown ends, which is required by a 2019 law. And they have sought to cancel funding approved by Congress for projects in sections of the country that vote for Democrats.

The Pentagon is also reprogramming money to provide pay for active duty military members this week,



**The U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., is pictured on Oct. 8, 2025.** (Photo by Jennifer Shutt/States Newsroom)

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 18 of 76

despite Congress not taking action on that issue.

The Trump administration's efforts to reduce the size of government during the shutdown are widely seen as an effort to pressure Democrats to vote for the stopgap spending bill, but they haven't had any measurable effect so far.

## Another failed Senate vote

The Senate deadlocked for an eighth time Tuesday evening on the House-passed funding bill that would last through Nov. 21. The vote was 49-45. The bill needs at least 60 senators to advance under the chamber's rules.

Nevada Democratic Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto and Maine independent Sen. Angus King voted with Republicans to advance their bill. Pennsylvania Democratic Sen. John Fetterman, who has been voting to advance the bill, didn't vote. Kentucky GOP Sen. Rand Paul voted no.

Trump said during his afternoon event he wanted Democrats to sign something to reopen government, though it wasn't clear what he meant since lawmakers in the Senate vote by giving a thumbs up or down.

"This was a position that's being forced upon us by Democrats and all they have to do is just sign a piece of paper saying we're going to keep it going the way it is," Trump said. "You know, it's nothing. It shouldn't even be an argument. They've signed it many times before."

## No strategy

During a morning press conference, House Speaker Mike Johnson said he would not change his approach or negotiate with Democrats on a stopgap measure.

"I don't have any strategy," the Louisiana Republican said. "The strategy is to do the right and obvious thing and keep the government moving for the people."

Johnson has kept the House out of session since late September but has been holding daily press conferences with members of his leadership team to criticize Democrats and press them to advance the short-term funding bill.

GOP Rep. Virginia Foxx of North Carolina, the chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, said starting Tuesday an additional 400,000 civilian federal workers would receive partial paychecks due to the government shutdown. Those federal employees work at the departments of Education and Interior, as well as the National Science Foundation.

"This will be the last paycheck that these federal workers receive until Democrats grow a spine and reopen the federal government," she said.

Last week, 700,000 civilian federal workers received about 70% of their usual paycheck, due to the shutdown. Those employees work for the Executive Office of the President, Health and Human Services, Department of Veterans Affairs, civilians at the Defense Department, NASA, General Services Administration and the Office of Personnel Management, among others.

Active duty military members were set to miss their first paycheck Wednesday until the Pentagon shifted \$8 billion in research funds to pay the troops on time.

U.S. Capitol Police Labor Committee Chairman Gus Papathanasiou released a statement Tuesday that the thousands of officers who protect members of Congress missed a full paycheck Friday.

"The longer the shutdown drags on, the harder it becomes for my officers," Papathanasiou wrote. "Banks and landlords do not give my officers a pass because we are in a shutdown — they still expect to be paid."

"Unfortunately, Congress and the Administration are not in active negotiations, and everyone is waiting for the other side to blink. That is not how we are going to end this shutdown, and the sooner they start talking, the quicker we can end this thing."

## Maryland, Virginia Dems rally

Seeking to pressure the Trump administration to negotiate, Democratic lawmakers who represent Maryland and Virginia, where many federal workers live, held a rally outside the Office of Management and Budget in the morning.

Virginia Sen. Mark Warner rebuked GOP leaders, including OMB Director Vought, for using federal workers as "political pawns" and "trading chips in some political debate."

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 19 of 76**

He said that when an agreement is brokered to reopen government, the Trump administration must adhere to it and not illegally withhold or cancel funds approved by Congress, which holds the power of the purse.

"We'll get the government reopened, but we have to make sure that when a deal is struck, it is kept," Warner said. "Russ Vought at the OMB cannot pick and choose which federal programs to fund after Congress and the president have come together."

Maryland Sen. Angela Alsobrooks sought to encourage Republicans to negotiate with Democrats to extend the enhanced tax credits that are set to expire at the end of the year for people who purchase health insurance through the Affordable Care Act marketplace.

"The Republicans would prefer to shut down the government than to ensure your family has affordable health care," Alsobrooks said. "It is more than shameful, it is immoral and it is the kind of immorality that will hurt our country for generations to come."

Democrats in Congress insisted before the shutdown began and for the 14 days it's been ongoing that they will not vote to advance the short-term government funding bill without a bipartisan agreement on the expiring subsidies.

GOP leaders have said they will negotiate on that issue, but only after Democrats advance the stopgap spending bill through the Senate.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries argued during an afternoon press conference that Republicans need Democratic votes in the Senate to advance the stopgap funding bill and should try to negotiate a deal.

"We need them to abandon their failed 'my way or the highway' approach," the New York Democrat said. "If Democratic votes are needed to reopen the government, which is the case, then this has to be a bipartisan discussion to find a bipartisan resolution to reopen the government."

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

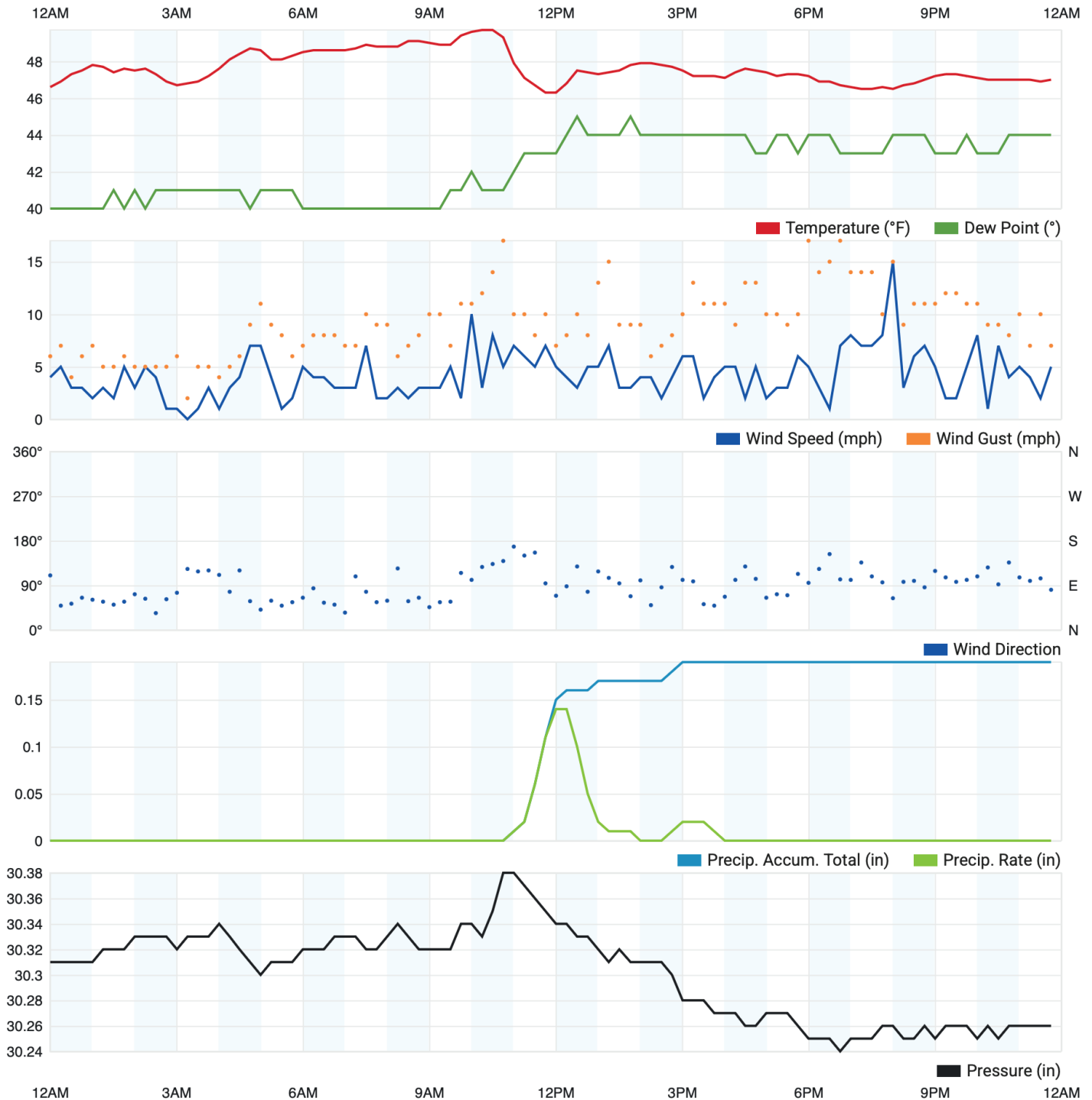
*Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her areas of coverage include politics and policy, lobbying, elections and campaign finance.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 20 of 76

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

October 14, 2025





# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 21 of 76

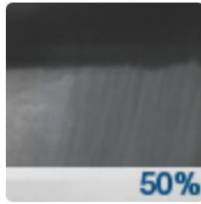
Wednesday



High: 57 °F

Patchy  
Drizzle and  
Patchy Fog

Wednesday  
Night



Low: 51 °F

Chance  
Showers

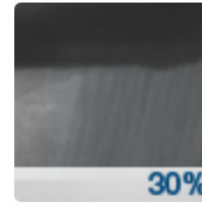
Thursday



High: 74 °F

Chance  
Showers and  
Breezy

Thursday  
Night



Low: 46 °F

Chance  
Showers

Friday



High: 64 °F

Sunny



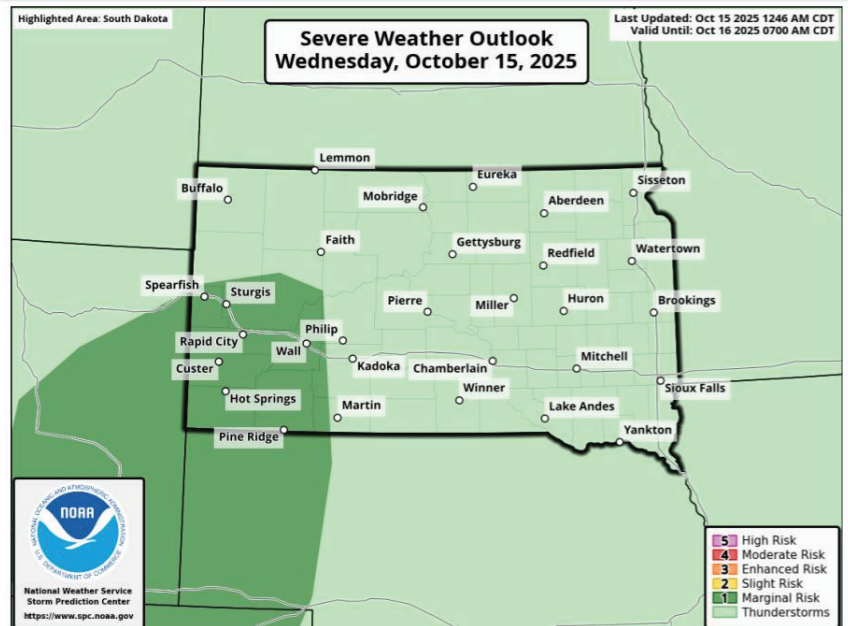
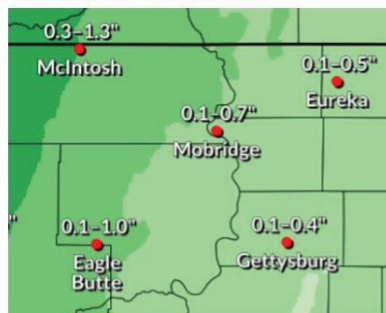
## Shift Westward in Strong Storm Potential

October 15, 2025  
4:47 AM

Threat area now across southwest SD

### Key Messages

- Shift **away** from central SD towards southwest SD for strong thunderstorm potential this evening.
- Main story for our region today will be clouds and morning fog/drizzle.
- Rain still likely overnight into Thursday across north central SD.



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

The focus area for the Marginal risk (level 1 of 5) of severe thunderstorms today into tonight has shifted out of central SD and is now confined to southwest SD and points southward. The main story for our area today will be an abundance of cloud cover, along with morning fog and drizzle. Rain is still expected over portions of the region tonight into Thursday as low pressure moves through. Heaviest rain amounts are forecast across north central SD, where amounts could exceed a half inch.



## Areas of Fog This Morning

- Fog with visibility as low as 1/4 mile will create hazardous travel conditions in low visibility.
- Leave extra room between you and the next car. Stay alert to changing driving conditions.
- ***Mainly central SD and along the Sisseton Hills ridge area.***



NWS Aberdeen

[weather.gov/abr](https://weather.gov/abr)

Fog has developed early this morning across much of central South Dakota, as well as parts of the Sisseton Hills ridge. Fog will be dense at times, with visibility down to around one-quarter mile or less. A Dense Fog Advisory is in effect this morning for parts of central South Dakota.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 23 of 76

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 50 °F at 10:22 AM**

**Low Temp: 46 °F at 11:56 AM**

**Wind: 18 mph at 5:58 PM**

**Precip: : 0.19**

## Today's Info

Record High: 88 in 1958

Record Low: 15 in 2018

Average High: 60

Average Low: 34

Average Precip in Oct.: 1.13

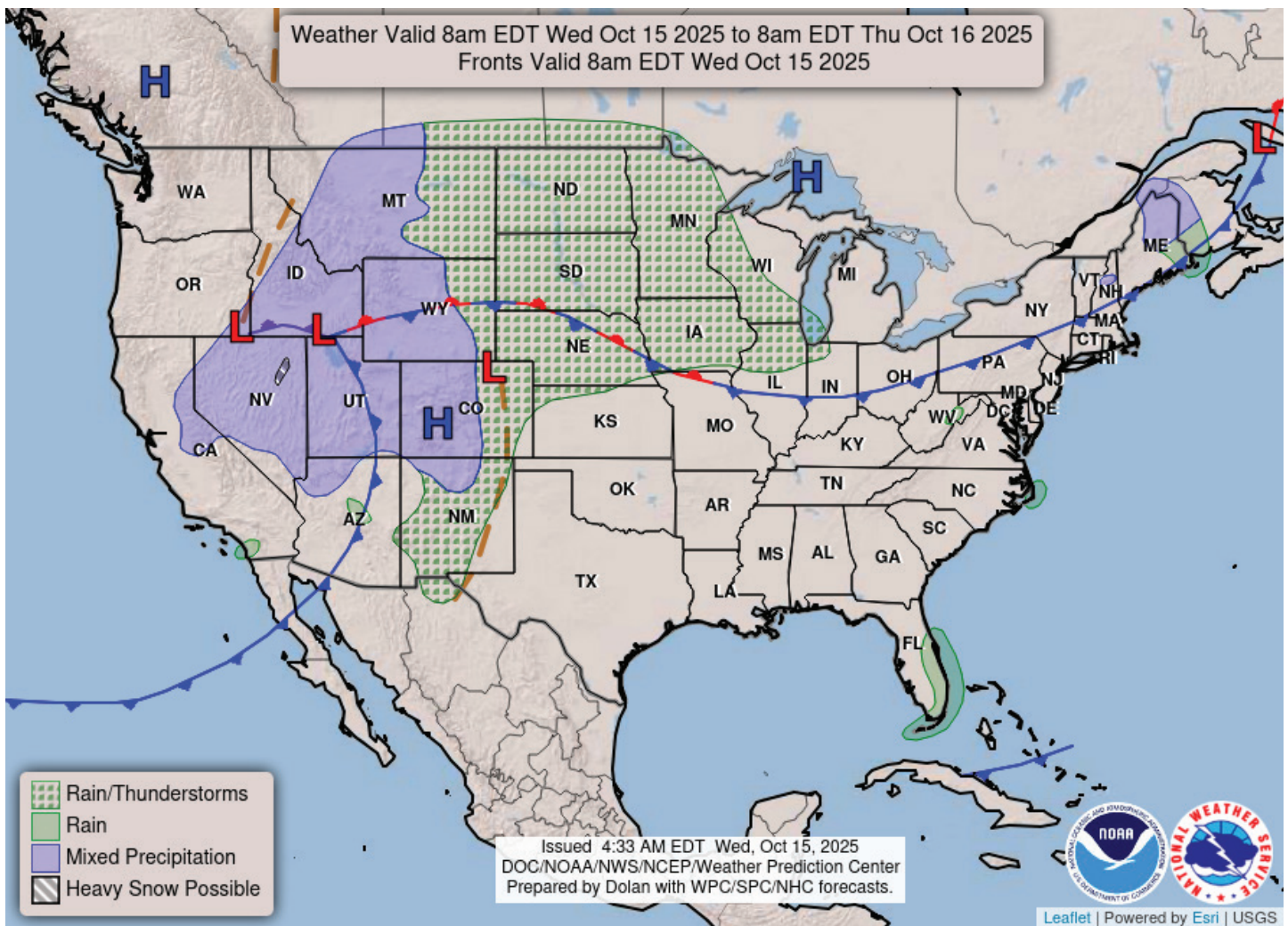
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.36

Average Precip to date: 19.46

Precip Year to Date: 23.28

Sunset Tonight: 6:47 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:50 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 24 of 76

## Today in Weather History

October 15, 1880: A violent early season blizzard devastated Minnesota and the Dakotas. Winds gusted to 70 mph at Yankton, SD, and snow drifts 10 to 15 feet high were reported in northwest Iowa and southeast South Dakota. Canby Minnesota reported 20 feet high snow drifts from this storm. Saint Paul, MN, reported a barometric pressure of 28.65 inches on the 16th. Piles of snow, which remained throughout the severe winter to follow, blocked railroads. The winter of 1880-81 is vividly portrayed in Laura Ingalls Wilder's Book: The Long Winter.

October 15, 1992: Snow fell throughout the day across the north-central and northwest part of the state with 2 to 6 inches occurring. There was a separate report of 7 inches near Harding in northwestern South Dakota.

1608: Evangelista Torricelli, the Italian physicist and mathematician who invented the barometer, was born on this day. In 1644, Evangelista Torricelli built the first barometer with mercury.

1880 - A violent early season blizzard raked Minnesota and the Dakotas. Winds gusted to 70 mph at Yankton SD, and snow drifts 10 to 15 feet high were reported in northwest Iowa and southeast South Dakota. Saint Paul MN reported a barometric pressure of 28.65 inches on the 16th. Railroads were blocked by drifts of snow which remained throughout the severe winter to follow. Gales did extensive damage to ship on the Great Lakes. (15th-16th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1954: By 11 pm on the 15th, Hurricane Hazel had reached and crossed the waters of Lake Ontario, still sporting sustained winds as high as 60 mph. Hazel took direct aim at the heart of Toronto as it roared past at 49 mph. Toronto saw heavy rainfall before Hurricane Hazel on the 14th. The previous storm, in combination with the hurricane, resulted in significant flooding.

1966 - Iowa experienced its worst late season tornado of record. In just one minute a twister tore through the town of Belmond leveling 75 percent of the businesses, and 100 homes, causing more than eleven million dollars damage. (The Weather Channel)

1984: The Monday Night Football game in Denver, Colorado, was played in a raging blizzard. 15 inches of snow fell with up to 34 inches reported in the nearby mountains. The Air Force Academy canceled classes for the first time in its' recorded history.

1987: Beginning on the night of October 15th, an unusually strong weather system caused extremely high winds in the United Kingdom. This storm became known as the Great Storm of 1987. It was the worst storm to hit the UK since the Great Storm in 1703.

1987 - Unseasonably cold weather continued in the eastern U.S., with thirteen cities reporting record low temperatures for the date. The low of 34 degrees at Montgomery AL was their coldest reading of record for so early in the season. Lows of 32 degrees at Harrisburg PA and 34 degrees at Parkersburg WV marked their third straight morning of record cold. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - The cold high pressure system responsible for the record low temperatures in the eastern U.S. began to move out to sea, giving way to a trend toward "Indian Summer". Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front produced golf ball size hail at Altamont KS and hail two inches in diameter at Yates City IL. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Hurricane Jerry made landfall at Galveston, TX, at 6 30 PM (CDT). Winds at the Galveston Airport reached 75 mph, with gusts to 100 mph. Tides along the island were six to eight feet, and rainfall totals ranged up to slightly more than six inches north of Beaumont. Three persons were killed when their vehicle was blown off the Galveston seawall into the pounding surf. Total damage along the Upper Texas Coast was estimated at fifteen million dollars. Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Lower Michigan during the late morning. Two persons were injured when a tree fell on their camper at the Traverse City State park. While strong northerly winds ushered much colder air into the central U.S., unseasonably warm weather continued in the south central and eastern U.S. The afternoon high of 82 degrees at Bluefield WV was a record for October. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 25 of 76



Daily Devotion

## Put Your Hand to the Plow

**In order to reap a harvest of faith, believers must keep their eyes focused on the Lord.**

Luke 9:61-62: 61 Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family."

62 Jesus replied, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Most of us probably don't fully appreciate Jesus' choice of a plow to illustrate a life dedicated to God. The ancient plow, shaped much like the ones widely used until the early 20th century, was a single wooden blade attached to two handles. A mule pulled the apparatus forward, but the farmer also had to do a great deal of work to push and guide the path of the plowshare.

Using such a device—one without an engine—is no easy task. The simple machine bumps and jerks as it tears up the ground. The only way to make a straight line is to stay focused on the work and keep your eyes forward every single second.

When believers trust Jesus Christ as Savior, they "put their hand to the plow." The idea is for us to follow the Lord in absolute obedience—always keeping our eyes focused on Him. That's how we stay on the right path and eventually reap an abundant harvest of faith.

