

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 1 of 66

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Groton Legion Ad](#)
- [5- 2025 Frosty Clues](#)
- [5- Northeast Conference Announces 2025 All-Conference Football Team](#)
- [6- Lawrence County Fatal Crash](#)
- [7- Fact brief: Can data centers lead to higher energy prices?](#)
- [8- Groton Area November Students of the Month](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: Noem's uses of credit cards and an economic fund cause lawmakers to propose restrictions](#)
- [10- SD SearchLight: Power outage affects thousands in western South Dakota and elsewhere](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: South Dakota Department of Education fails to reach goals in legislative performance review](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Air travel, SNAP benefits, back pay at issue as federal government slowly reopens](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: As health costs spike, a sour and divided Congress escapes one shutdown to face another](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: National school bus driver shortage persists, despite recent gains](#)
- [20- Weather Pages](#)
- [24- Daily Devotional](#)
- [25- Upcoming Events](#)
- [25- Subscription Form](#)
- [26- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [27- News from the Associated Press](#)

Friday, Nov. 14

Senior Menu: Hamburger cabbage roll hotdish, mixed vegetables, pears, cornmeal muffin.
School Breakfast: Egg wraps.
School Lunch: Chicken ala king, biscuits.

Saturday, Nov. 15

Groton Legion Turkey Party, 6:30 p.m.
4th-6th grade GBB Tournament at Groton Area, 8 a.m.
MS GBB at North Central Jamboree, 10 a.m.

Sunday, Nov. 16

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m., and Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School,

I HAVE FELT
GOD'S ARMS AROUND ME.
I HAVE HEARD
GOD'S WORDS AND I HAVE
SEEN GOD'S WORK
IN MY LIFE, PERSONALLY.
NO ONE WILL EVER
CONVINCE ME THAT GOD
ISN'T REAL.

Amen



9:45 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m. (Sunday School Christmas Program Parts Handout); at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.

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

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

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

7th grade soccer at Elementary School Gym, 1 p.m.

5th grade GBB Practice, 4 p.m.

2nd grade GBB Practice, 4 p.m.

Dance Team Practice, 5 p.m.

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

© 2025 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 2 of 66

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.

Government Returns

Many of the roughly 670,000 furloughed federal government employees began returning to work yesterday, after Congress passed a bill late Wednesday to end the US' longest-ever government shutdown.

Some government operations remain disrupted. States that had not released food stamp benefits this month due to lack of federal funds—including West Virginia and South Carolina—will resume payments within three days. The Bureau of Labor Statistics plans to release its September jobs report as soon as next week, but it may not be able to provide accurate economic data for October. Meanwhile, flight reductions at 40 major airports were at 6% yesterday, with over 1,000 flight cancellations; mandated flight restrictions will be rescinded once staffing returns to normal levels, potentially as soon as next week.

The shutdown cost the US economy an estimated 60,000 private-sector jobs and an estimated \$14B per week or \$84B in all, an expected dip of 1% to 2% in annualized GDP growth.

Red Cup Rebellion

Roughly 1,000 Starbucks workers began a strike yesterday at 65 stores across more than 40 cities. Employees targeted Red Cup Day—one of the chain's biggest promotional events of the year—when customers get a free reusable cup with a holiday drink.

Starbucks Workers United, representing 12,000 workers at about 550 of the company's 18,000 US locations, said the protests are over stalled contract talks, demands for better staffing and higher wages, and hundreds of unfair labor practice charges. Starbucks said it offers the best compensation package in retail, estimating average pay and benefits at roughly \$30 per hour, which includes paid family leave and tuition coverage.

The promotion typically drives some of Starbucks' heaviest traffic, with 2024 marking its highest single-day US sales ever. Red Cup Day strikes also took place in 2022 and 2023, although Starbucks has said the disruptions had minimal operational impact. There is no date set for the strike to end.

'Mona Lisa Bible'

A 15th-century Bible illustrated with gold and Afghan lapis lazuli was unveiled in Rome yesterday. Typically stowed away in Modena, the two-volume manuscript is on display in the Italian Senate until Jan. 16 for the Vatican's Holy Year.

The Bible—said to be the most expensive book of its time—was made by Italian Renaissance artists for Borso d'Este, the first duke of Ferrara. (Take a look inside.) The manuscript followed the Este family from Ferrara to Modena, where it remained until the family lost control of the city in 1859 and the last duke fled to Vienna. The Bible stayed among noble European families until Austria's last empress sold it to a Parisian antique collector in 1922. Italian industrialist Giovanni Treccani donated the Bible to the Italian state after purchasing it in 1923 for 3.3M French francs.

The Holy Year, a Roman Catholic tradition typically held every quarter century, draws tens of millions of pilgrims to Rome.

Editor's note: Yesterday, we mistakenly wrote that the House voted 202-209 to reopen the government. The final vote was 222-209. Thank you to our readers for pointing out this error!

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 3 of 66

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Taylor Swift releases first trailer for docuseries airing Dec. 12.

NBCUniversal to launch cable sports channel next week, including live NBA, WNBA, MLB, Premier League, and college football broadcasts.

Arkansas athletic director Hunter Yurachek tapped as College Football Playoff chair after Baylor's Mack Rhoades resigns amid university probe.

New Jersey officials arrest 14 people tied to alleged sports betting ring involving Mafia and student-athletes.

New York Yankees' Aaron Judge and Los Angeles Dodgers' Shohei Ohtani win MLB's American League and National League awards for second year in a row; Judge edges Seattle Mariners' Cal Raleigh for the honor.

Science & Technology

Anthropic says Chinese hackers used its Claude chatbot to target roughly 30 companies and government agencies in first documented cyberattack largely executed with artificial intelligence.

Aerial imaging reveals bird flu decimated roughly 47% of South Georgia's breeding female elephant seals between 2022 and 2024; research suggests virus continues to spread among birds and mammals in the Antarctic.

Researchers find bacterium causing Lyme disease becomes vulnerable when starved of or overloaded with manganese, a discovery that could inspire new disease treatments.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -1.7%, Dow -1.7%, Nasdaq -2.3%); all three indexes suffer worst day since Oct. 10, weighed down by tech losses and concerns over Federal Reserve potentially pausing rate cuts.

Verizon to cut roughly 15,000 jobs, or 15% of its workforce, representing the largest layoffs in the company's history.

IRS raises limits for 401(k) and other retirement plans, increases catch-up contributions for people aged 50 and up.

Politics & World Affairs

Senior officials present President Donald Trump with military options against Venezuela, including land strikes, after the US conducted its 20th strike against alleged narco-trafficking boats.

Justice Department sues California Gov. Gavin Newsom (D) over redrawn congressional districts, alleges racial gerrymandering to favor Hispanic communities.

Civil rights activist Jesse Jackson is hospitalized with a rare neurodegenerative disorder.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 4 of 66

Groton Post No. 39 American Legion

Annual Turkey Party

Saturday, Nov. 15, 2025

Starting at 6:30 p.m.

Groton Legion Post Home, 10 N. Main.

**Turkey, Ham and Bacon
to be given away**



Lunch served
by Auxiliary

DOOR
PRIZE!