Is there anything in your life drawing your attention away from the heavenly Father? Believers who focus on past failures and present distractions end up all over the place in their Christian life and often miss out on the peace and joy that can be ours in the Savior. Follow the Lord earnestly, and He will help you do what's needed to bring forth much spiritual fruit (John 15:5).

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 26 of 76

## The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.2% Sales Tax

- ☐ Black & White .....\$48.99/year
- ☐ Colored .....\$79.88/year
- ☐ Colored .....\$42.60/6 months
- ☐ E-Weekly\* .....\$31.95/year

\* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to [paperpaul@grotonsd.net](mailto:paperpaul@grotonsd.net)

## Groton Daily Independent [www.397news.com](http://www.397news.com) Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- ☐ 1 Month .....\$15.98
- ☐ 3 Months.....\$26.63
- ☐ 6 Months.....\$31.95
- ☐ 9 Months.....\$42.60
- ☐ 12 Months.....\$53.25

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Password \_\_\_\_\_

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

[paypal.me/paperpaul](https://paypal.me/paperpaul)

Pay with Venmo: @paperpaul    Phone Number to Confirm: 7460



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.14.25

12 22 49 57 58 19

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$625,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 19 Mins  
10 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.13.25

5 8 10 39 47 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$4,810,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 34 Mins 10  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.14.25

2 5 15 34 37 1

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 49 Mins 10  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.11.25

9 12 14 21 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$44,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 49 Mins 10  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.13.25

12 13 46 49 68 7

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 18 Mins 11  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 10.13.25

13 14 32 52 64 12

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$273,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 18 Mins 11  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS



# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 28 of 76**

## **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

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 29 of 76

## News from the Associated Press

### PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Christian def. Gettysburg, 25-16, 25-11, 25-11  
Aberdeen Roncalli def. Mobridge-Pollock, 25-17, 25-9, 25-12  
Arlington def. Sioux Valley, 25-22, 27-25, 25-19  
Avon def. Viborg-Hurley, 25-11, 25-14, 25-14  
Bon Homme def. Scotland, 25-6, 25-11, 25-11  
Burke def. Andes Central/Dakota Christian, 25-13, 25-8, 25-6  
Chester def. West Central, 25-21, 25-15, 25-16  
Clark-Willow Lake def. Flandreau, 25-13, 25-18, 25-17  
Colman-Egan def. Bridgewater-Emery, 25-17, 25-20, 25-22  
Custer def. Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud, 25-18, 25-20, 25-21  
Dakota Valley def. Lennox, 25-16, 25-13, 25-19  
Dell Rapids St Mary's def. Centerville, 25-27, 25-13, 18-25, 25-16, 17-15  
Elk Point-Jefferson def. South Sioux City, Neb., 25-16, 24-26, 25-22, 25-20  
Elkton-Lake Benton def. Deuel, 25-16, 25-17, 25-16  
Estelline-Hendricks def. James Valley Christian School, 25-12, 25-7, 25-10  
Ethan def. Howard, 25-15, 25-14, 25-15  
Flandreau Indian def. Mitchell Christian, 25-8, 25-15, 25-22  
Gregory def. Colome, 25-10, 25-16, 25-10  
Hamlin def. DeSmet, 25-15, 20-25, 25-11, 25-13  
Hanson def. Menno, 25-18, 25-17, 25-14  
Harding County def. Ekalaka, Mont., 25-18, 25-14, 25-13  
Harrisburg def. T F Riggs High School, 25-7, 25-12, 25-12  
Herreid-Selby def. Faulkton, 25-12, 27-25, 25-20  
Hitchcock-Tulare def. Langford, 25-11, 25-9, 25-19  
Huron def. Sioux Falls Roosevelt, 25-13, 25-17, 25-21  
Jones County def. Lyman, 25-15, 25-17, 25-13  
Lakota Tech def. Crow Creek Tribal School, 25-17, 25-6, 25-11  
Lead-Deadwood def. New Underwood, 26-24, 25-20, 25-12  
Madison def. Milbank, 25-23, 25-17, 25-9  
McCook Central-Montrose def. Garretson, 25-17, 17-25, 25-19, 25-14  
Miller def. Platte-Geddes, 26-24, 25-19, 25-21  
Mitchell def. Sioux Falls Jefferson, 25-20, 24-26, 19-25, 27-25, 15-2  
Oldham-Ramona-Rutland def. Freeman, 27-25, 25-18, 29-27  
Parkston def. Wagner, 25-23, 21-25, 25-18, 20-25, 15-4  
Philip def. Wall, 25-20, 25-18, 15-25, 27-29, 15-13  
Ponca, Neb. def. Vermillion, 25-18, 25-19, 25-22  
Rapid City Christian def. Hot Springs, 25-19, 25-12, 25-15  
Rapid City Stevens def. Douglas, 25-6, 25-10, 25-21  
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket def. Iroquois-Lake Preston, 25-10, 25-7, 16-25, 25-16  
Sioux Falls Christian def. Jackson County Central, Minn., 25-18, 25-14, 25-18  
Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Watertown, 25-19, 25-14, 25-22  
Sioux Falls Lutheran def. Beresford, 25-22, 23-25, 25-16, 25-19  
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Brandon Valley, 25-21, 25-22, 25-14  
Sioux Falls Washington def. Brookings, 25-13, 25-9, 25-16  
Spearfish def. Belle Fourche, 25-13, 25-9, 25-13

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 30 of 76

St Thomas More def. Hill City, 25-15, 21-25, 24-26, 25-13, 15-8  
Timber Lake def. Tiospaye Topa, 25-6, 25-17, 25-12  
Todd County def. Valentine, Neb., 25-21, 30-28, 25-12  
Tripp-Delmont-Armour def. Marty, 25-9, 25-13, 25-11  
Warner def. Redfield, 25-16, 25-17, 25-16  
Waverly-South Shore def. Sisseton, 15-25, 25-13, 27-25, 25-17  
Wessington Springs def. Sunshine Bible Academy, 25-14, 25-17, 25-13  
Wolsey-Wessington def. Highmore-Harrold, 25-10, 25-14, 25-9

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

## Becky Hammon cements her legacy as one of the WNBA's greatest coaches with another Aces title

By MARK ANDERSON AP Sports Writer

HENDERSON, Nev. (AP) — The Aces are preparing for a championship parade Friday that few outside the organization saw coming just a couple of months ago.

At the forefront will be the coach who made it happen — again.

In leading Las Vegas to its third championship in four years, Becky Hammon put herself on the select list of all-time WNBA coaching greats.

Her three titles are just behind record holders Van Chancellor and Cheryl Reeve. Chancellor coached the Houston Comets to the league's first four championships, and Reeve led the Minnesota Lynx to four titles over seven seasons. Hammon is tied with former Aces coach Bill Laimbeer, who captured his championships with the Detroit Shock.

Give Hammon a shot at a title and she is nearly unbeatable.

She owns the best record in WNBA Finals (10-2), and her 9-1 record in playoff series tops even Phil Jackson's NBA mark of 86.2%.

"The thing I always trust, we're not going to get outcoached," guard Jewell Loyd said.

That was proven in the finals.

Hammon threw a zone defense at Phoenix in the second half of Game 1 even though her team hadn't worked on it. The surprise switch confused the Mercury, and the Aces rallied for the victory. A win secured when Kiah Stokes was put in for the final 14 seconds — her only 14 seconds that game — for defensive purposes to deny the Mercury a quality final shot.

In Game 3 in Phoenix, the Aces had the ball with the game tied in the final seconds. With the clock winding down, the Aces' offense appeared confused and Hammon called timeout rather than let the final five seconds play out. She put the ball in the hands of four-time MVP A'ja Wilson, who delivered the series' defining moment with the winning shot with 0.3 seconds left.

"She's like the queen of adjustments," point guard Chelsea Gray said. "She's got so many tricks and philosophies and different things that she can do in the playoffs and in a series. I'll take us in a series any day."

But it's not just strategy, which Hammon said is a small percentage of coaching. Hammon said she has a combination of stubbornness and ability to be highly flexible that she found a way to marry.

Her ability to lead was tested this season like no other in her four seasons in Las Vegas. The Aces were 14-14 and coming off a 53-point loss to Minnesota — the worst defeat for a home team in league history. Forget holding the championship trophy in October, the Aces looked like they might be headed toward a rebuild.

Players such as Wilson stepped up to keep the team intact, but Hammon did her part, too, in not only saving the season, but leading the Aces to a 16-game winning streak to end the regular season.

It was probably her best coaching job.

"Yes in so far as this season had less to do with 'Xs' and 'Os' and more to do with what 90% of coaching is, which is managing people, trying to articulate, trying to get the group to be cohesive, to be a group,"



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 31 of 76

Hammon said. "It was a lot more mental, emotional, read the room in what does my team need from me? Does my team need me to be strong? Do they need my fire right now? Do they need my confidence right now? Do they need my discipline right now? Do they need hugs right now?"

Hammon knew she had trust built up with core players Wilson, Gray and Jackie Young, that she could coach them hard because they knew her motivation was coming from a good place. Establishing that trust with newcomers took more time.

But it happened. The players followed the lead of their coach whose jersey hangs in the Michelob Ultra Arena rafters from her Hall of Fame playing days when the organization was based in San Antonio.

Hammon took her bond with the players to another level when she included them in game planning, with Wilson taking a particularly notable role.

"Becky's heart and her mind about the game, it's always about the next person," Wilson said. "Our motto this year was 'others.' We always wanted to focus on other people because it's not going to be just you that wins a championship. It's not going to be just you that wins a game. It's going to take everybody, and so for Becky to instill that trust in us, it didn't come by any surprise."

Friday's parade shows that approach works.

Very little hasn't worked since Aces owner Mark Davis made Hammon the league's first \$1 million-a-year coach in 2022.

Talk about worth the money.

But Hammon doesn't like to discuss where she might rank in WNBA coaching history, saying there is plenty of work left to be done.

"I never want to get stagnant and not have growth, so typically I try to stay far away from comparisons in general," Hammon said. "I just try to be myself and try to be my best version of myself, and try to be the best coach I can be for the players that I'm leading. But, no, it's not something I think about. Most of the time when somebody tells me something, it's new to me. I'm not looking up those stats or numbers or anything like that."

## Theodore Roosevelt library takes 'calculated risk' with remote North Dakota site

By JACK DURA Associated Press

MEDORA, N.D. (AP) — The day his young wife and mother died, Theodore Roosevelt wrote in his diary that "the light has gone out of my life," and it was only through extended trips to the isolated Dakota Territory in the 1880s that he regained "the romance" of living.

A library examining the country's 26th president will open next summer in the North Dakota landscape remarkably similar to what Roosevelt would have experienced: far from any city and surrounded by rugged hills beneath a vast sky.

The isolation that was so appealing to Roosevelt remains today, and it raises a question.

How many people will visit a museum so distant from the rest of America?

"I think that's a calculated risk that is being taken, and I actually think it's a good one," said Clay Jenkinson, a public humanities scholar and Roosevelt author who believes the area's beauty will help draw visitors.

'Library is the landscape'

The nearly 100,000-square-foot facility near Medora, North Dakota, is planned to open July 4, 2026, America's 250th anniversary. All living presidents have been invited.

Library Foundation CEO Ed O'Keefe said he wants the library to be where "kids drag their parents," a setting for picnics, weddings and even presidential debates.

Library boosters have a \$450 million fundraising goal, with \$344 million in cash and pledges so far, including from oil executive Harold Hamm and Walmart heir Rob Walton and his wife, Melani. Construction, design and related costs alone are pegged at \$276 million. Other costs include millions for developing exhibits and digitizing archives.

The library rises from the flat, grassy top of a butte across a highway from Theodore Roosevelt National

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 32 of 76**

Park, which had more than 732,000 visits last year. A path leads onto the library's sloping roof planted with grasses and flowers. Inside, enormous rammed-earth walls of layered colors represent the dramatic Badlands.

"This is a purposeful place. We like to say that the library is the landscape," O'Keefe said.

Dakota days

Roosevelt, a New York native, came to the Badlands to hunt bison in 1883. He invested in a ranching operation and returned multiple times over several years following the deaths of his wife and mother.

Stories of his adventures live on, from riding with cowboys to knocking out a bully in a bar and apprehending three boat thieves.

In an Independence Day speech in Dickinson, Roosevelt gave his famous "I like big things" oration, which more or less was the beginning of his speaking career, said William Hansard, public historian at Dickinson State University's Theodore Roosevelt Center.

"He goes on to talk about how all of the material prosperity that America has means nothing if it's not backed up by morals and virtues. ... All these big things in the world don't matter if Americans don't have good character to use them and to use them well and correctly," Hansard said.

Roosevelt's time in Dakota largely ended after cattle losses in the terrible winter of 1886-87. He later said he never would have been president were it not for his time in North Dakota.

Roosevelt is a favorite president of people across the political spectrum, and his use of executive power — such as conserving public lands and building the Panama Canal — has shaped the modern presidency.

"Roosevelt will frequently do things that he believes are morally and legally right, and let Congress debate it later," Hansard said. "He rules very, very much by executive order, and again, this is something that's been a huge debate over the past several presidencies on both sides of the aisle."

'Calculated risk'

The Roosevelt library might be the loneliest presidential center in the country. Medora has about 160 residents, and is hours away by car from North Dakota's largest cities of Bismarck and Fargo.

The Obama Presidential Center is going up on Chicago's South Side. Florida Republican officials recently gifted nearly 3 acres of prime real estate in downtown Miami for President Donald Trump's presidential library. Other presidential libraries include locations in Atlanta, Boston and Dallas.

Library boosters are hoping tourists visiting Mount Rushmore, Yellowstone and Theodore Roosevelt National Park will add the library to their itinerary.

But there's no question North Dakota's winters can be brutal with subzero temperatures and blizzards that close highways and make travel nearly impossible.

Still, Roosevelt admirers note that earlier attempts to create Roosevelt libraries in other places fell short, and it was in North Dakota where the idea really took root.

"We North Dakotans who justly feel that we created Theodore Roosevelt, that he became the Theodore Roosevelt of American greatness and memory during his time here in North Dakota, we feel that it would be very appropriate to have a presidential library in the heart of the Badlands," Jenkinson said.

And beyond hardy winter travelers, O'Keefe said, library planners want to bring thousands of eighth graders from a five-state area to the library outside of summer, envisioning a "night at the museum" program.

"It's not going to be as busy as the summer, but that's the magic of it. You get a little more of the Badlands to yourself," O'Keefe said.

'Humanize' Roosevelt

O'Keefe said the facility will "humanize, not lionize" Theodore Roosevelt.

"We're not going to shy away from the controversies and things that, perhaps if this library had been built 125 years ago, wouldn't have been mentioned," O'Keefe said.

It would be a travesty to portray Roosevelt only as a wholly good figure, said Jenkinson, who called him a man of his times, a bully, an imperialist and perhaps a warmonger.

He invited Black leader Booker T. Washington to dine at the White House. But he discharged "without honor" an entire regiment of 167 Black soldiers without due process, in connection with a shooting in a

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 33 of 76

Texas town. Roosevelt encouraged photographer Edward S. Curtis in his photography of Native peoples, and some Native Americans were among Roosevelt's Rough Riders.

"But he also believed that Anglo-Saxon white America had a right and even a duty to dispossess Native peoples and install what he took to be a superior civilization. There was no ambiguity about that," Jenkinson said.

Kermit Roosevelt said he hopes the library helps people understand the legacy of his great-great-grandfather.

"I really do think Theodore Roosevelt is important for us now because of his ability to appeal to people across the political spectrum and, in our polarized times, maybe bring people together and give them a sense of what it means to be American," he said.

## Israeli military says one of the bodies handed over by Hamas is not that of a hostage

By MELANIE LIDMAN and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — The Israeli military said Wednesday that one of the bodies handed over by Hamas the previous day as part of the ceasefire deal is not that of a hostage who was held in Gaza, adding to tensions over the fragile truce in the two-year war.

Four bodies were handed over by Hamas on Tuesday to ease pressure on the ceasefire, following an earlier four on Monday — hours after the last 20 living hostages were released. In all, Israel has been awaiting the return of the bodies of 28 deceased hostages.

Israel, which released around 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees on Monday, is also handing over bodies of Palestinians under the deal, a step awaited by many families in Gaza whose relatives went missing during the war.

The military said that after the "examinations at the National Institute of Forensic Medicine, the fourth body handed over to Israel by Hamas does not match any of the hostages." There was no immediate word on whose body it was.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu demanded earlier Wednesday that Hamas fulfill the requirements laid out in the ceasefire deal — introduced by U.S. President Donald Trump — about the return of the hostages' bodies.

"We will not compromise on this and will not stop our efforts until we return the last deceased hostage, until the last one," Netanyahu said.

Returning all living and dead hostages

The U.S.-proposed ceasefire plan had called for all hostages — living and dead — to be handed over by a deadline that expired on Monday. But under the deal, if that didn't happen, Hamas was to share information about deceased hostages and try to hand over all as soon as possible.

This is not the first time Hamas has returned a wrong body to Israel. Earlier this year during a previous ceasefire, the group said it handed over the bodies of Shiri Bibas and her two sons. Israelis endured another moment of agony when testing showed that one of the bodies returned was identified as a Palestinian woman.

Bibas' body was returned a day later and positively identified.

Hamas and the Red Cross have said that recovering the remains of dead hostages was a challenge because of Gaza's vast destruction, and Hamas has told mediators of the truce that some are in areas controlled by Israeli troops.

Hazem Kasseem, a spokesperson for Hamas, said on the Telegram messaging app on Wednesday that the group was working to return the bodies of the hostages as agreed in the ceasefire deal. He accused Israel of violating the deal with shootings Tuesday in eastern Gaza City and the territory's southern city of Rafah.

Israel's defense minister, Israel Katz, said Wednesday the military is operating along the deployment lines laid out in the deal and warned that anyone approaching the deployment line will be targeted — as



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 34 of 76

had happened on Tuesday with several militants.

Two hostages whose bodies were released from Gaza were to be buried on Wednesday. The family invited the public to gather along the road in the afternoon to accompany the body of one hostage from a forensics institute to a cemetery north of Tel Aviv.

Separately, forensic experts in Gaza on Wednesday started identifying 45 bodies of Palestinians that Israel handed over through the Red Cross the previous day without identification. Israel is expected to transfer more bodies, though the total number has not been announced.

It wasn't immediately clear whether the bodies were those of people who died in Israeli prisons or bodies taken from Gaza by Israeli troops. During the war, the Israeli military has exhumed bodies as part of its search for the remains of hostages.

Desperately needed aid to Gaza

The entrance of humanitarian aid to Gaza was paused for the past two days due to the prisoner and hostage exchange on Monday and a Jewish holiday Tuesday.

The Egyptian Red Crescent said 400 trucks carrying food, fuel, and medical supplies were bound for the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, while Israel and Hamas argue over the slow return of the bodies of deceased hostages.

The Israeli defense body overseeing humanitarian aid in Gaza, COGAT, notified humanitarian organizations on Tuesday that it would allow into Gaza only half of the 600 daily aid trucks called for under the deal.

It was not immediately clear whether it was following through on the threat. COGAT declined to comment on the number of trucks expected to enter Gaza on Wednesday.

On Monday, Israelis celebrated the return of the last 20 living hostages in Gaza and Palestinians rejoiced at Israel's release of some 2,000 prisoners and detainees as part of the ceasefire's first phase.

Families of hostages and their supporters have expressed dismay these past days that so few of the dead hostages were being released. Hamas and the Red Cross have said that recovering the remains of dead hostages was a challenge because of Gaza's vast destruction, and Hamas told mediators of the truce that some are in areas controlled by Israeli troops.

The first four bodies released were all identified as hostages and of the second group of four bodies, three were identified — Uriel Baruch, Tamir Nimrodi and Eitan Levi.

Baruch was kidnapped from the Nova music festival during the Hamas-led attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, which triggered the war in Gaza.

Nimrodi, who had been serving with the Israeli defense body overseeing humanitarian aid in Gaza, was taken by militants from the Erez border crossing. The Hostages Family Forum, a group representing many of the hostages' families, says Levi was kidnapped while driving a friend to Kibbutz Be'eri during the Hamas attack.

## Government shutdown delays release of critically important inflation figures

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government shutdown is delaying another major economic report, leaving policymakers at the Federal Reserve with a cloudier picture even as the economy enters a challenging phase of stubbornly persistent inflation and a sharp slowdown in hiring.

The Labor Department's monthly inflation data was scheduled for release Wednesday, but late last week was postponed until Oct. 24. The department is recalling some employees to assemble the data, which was collected before the shutdown began. The figures are needed for the government to calculate the annual cost of living adjustment for tens of millions of recipients of benefit programs such as Social Security.

The shutdown could make things worse for agencies like the Fed if it continues, because government agencies cannot collect the raw data that are then compiled into the monthly reports on jobs, inflation, and other economic trends. The September employment report, for example, which was due to be released Oct. 3 but was not issued because of the shutdown, was essentially completed before the government

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 35 of 76

closed and could be released fairly quickly once the shutdown ends. But October data could be delayed much longer.

Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said Tuesday in remarks to the National Association for Business Economics that the central bank for now is looking at data from the private sector, such as payroll processor ADP, which issues its own monthly report on hiring by U.S. businesses, to gauge the economy. It is also relying on anecdotal reports from the hundreds of businesses that the regional Fed banks consult with.