FREE ADMISSION

Groton Daily Independent

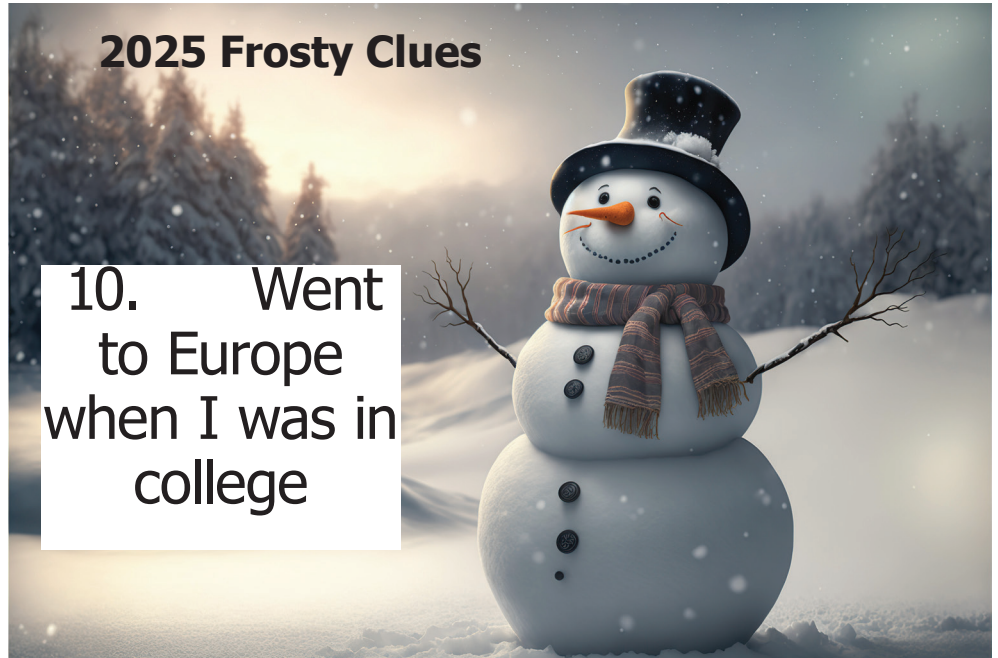
Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 5 of 66

Frosty is Back!!!

Please check the Groton Daily Independent for daily clues as to who the Groton Area Mystery Frosty is. The unveiling of Frosty will take place at the Groton Area Snow Queen Contest on Sunday, November 30th, at 4:00 pm.

2025 Frosty Clues

10. Went to Europe when I was in college



Northeast Conference Announces 2025 All-Conference Football Team

The Northeast Conference has released its 2025 All-Conference Football Team, highlighted by Clark-Willow Lake's undefeated conference season and a league-high six players named to the top squad. Deuel and Milbank followed with five each, while strong showings also came from Hamlin and Mobridge-Pollock with four apiece.

Clark-Willow Lake, the 2025 NEC champions, led all teams with six all-conference selections: seniors Lincoln Reidburn, Cooper Pommer, Emmerson Larson, Michael Severson, and juniors Seth Poppen and Jakob Steen. The Cyclones also had two honorable mentions, Diego Garcia and Ernesto Garcia.

Deuel placed five players on the team—Oliver Fieber, Troy Jenson, Gavin Kloos, Aidan Sievers, and Carson Marko—supported by honorable mentions Nathan Fieber and Kaleb TeKrony.

Milbank, competing as an 11A program, also earned five selections: Braylen Bowsher, Sam Rick, Carter Gloe, Layten Osowski, and Micah Tostenson, with honorable mentions Bennett Hunt and Ethan Owen.

Hamlin secured four all-conference spots with seniors Jackson Wadsworth, Aiden Abraham, Tate Everson, and junior Boden Stevenson, while Jaden Olsen and Caleb Drenth were named honorable mention.

Mobridge-Pollock likewise earned four selections—Mack Saxon, Kellen Pfitzer, Easton Eisemann, and Wyatt Ziegler—along with honorable mentions Luke Olson and Carter Schmeichel.

Britton-Hecla placed three on the team: Bryce Hawkinson, Jaxon Zuehlke, and Graham Fosness, with honorable mentions Riley Hofland and Bennett Suther.

Groton Area also earned three spots with seniors Keegen Tracy, Tucker Hardy, and Ryder Johnson, plus honorable mentions Karter Moody and Logan Warrington.

Redfield had two all-conference selections—Noah Johnson and Conner Zens—supported by honorable mentions Chace Odland and Rollie Betten.

Webster Area also placed two on the team: Matthew Mount and Gage Baumgarn, with honorable mentions Jeron McCreary and Jack Shoemaker.

Aberdeen Roncalli rounded out the list with senior Grady Jett named to the team and honorable mentions awarded to Jean Anthony Thomas and Ryan Schmidt.

The final conference standings reflected a balanced and competitive season: Clark-Willow Lake (5-0), Deuel (4-1), Mobridge-Pollock (3-2), Groton Area (2-3), Webster Area (1-4), and Aberdeen Roncalli (0-5). Milbank's games did not count toward the standings due to 11A scheduling requirements. Hamlin, Britton-Hecla and Redfield are Class 9AA Teams.

Lawrence County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash
Where: US Highway 85, mile marker 46, Spearfish, SD
When: 9:01 a.m., Thursday, November 13, 2025

Driver 1: 82-year-old male from Oracle, AZ, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2001 Toyota Tacoma pulling a Subaru Impreza
Seat belt Used: No

Lawrence County, S.D.- An Arizona man died in a single vehicle crash this morning on US Highway 85 in Spearfish, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2001 Toyota Tacoma was traveling northbound on US Highway 85 in a construction zone. The vehicle was equipped with a tow dolly and was pulling a Subaru Impreza. The driver lost control of the vehicle and crossed over into the median, striking a windrow of dirt near the shoulder. The vehicles overturned and separated. The driver, who was not wearing a seatbelt, was ejected from the Toyota.

The driver was transported to Spearfish Monument Health Hospital where he died from his injuries.

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

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



Fact brief: Can data centers lead to higher energy prices?

By Michael Klinski

Yes

Energy prices for people living in some areas where data centers are constructed increased after the facilities become operational.

An analysis by Bloomberg.com showed that electricity prices increased 267% over five years for energy customers who live near newly constructed data centers.

The report said that wholesale prices have doubled since 2020, mainly in areas near data center hot spots. Of the areas that had price increases, 70% are located within 50 miles of data centers.

The impact on energy prices can vary, however, according to a separate study. If data centers require new power plants or other substantial improvements to the grid, price changes could be more dramatic.

Data centers now have their eyes on South Dakota.

Gemini Data Center SD LLC purchased 160 acres in northeastern Sioux Falls near an existing Xcel Energy substation. The project still requires city approval. Another company is proposing a multi-billion data center in Deuel County.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 8 of 66

Groton Area November Students of the Month

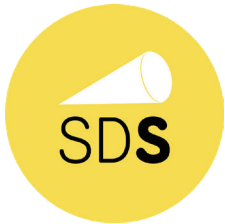


Pictured in back, left to right, are junior Brody Lord, sophomore Sydney Locke, senior Jaedyn Penning and freshman Novalea Warrington; in front, left to right, are eighth grader Sophia Flihs, seventh grader Bella Barrera and sixth grader Shaelee Gilchrist.