But while there are many firms that compile jobs-related data, there are fewer alternative sources of information to track inflation and growth, Powell added.

"We'll start to miss that data and particularly the October data," Powell said. "If this goes on for a while, they won't be collecting it. And it could become more challenging."

The Fed is already in a difficult spot, Powell has said, as it grapples with two policy goals that are nearly in conflict. It is tasked by Congress with seeking both maximum employment and stable prices.

Right now, inflation remains above the Fed's target of 2%, with the latest figures showing prices rose 2.9% compared with a year earlier, according to the Fed's preferred measure. Typically, elevated inflation would lead the Fed to raise its key interest rate, or at least keep it elevated.

Yet hiring has also weakened considerably, and the unemployment rate has ticked up to a still-low 4.3% in August from 4.2% in the previous month. When the Fed's other goal of maximum employment is threatened, it usually responds with the opposite approach: Cutting rates to spur more borrowing and spending.

On Tuesday, Powell noted those challenges and said, "There really isn't a risk-free path."

## European Commission fines Gucci, Chloé and Loewe \$183 million for price interference

MILAN (AP) — The European Commission has fined luxury fashion houses Gucci, Chloé and Loewe over 157 million euros (nearly \$183 million) for anti-competitive practices restricting independent retailers' ability to set prices for their luxury goods.

The Commission said the companies' fixing of resale prices breached the bloc's competition rules, harmed consumers and would not be accepted.

"The decision sends a strong signal to the fashion industry and beyond that we will not tolerate this kind of practice in Europe, and that fair competition and consumer protection apply to everyone, equally," commission vice president Teresa Ribera said in a statement on Tuesday.

The commission said that the three brands restricted the ability of independent retailers to set their own prices for high-end apparel, leather goods, footwear and accessories sold both online and in physical stores.

The brands required the retailers to stick to recommended retail prices, set maximum discount rates as well as periods for sales, mirroring practices in the brands' own direct sales channels.

The practices "deprived the retailers of their pricing independence and reduced competition between them," the commission said.

Gucci and Loewe had their fines reduced by half due to cooperation, with Gucci revealing additional breaches. Gucci's fine totals nearly 120 million euros, while Loewe's was 18 million euros. Chloé's fine was reduced by 15% to nearly 20 million euros.

## Russia makes more precise drones and is using them to attack Ukraine's vital rail network

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — When Russian drones smashed into the Shostka train station in northeastern Ukraine earlier this month, they killed a 71-year-old man, injured at least eight people and left train cars buckled by fire and riddled with shrapnel holes.

It was one of the latest examples of what Ukrainian officials say has been a surge since mid-summer in attacks on railways, a critical artery for commercial and military logistics.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 36 of 76**

They are part of Russia's broader targeting of infrastructure that now is being carried out with greater precision thanks to advances in long-range drone technology that include onboard video feed.

In the attack in Shostka, less than 70 kilometers (43 miles) from the Russian border, two explosives-laden drones struck two commuter trains in quick succession.

Russia has stepped up railway attacks over the past three months, seeking to sow unrest in Ukrainian regions it borders by depriving people there of rail connections, Oleksandr Pertsovskyi, the CEO of the Ukrainian state railway, told The Associated Press.

"What happens is not just about the quantity, it's also the approach of enemy forces. Now, as they have very precise Shahed drones, they are targeting individual locomotives," Pertsovskyi said.

Attacks have picked up pace

Ukrainian railway managers have prided themselves on speedy repairs and their ability — so far — to keep the trains running despite repeated strikes, but officials and analysts warn that advances in Russian drone capabilities and the growing tempo of attacks pose a serious threat.

Since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in early 2022, railway officials have publicly reported about roughly one attack on railways per week. Since mid-summer of this year, that rate has more than doubled to about two or three per week, according to an AP review of public reports.

However, what is publicly reported is only a small fraction of the overall number of attacks on all rail-related infrastructure, which could include damage to power lines, electrical substation, rail tracks, train stations and other structures.

Oleksii Kuleba, a deputy prime minister in charge of restoration and development, said there have been 300 attacks on railway infrastructure since August alone — which would represent about 10 attacks per week.

Ukraine's rail network carries more than 63% of the country's freight and 37% of passenger traffic, according to the State Statistics Service. It is also essential for moving grain and metal industry exports to seaports and borders, and for transporting military aid from allied nations.

Russia developing new drone capabilities

Russian forces have added a key upgrade to their drone fleet since the summer, according to Serhii Beskrestnov, a Ukrainian military and drone expert whose team studies intercepted Russian drones.

Cameras and radio modems, which send and receive data wirelessly, have been fitted to various types of long-range strike drones. That allows operators to adjust a drone's flight path in real time, sharply increasing precision compared to preprogrammed models.

Beskrestnov said locomotives are particularly vulnerable to the new technology, because they are relatively slow and follow predictable routes.

"If the Russians keep hitting diesel and electric locomotives, the time will come very soon when the track will still be intact — but we'll have nothing left to run on it," he said.

The modified drones can fly up to 200 kilometers (124 miles) into Ukrainian territory while streaming video back to operators in Russian-held areas, Beskrestnov said.

An official at Ukraine's Defense Ministry, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to reporters, said Ukrainian forces also have recovered and examined a Geran-type drone fitted with a civilian camera and radio modem. The Geran is a Russian variant of the Iranian-designed Shahed.

The official said the findings suggest that Moscow is actively testing and refining new technical solutions.

He said the cameras also allow Russian operators to identify Ukrainian air defense systems and assess damage on the ground.

Express repairs keep the country running

Throughout the war, Russian drones and missiles have repeatedly targeted railway infrastructure, mostly in regions near the front line. In March, the rail operator also endured a major cyberattack that disrupted online ticketing and other services for a week.

Ukraine's repair crews are racing to match the pace of Russian strikes. Piles of debris from missile attacks are cleared within hours, and utility teams typically restore power and water within a day after most



strikes on Kyiv and other cities.

Rail crews operate on a similar timeline. In Kyiv, railway repair team leader Maksym Shevchuk, 30, recalled the day a missile destroyed 12 meters (39 feet) of track. "Traffic on the track was fully restored in half a day," he said.

Freight volumes carried by rail from January through August 2025 dropped 11.7% year over year, while passenger traffic declined by 4.2%, according to the State Statistics Service, which has not stated a reason for the decline.

Nataliia Kolesnichenko, senior economist at the Kyiv-based Center for Economic Strategy, described the impact so far as "negative but marginal," crediting rapid repair work and train rerouting that keeps delays to a minimum.

Pertsovskiy said staff take pride in keeping trains moving despite the strikes. "For us, it is paramount to show Ukrainians — and the enemy — that these attacks are not going to bring the expected results," he said.

## **Yamamoto throws 3-hitter as Dodgers beat Brewers 5-1 for 2-0 lead in NLCS**

By STEVE MEGARGEE AP Sports Writer

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Relying on an old-school pitching strategy has the defending World Series champion Los Angeles Dodgers two wins from returning to the Fall Classic.

As long as their star-studded rotation can continue working deep into games, they don't need to worry about their inconsistent bullpen.

Yoshinobu Yamamoto threw a three-hitter for the first postseason complete game in eight years as the Dodgers beat the slumping Milwaukee Brewers 5-1 on Tuesday to extend their lead in the National League Championship Series. Yamamoto's gem in Game 2 came one night after two-time Cy Young Award winner Blake Snell allowed one hit over eight shutout innings for a 2-1 victory.

"We said before this postseason started, our starting pitching was going to be what carried us," said Max Muncy, who set a Dodgers record by hitting his 14th career postseason homer. "And so far it's been exactly that."

It's a dramatically different approach than the one the Dodgers took last year, when starting pitchers worked six innings in only two of their 16 postseason games. They have seven quality starts in eight playoff games this year, and their starters own a 1.54 postseason ERA.

That stellar pitching has the Dodgers closing in on another World Series berth even with the bullpen struggling and three-time MVP Shohei Ohtani going 2 for 25 at the plate over his last six games.

After winning nine of their last 11 regular-season games, the Dodgers are 7-1 in the postseason.

"Our entire team is playing the best baseball we've played all year," manager Dave Roberts said. "The focus, the concentration level is at the highest, and we're peaking at the right time."

Teoscar Hernández also homered to help the Dodgers leave Milwaukee with a 2-0 advantage in the best-of-seven series, which shifts to Los Angeles for Game 3 on Thursday. Yamamoto allowed a home run to Jackson Chourio on the first of his 111 pitches — 81 strikes — but shut down the Brewers the rest of the way.

The \$325 million right-hander struck out seven and walked one during his first complete game in two major league seasons. He retired his final 14 batters and didn't give up a hit after the fourth inning.

"I reset my mind (after Chourio's homer) and then I just focused on executing my own pitches," Yamamoto said through an interpreter.

The previous postseason starter to go the distance was Justin Verlander when he tossed a five-hitter with 13 strikeouts for Houston against the New York Yankees in Game 2 of the 2017 ALCS on Oct. 14, 2017 — eight years ago to the day.

Yamamoto's complete game was the first for Los Angeles since Gavin Stone's four-hit shutout on June 26

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 38 of 76**

last year at the Chicago White Sox. The last Dodgers pitcher to throw a complete game in the postseason was Jose Lima against St. Louis in Game 3 of their 2004 NL Division Series.

"I established my rhythm and then I dictated the tempo based off the game," Yamamoto said. "So that was great."

This is the first time since 1970 that both LCS road teams started 2-0. The Seattle Mariners own a 2-0 lead over Toronto in the ALCS heading into Game 3 on Wednesday in Seattle.

Twenty-four of the previous 27 teams that took the first two games on the road in a best-of-seven series with a 2-3-2 format have gone on to win. The three teams to come back after losing Games 1 and 2 at home all came in World Series: the 1985 Kansas City Royals against the St. Louis Cardinals, the 1986 New York Mets against the Boston Red Sox, and the 1996 New York Yankees against the Atlanta Braves.

"You guys might have us counted out," Brewers manager Pat Murphy said. "And I understand that 90% of the teams that have been in this situation don't win the series. But this team has been counted out a lot this year. And I think there's some fight left in them."

The Brewers pulled out all the stops Tuesday as they tried to avoid that 2-0 deficit. Former slugger Eric Thames got on the field to exhort fans just before the game and popped open his jersey to reveal his bare chest.

Chourio then delighted a sellout crowd with his fourth career postseason homer, tying Orlando Arcia and Prince Fielder for the Brewers record. It was the fifth leadoff homer of this postseason, tying an MLB mark originally set in 2007.

That seemed like a foreboding start for Yamamoto, who lasted just two-thirds of an inning in a 9-1 loss the previous time he pitched in Milwaukee. But he bounced back and silenced the Brewers the rest of the way.

The NL Central champions, who led the majors with 97 wins during the regular season, have five hits in the series.

"We've just got to play better," said slugger Christian Yelich, who is 0 for 13 in his last four games. "It's not an ideal start to the series, by any means. Just have to continue to battle and find a way to get the offense going. I've got to be better. We've got to be better. It's just facts."

Los Angeles became the first team to have consecutive postseason starts of at least eight innings in the same series since San Francisco's Madison Bumgarner and Tim Lincecum did it in Games 4 and 5 of the 2010 World Series against Texas.

After Chourio's homer, the Dodgers wasted no time coming back against Brewers ace Freddy Peralta.

Hernández, whose baserunning mistake contributed to the Brewers' unusual 8-6-2 double play in Game 1, sent a 3-2 curve over the left-field wall for his fourth homer of this postseason. One out later, Kiké Hernández singled and scored on Andy Pages' double.

Pages had been 1 for 27 in the postseason before delivering his shot into the right-field corner.

Muncy extended the lead to 3-1 with his two-out homer in the sixth, which came on Peralta's 97th and final pitch. The Dodgers added two more runs on RBI singles by Ohtani in the seventh and Tommy Edman in the eighth.

## **Storm decimates 2 Alaskan villages and drives more than 1,500 people from their homes**

By BECKY BOHRER, CEDAR ATTANASIO and GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — More rain and wind were forecast Wednesday along the Alaskan coast where two tiny villages were decimated by the remnants of Typhoon Halong and officials were scrambling to find shelter for more than 1,500 people driven from their homes.

The weekend storm brought high winds and surf that battered the low-lying Alaska Native communities along the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in the southwestern part of the state, nearly 500 miles (800 km) from Anchorage. At least one person was killed and two were missing. The Coast Guard plucked two dozen people from their homes after the structures floated out to sea.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 39 of 76**

Hundreds were staying in school shelters, including one with no working toilets, officials said. The weather system followed a storm that struck parts of western Alaska days earlier.

Across the region, more than 1,500 people were displaced. Dozens were flown to a shelter set up in the National Guard armory in the regional hub city of Bethel, a community of 6,000 people, and officials were considering flying evacuees to longer-term shelter or emergency housing in Fairbanks and Anchorage.

The hardest-hit communities included Kipnuk, population 715, and Kwigillingok, population 380. They are off the state's main road system and reachable this time of year only by water or by air.

"It's catastrophic in Kipnuk. Let's not paint any other picture," Mark Roberts, incident commander with the state emergency management division, told a news conference Tuesday. "We are doing everything we can to continue to support that community, but it is as bad as you can think."

## Heartbreaking moment

Among those awaiting evacuation to Bethel on Tuesday was Brea Paul, of Kipnuk, who said in a text message that she had seen about 20 homes floating away through the moonlight on Saturday night.

"Some houses would blink their phone lights at us like they were asking for help but we couldn't even do anything," she wrote.

The following morning, she recorded video of a house submerged nearly to its roofline as it floated past her home.

Paul and her neighbors had a long meeting in the local school gym on Monday night. They sang songs as they tried to figure out what to do next, she said. Paul wasn't sure where she would go.

"It's so heartbreaking saying goodbye to our community members not knowing when we'd get to see each other," she said.

About 30 miles (48 kilometers) away in Kwigillingok, one woman was found dead and authorities on Monday night called off the search for two men whose home floated away.

The school was the only facility in town with full power, but it had no working toilet and 400 people stayed there Monday night. Workers were trying to fix the bathrooms; a situation report from the state emergency operations center on Tuesday noted that portable toilets, or "honey buckets," were being used.

A preliminary assessment showed every home in the village was damaged by the storm, with about three dozen having drifted from their foundations, the emergency management office said.

Power systems flooded in Napakiak, and severe erosion was reported in Toksook Bay. In Nightmute, officials said fuel drums were reported floating in the community, and there was a scent of fuel in the air and a sheen on the water.

The National Guard was activated to help with the emergency response, and crews were trying to take advantage of any breaks in the weather to fly in food, water, generators and communication equipment.

## Long road to recovery ahead, officials say

Officials warned of a long road to recovery and a need for continued support for the hardest-hit communities. Most rebuilding supplies would have to be transported in and there is little time left with winter just around the corner.

"Indigenous communities in Alaska are resilient," said Rick Thoman, an Alaska climate specialist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. "But, you know, when you have an entire community where effectively every house is damaged and many of them will be uninhabitable with winter knocking at the door now, there's only so much that any individual or any small community can do."

Thoman said the storm was likely fueled by the warm surface waters of the Pacific Ocean, which has been heating up because of human-caused climate change and making storms more intense.

The remnants of another storm, Typhoon Merbok, caused damage across a massive swath of western Alaska three years ago.



## Pakistan reports a new clash with Afghan forces along border

By RIAZ KHAN Associated Press

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Clashes erupted Tuesday between Pakistani and Afghan forces in a remote northwestern border region, with state-run media in Pakistan accusing Afghan troops of opening “unprovoked fire” that was repulsed.

Pakistani forces responded, damaging Afghan tanks and military posts, according to Pakistan TV and two security officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

Tahir Ahrar, a deputy police spokesperson in Afghanistan’s Khost province, confirmed the clashes but provided no further details.

This is the second time this week that the two sides have traded fire along their long border.

According to Pakistan’s state-run media, Afghan forces and Pakistani Taliban jointly opened fire at a Pakistani post “without provocation,” prompting what the media described as a “strong response” from Pakistani troops in Kurram, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Security officials said Pakistan’s military also destroyed a sprawling training facility of the Pakistani Taliban.

There was no immediate comment from Pakistan’s military, which has been on high alert since Saturday, when both sides traded fire across multiple border regions, resulting in dozens of casualties on each side.

Although the clashes halted on Sunday after appeals from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, all border crossings between Pakistan and Afghanistan have remained closed.

Over the weekend, Kabul said that it targeted several Pakistani military posts and killed 58 Pakistani soldiers in retaliation for what it called repeated violations of Afghan territory and airspace. Pakistan’s military reported lower figures, saying it lost 23 soldiers and killed more than 200 “Taliban and affiliated terrorists” in retaliatory fire along the frontier.

Tensions have remained high since last week, when the Taliban government accused Pakistan of carrying out airstrikes in Kabul and in an eastern market. Pakistan has not acknowledged those allegations.

But Pakistan has previously launched strikes inside Afghanistan, saying it targets hideouts of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP, which is separate from but allied to the Afghan Taliban.

Pakistan accuses Kabul of harboring the group, which has carried out numerous deadly attacks inside Pakistan. Kabul denies the charge, saying it does not allow its territory to be used against other countries.

## Trump’s approval on immigration drops among AAPI adults, new AAPI Data/AP-NORC poll finds

By TERRY TANG and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — After months of aggressive immigration enforcement measures from the Trump administration, Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander adults are more likely to hold a negative view of President Donald Trump’s handling of immigration, a new AAPI Data/AP-NORC poll finds.

About 7 in 10 AAPI adults nationwide disapprove of Trump’s approach on immigration, according to the survey from AAPI Data and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, an increase from 58% in March. The new poll also finds that a solid majority of AAPI adults say the Republican president has overstepped on deporting immigrants living in the U.S. illegally, and most oppose several specific tactics used by the administration, such as using the military and National Guard to carry out arrests or deportations.

The findings come as federal immigration agents expand a crackdown in the Chicago area, where more than 1,000 immigrants have been arrested since last month. The escalation in Chicago is just part of a broader effort by the Trump administration to boost deportations, which has been a high priority for the president since he took office at the beginning of the year.

This approach does not seem to be landing well among AAPI adults, a diverse and rapidly growing group where many were born outside the U.S. Even among foreign-born AAPI adults, who tend to be more

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 41 of 76

conservative, most disapprove of the president's handling of immigration.

Joie Meyer, 25, was born in China and adopted as an infant. The Miami resident, who identifies as a Democrat, supports secure borders but Trump's recent actions have made her wonder what would happen if she suddenly lost her citizenship.

"If I was at risk of like being stripped away from my home, family, friends, everything I knew because of like a technicality, which is what some people are facing, that's just heartbreaking," Meyer said, adding that she finds Trump's methods "punitive."

Most think Trump has 'gone too far' on immigration enforcement

AAPI adults are particularly likely to think Trump has crossed a line on immigration enforcement. About two-thirds say Trump has "gone too far" when it comes to deporting immigrants living in the U.S. illegally, compared to about 6 in 10 Black and Hispanic adults in a separate AP-NORC poll conducted in September. In that survey, less than half of white adults thought Trump had overstepped on immigration.

The finding, combined with AAPI adults' increased disapproval of Trump on immigration, signals that the president's handling of the issue over the past few months may have turned some people off. Some may be finding "a big difference in terms of what policy support looks like in theory and how it plays out," said Karthick Ramakrishnan, AAPI Data executive director and researcher at the University of California, Berkeley.

Immigration is frequently in the local news for 38-year-old Peter Lee of Tacoma, Washington, where there is an active Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center. He sees Trump as hastily meeting deportation quotas without compassion.

"One, there doesn't seem to be a clear game plan for what he's doing in terms of immigration enforcement other than just pure numbers. Second it seems like his directives come from just gut, not fact-based," said Lee, a Democrat, who is Korean American. "The fact that he's deporting people to third-party countries not of their origin, I think that it's ridiculous."

Foreign-born AAPI adults likelier to approve of Trump on immigration and crime

American-born and foreign-born AAPI adults are equally likely to think Trump has overstepped on immigration overall. But they're more divided on issues related to illegal immigration.

Just over half of foreign-born AAPI adults, who tend to be older and more conservative than other AAPI adults, support deporting immigrants living in the U.S. illegally who have been charged with misdemeanors, compared to 41% of American-born AAPI adults. AAPI adults who were born outside the U.S. are also more likely than American-born AAPI adults to support deporting all immigrants who are in the country illegally.

More than half of AAPI adults are foreign-born, Ramakrishnan said, adding that American-born AAPI adults may be less "attuned in terms of what it takes to maintain one's status."

Tyrone Tai, 65, who has homes in Tampa and Lauderhill, Florida, was born in Jamaica. The half-Chinese and half-Jamaican immigrated with his parents to New York City when he was 12. He recalls how they struggled but eventually gained U.S. citizenship. He indicated Trump has "not gone far enough" when it comes to arresting those who "jump the line."

AAPI adults who were born outside the U.S. are more likely than American-born AAPI adults to approve of Trump's handling of immigration, although they still don't rate him especially highly on the issue. They're also more likely to approve of his handling of crime, suggesting that the president's efforts to link illegal immigration with crime may be resonating with some among this group.

Most AAPI adults oppose workplace raids and National Guard involvement

Some of the Trump administration's tactics are particularly unpopular among AAPI adults, the poll found. For example, about 6 in 10 AAPI adults oppose conducting large-scale immigration enforcement operations in neighborhoods with high populations of immigrants, deploying the military or National Guard to carry out arrests and deportations, detaining immigrants at their workplaces, or allowing agents to cover their faces during arrests.

Videos of ICE officers wearing masks and snatching people while they are at work or on a public street has rattled Michael Ida, a 56-year-old resident of Honolulu. An independent and Christian, Ida believes that some immigrants in the country illegally may deserve to stay.

"When it comes down to justice or mercy, we should err on the side of mercy. It's very disturbing to me," Ida said. "As an Asian American especially, I feel like there's a little bit of anxiety to travel outside of Hawaii."

Tai, however, says that ICE agents should be allowed to wear masks.

"Those poor ICE agents, they're doing their job there and people are basically threatening their families. That shouldn't be," Tai said.

Ida, who is half Korean and half Japanese, sees parallels with World War II, when in 1942 the U.S. government began forcing Japanese Americans from their homes and into incarceration camps.

"History doesn't repeat but it rhymes. There's kind of echoes of what happened in the past."

## Supreme Court takes up GOP-led challenge to Voting Rights Act that could affect control of Congress

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is taking up a major Republican-led challenge to the Voting Rights Act, the centerpiece legislation of the civil rights movement, that could gut a key provision of the law that prohibits racial discrimination in redistricting.

The justices on Wednesday are hearing arguments for the second time in a case over Louisiana's congressional map, which has two majority Black districts. A ruling for the state could open the door for legislatures to redraw congressional maps across the South, potentially boosting Republican electoral prospects by eliminating majority Black and Latino seats that tend to favor Democrats.

A mid-decade battle over congressional redistricting already is playing out across the nation, after President Donald Trump began urging Texas and other Republican-controlled states to redraw their lines to make it easier for the GOP to hold its narrow majority in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The court's conservative majority has been skeptical of considerations of race, most recently ending affirmative action in college admissions. Twelve years ago, the court took a sledgehammer to another pillar of the landmark voting law that required states with a history of racial discrimination to get approval in advance from the Justice Department or federal judges before making election-related changes.

The court has separately given state legislatures wide berth to gerrymander for political purposes, subject only to review by state supreme courts. If the court now weakens or strikes down the law's section 2, states would not be bound by any limits in how they draw electoral districts, a result that is expected to lead to extreme gerrymandering by whichever party is in power at the state level.

Just two years ago, the court, by a 5-4 vote, affirmed a ruling that found a likely violation of the Voting Rights Act in a similar case over Alabama's congressional map. Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Brett Kavanaugh joined their three more liberal colleagues in the outcome.

That decision led to new districts in both states that sent two more Black Democrats to Congress.

Now, though, the court has asked the parties to answer a fundamental question: "Whether the state's intentional creation of a second majority-minority congressional district violates the Fourteenth or Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution."

In the first arguments in the Louisiana case in March, Roberts sounded skeptical of the second majority-Black district, which last year elected Democratic Rep. Cleo Fields. Roberts described the district as a "snake" that stretches more than 200 miles to link parts of the Shreveport, Alexandria, Lafayette and Baton Rouge areas.

The court fight over Louisiana's congressional districts has lasted three years.

The state's Republican-dominated legislature drew a new congressional map in 2022 to account for population shifts reflected in the 2020 census. But the changes effectively maintained the status quo of five Republican-leaning majority white districts and one Democratic-leaning majority Black district.

Civil rights advocates won a lower-court ruling that the districts likely discriminated against Black voters.

The state eventually drew a new map to comply with the court ruling and protect its influential Repub-



lican lawmakers, including Speaker Mike Johnson. But white Louisiana voters claimed in their separate lawsuit that race was the predominant factor driving it. A three-judge court agreed, leading to the current high court case.

## Officials airlift evacuees to safety after the remnants of Typhoon Halong devastate Alaska villages

By BECKY BOHRER, CEDAR ATTANASIO and GENE JOHNSON Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — Officials in Alaska rushed Tuesday to evacuate and find housing for people from tiny coastal villages devastated by the remnants of Typhoon Halong. But the remote location and severe damage are limiting their options as they race against other impending storms and the onset of winter.

High winds and surging waters battered low-lying, isolated Alaska Native communities along the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in southwest Alaska, nearly 500 miles (800 km) from Anchorage, over the weekend. The Coast Guard plucked two dozen people from their homes after the structures floated out to sea in high water, three people were missing or dead, and hundreds of people were staying in school shelters — including one with no working toilets, officials said.

The system followed a storm that struck parts of western Alaska days earlier.

Across the region, more than 1,500 people were displaced. Dozens had been flown to a shelter set up in the National Guard armory in the regional hub city of Bethel, a community of 6,000 people, and officials are considering flying evacuees to longer-term shelter or emergency housing in Fairbanks and Anchorage as they run out of room there.

Fuel storage depots intended to support communities in the region had apparently been damaged, threatening pollution that could harm the fish and game the Alaska Native residents rely on for subsistence. Some people in the area may have lost freezers full of food such as salmon and moose intended to get them through the winter.

The hardest-hit communities included Kipnuk, population 715, and Kwigillingok, population 380. They are off the state's main road system and reachable this time of year only by water or by air.

"It's catastrophic in Kipnuk. Let's not paint any other picture," Mark Roberts, incident commander with the state emergency management division, told a news conference Tuesday. "We are doing everything we can to continue to support that community, but it is as bad as you can think."

Heartbreaking moment

Among those awaiting evacuation to Bethel on Tuesday was Brea Paul, of Kipnuk, who said in a text message that she had seen about 20 homes floating away through the moonlight on Saturday night.

"Some houses would blink their phone lights at us like they were asking for help but we couldn't even do anything," she wrote.

The following morning, she recorded video of a house submerged nearly to its roofline as it floated past her home.

Paul and her neighbors had a long meeting in the local schoolhouse gym on Monday night, singing songs of praises as they tried to figure out what to do next, she said. Neither she nor most everyone else knows where they will end up.

"It's so heartbreaking saying goodbye to our community members not knowing when we'd get to see each other," she said.

One woman was found dead in Kwigillingok, and authorities on Monday night called off the search for two men after their home floated away.

In Kwigillingok, the school was the only facility with full power, but it had no working toilet, and 400 people stayed there Monday night. Workers were trying to fix the bathrooms; a situation report from the state emergency operations center on Tuesday noted that "honey buckets are being used."

A preliminary assessment showed every home in the village was damaged by the storm, with about three dozen having drifted from their foundations, the emergency management office said.

Power systems flooded in Napakiak, and severe erosion was reported in Toksook Bay. In Nightmute,

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 44 of 76

officials said, fuel drums were reported floating in the community, and there was a scent of fuel in the air and a sheen on the water.

Officials activated members of the National Guard to help with the emergency response, and crews were trying to take advantage of any breaks in the weather to fly in food, water, generators and communication equipment.

Long road to recovery ahead, officials say

Officials warned of a long road to recovery and a need for continued support for the hardest-hit communities. Most rebuilding supplies would have to be transported in, and there is little time left with winter just around the corner.

"Indigenous communities in Alaska are resilient," said Rick Thoman, an Alaska climate specialist at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. "But, you know, when you have an entire community where effectively every house is damaged and many of them will be uninhabitable with winter knocking at the door now, there's only there's only so much that any individual or any small community can do."

Thoman said the storm was likely fueled by the warm surface waters of the Pacific Ocean, which has been heating up because of human-caused climate change and making storms more intense.

The remnants of another storm, Typhoon Merbok, caused damage across a massive swath of western Alaska three years ago.

## Trump and budget chief Vought are making this a government shutdown unlike any other

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is making this government shutdown unlike any the nation has ever seen, giving his budget office rare authority to pick winners and losers — who gets paid or fired, which programs are cut or survive — in an unprecedented restructuring across the federal workforce.

As the shutdown enters its third week, the Office of Management and Budget said Tuesday it's preparing to "batten down the hatches" with more reductions in force to come. The president calls budget chief Russ Vought the "grim reaper," and Vought has seized on the opportunity to fund Trump's priorities, paying the military while slashing jobs in health, education, the sciences and other areas with actions that have been criticized as illegal and are facing court challenges.

Trump said programs favored by Democrats are being targeted and "they're never going to come back, in many cases."

Speaking during an event at the White House, Trump added, "We're being able to do things that we were unable to do before."

With Congress at a standstill — the Republican-led House refusing to return to session and the Senate stuck in a loop of failed votes to reopen government as Democrats demand health care funding — the budget office quickly filled the void.

From Project 2025 to the White House

Vought, a chief architect of the conservative Project 2025 policy book, is reshaping the size and scope of federal government in ways similar to those envisioned in the blueprint. It is exactly what certain lawmakers, particularly Democrats, feared if Congress failed to fund the government.

Trump's priorities — supporting the military and pursuing his mass deportation agenda — have been largely uninterrupted, despite the closures. The administration found leftover tariff revenues to ensure the Women, Infants and Children food aid program did not shutter.

But the Trump administration is shuttering scores of other programs, firing workers handling special education and after-school programs and those guarding the nation's infrastructure from cyber attacks. More than 4,100 federal workers received layoff notices over the weekend.

"This shutdown is different from earlier ones because Donald Trump and Russ Vought and all of their cronies are using this moment to terrorize these patriotic federal employees," said Sen. Chris Van Hollen, D-Md., standing with federal workers Tuesday outside the White House budget office.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 45 of 76**

Van Hollen said it's "a big fat lie" when Trump and his budget director say the shutdown is making them fire federal workers. "It is also illegal and we will see them in court," he said.

Shutdown grinds into a third week

Now on its 14th day, the federal closure is quickly becoming one of the longest government shutdowns. Congress failed to meet the Oct. 1 deadline to pass the annual appropriations bills needed to fund the government as the Democrats demanded a deal to preserve expiring health care funds that provide subsidies for people to purchase insurance through the Affordable Care Act.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said Tuesday he has nothing to negotiate with the Democrats until they vote to reopen the government. But there are no signs so far of that happening as Senate Democrats have rejected a GOP bill to reopen the government eight times, most recently on Monday evening.

The Republican speaker welcomed OMB's latest actions to pay some workers and fire others.

"They have every right to move the funds around," Johnson said at a press conference at the Capitol. If the Democrats want to challenge the Trump administration in court, Johnson said, "bring it."

Typically, federal workers are furloughed during a lapse in funding, traditionally with back pay once government funding is restored. But Vought's budget office announced late last week that the reductions in forces had begun. Some 750,000 employees are being furloughed.

Military pay, deportations on track

At the same time, Trump instructed the military to find money to ensure service personnel wouldn't miss paychecks this week. The Pentagon said over the weekend it was able to tap \$8 billion in unused research and development funds to make payroll.

On Tuesday, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said her agency was relying on Trump's big tax cuts law for funding to make sure members of the Coast Guard are also paid.

"We at DHS worked out an innovative solution," Noem said in a statement. Thanks to Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill," she said, "the brave men and women of the US Coast Guard will not miss a paycheck this week."

In past shutdowns, the OMB has overseen agency plans during the lapse in federal fundings, ensuring which workers are essential and remain on the job. Vought, however, has taken his role further by speaking openly about his plans to go after the federal workforce.

As agencies started making their shutdown plans, Vought's OMB encouraged department heads to consider reductions in force, an unheard-of action. The budget office's general counsel, Mark Paoletta, suggested in a draft memo that the workforce may not be automatically eligible for back pay once government reopens.

'Grim reaper' replaces Elon Musk's chainsaw

Trump posted an AI-generated video last week that portrayed Vought wearing a cloak and carrying a scythe, against the backdrop of the classic rock staple "(Don't Fear) The Reaper."

"Every authoritarian leader has had his grim reaper. Russell Vought is Donald Trump's," said Rep. Steny Hoyer, the senior Democrat from Maryland.

Hoyer compared the budget chief to billionaire Elon Musk wielding a chainsaw earlier this year during the Department of Government Efficiency's slashing of the workforce. "Vought swings his scythe through the federal government as thoughtlessly," he said.

In many ways, Trump's tax cuts law gave the White House a vast new allotment of federal funding for its priority projects, separate from the regular appropriations process in Congress.

The package unleashed some \$175 billion for the Pentagon, including for the "Golden Dome" missile shield and other priority projects, and nearly \$170 billion for Homeland Security, largely for Trump's mass deportation agenda. It also included extra funds for Vought's work at OMB.

Certain funds from the bill are available to be used during the shutdown, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office.

"The Administration also could decide to use mandatory funding provided in the 2025 reconciliation act or other sources of mandatory funding to continue activities financed by those direct appropriations at



various agencies," according to CBO.

The CBO cited the departments of Defense, Treasury and Homeland Security and the Office of Management and Budget as among those that received funds under the law.

## Trump honors Charlie Kirk with Presidential Medal of Freedom on what would be his 32nd birthday

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday posthumously awarded America's highest civilian honor to Charlie Kirk, the assassinated activist who inspired a generation of young conservatives and helped push the nation's politics further to the right.

Receiving the award on Kirk's behalf was his widow, Erika. Her voice cracking and often falling to a whisper as she wiped away tears, Erika Kirk talked about her late husband's life, political beliefs and legacy.

"Thank you, Mr. President, for honoring my husband, in such a profound and meaningful way. And thank you for making this event a priority," she said. "Your support of our family and the work that Charlie devoted his life to will be something I cherish forever."

The ceremony coincided with what would have been Kirk's 32nd birthday. It came about a month after the Turning Point USA founder was fatally shot while speaking to a crowd at Utah Valley University.

In a sign of Kirk's close ties to the administration, he was the first recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom in Trump's second term. The president also spoke at Kirk's funeral in September, calling him a "great American hero" and "martyr" for freedom, while Vice President JD Vance accompanied his body home to Arizona on Air Force Two along with Erika Kirk.

"We're here to honor and remember a fearless warrior for liberty, beloved leader who galvanized the next generation like nobody I've ever seen before, and an American patriot of the deepest conviction, the finest quality and the highest caliber," Trump said during the medal ceremony.

Of Kirk's killing, the president said, "He was assassinated in the prime of his life for boldly speaking the truth, for living his faith and relentless fighting for a better and stronger America."

The Presidential Medal of Freedom was established by President John F. Kennedy in 1963 for individuals making exceptional contributions "to the security or national interests of the United States, world peace, cultural or other significant public or private endeavors."

Trump returned to the U.S. in the pre-dawn hours Tuesday after a whirlwind trip to Israel and Egypt to celebrate a ceasefire agreement in Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza that his administration was instrumental in brokering. The president joked that he almost requested to reschedule the ceremony because of the trip.

"I raced back halfway around the globe," Trump said. "I was going to call Erika and say, 'Erika, could you maybe move it to Friday?' And I didn't have the courage to call. But you know why I didn't call? Because I heard today was Charlie's birthday."

Argentine President Javier Milei, who had been visiting with the president at the White House earlier, stayed on to attend the ceremony.

Trump has awarded a string of presidential medals going back to his first term, including to golf legend Tiger Woods, ex-football coach Lou Holtz and conservative economist Arthur Laffer as well as to Yankees Hall of Fame closer Mariano Rivera and conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh, the latter of which came during the 2020 State of the Union. He awarded posthumous medals to Babe Ruth and Elvis Presley.

This term, Trump has also announced his intentions to award the medals to Rudy Giuliani, the former New York City mayor and a close former adviser, and to Ben Carson, who served as Trump's first-term secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Kirk founded Turning Point USA in 2012 and Trump praised him as one of the key reasons he was re-elected last year.

But Kirk's politics were also often divisive. He sharply criticized gay and transgender rights while inflaming racial tensions. Kirk also repeated Trump's false claims that former Vice President Kamala Harris was responsible for policies that encouraged immigrants to come to the U.S. illegally and called George Floyd,

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 47 of 76

a Black man whose killing by a Minneapolis police officer sparked a national debate over racial injustice, a "scumbag."

As Tuesday's ceremony was underway, the Trump administration said it had revoked the visas of six foreigners who U.S. officials deemed had made derisive or mocking comments about Kirk's assassination. The six who had their visas revoked were from Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, Paraguay and South Africa.

The move comes as the Trump administration and its supporters have zeroed in on people who made critical comments about Kirk, leading to firings and other discipline.

Trump wrote in a social media post hours before it started that he was moving the ceremony from the White House's East Room to the Rose Garden to accommodate a crowd he said would be "so big and enthusiastic."

Trump paved over the grass there and put in a patio area, and talked happily about the medal ceremony being one of the first major events in the new space. He noted how the weather had cleared up after it was expected to be raining, saying: "I was telling Erika, God was watching. And he didn't want that for Charlie."

Kirk's widow said she asked their 3-year-old daughter what she might have given her father for his birthday, and she responded a stuffed animal and a cupcake while saying he hoped he'd get a birthday surprise. Erika Kirk said her husband was sometimes hard to buy presents for, but the medal was the perfect gift.

Erika Kirk said her husband might one day have run for president "but not out of ambition. He would only have done it if that was something that he believed that his country needed from his servant's heart."

She said God began a "mighty work" through her husband, and she intends to see it through. She finished her remarks by saying Charlie's story reminds us that "to live free is the greatest gift but to die free is the greatest victory."

## Los Angeles County officials approve emergency declaration over immigration raids

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER and JAIMIE DING Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles County officials voted Tuesday to declare a state of emergency that gives them power to provide assistance for residents they say have suffered financially from ongoing federal immigration raids.

The move allows the LA County Board of Supervisors to provide rent relief for tenants who have fallen behind as a result of the crackdown on immigrants.

The immigration raids that ramped up over the summer have spread fear in immigrant communities, prompting many to limit their outings. Federal agents have rounded up immigrants without legal status to be in the U.S. from Home Depots, car washes, bus stops, and farms. Some U.S. citizens have also been detained.

The local state of emergency can also funnel state money for legal aid and other services.

Funds for rent will be available to people who apply via an online portal that would be launched within two months, Supervisor Lindsey Horvath's office said. The motion could also be a first step toward an eviction moratorium, but that would require a separate action by the supervisors.

Landlords worried it could be another financial hit after an extended ban on evictions and rental increases during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The declaration was passed by a 4-1 vote, with Supervisor Kathryn Barger opposing.

Horvath and Supervisor Janice Hahn said the raids have spread fear and destabilized households and businesses. In late August, there were more than 5,000 arrests in Los Angeles as part of the crackdown. About a third of the county's 10 million residents are foreign-born. Several cities in the region canceled their Fourth of July celebrations and summer movie nights as families stayed home due to safety concerns.

Since June, the Los Angeles region has been a battleground in the Trump administration's aggressive immigration strategy that spurred protests and the deployment of the National Guards and Marines for more than a month.

"We have residents afraid to leave their homes, we have constituents contacting my office because their family members never came home and they don't know if they've been taken by ICE or where they've been taken," Hahn said. "We have entire families who are destitute because their fathers or mothers have been taken from their work places and they have no way to pay their rent or put food on their table."

Last week the five-member board voted 4-1 to put the declaration up for a vote at its regular Tuesday meeting. The sole "no" vote also came from Barger, who argued that the immigration raids did not meet the criteria of an emergency and that it could be unfair to landlords.

"I'm sure we're going to be challenged legally," Barger said. The county's eviction moratorium during the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in multiple lawsuits.

Several people said they were against the emergency declaration if it would lead to an eviction moratorium during the public comment portion of Tuesday's vote.

Landlords are "still reeling" from the COVID-era freezes that cost them "billions of dollars in uncollected rent and prohibited annual rent increase," said Daniel Yukelson, CEO of the Apartment Association of Greater Los Angeles.

He said housing providers are sympathetic to tenants and their family members affected by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement activities. But, he said, the association isn't aware of anyone unable to pay rent due to immigration enforcement.

"If local jurisdictions once again allow rent payments to be deferred due to ICE enforcement activities, this will lead to the further deterioration and loss of affordable housing in our community," Yukelson said Monday.

## **Florida judge temporarily blocks transfer of downtown Miami land for Trump's presidential library**

By KATE PAYNE Associated Press/Report for America

A Florida judge on Tuesday temporarily blocked the planned transfer of prime downtown Miami land for President Donald Trump's future presidential library.

The move by Circuit Judge Mavel Ruiz came after a Miami activist alleged that officials at a local college violated Florida's open government law when they gifted the sizable plot of real estate to the state, which then voted to transfer it to the foundation for the planned library.

"This is not an easy decision," Mavel said Tuesday when explaining her ruling from the bench, finding that the college didn't give the public reasonable notice ahead of the vote last month.

"This is not a case, at least for this court, rooted in politics," she added.

The nearly 3-acre (1.2-hectare) property is a developer's dream and is valued at more than \$67 million, according to a 2025 assessment by the Miami-Dade County property appraiser. One real estate expert wagered that the parcel — one of the last undeveloped lots on an iconic stretch of palm tree-lined Biscayne Boulevard — could sell for hundreds of millions of dollars more.

Marvin Dunn, an activist and chronicler of local Black history, filed a lawsuit this month in a Miami-Dade County court against the Board of Trustees for Miami Dade College, a state-run school that owned the property. He alleged that the board violated Florida's Government in the Sunshine law by not providing sufficient notice for its special meeting on Sept. 23, when it voted to give up the land.

An agenda released ahead of the meeting simply stated the board would consider conveying property to a state fund overseen by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis and the Florida Cabinet, but provided no details on which piece of property was being considered or why. Unlike every other meeting the board has held this year, the 8 a.m. meeting on Sept. 23 was not livestreamed.

A week later, DeSantis and other top GOP officials voted to transfer the land again, effectively putting the property under the control of the Trump family when they deeded it to the foundation for Trump's library. That foundation is led by three trustees: Eric Trump, Tiffany Trump's husband, Michael Boulos, and the president's attorney James Kiley.