Groton Area School works to ensure that all levels of academic instruction also include the necessary life skills teaching, practicing, and modeling that encourages essential personal life habits that are universally understood to facilitate helping our students become good human beings and citizens.

It is learning with our heads, hearts, and hands to be caring and civil, to make healthy decisions, to effectively problem solve, to be respectful and responsible, to be good citizens, and to be empathetic and ethical individuals.

Students are selected based on individual student growth in the areas of: positive behavior, citizenship, good attendance, a thirst for knowledge, and high academic standards.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Noem's uses of credit cards and an economic fund cause lawmakers to propose restrictions

Committee endorses tighter limits on Future Fund and state employee expenses

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

A committee of South Dakota lawmakers expressed support Thursday for legislative efforts to rein in powers that some committee members said Republican former Gov. Kristi Noem abused.

The Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee, which met at the Capitol in Pierre, endorsed draft legislation that would take a pool of economic development money known as the Future Fund out of the governor's exclusive control.

Committee members also expressed informal support — but did not formally endorse — another bill draft that would tighten rules governing the use of state-issued credit cards.

Both ideas could become bills when legislators gather for their annual lawmaking session in January.

"This is trying to provide some more oversight and transparency," said Sen. Taffy Howard, R-Rapid City, who serves as committee chair and introduced the bill drafts.

Future Fund

South Dakota employers pay a fee to the Future Fund when they submit payroll taxes to the unemployment benefits program. State law says the Future Fund must be used "for purposes related to research and economic development for the state." Unlike other funds administered by the Governor's Office of Economic Development, Future Fund expenses don't go through a board of citizen appointees for vetting or approval. The governor has sole discretion to award Future Fund money.

Noem's controversial uses of the Future Fund included \$350,000 to pay for a fireworks show in 2020 at Mount Rushmore, \$13.5 million toward the construction of a Rapid City-area shooting range that opened last week, \$2.5 million to promote and conduct a Governor's Cup rodeo in Sioux Falls, and up to \$9 million on a workforce recruitment campaign that Noem starred in.

Legislators denied state funding for the shooting range before Noem awarded the Future Fund money.

"I think everyone remembers the fact that funding was denied for the new gun range, what was it — three or four times?" Howard said. "And lo and behold, Future Funds were given to complete that project, which, in my opinion, subverted the appropriations process."

The bill draft, which the committee endorsed 7-1 with two members excused, would require each Future Fund grant to be approved by a majority of the Board of Economic Development, which already oversees other programs controlled by the governor's office. The board's members are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state Senate.

The bill would also order the Governor's Office of Economic Development to create rules establishing an application process for Future Fund loans and grants; the methods for assessing or estimating the economic impact that a project would have on the state; the criteria for determining how a project is selected for a loan or a grant; the process for setting an interest rate on a loan; any requirements that applicants must meet to be awarded a grant; and the process by which a loan or a grant is disbursed.

Credit cards

A Dakota Scout investigation earlier this year uncovered roughly \$750,000 in charges to Noem's state-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 10 of 66

issued credit cards over six years, including travel tied to a book tour and a Canadian hunting trip.

"I mean, the previous governor traveled to more than 30 states," Howard said. "Places that you really had to wonder if every one of those was done on official state business. So, unfortunately, this is somewhat of a blowback because of previous actions."

Noem resigned in January to become secretary of the federal Department of Homeland Security.

The bill addressing credit cards would direct the state Bureau of Finance and Management to write rules for how a state officer or employee can be issued a bank card, what criteria are used to assess that request, and maximum amounts for lodging, meals, transportation and other expenses charged. The bill would also establish a process to recover from an employee's wages any spending above those caps.

Sen. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, said the committee ran out of time Thursday, but he hopes to keep discussing the bill draft.

"I support the idea," he said. "It needs to be workshopped a little bit."

Karr voted in favor of the committee endorsing "the idea of" the bill, which Howard suggested following Karr's comments. That motion passed 6-1, with three members excused.

Another of Howard's drafts would have required that any expense incurred by the governor, in connection with state business conducted outside the state, must be reviewed by the State Board of Finance. That draft failed in a 5-3 vote, with two committee members excused. The motion needed a six-vote majority of the committee's 10 members.

Sen. Ernie Otten, R-Tea, was the only member to vote against all three bill drafts. He did not explain his votes publicly.

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

Power outage affects thousands in western South Dakota and elsewhere

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF

Black Hills Energy was using a phased approach to restore electricity as a widespread power outage that began early Thursday afternoon stretched into the evening, affecting thousands in Rapid City and the surrounding region.

"We are continuing to work as quickly as possible to safely restore service to all South Dakota and Wyoming customers impacted by today's regional electrical outage," the company said Thursday evening in a news release.

"The restoration process is complex as our power generation facilities and substations were impacted. We will use a phased process to restore power which balances system safety and stability."

Black Hills Energy said the outage impacted multiple utilities across the region, resulting from an event on the regional transmission grid outside of the Black Hills Energy footprint. That footprint includes Rapid City, South Dakota's second largest population center, where power was out all afternoon for many people and some street lights remained dark into the evening.

The website PowerOutage.us said at one point Thursday afternoon that more than 40,000 customers in South Dakota were affected, and more than 60,000 in Wyoming.

WyoFile quoted a spokesman for the Western Area Power Administration who said the outage began around 12:45 p.m. Mountain time and may have been triggered by "two tripped 500-kilovolt lines near Medicine Bow, Wyoming."

"This incident resulted in an abnormal voltage event that subsequently tripped a number of surrounding lines, including WAPA transmission, resulting in further power outages to communities across the area," Public Affairs Specialist Stephen J. Collier told WyoFile.

South Dakota Department of Education fails to reach goals in legislative performance review

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

The South Dakota Department of Education deserves a failing grade, according to one of the lawmakers tasked with performance management reviews of state agencies.

Senate President Pro Tempore Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, called the department's review the "worst performing report that we have" and said Department of Education Secretary Joe Graves faces an "uphill battle."

The Legislature's Government and Operations Audit Committee reviewed the report Thursday at the Capitol in Pierre. The report measures the department's success at improving public school student performance against goals in reading and math proficiencies, attendance, Native American student success and college and workforce preparedness.

The department didn't reach any of the report's target performance outcomes in the last fiscal year.

For the past five years, the department hasn't reached its target performance outcomes for reading proficiency, math proficiency, Native American student success or absenteeism. The last time the department met a target for college and career readiness was in fiscal year 2021.

English and language arts

The department measures third grade English and language arts proficiency rates and elementary and middle school state assessment growth rates.

The proficiency rate indicates what percentage of students can read at grade level, while the growth rate measures whether students will stay proficient later in their education.

During the 2024-2025 school year, just under 45% of students tested proficient in English and language arts. The department aimed for just under 55%.

When lawmakers pressed Graves about the gap in proficiency, he told lawmakers that South Dakota implements "really rigorous expectations" for proficiency, which can lead to lower scores.

The student growth rate was 56%, short of the 61% target.

Graves said he expects statewide implementation of the Science of Reading principles, which focus heavily on phonics, will improve student literacy rates and test scores in the coming years. The state Board of Education included the principles in revisions to English and language arts standards earlier this year.

Eighth grade math proficiency

The department's math goals use eighth grade math proficiency rates on the state assessment and math growth rates for elementary and middle school students.

Nearly 42% of eighth graders tested proficient in math last school year, missing the 54% target. Students' growth rate came in at just under 51%, under the 58% goal.

Despite that, Graves noted, South Dakota ranks sixth in the nation for math proficiency at the eighth grade level, based on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. It ranks 17th for fourth grade proficiency.

The department proposed new math standards this year, meant to simplify what standards need to be taught — especially at the elementary school level. Some math educators are raising concerns that the changes oversimplify the standards, which could make it harder for teachers to know what exact mathematical skills students need to exhibit by the end of the year. The proposed standards are still under review.

Native American student success

Native Americans comprise the largest minority in South Dakota, and Native American students face some of the starkest disparities in academic achievement compared to their peers.

The third grade English and language arts proficiency rate among Native Americans last school year stood at 16%. Eighth grade math proficiency stood at 9%. Both goals were over 54%.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 12 of 66

Growth rates, graduate rates and college and career readiness among Native American students were also significantly below their targets.

Graves said he'd hoped a movement to introduce Education Savings Accounts in South Dakota would help educators to "innovate" and address the problems. But the measure, which would have provided public funding for private education and homeschool options, failed during the last legislative session.

Traditional solutions, Graves said, especially federal funding distributed to school districts serving high populations of Native American students, have "never achieved the kind of results we would hope for."

South Dakota's attendance rate stood at 88% of students attending at least 90% of enrolled days the last school year. Among Native American students, attendance has hovered between 50% and 60% during the last five years.

The state department awarded grants to several school districts across the state in 2024 to target absenteeism rates. While in their second year of the grant, Graves said some districts have seen "some improvement." Overall, the progress is "disappointing."

"We were hoping for a faster recovery and a greater improvement in attendance at this point in time," Graves told lawmakers.

Graves added that he expects most of the attendance programs initiated because of the grants will go away once funding ends.

College and career readiness

The department also missed its targeted four-year graduate rate, math and English proficiency rates indicating college readiness, and workforce readiness rate targets. The outcomes were closer to their targets than in other areas of student achievement.

The department plans to use a "more comprehensive look" at college and workforce readiness measures in coming years, based on the report, rather than basing it only on test scores.

Graves highlighted a school program that works primarily with low-income or other marginalized groups of students to prepare students for postsecondary education or the workforce. About 99% of students involved in South Dakota Jobs for America's Graduates chapters in the state graduated from high school. About 98% of program graduates in 2024 went on to attend college or technical schools. The other 2% were enrolled in a certificate program or Job Corps training.

But the program includes "considerable expense at the state and local level" to implement, which limits what schools take part. He added that the state is seeking sponsorships to grow the program.

"I'm convinced that it could really balloon in South Dakota," Graves said.

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.

Air travel, SNAP benefits, back pay at issue as federal government slowly reopens

BY: JACOB FISCHLER AND ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — The record 43-day government shutdown that ended Wednesday night scrambled air travel, interrupted food assistance and forced federal workers to go without a paycheck for weeks.

It also cost the U.S. economy about \$15 billion per week, White House Council of Economic Advisers Director Kevin Hassett told reporters Thursday.

As the government began to reopen Thursday, officials were working to untangle those issues and others.

But in some areas, the processes for getting things back to normal after such a lengthy shutdown will also take time.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 13 of 66

President Donald Trump on Wednesday night signed a package passed by Congress reopening the government, which closed on Oct. 1 after lawmakers failed to pass a stopgap spending bill.

Flights back on schedule by Thanksgiving?

The Federal Aviation Administration's shutdown plan, announced last week by Administrator Bryan Bedford and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy, was to reduce flights to 40 major airports by 10%.

As of Thursday afternoon, the FAA had not lifted the order restricting flights. But the agency did stop ramping up the percentage of those affected.

The FAA started by asking airlines to cancel 4% of flights Nov. 7. A Wednesday order halted the rate at 6%.

That was enough to cause major disruptions to travel, and it remained unclear Thursday how long it would take to resume normal operations.

In a statement, Airlines for America, the trade group representing the nation's commercial air carriers, welcomed the end of the shutdown but was vague about how much longer air travelers would see disruptions. The statement noted the upcoming holiday as a possible milestone.

"When the FAA gives airlines clearance to return to full capacity, our crews will work quickly to ramp up operations especially with Thanksgiving holiday travel beginning next week," the group's statement said.

The FAA and Transportation Department did not return messages seeking updates Thursday.

The reduction in flights was meant to ease pressure on air traffic controllers, who worked through the shutdown without pay.

Many missed work as they pursued short-term jobs in other industries. Duffy said that left the controllers on the job overstressed and possibly prone to costly mistakes.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem sought to reward other federal workers at airports, those employed by her department's Transportation Security Administration, with \$10,000 bonuses if they maintained high attendance records during the shutdown.

Noem handed out checks to TSA workers in Houston on Thursday and said more could come.

Federal workers return, with back pay on the way

Hundreds of thousands of federal workers who had been furloughed returned to the office Thursday and those who had been working without pay will continue their duties knowing their next paycheck should be on time.

All workers will receive back pay for the shutdown, in accordance with a 2019 law that states employees "shall be paid for such work, at the employee's standard rate of pay, at the earliest date possible after the lapse in appropriations, regardless of scheduled pay dates."

A spokesperson for the Office of Management and Budget said the White House has urged agencies to get back pay to employees "expeditiously and accurately."

Agencies will need to submit time and attendance files, and payroll processors can then issue checks. According to the spokesperson, agencies have different pay schedules and payroll processors, and "discrepancies in timing and pay periods are a result of that."

The office estimates that workers will receive a "supercheck" for the pay period from Oct. 1 to Nov. 1 on the following dates:

Nov. 15

General Services Administration
Office of Personnel Management

Nov. 16

Departments of Energy, Health and Human Services, Veterans Affairs and Defense

Nov. 17

Departments of Education, State, Interior and Transportation
Environmental Protection Agency

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 14 of 66

NASA

National Science Foundation

Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Social Security Administration

Nov. 19

Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor and Treasury

Small Business Administration

Doreen Greenwald, president of the National Treasury Employees Union, said in a statement Wednesday that federal workers across all agencies "should not have to wait another minute longer for the paychecks they lost during the longest government shutdown in history."

"The anxiety has been devastating as they cut back on spending, ran up credit card debt, took out emergency loans, filed for unemployment, found temporary side jobs, stood in line for food assistance, skipped filling prescriptions and worried about the future. Federal employees should receive the six weeks of back pay they are owed immediately upon the reopening of the federal government," said Greenwald.

The union represents workers at 38 federal agencies and offices.

States Newsroom spoke to several furloughed federal workers who attended a special food distribution event during the shutdown.