Jesus Suarez, an attorney for the college, argued that MDC did what was required under the law and questioned Dunn's political motivations for filing the case.

"There is no requirement under Florida law that there be specificity on notice, because those trustees can come into that room and talk to each other about whatever they wish," Suarez said.

Attorneys for Dunn maintain that no one who wasn't already in on the deal could have known what the board would do.

"The people have a right to know what they're going to decide to do when the transaction is so significant, so unusual and deprives the students and the college of this land," said plaintiff's attorney Richard Brodsky, speaking with The Associated Press prior to the judge's decision.

Javier Ley-Soto, general counsel for Miami Dade College, testified that it is still in the process of finalizing the land transfer. Delays caused by an injunction could cost the college up to \$300,000, he estimated.

Other Florida locations had previously been floated as library sites, including properties associated with Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton and Florida International University in suburban Miami. DeSantis signed a bill this year preempting local governments from blocking development of a presidential library, aiming to overrule potential opposition in liberal-leaning counties or municipalities.

## **Driver following too close behind van charged in crash that killed 3 adults, 5 kids, officials say**

By JEFF MARTIN and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The driver of a semitrailer following too close behind a van has been arrested on homicide charges in a fiery crash that killed three adults and five children on a Georgia highway, law enforcement announced Tuesday.

Kane Aaron Hammock, 33, has been charged with eight counts of vehicular homicide in the second degree and one count of feticide by a vehicle in the second degree, Franka Young, a spokesperson for the Georgia Department of Public Safety, said in an email Tuesday afternoon. Hammock has also been charged with counts of following too closely, no registration and driver to exercise due care.

The victims were killed Monday afternoon, when the semitrailer struck a Dodge van on Interstate 85 in Jackson County, about 62 miles (100 kilometers) northeast of Atlanta and it burst into flames, according to law enforcement.

The identities of the eight people killed in the van have not been released. Young said one person may have been pregnant, "but this will not be confirmed until an autopsy has been completed."

Hammock was arrested by the Georgia State Patrol and booked into the Jackson County Jail, records show. Jail records did not list any attorney who could be reached to comment on his behalf, and a message left late Tuesday with the local public defender's office was not immediately returned.

Four other vehicles also crashed in what officials described as a "chain reaction" after the initial collision.

A van being used by Furkids Animal Rescue and Shelters was one of the other vehicles involved in the crash. That van's driver was left with bruises and cuts to his head, according to CEO Samantha Shelton.

"In the chaos of the wreckage, cages were crushed, and cats began to flee," the Cumming, Georgia-based animal rescue group wrote on its Facebook page.

The group was taking 37 cats to a shelter in Vermont, and some of the cats fled after the crash, Shelton said. Two were still missing as of Tuesday, and one cat was hospitalized in critical care, Shelton said.

The crash is being investigated by the Georgia State Patrol's Specialized Collision Reconstruction Team, Young said. The National Transportation Safety Board is also investigating the crash.

## Trump threatens to pull support for Argentina if its politics move leftward

By SEUNG MIN KIM and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened to pull assistance for Argentina — led by a political kindred spirit whose philosophy is similar to that of the Republican administration — if the nation's internal politics don't align with his interests in upcoming elections.

The comments came during a meeting with Argentine President Javier Milei, whose country is set to hold midterm elections for its legislative body later this month. U.S. presidents typically do not weigh in on the candidates in other countries' democratic elections.

Referring to an opponent who was "extremely far-left" and encompassed a "philosophy that got Argentina into this problem in the first place," Trump warned that the United States wouldn't "waste our time" with largesse toward Buenos Aires if Milei does not prevail. In addition to the midterms that will be a referendum on his policies, Milei himself is up for reelection in 2027.

"We're not going to let somebody get into office and squander the taxpayer money from this country. I'm not gonna let it happen," Trump said from the Cabinet Room as he prepared to eat lunch with Milei. "If he loses, we are not going to be generous with Argentina."

Even so, Trump insisted that the \$20 billion assistance to Argentina, which administration officials strenuously deny is a bailout, was about helping "our neighbors" rather than any ties to the upcoming midterms.

"It's just helping a great philosophy take over a great country," the U.S. president said. "Argentina is one of the most beautiful countries that I've ever seen, and we want to see it succeed. It's very simple."

U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent added that the administration believed Milei's coalition in the upcoming midterms would "do quite well and continue his reform agenda."

As he opened his lunch with Milei, Trump noted that the Argentine president, who is an economist by trade, is "MAGA all the way." That traditionally refers to his campaign slogan, "Make America Great Again," but this time, it also meant "Make Argentina Great Again."

Trump's meeting with Milei was already making waves back in Argentina, with Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, leader of the left-leaning Peronist opposition and a two-term former president, writing on social media: "Trump to Milei: 'Our agreements are subject to whoever wins election'. Argentines ... you know what to do!"

The former president is serving a six-year sentence under house arrest since June for corruption, but she remains the most influential leader of Peronism, an ideologically flexible, labor rights-focused populist movement, which emerged in the 1940s and dominated politics for decades.

Ahead of his White House meeting and during it Milei lavished praise on Trump, deploying a tactic that has helped transform Milei's cash-strapped country into one of the Trump administration's closest allies.

Milei, speaking in Spanish, said he is "very honored, especially in this moment when we are giving thanks for Trump's great leadership."

"We can follow a peaceful route and make Argentina a strong example for freedom and prosperity," Milei said.

That bromance has already paid off for Argentina — most recently, to the tune of a \$20 billion bailout. In a crisis, turning to Trump

The Trump administration made a highly unusual decision to intervene in Argentina's currency market after Milei's party suffered a landslide loss in a local election last month.

Along with setbacks in the opposition-dominated Congress, the party's crushing defeat created a crisis of confidence as voters in Buenos Aires Province registered their frustration with rising unemployment, contracting economic activity and brewing corruption scandals.

Alarmed that this could herald the end of popular support for Milei's free-market program, investors dumped Argentine bonds and sold off the peso.

Argentina's Treasury began hemorrhaging precious dollar reserves at a feverish pace, trying shore up the currency and keep its exchange rate within the trading band set as part of the country's recent \$20

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 51 of 76**

billion deal with the International Monetary Fund.

But as the peso continued to slide, Milei grew desperate.

He met with Trump on Sept. 23 while in New York City for the United Nations General Assembly. A flurry of back-slapping, hand-shaking and mutual flattery between the two quickly gave way to Bessent publicly promising Argentina a lifeline of \$20 billion.

Markets cheered, and investors breathed a sigh of relief.

Timing is everything

In the days that followed, Argentine Economy Minister Luis Caputo spent hours in meetings in Washington trying to seal the deal.

Reassurance came last Thursday, when Bessent announced that the U.S. would allow Argentina to exchange up to \$20 billion worth of pesos for an equal sum in dollars. Saying that the success of Milei's program was "of systemic importance," Bessent added that the U.S. Treasury directly purchased an unspecified amount of pesos.

For the Trump administration, the timing was awkward as it struggles to manage the optics of bailing out a nine-time serial defaulter in the middle of a U.S. government shutdown that has led to mass layoffs. Democratic lawmakers and other critics have slammed it as an example of Trump rewarding loyalists at the expense of American taxpayers.

Later Thursday, Sen. Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts — who was singled out during the White House meeting by both Bessent and Trump — tried to advance a bill that would block the \$20 billion in U.S. assistance, but the gambit failed in the Republican-controlled Senate.

Saying Trump was only aiding Argentina to help Milei, Warren said, "That's Argentina first, not America first."

But for Argentina, the U.S. help came in the nick of time.

Aware of how a weak currency could threaten his flagship achievement of taming inflation and hurt his popularity, Milei hopes to stave off what many economists see as an inescapable currency devaluation until after the Oct. 26 midterm elections. A devaluation of the peso would likely fuel a resurgence in inflation.

Talks also touch on artificial intelligence

Another topic that had been on the agenda was the Stargate project, which would expand a network of massive artificial intelligence centers to Latin America, according to a person with knowledge of the plans who was granted anonymity to speak about private discussions.

Argentina could be home to Latin America's first Stargate, which is a joint initiative from OpenAI, Oracle and SoftBank that will build a network of big data centers that would power OpenAI's artificial intelligence technology. It's an initiative that's been championed by Trump himself.

Milei also joined a ceremony at the White House honoring Charlie Kirk, the prominent right-wing political activist who was fatally shot last month. Milei often crossed paths with Kirk on the speaking circuit of the ascendant global right.

There has been no word on how Argentina, the IMF's largest debtor, will end up paying the U.S. back for this \$20 billion, which comes on top of IMF's own loan for the same amount in April. And that one came on top of an earlier IMF loan for \$40 billion.

Despite all the help, Milei's government already missed the IMF's early targets for rebuilding currency reserves.

"The U.S. should be concerned that Argentina has had to return for \$20 billion so quickly after getting \$14 billion upfront from the IMF," said Brad Setser, a former Treasury official now at the Council on Foreign Relations.



## US kills 6 people in strike on boat accused of carrying drugs near Venezuela, Trump says

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States struck another small boat accused of carrying drugs in the waters off Venezuela, killing six people, President Donald Trump said Tuesday.

Those who died in the strike were aboard the vessel, and no U.S. forces were harmed, the president said in a social media post. It's the fifth deadly strike in the Caribbean as Trump's administration has asserted it's treating alleged drug traffickers as unlawful combatants who must be met with military force.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered the strike Tuesday morning, said Trump, who released a video of it as he has in the past. Hegseth later shared the video in a post on X.

The black-and-white video showed a small boat that appeared stationary on the water. Seconds into the video, it is struck by a projectile from overhead and explodes. The boat is then seen floating aflame for several seconds.

Trump said the strike was conducted in international waters and "intelligence" confirmed the vessel was trafficking narcotics, was associated with "narcoterrorist networks" and was on a known drug trafficking route.

The Pentagon did not immediately respond to an email from The Associated Press seeking more information on the latest boat strike, but one defense official confirmed that the details in the social media post were accurate. The official was not authorized to speak publicly on the strike and spoke on condition of anonymity.

What could the long-term impact be?

James Story, former U.S. ambassador for the Venezuela Affairs Unit from 2018 to 2023, served under Trump's first term and under President Joe Biden. He told The Associated Press that ongoing American strikes on boats in the Caribbean may ultimately hinder counternarcotics efforts. By ruffling the feathers of longtime American allies in the region like Colombia, Story said, the strikes likely "hurt our ability to gather intelligence" from allies to crack down on drug trafficking organizations.

"If they believe that the intelligence they provide us will result in what some could describe as an extra-judicial killing, and nobody here is sympathetic to the plight of drug traffickers ... that puts us in a pretty bad spot," Story said. "It puts us in contravention with international law and it undermines our ability to work in the hemisphere."

Meanwhile, frustration with the Trump administration has been growing on Capitol Hill among members of both major political parties. Some Republicans are seeking more information from the White House on the legal justification and details of the strikes. Democrats contend the strikes violate U.S. and international law.

The Senate last week voted on a war powers resolution that would have barred the Trump administration from conducting the strikes unless Congress specifically authorized them, but it failed to pass.

In a memo to Congress that was obtained by The Associated Press, the Trump administration said it had "determined that the United States is in a non-international armed conflict with these designated terrorist organizations" and that Trump directed the Pentagon to "conduct operations against them pursuant to the law of armed conflict."

The Trump administration has yet to provide underlying evidence to lawmakers proving that the boats targeted by the U.S. military were in fact carrying narcotics, according to two U.S. officials familiar with the matter who were not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Congressman says Trump's authority in this matter is limited

California Sen. Adam Schiff, a Democrat who last week pushed the vote on the Venezuela resolution, said in a post on X that the president's authority to respond to an armed attack or the threat of one was limited and did not apply.

"These continued strikes — 27 killed to date — risk getting the U.S. into a full fledged war," Schiff said. He said he would push for another vote if the strikes continue.

The strikes followed a buildup of U.S. maritime forces in the Caribbean unlike any seen in recent times.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 53 of 76**

Following Tuesday's strike, Jorge Rodríguez, president of Venezuela's National Assembly and a close ally of President Nicolás Maduro, called on the press to combat U.S. "lies" that are being used to justify a possible invasion.

The government had convened foreign media and dozens of leaders of local media outlets for Rodríguez's message.

"The objective is not the search for the truth and much less fighting drug trafficking," Rodríguez said. It's about "looking for the way to have an excuse for aggression."

"We're not asking you to make up anything, but rather to defend the truth," he said.

## **Instagram says it's safeguarding teens by limiting them to PG-13 content**

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

Teenagers on Instagram will be restricted to seeing PG-13 content by default and won't be able to change their settings without a parent's permission, Meta announced on Tuesday.

This means kids using teen-specific accounts will see photos and videos on Instagram that are similar to what they would see in a PG-13 movie — no sex, drugs or dangerous stunts, among others.

"This includes hiding or not recommending posts with strong language, certain risky stunts, and additional content that could encourage potentially harmful behaviors, such as posts showing marijuana paraphernalia," Meta said in a blog post Tuesday, calling the update the most significant since it introduced teen accounts last year.

Anyone under 18 who signs up for Instagram is automatically placed into restrictive teen accounts unless a parent or guardian gives them permission to opt out. The teen accounts are private by default, have usage restrictions on them and already filter out more "sensitive" content — such as those promoting cosmetic procedures. But kids often lie about their ages when they sign up for social media, and while Meta has begun using artificial intelligence to find such accounts, the company declined to say how many adult accounts it has determined to be minors since rolling out the feature earlier this year.

The company is also adding an even stricter setting that parents can set up for their children.

The changes come as the social media giant faces relentless criticism over harms to children. As it seeks to add safeguards for younger users, Meta has already promised it wouldn't show inappropriate content to teens, such as posts about self-harm, eating disorders or suicide.

But this does not always work. A recent report, for instance, found that teen accounts researchers created were recommended age-inappropriate sexual content, including "graphic sexual descriptions, the use of cartoons to describe demeaning sexual acts, and brief displays of nudity."

In addition, Instagram also recommended a "range of self-harm, self-injury, and body image content" on teen accounts that the report says "would be reasonably likely to result in adverse impacts for young people, including teenagers experiencing poor mental health, or self-harm and suicidal ideation and behaviors."

Meta called the report "misleading, dangerously speculative" and that it misrepresents its efforts on teen safety.

Josh Golin, the executive director of the nonprofit Fairplay, said he's "very skeptical about how this will be implemented."

"From my perspective, these announcements are about two things. They're about forestalling legislation that Meta doesn't want to see, and they're about reassuring parents who are understandably concerned about what's happening on Instagram," he said.

"Splashy press releases won't keep kids safe, but real accountability and transparency will," Golin said, adding that passing the federal Kids Online Safety Act would push for this accountability.

Ailen Arreaza, executive director of ParentsTogether, was also skeptical.

"We've heard promises from Meta before, and each time we've watched millions be poured into PR campaigns while the actual safety features fall short in testing and implementation. Our children have paid the price for that gap between promise and protection," Arreaza said. "While any acknowledgment

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 54 of 76

of the need for age-appropriate content filtering is a step in the right direction, we need to see more than announcements — we need transparent, independent testing and real accountability.”

Meta says the new restrictions go further than its previous safeguards. Teens will no longer be able to follow accounts that regularly share “age-inappropriate content” or if their name or bio contains something that isn’t appropriate for teens, such as a link to an OnlyFans account. If teens already follow these accounts, they’ll no longer be able to see or interact with their content, send them messages, or see their comments under anyone’s posts, the company said. The accounts also won’t be able to follow teens, send them private messages or comment on their posts.

Meta said it already blocks certain search terms related to sensitive topics such as suicide and eating disorders, but the latest update will expand this to a broader range of terms, such as “alcohol” or “gore” — even if they are misspelled.

The PG-13 update will also apply artificial intelligence chats and experiences targeted to teens, Meta said, “meaning AIs should not give age-inappropriate responses that would feel out of place in a PG-13 movie.”

The Motion Picture Association, which runs the film rating system that was established nearly 60 years ago, said it was not contacted by Meta prior to its announcement.

“We welcome efforts to protect kids from content that may not be appropriate for them, but assertions that Instagram’s new tool will be ‘guided by PG-13 movie ratings’ or have any connection to the film industry’s rating system are inaccurate,” said Charles Rivkin, the chairman and CEO of the association, in a statement.

For parents who want an even stricter setting for their kids, Meta is also launching a “limited content” restriction that will block more content and remove teens’ ability to see, leave, or receive comments under posts.

To Maurine Molak, the cofounder of Parents for Safe Online Spaces, or ParentsSOS, whose son died by suicide in 2016 after being bullied online, Meta’s announcement amounts to what she called a “PR stunt.”

“Any time it seems like we’re getting close to federal legislation...that would actually hold them really accountable and create transparency and independent audits and require parental safety tools that work, it seems like they’re always releasing some new safeguard,” Molak said. “I think it’s for Congress to see...‘hey, we’ve got parents, we got you covered, we’re going to take care of you, we don’t need legislation’ and it’s the same thing over and over again.”

While some advocates worry that the announcement may give parents a false sense of security about the safety of their kids on Instagram, Desmond Upton Patton, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania who studies social media, AI, empathy and race, said it gives a “timely opening for parents and caregivers to talk directly with teens about their digital lives, how they use these tools, and how to shape safer habits that enable positive use cases.”

“I am especially glad to see changes around AI chatbots that make clear they are not human, they do not love you back, and should be engaged with that understanding,” he said. “It is a meaningful step toward a more joyful social media experience for teens.”

## **D’Angelo, Grammy-winning R&B singer who became an icon with ‘Untitled (How Does It Feel),’ dies**

By JONATHAN LANDRUM Jr. AP Entertainment Writer

D’Angelo, the Grammy-winning R&B singer recognized by his raspy yet smooth voice and for garnering mainstream attention with the shirtless “Untitled (How Does It Feel)” music video, has died. He was 51.

The singer, whose real name was Michael Eugene Archer, died Tuesday after a long bout with cancer, his family said in a statement.

It called him “a shining star of our family and has dimmed his light for us in this life,” adding that they are “eternally grateful for the legacy of extraordinarily moving music he leaves behind.”

In his music, D’Angelo blended hip-hop grit, emphatic soul and gospel-rooted emotion into a sound that helped spearhead the neo-soul movement of the 1990s. Earlier this year, the Virginia native celebrated



# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 55 of 76**

the 30th anniversary of his debut studio album "Brown Sugar," a platinum-selling offering that produced signature hits like "Lady" and the title track. The 1995 album earned him multiple Grammy nominations and cemented him as one of R&B's most original new voices.

D'Angelo's sultry vocal style — a mix of raspy texture and church-bred fluidity — set him apart from his peers. That voice became inseparable from the striking visuals of his 2000 single "Untitled (How Does It Feel)." The minimalist, shirtless music video became a cultural touchstone, igniting conversations around artistry, sexuality and vulnerability in Black male representation. The song earned him a Grammy for best male R&B vocal performance and propelled his sophomore album "Voodoo," topping the Billboard 200 chart and winning the Grammy for best R&B album.

With an idiosyncratic spirit not unlike Prince, D'Angelo's devotion was always to the craft — not the machinery around it. In a 2000 interview with The Associated Press, he spoke candidly about the cost of chasing commercial success.

"(Musicians) have gotten trapped into that mode of thinking marketable and commercial. That destroys art, that destroys the essence of what it is about," he said. "You cannot, you cannot work like that. You cannot make music like that. That's not what this is about."

That same year, D'Angelo reflected on his need for solitude amid fame: "I used to hang out a lot, but now I've become more of a recluse," he told AP. "I long for just peace and silence."

Beyond his own catalog, D'Angelo's artistry shined in collaborations. He memorably duetted with Lauryn Hill on the soulful ballad "Nothing Even Matters," a highlight of her landmark 1998 album "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill." He also contributed to The Roots' 1996 album "Illadelph Halflife" and was part of the supergroup Black Men United, which yielded one song: "U Will Know," which D'Angelo wrote and co-produced, for the film "Jason's Lyric" in 1994.

"I remember hearing your music for the first time... I said to myself damn whoever this is they are anointed," Jamie Foxx said on social media. "Then when I finally got a chance to see you... Like everyone when they saw the most incredible music video of our time... I was blown away... I thought to myself I have to see this person in concert... I had my chance to see you at the house of blues... You came out and got right down to business... Your voice was silky and flawless... I was graciously envious of your style and your swag..."

Years before stepping back from public view, D'Angelo's life and music were closely intertwined with Grammy-nominated R&B singer Angie Stone in the '90s. The pair met while he was finishing "Brown Sugar" and bonded over their shared Southern roots and deep church upbringing. Stone contributed to the album and later collaborated with him on "Everyday," a song from her 1999 debut album, "Black Diamond."

Stone once described D'Angelo as her "musical soul mate," to the AP in 1999, adding that their working relationship was "like milk and cereal .... Musically, it was magic. It's something that I have not been able to do with any other producer or musician." They had a son together, the artist Swayvo Twain, born Michael Archer Jr.

Stone died earlier this year in a car crash. She was 63.

D'Angelo also has a daughter, Imani Archer, who is also a music artist.

In the years that followed, D'Angelo's life became as defined by absence as by acclaim. After "Voodoo," he withdrew from the spotlight for more than a decade, fueling speculation about personal struggles and creative battles. His long-awaited return came in 2014 with "Black Messiah," credited to D'Angelo and The Vanguard. The urgent and politically charged album that arrived amid nationwide protests and helped usher in a wave of activist music responding to police killings of Black Americans and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The album debuted at No. 5 on the Billboard 200 chart and won him a Grammy for best R&B album, reaffirming his stature as a generational voice. Its standout single, "Really Love," earned him another Grammy for best R&B song and earned a nomination for record of the year.