The American Federation of Government Employees, one of multiple unions that sued the Trump administration over layoffs during the shutdown, said its members were used "as leverage to advance political priorities," according to a statement issued Tuesday by the union's national president, Everett Kelley.

The AFGE, which according to the union represents roughly 820,000 federal workers, did not immediately respond for comment Thursday.

The shutdown-ending deal reinstated jobs for fired federal employees and prohibits any reductions in force by the administration until Jan. 30.

Federal workers speak out

A statement released Thursday by a group of federal workers across agencies struck a different tone on the shutdown and praised the 40 senators and 209 representatives who voted against the temporary spending bill deal.

"The fight mattered. It changed the conversation. More members of the American public now understand that Trump is shredding the Constitution," according to the statement issued by the Civil Servants Coalition.

The coalition also noted, "Even though the government is reopening, none of us will be able to fully deliver our agency's missions. Our work has been exploited and dismantled since January through harmful policies and illegal purges of critical staff."

The group emailed the statement as a PDF document to an unknown number of government workers and urged them to "channel that frustration toward action" by contacting their representatives.

SNAP saga concludes

The government reopening ended a drawn-out saga over the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which helps 42 million people afford groceries.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture told states in a Thursday memo they "must take immediate steps to ensure households receive their full November allotments promptly."

The guidance also noted that states should prepare for another shutdown as soon as next October by upgrading systems so that they could allow for partial payments.

A key point of dispute between the administration and those seeking SNAP benefits was the lengthy time the administration said it would take to fund partial benefits.

A Wednesday evening statement from a department spokesperson said full benefits would be disbursed in most states by Thursday night.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 15 of 66

Lauren Kallins, a senior legislative director for the National Conference of State Legislatures, said Thursday "states are all working hard to resume full benefits."

"But there will likely be logistical challenges, depending on a state's system's capabilities and whether the state had already issued partial benefits, that may impact how quickly a state is able to push out" benefits, she wrote.

The program, which is funded by the federal government and administered by states, sends monthly payments on a rolling basis.

That means that the day of the month each household receives its allotment varies. Households that usually receive benefits mid-month or later should see no interruption.

But many of the program's beneficiaries receive their payments earlier in the month, meaning that, depending on their state, they may have missed their November payments.

Some states, including Democrat-run Wisconsin, Oregon and Michigan, began paying full benefits last week after a Rhode Island federal judge ordered the administration to release full November payments and the department issued guidance to states to do so.

The administration then asked the U.S. Supreme Court to pause enforcement of the Rhode Island judge's order and reversed its guidance to states, telling them to "immediately undo" efforts to pay out full November benefits.

The Department of Justice dropped its Supreme Court case Thursday.

"Because the underlying dispute here is now moot, the government withdraws its November 7 stay application in this Court," U.S. Solicitor General D. John Sauer wrote to the high court.

In the trial court, the administration cited the USDA guidance and said it would discuss the future of the litigation with the coalition of cities and nonprofit groups that brought the suit.

Capital area tourist attractions reopen

Tourists in the nation's capital have been shut out of the Smithsonian Institution's 17 free museums and zoo for most of the federal shutdown.

The institution on Friday will open the National Museum of American History, the National Air and Space Museum and the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, an annex of the Air and Space Museum located at Dulles International Airport in Virginia, according to a message posted on the Smithsonian's website.

All other museums and the National Zoo will open on a "rolling basis" by Nov. 17.

Multiple public-facing agencies, including the National Park Service and Internal Revenue Service, did not respond to States Newsroom's requests for reopening information.

National parks were closed or partially closed during the shutdown.

Several IRS services were reduced or altogether cut as the funding lapse dragged on. Those disruptions included limited IRS telephone customer service operations and the closure of in-person Taxpayer Assistance Centers.

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

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

As health costs spike, a sour and divided Congress escapes one shutdown to face another

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT, ARIANA FIGUEROA AND SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — Congress has roughly two months to find bipartisan agreement to curb rising health insurance costs if lawmakers want to avoid another government shutdown.

That herculean task would be difficult in the best circumstances, but is much more challenging after lawmakers spent the last 43 days criticizing each other instead of building the types of trust that are usually needed for large deals. Democrats maintained they wanted to address skyrocketing premiums for individual health care plans, while Republicans insisted those talks had to occur when the government was open.

At the same time, congressional leaders will try to wrap up work on the nine full-year government funding bills that were supposed to become law before Oct. 1 and weren't included in the package that reopened the government.

Congress must pass all of those bills or another stopgap measure before the new Jan. 30 deadline, regardless of how well or disastrous talks on a health care bill turn out.

The two-track negotiations will push party leaders to compromise on issues they'd rather not, especially as next year's November midterm elections inch closer.

Early signs were not good.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said during a Wednesday night press conference the enhanced Affordable Care Act tax credits set to expire at the end of the year are a "boondoggle" and that "Republicans would demand a lot of reforms" before agreeing to extend those in any way.

"We currently have 433 members of the House of Representatives. There's a lot of opinions in this building. And on our side, certainly, a lot of opinions on how to fix health care and make it more affordable. I have to allow that process to play out," Johnson, R-La., said.

While Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., made a commitment to hold a vote on a health care bill before the end of December to conclude the shutdown, Johnson has avoided giving a timeline for when he would bring any similar legislation to the floor.

President Donald Trump, aside from throwing insults at Democrats, largely stayed on the sidelines of the shutdown fight, though he suggested the funds used for the tax credits should in some way go directly to individuals instead of large insurance companies.

Pessimism over progress

The shutdown highlighted the stark differences Republicans and Democrats hold on health care as prices for insurance continue to spike, forcing millions of Americans to choose between taking care of themselves and breaking their budgets, States Newsroom found in interviews with members of Congress.

GOP leaders held together throughout the funding lapse and didn't negotiate on the expiring ACA marketplace tax credits, or anything else.

Now that it's over, Republicans will need to put something forward.

Connecticut Rep. Rosa DeLauro, the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, said her sense is that Congress will "probably be in the same place on January 30th that we are now."

"We have two parties here, two sides," DeLauro said. "In the past ... we've had serious negotiation back and forth, and that's what we need to do, and that's not happening."

While Republicans have unified control of government, major legislation needs the support of at least 60 senators to advance in that chamber. Republicans hold 53 seats at the moment, meaning at least some Democrats must support a bill for it to pass.

DeLauro did not rule out another shutdown, saying Democrats plan to take the next few months "one day at a time," while closely watching what Republicans are willing to do on the nine full-year appropriations bills and health care costs.

Maryland Democratic Rep. Steny Hoyer, former House majority leader and a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, said Republican leaders keeping that chamber in recess for nearly two months

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 17 of 66

leading up to and during the shutdown significantly delayed work on the full-year government funding bills.

Hoyer said that scheduling decision was a clear "indication they're not interested in solving the problem."

"If they were, they would have had members here working on appropriation bills," Hoyer said. "And the only way you're going to ultimately solve this problem is to pass appropriation bills."

Hoyer said the real question facing Congress now isn't whether there is time to work out agreement on the remaining nine government spending bills, but whether there's a will to make the types of compromises needed.