In May, D'Angelo withdrew from being a headliner for the 2025 Roots Picnic in Philadelphia due to "an unforeseen medical delay regarding surgery (he) had earlier this year," the artists shared in a statement.

D'Angelo said he was advised the performance "could further complicate matters."

Beyond his biggest singles, D'Angelo's catalog includes fan favorites like "Me and Those Dreamin' Eyes of Mine," "Cruisin'" and "Devil's Pie." His influence stretched far beyond the charts: he inspired a wave of artists including Maxwell, Alicia Keys and Frank Ocean.

## Israel says it has received the remains of 4 more deceased hostages as cuts to aid for Gaza loom

By SAM MEDNICK and GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Hamas hastened Tuesday to ease the pressure on a fragile ceasefire in its war with Israel by returning the bodies of more dead hostages. The move came after an Israeli military agency said it would slash aid deliveries to Gaza by half over concerns that the militant group was handing remains over slower than agreed.

The Israeli Prime Minister's office confirmed late Tuesday that authorities received four deceased hostages that the Red Cross handed over to Israeli military authorities inside Gaza. The bodies will be taken to the National Center for Forensic Medicine where they will be identified and the families notified.

This latest transfer of remains comes a day after Israel received the bodies of four other dead hostages. Despite the development, it was unclear if the Israeli military agency known as COGAT will follow through with its decision to allow into Gaza only half of the 600 aid trucks called for under the deal.

The United Nations' humanitarian office in famine-stricken Gaza received word of the humanitarian aid cuts from the Israeli military agency in charge of transferring aid to the territory, according to spokesperson Olga Cherevko. U.S. officials were also notified, according to three Associated Press sources who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the matter.

U.S. President Donald Trump expressed concern in a social media post that too few of the dead hostages have been returned. He made no mention of Israel halving the flow of aid into the territory.

Trump also warned Hamas that if "they don't disarm, we will disarm them."

A day earlier, Israelis celebrated the return of the last 20 living hostages in Gaza and Palestinians rejoiced at Israel's release of some 2,000 prisoners and detainees as part of the ceasefire's first phase.

Families of hostages express dismay

Hamas and the Red Cross have said that recovering the remains of dead hostages is a challenge because of Gaza's destruction, and Hamas told mediators of the deal that some are in areas controlled by Israeli troops.

The U.S.-proposed ceasefire plan called for all hostages living and dead to be handed over within 72 hours, meaning on Monday. But it provided a mechanism if that didn't happen, saying Hamas should share information about deceased hostages and "exert maximum effort" to carry out the handover as soon as possible.

Families of hostages and their supporters expressed dismay that only four of the 28 bodies were returned on Monday. The Hostages Family Forum, representing many families, called it a "blatant violation of the agreement by Hamas."

The top official in Israel coordinating the return of hostages and the missing, Gal Hirsch, told the families in a note that pressure was being applied on Hamas through mediators to expedite the process. A copy of the note was seen by the AP and its authenticity was confirmed by someone with knowledge of the statement.

Israel confirms identities of returned hostages

On Tuesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office confirmed the identity of the four dead hostages returned on Monday: Guy Illouz from Israel, Bipin Joshi from Nepal, Cpt. Daniel Peretz and Yossi Sharabi.

Illouz was abducted from a music festival, Joshi from a bomb shelter and Sharabi from Be'eri Kibbutz during the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack that ignited the war.

Israel said Illouz died of his wounds without proper medical treatment, while Joshi was killed in the war's

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 57 of 76

first months.

Families left waiting expressed concern.

Ela Haimi said she didn't know if the body of her husband, Tal, would be returned by Hamas in a few hours, days or ever. "I am afraid they will stop the return," she said. Tal Haimi was killed while defending his kibbutz during the 2023 attack.

Long journey to recovery

The freed Israeli hostages were in medical care, and some families said it would be weeks before the men could go home.

Dalia Cusnir-Horn said brother-in-law Eitan Horn had lost more than 40% of his body weight after receiving very little food in the last few months. The physical toll was only part of the trauma, she said.

"He's just learning now ... friends he knew that were murdered, and he had no clue how many people were kidnapped on that day and what this country went through, and it's overwhelming and it's hard," Cusnir-Horn said.

Moshe Levi spoke of brother-in-law Omri Miran's elation at playing with his young daughters — one less than a year old when her father was taken hostage.

"He could feel like he's a father again," Levi said.

Palestinian prisoners allege mistreatment

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza, where hundreds of prisoners and detainees were released, several were taken to hospitals.

Murad Barakat, medical director of the Palestine Medical Complex in Ramallah, said the facility received 14 men and discharged all but two.

Doctors said their conditions suggested they "were subjected to severe beatings, reflecting the extent of the violence they endured," said Imed al-Shami, a resident doctor at the hospital.

Kamal Abu Shanab, who was released after more than 18 years, said beatings caused his shoulder to tear. "For eight months, I wasn't given even a pill for the pain," he said.

AP could not independently verify the claims. Israel's Prison Service said it was unaware of such claims.

Nasser Hospital in Gaza said the Red Cross transferred the bodies of 45 Palestinians to its morgue. The bodies were the first of an expected 450 to arrive.

Long-term challenges for lasting peace

Difficult questions remain about Gaza's future, including whether Hamas will disarm and who will govern and help rebuild the territory. Also unanswered is the question of Palestinian statehood.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty said 15 Palestinian technocrats have been selected to administer Gaza, with approval from Israel, Hamas and all other Palestinian factions.

Palestinians in Gaza appealed for authorities to move quickly to restore some semblance of normality. "There is no infrastructure, electricity, water or anything that is fit for life," said Mohamad Abu Hajras, one of the many displaced.

On Tuesday, the U.N. development agency said the latest joint estimate with the European Union and the World Bank is that rebuilding Gaza will require \$70 billion.

Under the ceasefire deal, Israeli forces pulled back to where they were in August, before launching their latest offensive on Gaza City. A number of hard-hit Palestinian neighborhoods remain under Israeli control, and Israel has warned residents not to try to return to homes there.

Gaza's Health Ministry on Tuesday said the bodies of three people killed by Israel's military in the north were taken to Al Ahli hospital. The military said troops had "opened fire to remove the threat" of several people approaching them and not complying with orders to stop. It didn't immediately comment on any casualties.

The war has killed over 67,600 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, part of the Hamas-run government, which does not say how many were civilians or combatants. It says women and children make up around half the dead, and many independent experts say its figures are the most reliable estimate of wartime casualties.



## House Republicans seek testimony from ex-Trump prosecutor Jack Smith

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee requested Tuesday that Jack Smith, the former Justice Department special counsel, appear for an interview, part of an escalating effort among the GOP to pursue the perceived enemies of President Donald Trump.

Rep. Jim Jordan, the committee chair, charged in a letter to Smith that his prosecutions of Trump were “partisan and politically motivated.” Smith has come under particular scrutiny on Capitol Hill, especially after the Senate Judiciary Committee said last week that his investigation had included an FBI analysis of phone records for more than half a dozen Republican lawmakers from the week of Jan. 6, 2021.

Smith brought two cases against Trump, one accusing him of conspiring to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election and the other of hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. Both were brought in 2023, well over a year before the 2024 presidential election, and indictments in the two cases cited what Smith and his team described as clear violations of well-established federal law. Former Attorney General Merrick Garland, who named Smith as special counsel in November 2022, has repeatedly said politics played no part in the handling of the cases.

Smith abandoned the criminal cases against Trump after he won the presidential election last year. Trump’s return to the White House precluded the federal prosecutions, as well as paved the way for Republicans to go after Trump’s political and legal opponents.

Jordan wrote to Smith: “Your testimony is necessary to understand the full extent to which the Biden-Harris Justice Department weaponized federal law enforcement.”

In just the last weeks, the Trump administration has pursued criminal charges against both James Comey, the former FBI director, and New York Attorney General Letitia James, who for years investigated and sued Trump.

Rep. Jamie Raskin, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, said in a statement that “everyone can see the irony” of the committee demanding testimony from Smith at a time when Trump has demanded the prosecutions of Comey and James.

The House Judiciary Committee has been looking into Smith’s actions as special counsel since the start of the year. Jordan said that it had interviewed two other members of Smith’s prosecutorial team, but they had declined to answer many questions, citing the Fifth Amendment.

An attorney for Smith did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the House Judiciary Committee’s interview request.

## US revokes visas for 6 foreigners over Charlie Kirk-related speech

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration has revoked the visas of six foreigners deemed by U.S. officials to have made derisive comments or made light of the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk last month.

The State Department said Tuesday it had determined they should lose their visas after reviewing their online social media posts and clips about Kirk, who was killed while speaking at a Utah college campus on Sept. 10.

The announcement came as President Donald Trump was posthumously awarding him America’s highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. At Kirk’s funeral in September, Trump called him a “great American hero” and “martyr” for freedom.

The administration and its supporters have targeted people for their comments about Kirk, leading to firings or other discipline of journalists, teachers and others, and raising free speech concerns.

The six foreigners who had their visas revoked were from Argentina, Brazil, Germany, Mexico, Paraguay and South Africa. They were not identified.

Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio “will defend our borders, our culture, and our citizens by

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 59 of 76**

enforcing our immigration laws," the State Department said. "Aliens who take advantage of America's hospitality while celebrating the assassination of our citizens will be removed."

Vice President JD Vance and other top U.S. officials have encouraged people to call out offensive language about Kirk that they see online. In an unusual tweet last month, Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau asked social media users to copy him on any relevant posts, saying he was personally "disgusted to see some on social media praising, rationalizing, or making light of the event, and have directed our consular officials to undertake appropriate action."

In addition to Tuesday's action, the administration has ramped up efforts to identify and potentially expel thousands of foreigners in the United States, notably students, who it says have either fomented or participated in unrest or publicly supported protests against Israel's military operations in Gaza. The administration has also denied visas to applicants whose social media histories have been critical of its policies.

Among the higher-profile cases, the administration has expelled South Africa's ambassador to the United States for comments critical of Trump, revoked a visa for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to attend the U.N. General Assembly and yanked the visas for British punk-rap duo Bob Vylan. It said it is reviewing the status of the more than 55 million current U.S. visa holders for potential violations of its standards.

Those actions have been criticized by civil rights groups as violations of constitutional protections for freedom of speech, which apply to anyone in the United States and not just to American citizens.

## **Stocks wobble as trade tensions between the US and China escalate**

By DAMIAN J. TROISE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. indexes bounced between gains and losses on Tuesday and wound up mixed on Wall Street as trade tensions continued to simmer between Washington and Beijing.

The S&P 500 closed 0.2% lower after shifting between a steep morning loss and a recovery in the afternoon. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 0.4% and the Nasdaq composite dropped 0.8% after making similar swings. The moves mark yet another series of sharp twists for markets over the last few days.

Wall Street tumbled on Friday for its worst day since April and bounced back on Monday for its best day since May. The swings were prompted by shifting trade sentiment between the U.S. and China.

The latest swing follows China's Commerce Ministry banning dealings by Chinese companies with five subsidiaries of South Korean shipbuilder Hanwha Ocean, swiping at President Donald Trump's efforts to rebuild the industry in America. European markets were mixed and Asian markets fell.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 10.41 points to 6,644.31. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 202.88 points to 46,270.46, and the Nasdaq sank 172.91 to 22,521.70.

Technology stocks are particularly sensitive to trade issues involving China and were the biggest weights on the market. Big chipmakers and other companies rely on China for raw materials and manufacturing. China's large consumer base is also important for sales growth. Chipmaker Nvidia slumped 2.6% and Broadcom fell 3.5%.

The ongoing trade war between the U.S. and the world has been an unpredictable weight on the market. The trade conflict between the U.S. and China is potentially the most economically consequential, owing to those nations' positions as the two largest economies in the world.

International shipping and shipbuilding have become a major source of friction between Washington and Beijing, with each side imposing new port fees on each others' vessels. Those fees went into effect on Tuesday.

"We remain cautiously optimistic that both sides will ultimately pursue a negotiated resolution, given the significant economic stakes," said Ulrike Hoffmann-Burchardi, chief investment officer for the Americas and global head of equities at UBS Global Wealth Management.

The U.S. economy has so far dodged any major impact from the frequently shifting U.S. tariff policies.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 60 of 76

That could change if nations fall back into a cycle of retaliatory tariffs and companies pass along more of the higher costs to consumers.

The U.S. government shutdown has put a halt to the usual economic updates on inflation, consumer spending and employment. That has made it more difficult for investors and economists to continue gauging the economic impact from tariffs. Wall Street is looking toward the latest round of company earnings and forecasts to get a better sense of the broader economic picture.

Upcoming profit reports will also help Wall Street gauge the broader market's value amid criticism that it has become too expensive after prices rose much faster than corporate profits. For stocks to look less expensive overall, either prices need to fall, or companies' profits need to rise.

Banks were the first big sector to kick off the latest round of earnings reports and the results hint at Wall Street notching one of its most profitable quarters ever. Still, executives from major banks expressed various degrees of caution about markets and the economy. JPMorgan Chase slipped 1.9%, Wells Fargo rose 7.1% and Citigroup rose 3.9%.

Industrial firms and retailers were among the other companies making some of the biggest gains. Caterpillar rose 4.5% and Walmart rose 5%.

Beyond Meat's stock fell 24.6% and slipped below \$1 as investors fretted over the company's plans to cut its debt by issuing more shares.

A lack of updates about the U.S. economy has also left the Federal Reserve without much of the information it uses to make policy decisions. The central bank cut its benchmark interest rate by a quarter of a percentage point in September amid worries that unemployment could worsen. That marked its first cut of the year and Wall Street expects similar cuts at the Fed's meetings in October and December.

Lapses in data about employment and inflation makes it more difficult for the central bank to balance its tasks of both helping to maintain strong employment while keeping prices stable. On Tuesday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell again signaled that the Fed is slightly more worried about the job market.

"Rising downside risks to employment have shifted our assessment of the balance of risks," he said, at a meeting of the National Association of Business Economics in Philadelphia.

Treasury yields held relatively steady. The yield on the 10-year Treasury slipped to 4.03% from 4.05% late Friday. Bond markets were closed in the U.S. on Monday for a holiday.

Gold rose 0.7% and remains above \$4,100 per ounce. The precious metal has soared 57% in 2025 amid a long list of uncertainties, including tariffs and the economy.

## Madagascar's president is ousted in a military coup after weeks of youth-led protests

By NQOBILE NTSHANGASE, BRIAN INGANGA, SARAH TETAUD and GERALD IMRAY Associated Press ANTANANARIVO, Madagascar (AP) — Madagascar President Andry Rajoelina was toppled Tuesday in a military coup that capped weeks of youth protests over poverty, power outages and a lack of opportunity in the Indian Ocean island country.

Right after parliament voted to impeach Rajoelina, who fled the country fearing for his safety, the leader of Madagascar's elite CAPSAT military unit said the armed forces would form a council made up of officers from the armed forces and gendarmerie, a military unit that polices civilians, and would appoint a prime minister to "quickly" form a civilian government.

"We are taking power," Col. Michael Randrianirina told reporters in front of a ceremonial presidential palace in the capital, Antananarivo, as protesters celebrated the news with soldiers. He said the constitution and High Constitutional Court's powers had been suspended, and that a referendum would be held in two years, though he didn't go into detail.

From an undisclosed location after fleeing, Rajoelina issued a decree Tuesday trying to dissolve parliament's lower house in an apparent attempt to preempt being impeached. But lawmakers ignored it and voted overwhelmingly to end the rule of the 51-year-old leader, who himself came to power as a transitional



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 61 of 76

leader in a military-backed coup in 2009.

Rajoelina's office released a statement condemning Randrianirina's announcement as an "illegal declaration" and "a serious breach of the rule of law."

"The Republic of Madagascar cannot be taken hostage by force. The State remains standing," it said.

Madagascar, a sprawling island country off the east coast of southern Africa, is home to about 30 million people. It is the world's biggest vanilla producer and, because of its geographic isolation, is known for its biodiversity. Since gaining its independence from French colonial rule in 1960, it has struggled to overcome poverty and political instability, including a series of coups.

Rajoelina's fall capped weeks of Gen Z-led protests that started over persistent electricity and water outages but snowballed into demonstrations of frustration with the government and Rajoelina's leadership. Protesters raised a range of issues, including government corruption, access to higher education, the cost of living and poverty, which affects about 75% of Madagascar's population, according to the World Bank. Although young people led the demonstrations, others also took part, including civic groups and unions.

The turning point came Saturday, when Randrianirina and CAPSAT troops joined the protests and turned against Rajoelina, which led the president to go into hiding. In a Monday night speech broadcast on social media, Rajoelina said he left the country for a "safe place" in fear for his life.

The protesters, who have been on the streets for weeks and packing a main square since Saturday, have said they were inspired by other Gen Z-led movements that toppled leaders in Nepal and Sri Lanka. The young protesters have made clear they don't have a leader.

Demonstrators insisted that change is needed in Madagascar.

"We do not get a constant supply of electricity and water from the government," said one protester, Soavololona Faraniaina. "If Madagascan children are studying in darkness, where will the future of this nation be? Where is the wealthy Madagascar that many countries envied?"

CAPSAT is the same military unit that turned against the government in 2009 and helped Rajoelina take power. The unit said over the weekend that it was taking charge of all of Madagascar's armed forces, and new heads of the military and the gendarmerie security forces have been appointed.

CAPSAT commanders previously denied that they had carried out a coup, and said Madagascar's people should decide what happens next. But the unit appeared to be in a position of authority in some areas of government decision-making since Saturday, and Rajoelina had called the military's actions a rebellion against the government and "an attempt to seize power illegally and by force."

## **Pennsylvania man pleads guilty in arson attack at governor's mansion while Shapiro's family slept**

By MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — A man who scaled an iron security fence in the middle of the night, eluded police and used beer bottles filled with gasoline to ignite the occupied Pennsylvania governor's mansion pleaded guilty Tuesday to the attempted murder of Gov. Josh Shapiro.

Cody Balmer also entered pleas to terrorism, 22 counts of arson, aggravated arson, burglary, aggravated assault, 21 counts of reckless endangerment and loitering in the April 13 attack that caused millions of dollars in damage to the state-owned brick building.

Under a plea deal, Balmer was sentenced to 25 to 50 years in prison, far less than he could have faced if the case went to trial. He declined to address the judge about the crime, answering questions with short, simple answers.

Defense attorney Bryan Walk said Balmer "is taking full responsibility" and paying "a hefty price for a man who's 38 years old."

Accountability for political violence

Shapiro said afterward that he and his family support the plea deal, and that it provides real accountability.

They had to be awakened and evacuated, but no one was injured in the fire. The multiple arson and

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 62 of 76**

endangerment charges reflected the number of people in the residence at the time, including guests and state troopers.

Shapiro lamented the impact of increasing political violence, noting he's heard from leaders around the world about their own sense of vulnerability and from potential political candidates who say they don't want to run because it would put their families at risk. The Democrat had spoken about eradicating hate days after the assassination of conservative political activist Charlie Kirk, and has criticized what he called the subsequent "rhetoric of rage" from Republican President Donald Trump, who was himself grazed by a bullet last year while campaigning in Pennsylvania.

Shapiro said Tuesday that political violence shouldn't be accepted as the normal course of business for elected officials.

Shapiro called it an "ongoing effort" to ease his children's worries in the aftermath of the attack.

"Why would someone want to do us harm, our kids will ask. How were they able to get so far into the governor's residence, a place that is supposed to be the safest place we could possibly be?" Shapiro said at a news conference after the plea.

Video of the security breach

Security video played in court shows Balmer breaking a window, launching one Molotov cocktail into a dining room often used to entertain crowds, then using a small sledgehammer to break a different window to crawl into the space. The footage shows Balmer made it far enough into the building to kick the doors leading to where Shapiro and his family were sleeping, but he couldn't get through.

He ignites a second fire, then leaves the room and walks back across the yard, never encountering the state police at the property.

Judge Deborah Curcillo called the video "horrific" and "very frightening."

Shapiro and his wife, Lori, provided a victim statement read in court that described how they were left feeling exposed in unimaginable ways, calling it "a fear and anxiety we are learning to live with."

Balmer told police he planned to beat Shapiro with the small sledgehammer if he had encountered him after breaking in, according to court documents. Balmer turned himself in the next afternoon.

Questions about motive and mental health

The attack hours after the family celebrated the Jewish holiday of Passover with a Seder in the residence raised questions about Balmer's motivation, but Balmer told The Associated Press in a May letter from jail that the governor's faith wasn't a factor.

"He can be Jewish, Muslim, or a purple people eater for all I care and as long as he leaves me and mine alone," Balmer wrote.

Balmer told investigators he was concerned about the potential death toll of the war in Gaza, and his comments indicated he was willing to take a life for what he viewed as an offset to the war, Chardo said.

Balmer told the AP in a brief June 9 video interview from Camp Hill State Prison that he did think beforehand about whether children might be injured.

"Does anyone ever consider children?" Balmer said in June. "It doesn't seem that way. I sure as hell did. I'm glad no one got hurt." Asked why he felt Shapiro had somehow done him wrong, Balmer replied: "I'm not going to answer that."

Balmer's mother said days after his arrest that she had tried to get him assistance for mental health issues, but "nobody would help." Court proceedings were delayed while he received mental health treatment, his lawyer said.

A letter from Balmer's relatives read in court on Tuesday said he stopped taking his medication, leading to manic episodes and a "dark and difficult path."

Balmer previously told a judge he was an unemployed welder with no income or savings and "a lot of children."

The residence, built in 1968, did not have sprinklers. The fire charred walls, tables, buffet serving dishes, plates and a piano. Window panes and brick around doors and windows were also damaged.

Work to fix the damage and to bolster its security features continues.

## Supreme Court rejects Alex Jones' appeal of \$1.4 billion defamation judgment in Sandy Hook shooting

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected an appeal from conspiracy theorist Alex Jones and left in place the \$1.4 billion judgment against him over his description of the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting as a hoax staged by crisis actors.

The Infowars host had argued that a judge was wrong to find him liable for defamation and infliction of emotional distress without holding a trial on the merits of allegations lodged by relatives of victims of the shooting, which killed 20 first graders and six educators in Newtown, Connecticut.

The justices did not comment on their order, which they issued without even asking the families of the Sandy Hook victims to respond to Jones' appeal. An FBI agent who responded to the shooting also sued.

A lawyer who represents Sandy Hook families said the Supreme Court had properly rejected Jones' "latest desperate attempt to avoid accountability for the harm he has caused."

"We look forward to enforcing the jury's historic verdict and making Jones and Infowars pay for what they have done," lawyer Christopher Mattei said in a statement.

A lawyer representing Jones in the case didn't immediately respond to an email seeking comment. During his daily show on Tuesday, Jones said his lawyers believed his case was "cut and dry," while he had predicted the high court wouldn't take up his appeal.

"I said no, they will not do it because of politics," Jones said.

Jones mocked the idea that he has enough money to pay the judgement, saying his studio equipment, including five-year-old cameras, was only worth about \$304,000.

"It's all about torturing me. It's all about harassing me. It's about harassing my family. It's about getting me off the air," said Jones, who urged his listeners to buy merchandise to keep show running.

Jones filed for bankruptcy in late 2022, and his lawyers told the justices that the "plaintiffs have no possible hope of collecting" the entire judgment.

He is separately appealing a \$49 million judgment in a similar defamation lawsuit in Texas after he failed to turn over documents sought by the parents of another Sandy Hook victim.

In the Connecticut case, the judge issued a rare default ruling against Jones and his company in late 2021 because of what she called Jones' repeated failure to abide by court rulings and to turn over certain evidence to the Sandy Hook families. The judge convened a jury to determine how much Jones would owe.

The following year, the jury agreed on a \$964 million verdict and the judge later tacked on another \$473 million in punitive damages against Jones and Free Speech Systems, Infowars' parent company, which is based in Austin, Texas.

In November, the satirical news outlet The Onion was named the winning bidder in an auction to liquidate Infowars' assets to help pay the defamation judgments. But the bankruptcy judge threw out the auction results, citing problems with the process and The Onion's bid.

The attempt to sell off Infowars' assets has moved to a Texas state court in Austin. Jones is now appealing a recent order from the court that appointed a receiver to liquidate the assets. Some of Jones' personal property is also being sold off as part of the bankruptcy case.

## News organizations, including Hegseth's former employer Fox, reject new Pentagon reporting rules

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

Fox News, the former employer of Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, has joined a near-unanimous outpouring of news organizations rejecting new rules for journalists based in the Pentagon.

Fox signed on to a statement with ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN saying they would not agree to Hegseth's new rules, saying "the policy is without precedent and threatens core journalistic protections." So far, only the conservative One America News Network has said its reporters would follow the new regulations.



# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 64 of 76

Hegseth has said that outlets who don't agree to the new rules by the end of Tuesday, which restrict reporting on news not specifically approved by his team, will be evicted from the Pentagon on Wednesday.

The Associated Press says it will not agree to the rules.

The Pentagon has said the rules establish "common sense media procedures" and want news outlets to sign a statement acknowledging them, even if they don't agree with them. The news outlets have said that they are concerned, however, that their reporters will be subject to expulsion if they simply try to report news not approved by Hegseth.

The Pentagon's new press policy undermines the First Amendment and AP's core values as an independent global news organization," the AP said in its statement. "The restrictions impede the public's access to information about their government and limit the people's right to know. AP remains focused on continuing to produce strong independent coverage of the Pentagon in the public interest."

The New York Times, Washington Post, Reuters, NPR and The Atlantic are among the other news outlets saying they won't sign onto the new rules. Another conservative television network, Newsmax, has also rejected them.

OANN, through its founder Charles Herring, said that it has signed the document after a thorough review by its attorney.

The rejection by Fox, by far the most popular television outlet for fans of President Donald Trump, is a significant step. Hegseth worked as a weekend host at Fox before Trump selected him as his defense secretary. He's one of several familiar Fox faces now working for Trump, including Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy and Jeanine Pirro, U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia.

The news organizations who have rejected the rules all say they will continue covering the U.S. military, even without being permitted on the Pentagon grounds. Barring a change from either side, the case looks to be headed for court.

The Pentagon Press Association, which represents dozens of reporters at the Pentagon, has said it wonders why it is even necessary for the Pentagon to proceed in this manner.

"Our members did nothing to create this disturbing situation," the reporters' group said in a statement Monday. "It arises from an entirely one-sided move by Pentagon officials apparently intent upon cutting the American public off from information they do not control and pre-approve."

Since taking over at the Defense Department, Hegseth and his team have rarely conducted press briefings. They have moved to restrict the number of places reporters could go in the Pentagon without an official escort, and removed some reporters from long-established working spaces in the building.

Trump has fought news organization on several fronts in the past year. He has filed lawsuits against ABC News, CBS News, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, moved to choke off funding for government-funded news services like the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and is engaged in a court fight with the AP over access to presidential events.

## **UConn tops women's preseason AP Top 25 ahead of South Carolina, UCLA; SEC has 5 teams in top 10**

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

Defending champion UConn picked up where it left off as the No. 1 team in the country in The Associated Press Top 25 preseason women's basketball poll released Tuesday.

The Huskies received 27 first-place votes from a 31-member national media panel. South Carolina, last season's runner-up to UConn, was picked second in the poll and garnered the other four first-place votes. It's the fifth time in the last six years that Dawn Staley's Gamecocks were picked in the top five of the preseason poll. UCLA and Texas were third and fourth and LSU was fifth.

Oklahoma was sixth, the Sooners' highest preseason ranking since they were fourth in 2008. Duke, Tennessee, N.C. State and Maryland rounded out the top 10.

Led by sensational sophomore Sarah Strong and super senior Azzi Fudd, Geno Auriemma's UConn squad is ranked No. 1 in the preseason for the 13th time since 1995 and first since 2017.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 65 of 76

"Hopefully it's a little bit of a confidence builder and not, 'Oh my God!'" Auriemma said. "I'm happy for them. We talk a lot about how we're not out here to prove that we're defending national champions or we're preseason number one in the country, and we have to beat everybody by 40. We don't want to get caught in that trap. You tend to finish the year where you're predicted. So I like being in this position."

Eight of the 12 previous times UConn was picked first, the Huskies won the national championship. Auriemma thinks his team has a good shot this year.

"It's got to come with great leadership and it's got to come with a little bit of luck and people rising to the occasion," he said. "Those four times that we didn't win, we didn't get lucky or we didn't stay healthy."

The top four teams were picked in the same order as last season's final poll. It's the first time in the 50-year history of the women's poll that the top four teams in the final poll were the same in the pre-season Top 25 the next year; last year was only the second season that the AP released a Top 25 after the championship game. For more than four decades, the final poll was released before the start of the NCAA Tournament.

## Conference supremacy

The Southeastern Conference has eight teams in the Top 25, including five in the top 10. The Big Ten is next with six schools in the poll. The ACC has five and Big 12 four. The Atlantic-10 and Big East each have one.

## High expectations in Ann Arbor

Michigan is ranked No. 13 in the preseason poll, its highest ranking in the inaugural poll since 2021 (No. 11). The Wolverines started three freshmen last year and went 23-11, winning an NCAA Tournament game. Big things are expected from that trio of Sylva Swords, Mila Holloway and Olivia Olson.

## Resurgent 'Dores

No. 19 Vanderbilt, led by sophomore Mikayla Blakes, is ranked in the preseason for the first time since 2012. Blakes had one of the finest freshman seasons in school history when she averaged 23.3 points and scoring over 50 twice. Coach Shea Ralph's team was ranked last year for the first time since 2014 when they entered the poll for two weeks.

## Ranked Richmond

No. 24 Richmond has its first ranking in school history. Expectations are high for the Spiders, who won their first NCAA Tournament game last season. The Spiders are the first team from the Atlantic-10 to earn a Top 25 ranking in a decade (George Washington, 2015).

Richmond returns senior standouts Maggie Doogan and Rachel Ullstrom from last season's team that went 28-7. The Spiders also added transfer Tierra Simon from Saint Louis.

"It says a lot about where the program is right now," Richmond coach Aaron Roussell said. "I don't think it was ever a goal, we just wanted to keep putting this program on the map. We talk about that a lot."

## It's called automated officiating. The NBA is utilizing it to get even more calls right

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Basketball Writer

The play, in real time to the naked eye, might have looked very close to a violation. LeBron James leaped, got his right hand on the ball with a few tenths of the game's final second remaining and tapped it through the basket to give the Los Angeles Lakers a buzzer-beating win last season.

Referees on the floor called it correctly. Video replay backed up their call, and the Lakers got a victory over the Indiana Pacers.

Turns out, it wasn't close at all.

The NBA has a relatively new tool called "automated officiating," and the robotic eyes that are now tracking just about everything on basketball courts showed that James was nowhere near committing offensive basket interference on that play. It wasn't needed to decide matters in that case — again, the humans got it right — but the NBA is tapping into technology more and more to ensure that plays like those get adjudicated correctly.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 66 of 76

"Turns out, computers are really good at this," said Evan Wasch, an NBA executive vice president overseeing basketball strategy and analytics. "So, if we can invest in this technology to get more calls right on the objective ones, we do two things."

"One, the accuracy on those calls, by definition, goes up. But we also free up the human referees to not have to focus on those calls and in turn allow them to focus more closely on the really difficult judgment plays that they're so adept at and actually increase accuracy there, too. We think there's what we call double bottom-line benefit to doing this from an accuracy perspective."

Basketball, of course, is not alone in veering toward higher-tech officiating.

Robot umpires are getting called up to Major League Baseball next season; humans will still make the calls, but teams can challenge ball or strike calls and an automated system will determine if those challenges were successful. Many major tennis tournaments, even Wimbledon, have replaced line judges with electronic line-calling. Soccer has technology to tell referees if a ball fully crossed a goal line or if someone was offside, calls that in real time might just be guesswork.

It's important to note that NBA referees are not being replaced. Technology is just helping; instead of six human eyes on a court, it's now six human eyes and a whole lot of camera lenses that are there to collect as much data as the league can think of.

"Let's get it right," Milwaukee coach Doc Rivers said. "And let's get right quicker."

Those are the goals, the NBA insists. Using technology helps with game flow thanks to shorter review times, helps with the accuracy and also provides transparency in the ability to show fans and players computer-generated images to explain how calls were made.

Cameras in arenas are helping to precisely make calls such as the ones along sidelines and baselines — who was a ball off, was it out of bounds, that sort of thing — as well as determining if blocked shots were good or was goaltending committed on those plays.

"What we're doing is tracking a bunch of objects in space with incredible precision," Wasch said. "We are tracking a basketball, fingers, feet, heads, hands, all the parts of the body. We're tracking them in space with cameras and sensors. And there's an element of machine learning and artificial intelligence to build those algorithms on top of that to then know what in fact happened from a basketball perspective based on the movement of all those things."

The technology isn't limited to calls or non-calls.

Some referees have been wearing earpieces during this preseason as the league tinkers with ways for better communication methods. There's been talk at the league of sending alerts to smartwatches about decisions on calls. And at summer league this year, there was even a sensor placed inside the ball to help collect data. The sensor weighs about the same as a raisin does. Hundreds of players used the ball, which typically weighs somewhere around 600 grams; nobody noticed that it was about a gram heavier than usual.

In the end, it's all about making the product better.

"There's actually been a ton of openness from the referees and the referee union on implementing this technology," Wasch said. "It lets them focus on the things that they train for this job to do."

## French prime minister will suspend a pension reform to avoid government collapse

By SAMUEL PETREQUIN Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — French Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu on Tuesday announced he would suspend a much-debated plan to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64, in a move aimed at preventing his fragile minority government from being toppled.

After a week of political turmoil, the newly reappointed Lecornu said in a policy speech at the National Assembly that the law, a flagship initiative of President Emmanuel Macron, would be put on hold until after the next presidential election in 2027.

On Thursday, Lecornu will face two no-confidence motions, one from the hard-left France Unbowed and

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 67 of 76**

the other from the far-right National Rally. The two parties do not hold enough seats to topple Lecornu's government on their own, but the prime minister could be ousted if the Socialists and others on the left join forces with them.

The Socialist Party, which is not part of the governing coalition, had demanded the law be repealed.

Boris Vallaud, president of the Socialist group in the National Assembly, said his colleagues were ready to take a "gamble," making clear they would not vote the no-confidence motions. Vallaud called the suspension a "first step" toward scrapping the law.

Lecornu said the suspension would cost 400 million euros (\$463 million) in 2026, and 1.8 billion euros in 2027. He said it will benefit 3.5 million French citizens.

"It will therefore have to be financially compensated, including through cost-saving measures. It cannot be carried out at the expense of an increased deficit," he said.

France's deficit hit 5.8% of gross domestic product last year, way above the official EU target of 3%. France is also facing a massive debt crisis. At the end of the first quarter of 2025, France's public debt stood at 3.346 trillion euros, or 114% of GDP.

Concessions required

Earlier on Tuesday, Lecornu met with his cabinet to discuss the 2026 budget, which must be approved by year's end. He said the main objective would be to bring the deficit below 5% of GDP to safeguard France's sovereignty, stressing the need for fiscal discipline and structural savings.

Among the measures under consideration are cutting red tape, fighting social and tax fraud, targeted tax cuts for small and medium-sized businesses, and exceptional contributions from large corporations.

Lecornu also confirmed that he would not use a special constitutional power to force the budget through parliament without a vote, and would instead seek a compromise with lawmakers.

The so-called "49.3" article allows the government to pass a bill without a vote at the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament. Lecornu's predecessor, François Bayrou, used it to pass this year's budget.

"The government will make proposals, we will debate, and you will vote," Lecornu told lawmakers.

With his government hanging by a thread, France's newly reappointed prime minister must make concessions to his political opponents.

The opposite sides of the political spectrum have slammed Macron's decision to reappoint Lecornu, France's former defense minister and fourth prime minister in barely a year.

With less than two years before the next presidential election, National Rally is urging Macron to call another early parliamentary vote, while France Unbowed wants Macron to step down.

Outcry around pension reform

Rammed through parliament without a vote in 2023 despite mass protests, the pension change gradually raises the retirement age from 62 to 64. Opposition parties want it scrapped.

Those calling for the law to be suspended have gained a high-profile ally. Nobel Prize-winning economist Philippe Aghion told broadcaster France 2 that it should be suspended until 2027.

"I think we need to stop the clock now until the presidential election," Aghion said, arguing that doing so would be "the way to calm things down" and "it doesn't cost very much to pause it."

Communist party leader Fabien Roussel called the suspension of the pension reform "a first victory," while the Greens were unconvinced and announced they would vote to topple Lecornu's government.

Macron's last chance

Lecornu's reappointment is widely seen as Macron's last chance to reinvigorate his second term. His centrist camp lacks a majority in the National Assembly and he is facing increasing criticism even within its ranks.

Macron's surprise decision last year to dissolve the National Assembly resulted in a hung parliament and political paralysis.

Over the past year, Macron's minority governments have collapsed in quick succession, leaving France mired in deadlock while confronting a rising poverty rate and a mounting debt crisis that has alarmed markets and EU partners.



## US rejects bid to buy 167 million tons of coal on public lands for less than a penny per ton

By MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP) — Federal officials rejected a company's bid to acquire 167 million tons of coal on public lands in Montana for less than a penny per ton, in what would have been the biggest U.S. government coal sale in more than a decade.

The failed sale underscores a continued low appetite for coal among utilities that are turning to cheaper natural gas and renewables such as wind and solar to generate electricity. Emissions from burning coal are a leading driver of climate change, which scientists say is raising sea levels and making weather more extreme.

President Donald Trump has made reviving the coal industry a centerpiece of his agenda to increase U.S. energy production. But economists say Trump's attempts to boost coal are unlikely to reverse its yearslong decline.

The Department of Interior said in a Tuesday statement that last week's \$186,000 bid from the Navajo Transitional Energy Co. (NTEC) did not meet the requirements of the Mineral Leasing Act.

Agency representatives did not provide further details, and it's unclear if they will attempt to hold the sale again.

The leasing act requires bids to be at or above fair market value. At the last successful government lease sale in the region, a subsidiary of Peabody Energy paid \$793 million, or \$1.10 per ton, for 721 million tons of coal in Wyoming.

President Joe Biden's administration sought to end coal sales in the Powder River Basin of Montana and Wyoming, citing climate change.

A second proposed lease sale under Trump — 440 million tons of coal near an NTEC mine in central Wyoming — was postponed last week following the low bid received in the Montana sale. Interior Department officials have not said when the Wyoming sale will be rescheduled.

NTEC is owned by the Navajo Nation of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah.

In documents submitted in the run-up to the Montana sale, NTEC indicated the coal had little value because of declining demand for the fuel. The Associated Press emailed a company representative regarding the rejected bid.

Most power plants using fuel from NTEC's Spring Creek mine in Montana and Antelope mine in Wyoming are scheduled to stop burning coal in the next decade, according to an analysis by The Associated Press.

Spring Creek also ships coal overseas to customers in Asia. Increasing those shipments could help it offset lessening domestic demand, but a shortage of port capacity has hobbled prior industry aspirations to boost coal exports.

## 3 Italian carabinieri killed in apparently deliberate farmhouse explosion

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

MILAN (AP) — Three carabinieri militarized police officers were killed and another 13 carabinieri and police officers were injured in an explosion allegedly set by three middle-aged siblings who had been fighting eviction from a family farm near the northeastern Italian city of Verona early Tuesday, authorities said.

Two brothers and a sister, identified as Dino, Franco and Maria Luisa Rampini, were detained in connection to the explosion in the town of Castel d'Azzano, 10 kilometers (six miles) southwest Verona, police said.

They were being investigated for premeditated murder, chief prosecutor Raffaele Tito told reporters at the scene.

"While our carabinieri were carrying out a judicial order, they were hit by an intentional explosion of a gas tank," Verona's carabinieri commander, Col. Claudio Pagano, told Sky TG24. He called it "an absolutely crazy gesture."

Tito said the eviction had been carefully planned. "The reaction was so violent, that it was hard to predict," the prosecutor said.

The two-story farmhouse had been filled with gas, and the explosion was set off when authorities opened the door in the predawn hours, regional governor Luca Zaia told Sky TG24.

It was the second time authorities moved to evict the siblings. Another attempt was thwarted last year when the Rampinis threatened to blow the house up, Zaia said.

Maria Luisa Rampini told Corriere della Sera last year that the siblings had been fighting what they perceived to be an unjust foreclosure of the family farm.

"They took away the agricultural company, the land and now the house, probably," Maria Luisa Rampini said on a video filmed during last year's attempt at evicting the siblings.

"Today they wanted to carry out the eviction. We are opposing it in every way. We have filled the house with gas to be able to fight," she said on the video posted Tuesday by the newspaper.

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni and Defense Minister Guido Crosetto each expressed their condolences for the deaths of the carabinieri, part of a national militarized police force that plays a central law enforcement role in Italy.

## Takeaways from the AP investigation into ICE's use of a full-body restraint device known as the WRAP

By JASON DEAREN, JIM MUSTIAN and DORANY PINEDA Associated Press

The full-body restraint device known as the WRAP has become a harrowing part of deportations for some immigrants.

The Associated Press identified multiple examples of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers using the black-and-yellow full-body restraint device on deportation flights.

Here are takeaways from the AP's investigation:

What is the WRAP?

The WRAP first appeared in law enforcement in the late 1990s, presented as an alternative to tying a subject's hands and feet together in a practice known as "hog-tying" and a long-awaited solution for restraining the most erratic inmates and avoiding in-custody deaths caused by handcuffs and positional asphyxia, in part by preventing a detainee from being able to remain prone.

It first found widespread use in California jails and today is used by more than 1,800 departments and facilities around the country, according to the manufacturer, which says it has sold more than 10,000 devices.

Charles Hammond, CEO of the WRAP's maker, Safe Restraints Inc., said his company has made a modified version of the device for ICE, with changes meant to allow people to be kept in it during flights and long bus trips.

ICE's version includes a ring on the front of the suit that allows a subject's cuffed hands to be attached while still allowing for limited use to eat and drink, he said. In addition, the ICE version has "soft elbow cuffs," Hammond said, which connect in the back so a person can move for proper circulation but can't flip an elbow out to hit someone.

ICE's parent agency, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, has paid Safe Restraints Inc. \$268,523 since it started purchasing the devices in late 2015 during the Obama administration. Government purchasing records show the two Trump administrations have been responsible for about 91% of that spending. ICE would not provide AP with records documenting its use of the WRAP despite multiple requests, and it's not clear how frequently it has been used in the current and prior administrations.

What did AP's investigation find?