Untangling spending bills

The spending package that reopened the government included three of the dozen full-year bills, funding the Agriculture Department, Food and Drug Administration, Legislative Branch, military construction projects and Department of Veterans Affairs.

The remaining appropriations bills will be considerably tougher to resolve, especially because the House and Senate have yet to agree on how much they want to spend across the thousands of programs. Trump proposed major cutbacks in multiple programs in his budget request earlier this year that Democrats have strongly resisted.

The Defense, Homeland Security, Labor-HHS-Education and State-Foreign Operations bills will be some of the more difficult to settle.

Congress could always lean on another stopgap spending bill to keep funding relatively flat for the departments and agencies not covered by a full-year bill before Jan. 30. But lawmakers will need bipartisan support to advance in the Senate.

Washington Democratic Rep. Pramila Jayapal, former chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, said Republicans don't seem to grasp how much Americans are struggling with the cost of living, including for health insurance and health care.

"My constituents are already telling me that they're making that choice between having health insurance or having a house to live in, and they're going to choose the house," Jayapal said.

Whether or not a partial government shutdown begins in early 2026 will likely depend on whether Republican lawmakers from swing districts force bipartisanship on a health care bill.

"I really don't know," Jayapal said. "I think it depends on these vulnerable House Republicans, who are not going to be able to go back to their constituents without telling them that they've done something on health care."

Political juice and a backbone

Democratic Rep. Melanie Stansbury of New Mexico said she wouldn't be surprised if Congress is unable to strike a deal on government funding and winds up in a partial shutdown by February.

"Do I think that the Republicans have the political juice to get ... the rest of their appropriation bills across the finish line and a health care deal? No," Stansbury said.

She added that she hopes a handful of Republicans decide to join Democrats on the discharge petition bill that would force a floor vote on a bill to extend the ACA marketplace subsidies for three years.

"We gotta find a few brave Republicans who still have a backbone and some guts to stand up to this administration and actually care for their constituents," Stansbury said.

But any bipartisan deal to extend those health care tax credits seems fraught, as House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries slammed Republicans as having "zero credibility on this issue."

He pointed to Republicans trying several times to repeal the Affordable Care Act, including their last attempt in 2017, when GOP Sens. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, Susan Collins of Maine and the late John McCain of Arizona crossed party lines to vote against repealing the 2010 law.

"There's no evidence that they're serious about extending the Affordable Care Act tax credits," Jeffries, of New York, said. "Republicans have zero interest in fixing the health care crisis that they've created."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 18 of 66

'No point in taking 41 days to cave'

When Democrats controlled both chambers, temporary health care subsidies were originally passed as part of the COVID-19-era American Rescue Plan in 2021 for two years.

With Democrats still controlling both chambers, lawmakers approved the Inflation Reduction Act, the 2022 signature climate policy bill from the Biden administration, that extended those health care subsidies for three years, expiring at the end of December 2025.

The outcome of the just concluded shutdown is shaping some House Democrats' views.

Virginia Democratic Rep. Bobby Scott said if there is a new shutdown come February, Senate Democrats will have to decide whether they're going to "cave again, or at least engage in negotiations."

"When the (Senate) Democrats say: 'Our strategy wasn't working,' it wasn't working because they assume you're going to cave, which you just proved," Scott told States Newsroom. "Their strategy worked — trying to get them to negotiate and talk to you doesn't because they know you're going to cave."

Scott said "there's no point in taking 41 days to cave," pointing to the eight members of the Senate Democratic Caucus who broke ranks to advance and later approve the package to reopen the government.

"Why don't you just cave right at the beginning, on February 2nd?" he said. "If the Republican strategy is: 'We're not going to negotiate at all because you're going to cave,' you have to show them that you're not going to cave, then you can have a discussion."

Scott said the same health care issues will still exist if nothing happens between now and the package's Jan. 30 government funding deadline.

"By then, we'll know that several million people don't have health insurance, we'll know that rural hospitals are beginning to suffer," Scott said.

Delaware Democratic Rep. Sarah McBride said that "from today through November (2026) and after, we will continue to be talking about health care, to be fighting for health care."

"I think what you've seen over the last several months, you will continue to see from us through November and then, God willing, once we're in a majority, we'll do all that we can to reverse these cuts and restore care and expand access to it," she said.

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 coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.

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

National school bus driver shortage persists, despite recent gains

A dearth of drivers has a particularly pronounced effect on students with disabilities

BY: ROBBIE SEQUEIRA

School districts have made some progress in addressing the national shortage of school bus drivers, but there still aren't as many drivers as there were in 2019, according to a new study.

The number of drivers has increased by 2,300, or 1.1%, since last year, according to the Economic Policy Institute, a left-leaning research group. But there are still 21,200 fewer bus drivers than there were in 2019, a decline of 9.5%.

The researchers link the employment gain to higher wages: Average hourly wages are up 4.2% in the past year, the largest jump since the COVID-19 pandemic.

During and after the pandemic, many bus drivers retired, left the workforce or in some cases, died. Districts across the country have had to scramble to find someone to take the wheel — be it substitute teachers, administrators or even parents.

The number of bus drivers decreased by 15% between September 2019 and September 2023, accord-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 19 of 66

ing to the Economic Policy Institute. Private school bus contractors now account for 38% of the nation's pupil transportation services, according to the National School Transportation Association.

Other school transportation options, such as ride-hailing services, have helped fill the gap in some places. But roughly half of all U.S. K-12 students rely on a school bus to get to school.

The report warns that school district budgets are tightening as federal pandemic relief funds have expired, and notes that the Trump administration has delayed some federal K-12 funding in its bid to shrink and eventually eliminate the U.S. Department of Education.

The report points to Maine, Missouri, and Vermont as states that are dealing with especially severe bus driver shortages. It also notes that a dearth of drivers has a particularly pronounced effect on students with disabilities, and that not having enough drivers can lead to inconsistent bus schedules and routes, which contributes to absenteeism and missed school meals.

Stateline reporter Robbie Sequeira can be reached at 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.