Use of the WRAP was described to the AP by five people who said they were restrained in the device, sometimes for hours, on ICE deportation flights dating to 2020. And witnesses and family members in four countries told the AP about its use on at least seven other people this year.

The AP found that ICE has used the device despite internal concerns voiced in a 2023 report by the civil rights division of DHS, in part due to reports of deaths involving the use of the WRAP by local law

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 70 of 76

enforcement. And the AP has identified a dozen fatal cases in the last decade where local police or jailers around the U.S. used the WRAP and autopsies determined "restraint" played a role in the death.

The WRAP is the subject of a growing number of federal lawsuits likening incorrect usage of the device to punishment and even torture, whether used in a jail or by immigration authorities during international flights. Among advocates' concerns is that ICE is not tracking the WRAP's use as required by federal law when officers use force, making it difficult to discern exactly how many people are being subjected to the restraints.

The WRAP's manufacturer says it intended the device to be a lifesaver for law enforcement confronting erratic people who were physically attacking officers or harming themselves.

But ICE officials have a much lower threshold for deploying the WRAP than the manufacturer advises, the AP found. Instead, detainees interviewed by the AP said ICE officers used the restraints on them after they had already been shackled. They said this was done to intimidate or punish them for asking to speak to their attorneys or expressed fear at being deported, often to places they fled due to violence and torture.

What do ICE and DHS say?

ICE and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security would not answer detailed questions from the AP and refused a request for the government's policy for when and how to use the WRAP.

"The use of restraints on detainees during deportation flights has been long standing, standard ICE protocol and an essential measure to ensure the safety and well-being of both detainees and the officers/agents accompanying them," Tricia McLaughlin, DHS' spokesperson, said in an email to AP. "Our practices align with those followed by other relevant authorities and is fully in line with established legal standards."

The agency would not specify those authorities or describe its practices.

## **ICE's use of full-body restraints during deportations raises concerns over inhumane treatment**

By JASON DEAREN, JIM MUSTIAN and DORANY PINEDA Associated Press

The Nigerian man described being roused with other detainees in September in the middle of the night. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers clasped shackles on their hands and feet, he said, and told them they were being sent to Ghana, even though none of them was from there.

When they asked to speak to their attorney, he said, the officers refused and straitjacketed the already-shackled men in full-body restraint suits called the WRAP, then loaded them onto a plane for the 16-hour flight to West Africa.

Referred to as "the burrito" or "the bag," the WRAP has become a harrowing part of deportations for some immigrants.

"It was just like a kidnapping," the Nigerian man, who's part of a federal lawsuit, told The Associated Press in an interview from the detainment camp in which he and other deportees were being held in Ghana. Like others placed in the restraints interviewed by the AP, he spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

The AP identified multiple examples of ICE using the black-and-yellow full-body restraint device, the WRAP, in deportations. Its use was described to the AP by five people who said they were restrained in the device, sometimes for hours, on ICE deportation flights dating to 2020. And witnesses and family members in four countries told the AP about its use on at least seven other people this year.

The AP found ICE has used the device despite internal concerns voiced in a 2023 report by the civil rights division of its parent agency, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, in part due to reports of deaths involving use of the WRAP by local law enforcement. And the AP has identified a dozen fatal cases in the last decade where local police or jailers around the U.S. used the WRAP and autopsies determined "restraint" played a role in the death.

The WRAP is the subject of a growing number of federal lawsuits likening incorrect usage of the device to punishment and even torture, whether used in a jail or by immigration authorities during international flights. Among advocates' concerns is that ICE is not tracking the WRAP's use as required by federal law

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 71 of 76

when officers use force.

DHS has paid Safe Restraints Inc., the WRAP's California-based maker, \$268,523 since it started purchasing the devices in late 2015 during the Obama administration. Government purchasing records show the two Trump administrations have been responsible for about 91% of that spending. ICE would not provide AP with records documenting its use of the WRAP despite multiple requests, and it's not clear how frequently it has been used in the current and prior administrations.

The WRAP's manufacturer says it intended the device to be a lifesaver for law enforcement confronting erratic people who were physically attacking officers or harming themselves.

But ICE officials have a much lower threshold for deploying the WRAP than the manufacturer advises, the AP found. Detainees interviewed by the AP said ICE officers used the restraints on them after they had been shackled. They said this was done to intimidate or punish them for asking to speak to their attorneys or expressing fear at being deported, often to places they fled due to violence and torture.

The West African deportee described a terrifying, hourslong experience that left his legs swollen to the point where he walked with a limp.

"They bundled me and my colleagues," he said, "tied us up in a straitjacket."

ICE and DHS would not answer detailed questions from the AP and refused a request for the government's policy for when and how to use the WRAP.

"The use of restraints on detainees during deportation flights has been long standing, standard ICE protocol and an essential measure to ensure the safety and well-being of both detainees and the officers/agents accompanying them," Tricia McLaughlin, DHS' spokesperson, said in an email to AP. "Our practices align with those followed by other relevant authorities and is fully in line with established legal standards."

The agency would not specify those authorities or describe its practices.

"The use of these devices is inhumane and incompatible with our nation's fundamental values," said Noah Baron, an attorney for the West African deportees.

Charles Hammond, CEO of Safe Restraints Inc., said his company has made a modified version of the device for ICE, with changes meant to allow people to be kept in it during flights and long bus trips.

ICE's version includes a ring on the front of the suit that allows a subject's cuffed hands to be attached while still allowing for limited use to eat and drink, he said. In addition, the ICE version has "soft elbow cuffs," Hammond said, which connect in the back so a person can move for proper circulation but can't flip an elbow out to hit someone.

An AP reporter recounted for Hammond some of the allegations made by people who had been placed in the WRAP for long flights. All of those interviewed by AP said their hands and feet were already restrained by chains. All denied fighting with officers, saying they were either crying or pleading against their deportation to countries they deemed dangerous.

Hammond said that, if true that some people were not being violent and simply protesting verbally, putting them in the WRAP could be improper use.

"That's not the purpose of the WRAP. If (the deportee) is a current or potential risk to themselves, to officers, to staff, to the plane, restraints are justified. If it's not, then restraints aren't."

'Please help me'

Juan Antonio Pineda said he was put into "a bag" in late September and driven by immigration officers to the Mexico border. It was black with yellow stripes and had straps that immobilized his body and connected over his shoulders — the WRAP.

Pineda, who is from El Salvador, was in the U.S. legally, he said in a video from an ICE detention center in Arizona. On Sept. 3, he went to an appointment in Maryland to get permission for another year, his wife, Xiomara Ochoa, said in an interview from El Salvador. Instead, he was detained by ICE and told he'd be deported to Mexico, but the documents he was shown had someone else's name, he said. Even so, he was sent to the Florence Service Processing Center detention facility in Arizona.

Early morning on Wednesday, Sept. 24, he said officers tied his hands and legs, placed him into the "bag" and drove him four hours to the border. When he refused to sign the deportation papers, Pineda alleges officers broke his right arm and gave him a black eye before driving him back another four hours



# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 72 of 76**

in the "bag." The AP was unable to independently confirm how he was injured. Pineda's video shows him with a cast on his arm and bruising on his face.

The next day, Thursday, Sept. 25, they tied him up again, put him in the bag and drove him to the border, where Mexican immigration officials turned him away, he said.

"Eight hours there and back and they don't give me food or water or anything," he said in the video, which his wife shared with the AP. "Please help me."

He was ultimately deported to Mexico, Ochoa said.

ICE did not respond to multiple requests for comment from the AP regarding Pineda's case.

In addition to the Nigerian man flown to Ghana, four others interviewed by AP said they were placed in the WRAP and carried onto deportation flights since the first Trump administration.

As U.S. immigration officials move aggressively to meet the president's deportation goals, advocates and attorneys for immigrants are echoing the concerns of the government's own civil rights inquiry that ICE officers aren't trained on how to use the restraints.

"This should be a last resort type of restraint after they've already tried other things," said Fatma Marouf, a Texas A&M law professor who has sued ICE over its use of the device. "Just being bound up like that can inflict a lot of psychological harm."

Some deportees said they were left in the WRAP for an entire night. A lawsuit filed on behalf of the Nigerian man and four others currently detained in Dema Camp, Ghana, included the allegation from one that ICE left the restraint suit on him for 16 hours, only once undoing the lower part so he could use the bathroom.

"No one should be put into a WRAP. I don't even think they strap animals like that," recalled a man who said he suffered a concussion and dislocated jaw being placed into the device in 2023 before a deportation flight to Cape Verde, an African island nation. AP's review of his medical records confirmed he suffered those injuries in 2023.

"It was the most painful thing I've been through," said the man, adding he was restrained most of the 10-hour flight. "Forget the assault, forget the broken jaw. Just the WRAP itself was hurtful."

Also, the man said, the metal ring his cuffed hands were attached to — one of the ICE modifications to the WRAP designed to increase comfort — injured him. "When they slammed me face forward on the floor, that metal ring dug into my chest causing me bruising and pain which was part of my injuries that I complained about."

ICE's current use of the WRAP comes amid an unprecedented wave of masked federal immigration officers grabbing suspected immigrants off the street, and mounting accusations that the Trump administration has dehumanized them, including by subjecting them to cruel and unusual detention conditions.

ICE's use of the WRAP has continued despite a 2023 report by DHS's Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, or CRCL, that raised serious concerns over the lack of policies governing its use.

ICE agreed with the internal findings on some points, a then-DHS official involved in the review said, but challenged the notion that the WRAP should be classified as a "four-point restraint," a designation that would place more limitations on its use. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the inquiry.

DHS largely dismantled the office that produced the 2023 report earlier this year amid widespread government firings, calling it a roadblock to enforcement operations.

"Without changes to the current training, and the lack of policy, CRCL has serious concerns about ICE's continued use of the WRAP," wrote the report's authors, who cited a news article mentioning lawsuits claiming the device had led to deaths.

Use by police and in jails

Last year police officers in Virginia Beach, Virginia, placed Rolin Hill in the WRAP, saying he was being combative during an arrest at a convenience store. The officers left Hill in the device when they dropped him at the jail. Video from the jail shows deputies punching the WRAP-immobilized Hill in the head and back. Hill died in a hospital, and while the WRAP's exact role is unknown, Hill's death was ruled a homicide by "positional and mechanical asphyxia due to restraint with neck and torso compression." Three of the

# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 73 of 76**

deputies are now charged with his murder, and five were removed from their jobs.

Also last year, in Missouri, prosecutors charged five jailers in the death of Othel Moore Jr., who according to an autopsy asphyxiated in the WRAP. Jailhouse footage showed Moore, who'd also been sprayed with tear gas and placed in a "spit mask" covering his face, repeatedly told officers he couldn't breathe.

AP identified many of the other non-ICE cases involving the WRAP during an investigation into deaths after police subdued people with common tactics that, unlike guns, are meant to stop someone without killing them.

While Hammond insists the WRAP has never been determined as the cause of death when used properly, the AP identified 43 times in which the WRAP was used by police or correctional officers in a case in which someone died. In 12 of those cases the official autopsy determined that "restraint" played some role in the death.

It was often impossible to determine the exact role the WRAP may have played, as deaths often involved the use of other potentially dangerous force on people who in several cases were high on methamphetamine.

The WRAP first appeared in law enforcement in the late 1990s, presented as an alternative to tying a subject's hands and feet together in a practice known as "hog-tying." It first found widespread use in California jails and today is used by more than 1,800 departments and facilities around the country, according to the manufacturer, which says it has sold more than 10,000 devices.

Many of these cases have drawn little media attention, such as the 2020 case of Alberto Pena, who was jailed on a misdemeanor criminal mischief charge after getting drunk and damaging the walls and doors at his parents' home outside Rio Grande City, Texas. The 30-year-old became erratic on the way to the Starr County Jail, beating his own head against the inside of the patrol unit and, later, the wall of his cell.

Deputies placed Pena in the WRAP for more than two hours, where he repeatedly cried out for help and complained he could not breathe. But he was left unattended in the device for significant periods of time, court records show, and no medical attention was provided for his self-inflicted head injuries.

An autopsy ruled Pena's death "accidental," but a forensic pathologist hired by the family attributed Pena's death in part to the WRAP's "prolonged restraint" and said it "could have been averted" with proper medical care.

"The WRAP should have never been used in this situation. It was a medical emergency and he should have been taken to the hospital," said Natasha Powers-Marakis, a former police officer and use of force expert who reviewed the case on behalf of Pena's family as part of their wrongful death lawsuit against the county and officers who placed him in the device. The arresting officers had been told Pena suffered from bipolar disorder.

The Starr County Sheriff's Office has denied wrongdoing and maintained Pena did not require medical care. Robert Drinkard, an attorney for the county, told AP the use of the WRAP "was neither improper nor caused Mr. Pena's tragic death." He added that each deputy involved in placing Pena in the WRAP had been trained in its application.

A federal judge recently dismissed the Pena family's lawsuit, ruling the deputies were shielded from liability. 'Carrying me like a corpse'

In the context of an ICE deportation flight, the use of restraints like the WRAP can be justified, Hammond, the manufacturer's CEO, argues.

ICE officers have to ensure that they secure anyone who could pose a fight risk on a long flight, he said. Given the high stakes of a violent confrontation on an airplane, Hammond believes cases like those described to the AP can warrant the WRAP's use, even if the person is already in chains.

However, properly trained agents are supposed to loosen the straps and allow enough movement so the subject can eat and drink, as well as use the bathroom.

"With the WRAP, when it is used properly, it's a shorter fight, which is good for everybody. It prioritizes breathing, which is good for everybody. And you have no more fight and can provide medical care or mental health care or de-escalation efforts," Hammond said.

Those placed in one of Hammond's restraint suits, however, recount the experience as traumatic.

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 74 of 76

One of these people was first put into five-point shackles when he became dizzy and tripped while ascending the stairs to board the ICE flight to Cameroon in November 2020. The officer mistook his stumbling as resistance, he said. Immediately, camouflage-clad ICE officers quickly pushed him to the tarmac and onto a WRAP device, he said.

Soon, he felt the straps cinching around his legs and upper body.

"They bundled me like a log of wood from all the sides and they were just carrying me like a corpse," he said.

Another man interviewed by the AP said ICE officers put him in the WRAP after he initially resisted efforts to move him onto a deportation flight in Alexandria, Louisiana, in 2020. He'd fled political violence and persecution in his native Cameroon, and was afraid to go back. He said officers took him out of his cell in front of the other detainees and put him in the WRAP, leaving him for hours in view of the others as a warning to them not to speak up.

"I told him 'I can't breathe,'" the man said. "He responded, 'I don't care, I'm doing my job.'"

## NFL uses AI to predict injuries, aiming to keep players healthier

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

Injuries are an inevitable part of the NFL with all the high-speed collisions, crushing hits and high exertion necessary on every play.

Success each season often comes down to which teams can be the healthiest at the end and a string of injuries has already hampered preseason contenders like Baltimore, San Francisco and Cincinnati.

With teams investing hundreds of millions of dollars every season into their rosters, keeping those players available to play is crucial and any small edge has the potential to lead to better results on the field. To help achieve that, the NFL has turned to technology in recent years, partnering with Amazon Web Services on an injury prediction tool that uses data and artificial intelligence to help teams manage the health of their players.

"Fans want their favorite players on the field. The team owners certainly want those players on the field. The athletes themselves want to be on the field," said Julie Souza, the global head of sports at AWS. "Anything we can do to improve that and keep players healthy, that's sort of a noble endeavor."

A 'one-stop shop' for injury data

The Digital Athlete tool takes video and data from players on all 32 teams from training, practice and games, giving every team information on how hard its players have worked, whether they are at risk for more injuries, as well as helping them track leaguewide trends and benchmarks.

This is the third season all teams have had access to the Digital Athlete portal and medical staff say it has been extremely beneficial, calling it a "one-stop shop" for information that previously was never available at one source.

"Basically, it's giving you more information to ask yourself better questions to then make better interventions to make your process more efficient," said Tyler Williams, the vice president of health and performance for the Minnesota Vikings. "At the end of the day, if you sum sports science into one sentence: How can we measure and assess to make ourselves more effective and efficient."

Digital Athlete uses sensors in the shoulder pads, cameras and optical tracking to gather information from practice and games for every player on all 32 teams, similar to what NextGen stats does to determine who's the fastest ball carrier or how much separation a receiver generates on his pass routes.

But the amount of data is far different.

While NetGen Stats generates about 500 million data points in an entire season, Digital Athlete does that on a weekly basis, meaning the only way to parse through all that to glean anything meaningful is through the use of machine learning and AI technology.

"The sheer volume of data means somebody can't be sitting there with a clipboard or Excel figuring that out," Souza said. "This is absolutely a job for high-performance computers, machine learning, artificial intelligence, all of those things."

# Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 75 of 76

One of the strengths of Digital Athlete is its ability to aggregate the data from all 32 teams and more than 1,500 players to give training staffs and coaches better insights into which players might be more susceptible to getting hurt at a given time and what steps have helped reduce the impact of injuries.

How Digital Athlete is used

Teams have used it to help determine practice schedules for training camp, how hard they work the players in a given week of a season and what players or position groups have been pushed so hard that dialing back their work might prevent nagging soft-tissue injuries.

"You want to find a sweet spot that's not overworked or underprepared for football," Williams said. "The more football you play, the better at football you are, but the more fatigued you are. It's this seesaw balance of tactical and performance. How do we put the players out there to be the best versions of themselves, in the safest manner to have the longevity in the game?"

Williams said much of the data reinforces his prior beliefs but there are times it helps him catch something he might have missed. Having empirical evidence also can help him persuade a player who might need a day off or a coach that he has to lighten the load at practice or sometimes can push his team harder.

The model can tell the training staff how much a player has worked by tracking decelerations, accelerations, total workload on field, change of direction.

While the NFL said overall injuries have been reduced since the introduction of Digital Athlete, Williams said there are many factors involved and he can't be sure there's a direct causation.

"Everybody is always going to want the smoking gun that if we do A and pair it with B, we will get C," Williams said. "It doesn't ever work like that. Everyone wants to talk about well, this team's really good at preventing injuries. Nobody's preventing injuries. It's what type of recipe can you put together that mitigates the risk the best. With the more we measure, the more risk we'll be able to mitigate."

How it impacted rule changes

The NFL has also used the data gathered from these systems to model the impact of rule changes like the new kickoff that was put in place last season or the crackdown on hip-drop tackles. Digital Athlete was able to simulate 10,000 seasons to help model how the new kickoff rule would impact injuries.

It also has helped inform the league on things like which helmets are best at protecting players from concussions. NFL executive Dawn Aponte said the data helped the league make changes to the helmets for quarterbacks by putting more padding in the back of the helmet.

"Last year we saw the lowest number of concussions in the NFL since we started tracking them," Aponte said. "That really is something that we attribute to the fact of being able to look at all of this data and come up with better equipment, better-performing helmets, ways in which we make the helmets and manufacture them based on the types of hits and impacts these players are having."

Aponte said the initial reaction from some old-timers was to wonder if this was "junk science." But now she sees much more acceptance from everyone involved, from coaches to medical staff to players.

"I think this has now been presented as an additive tool," she said. "It doesn't take away from decisions of coaches that are going to do what they feel is best for that specific athlete, or the team at large. But when you're actually able to point them to certain things and say, hey, this is what we're seeing. This is causing X times more likely for this player to sustain an injury. When they start losing players, particularly in training camp, they pay more attention."

## Today in History: October 15, #MeToo movement goes viral

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Oct. 15, the 288th day of 2025. There are 77 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Oct. 15, 2017, actor and activist Alyssa Milano tweeted that women who had been sexually harassed or assaulted should write "Me too" as a status. Within hours, tens of thousands had taken up the #MeToo hashtag (using a phrase that had been introduced a decade earlier by social activist Tarana Burke).

Also on this date:



# Groton Daily Independent

**Wednesday, Oct. 15, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 133 ~ 76 of 76**

In 1815, Napoleon Bonaparte, the deposed French emperor, arrived on the British-ruled South Atlantic island of St. Helena, where he spent the last 5 1/2 years of his life in exile.

In 1945, the former premier of Vichy France, Pierre Laval, was executed for treason.

In 1946, Nazi war criminal Hermann Goering (GEH'-reeng) fatally poisoned himself hours before he was to have been executed.

In 1954, Hurricane Hazel made landfall on the Carolina coast as a Category 4 storm; Hazel was blamed for about 1,000 deaths in the Caribbean, 95 in the U.S. and 81 in Canada.

In 1976, the first debate of its kind took place between vice-presidential nominees. Democrat Walter F. Mondale and Republican Bob Dole faced off in Houston.

In 1991, despite sexual harassment allegations by Anita Hill, the Senate narrowly confirmed the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court, 52-48.

In 1997, British Royal Air Force pilot Andy Green twice drove a jet-powered car in the Nevada desert faster than the speed of sound, officially shattering the world's land-speed record.

In 2003, 11 people were killed and 70 were injured when a Staten Island ferry slammed into a maintenance pier. (The ferry's pilot, who had blacked out at the controls, later pleaded guilty to 11 counts of manslaughter.)

Today's Birthdays: Baseball Hall of Famer Jim Palmer is 80. Musician Richard Carpenter is 79. Film director Mira Nair is 68. Britain's Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, is 66. Chef Emeril Lagasse (EM'-ur-ul leh-GAH'-see) is 66. Actor Dominic West is 56. R&B singer Ginuwine (JIHN'-yoo-wyn) is 55. Singer-TV personality Keyshia Cole is 44. Actor Bailee Madison is 26.