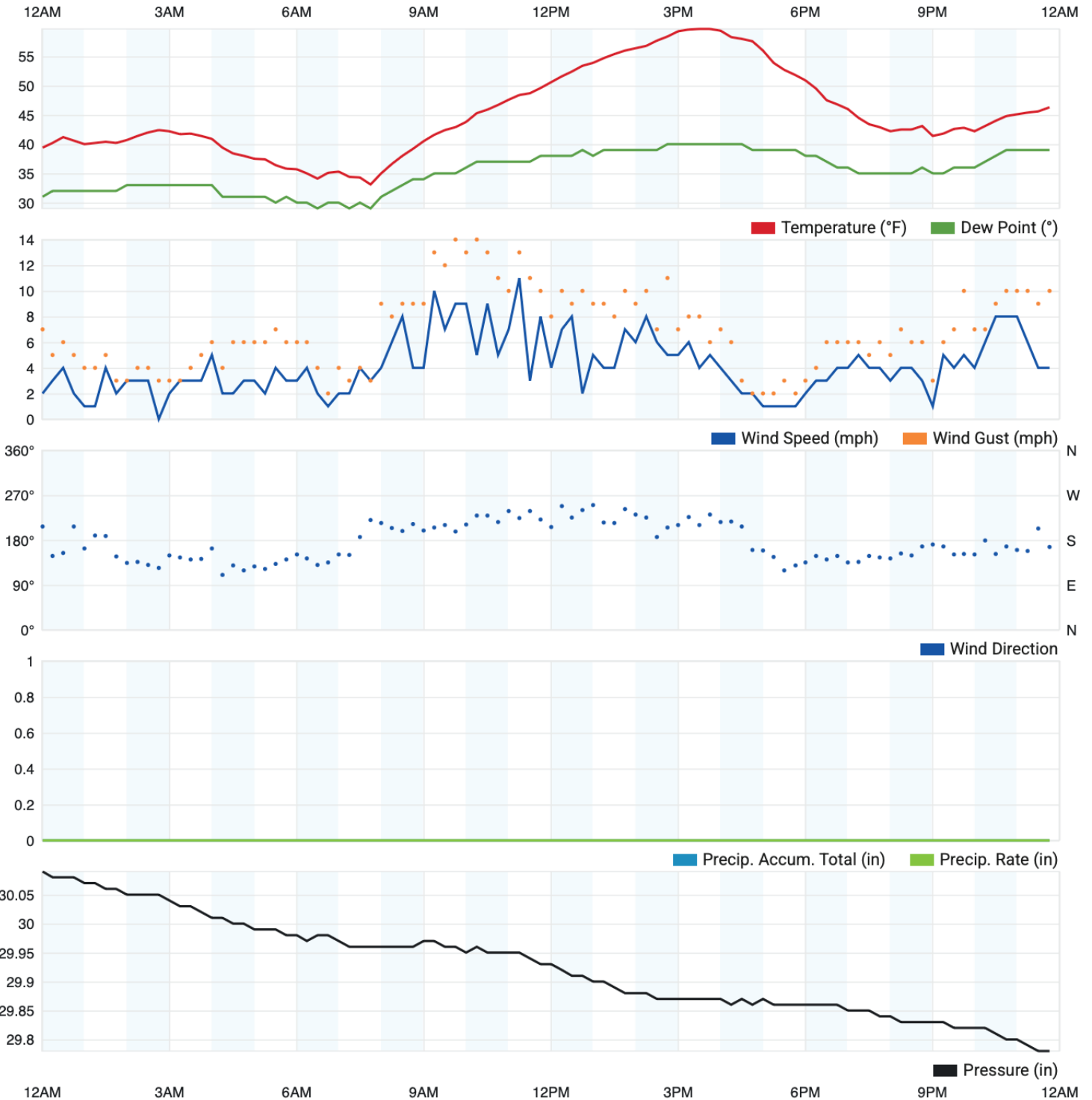
Robbie Sequeira is a staff writer covering housing and social services for Stateline.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 20 of 66

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

November 13, 2025



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 21 of 66

Today



High: 68 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 39 °F

Chance Rain

Saturday



High: 50 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Saturday Night



Low: 27 °F

Partly Cloudy

Sunday



High: 48 °F

Mostly Sunny



Weekend Outlook

Friday



Highs: 66-76°

Lows: 37-43°

Light rain
showers this
evening

Saturday



Highs: 46-56°

Lows: 26-33°

Sunday



Highs: 44-54°

Lows: 22-34°

Highs today will be in the upper 60s to upper 70, about 20-25 degrees above average. This could break some records around the area. There is a 20-30% chance of light rain showers this evening, mainly north of Hwy 14. Saturday and Sunday will be slightly cooler, but dry and mostly sunny.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 22 of 66

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 60 °F at 3:29 PM

Low Temp: 33 °F at 7:41 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 9:31 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 68 in 2015

Record Low: -17 in 2014

Average High: 43

Average Low: 20

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.40

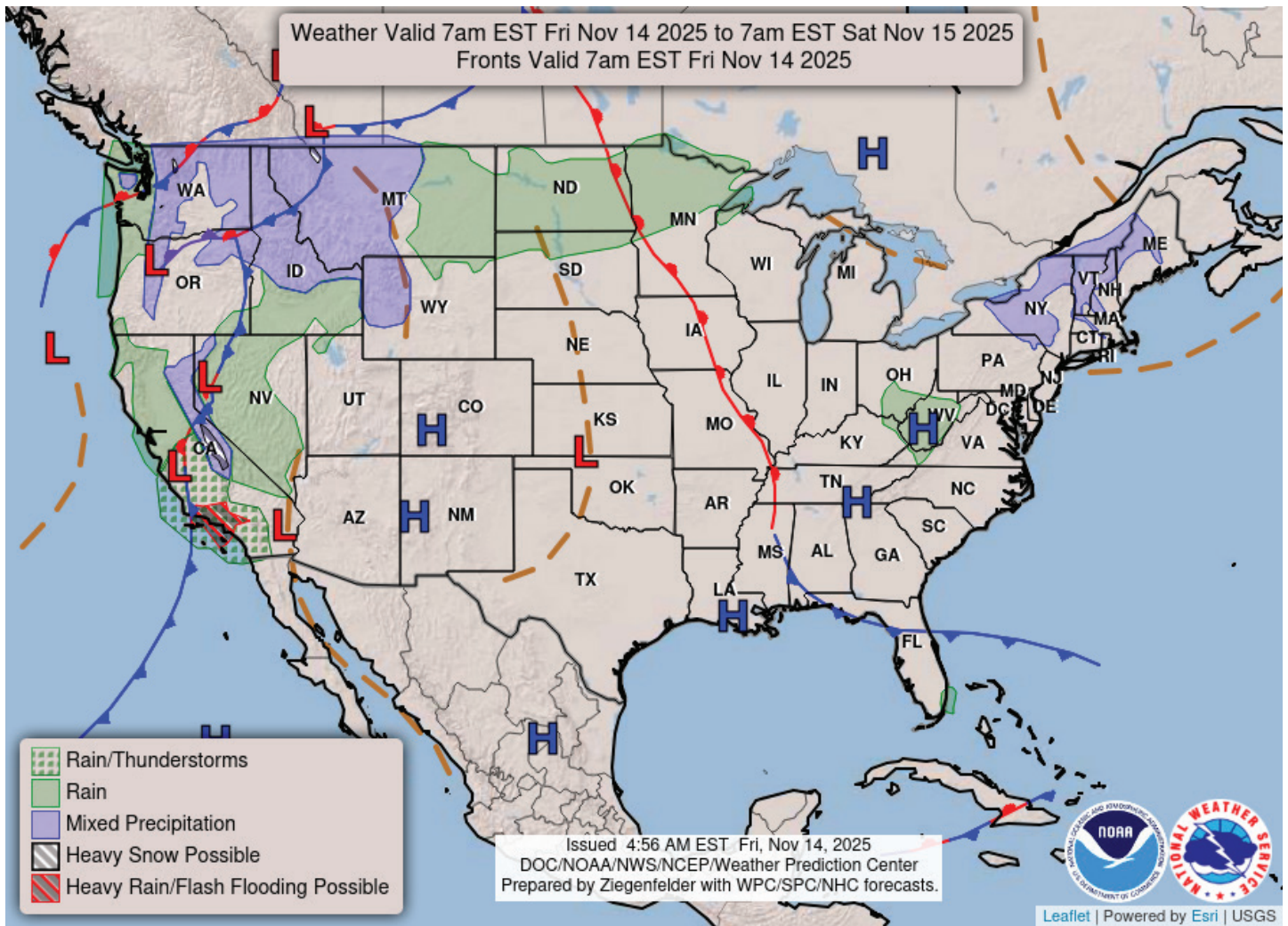
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 20.87

Precip Year to Date: 23.51

Sunset Tonight: 5:03 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:31 am



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 23 of 66

Today in Weather History

November 14, 1997: A low-pressure system produced snow and blowing snow, creating near whiteout conditions at times. Six inches of snow fell in the Sisseton foothills by Friday evening in Roberts and eastern Marshall Counties. Strong north winds gusting to near 35 mph, combined with the snow, caused visibilities to fall below one-half mile at times over a large portion of northeast South Dakota during the evening of the 13th and through the 14th. Classes were canceled around Summit because of near-whiteout conditions, while classes were delayed for two hours in Britton. Interstate 29 was closed just north of the Grant County line for a time after a semi-trailer rolled. Some snowfall amounts include; 6.5 inches in Summit; 6.2 inches in Waubay; 6.0 inches in Roscoe; and 5.0 inches in Sisseton and Wilmot.

1921: During the afternoon hours, thunderstorms brought severe hail to portions of Alabama. The hailstones ranged from about the size of buckshot to as large as a baseball. The largest stoned weighed as much as a pound.

1964 - With the help of a fresh three inch cover of snow, the temperature at Ely, NV, dipped to 15 degrees below zero to establish an all-time record low for the month of November. That record of -15 degrees was later equalled on the 19th of November in 1985. (The Weather Channel)

1969: Apollo 12 was launched into a threatening gray sky with ominous cumulus clouds. Pete Conrad's words 43 seconds after liftoff, electrified everyone in the Control Center: "We had a whole bunch of buses drops out," followed by "Where are we going?" and "I just lost the platform." Lightning had stricken the spacecraft. Warning lights were illuminated, and the spacecraft guidance system lost its attitude reference.

1974 - A storm produced 15 inches of snow at the Buffalo, NY, airport, and 30 inches on the south shore of Lake Erie. (David Ludlum)

1986 - An early season cold wave set more than 200 records from the northwestern U.S. to the east coast over a seven day period. For some places it proved to be the coldest weather of the winter season. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 - The first major snowstorm of the season hit the Southern and Central Rockies, producing 12 inches at the Brian Head ski resort in Utah overnight. Strong and gusty winds associated with the storm reached 52 mph at Ruidoso NM. In the eastern U.S., the temperature at Washington D.C. soared to 68 degrees, just three days after being buried under more than a foot of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A massive storm produced snow and gusty winds in the western U.S., with heavy snow in some of the higher elevations. Winds gusted to 66 mph at Show Low AZ, and Donner Summit, located in the Sierra Nevada Range of California, was buried under 23 inches of snow. Heavy rain soaked parts of California, with 3.19 inches reported at Blue Canyon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Unseasonably warm weather prevailed east of the Rockies. Temperatures reached 70 degrees as far north as New England, and readings in the 80s were reported across the southeast quarter of the nation. Nineteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date. For the second time in the month Dallas/Fort Worth TX equalled their record for November with an afternoon high of 89 degrees. The high of 91 degrees at Waco TX was their warmest of record for so late in the season. Heavy snow blanketed parts of Wyoming overnight, with a foot of snow reported at Cody, and ten inches at Yellowstone Park. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



Daily Devotion

God Knows Your Needs

God invites us into conversation with Him, even though He already knows what we need.

Matthew 6:7-8: 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

Have you ever watched parents of young children? In the midst of a whirlwind of activity, they meet their kids' many needs. Spills are averted, noses are wiped, hugs are freely given—all at the same time! Clearly, such parents know what their little ones need, even when the children can't express it.

Sometimes it is difficult for us to think of ourselves as children. When we see little ones running around, always needing something from us, we cannot imagine that we might often look the same way, only in grown-up bodies. Fortunately, we also have a Parent who already knows our needs (Matt. 6:8). Yet we often act as though we must tell God how to fix our problems.

Isn't it strange? If you asked Christians whether they thought God is all-knowing, most would say "yes" without hesitation. However, many of us don't pray as if that's the case. Instead, we ask God to meet our needs in the very specific ways we think are best suited to our situation.

God does want us to talk with Him about what is on our heart. But at the same time, we should remember that He truly knows what's needed even before we pray about it (Psalms 139:2-4). Ask Him to speak to your listening heart. Remember, He's already got the answer and is waiting for the opportunity to share it with you.

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

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 25 of 66

Upcoming Groton Events

- 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

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

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

paypal.me/paperpaul

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

Groton Daily Independent 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 _____



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.11.25

10 13 40 42 46 1

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$965,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 24 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.12.25

9 30 31 34 39 2

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$7,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 39 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.13.25

3 9 16 20 42 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 54 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.12.25

3 7 14 22 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$83,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 54 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.12.25

7 31 32 39 65 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 23 Mins 26 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.12.25

29 39 43 51 65 23

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$546,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 23 Mins 26 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 27 of 66

News from the **AP** Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL

SDHSAA State Championship=
Class 9-AA=Freeman-Marion-FA 46, Elkton-Lake Benton 22
Class 9-B=Dell Rapids St Mary's 54, Avon 6

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

PREP VOLLEYBALL

SDHSAA Playoffs=
SoDak 16=
Class AA=
Brandon Valley def. Rapid City Central, 25-12, 25-18, 25-17
Harrisburg def. Sturgis Brown High School, 25-5, 25-11, 25-8
Mitchell def. Spearfish, 25-12, 25-15, 25-22
Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Rapid City Stevens, 25-23, 21-25, 25-19, 8-1
Sioux Falls Lincoln def. Yankton, 25-20, 25-21, 25-12
Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Brookings, 25-11, 25-6, 25-16
Sioux Falls Washington def. Aberdeen Central, 25-12, 25-18, 25-17
Watertown def. Huron, 25-23, 28-26, 25-13

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

Chinese astronauts return from space station after delay blamed on space debris damage

By KEN MORITSUGU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Three Chinese astronauts returned from their nation's space station Friday after more than a week's delay because the return capsule they had planned to use was damaged, likely from being hit by space debris.

The team left their Shenzhou-20 spacecraft in orbit and came back using the recently arrived Shenzhou-21, which had ferried a three-person replacement crew to the station, China's Manned Space Agency said.

The original return plan was scrapped because a window in the Shenzhou-20 capsule had tiny cracks, most likely caused by impact from space debris, the space agency said Friday.

They had been on a six-month rotation and were originally scheduled to return Nov. 5, four days after the new crew arrived. Their return was delayed for nine days, and their 204-day stay in space was the longest for any astronaut at China's space station.

It wasn't clear if the change in spacecraft would affect the timing of future missions to the Tiangong space station, where new crews typically swap in every six months. The space agency said that Shenzhou-22 would be launched but did not specify when.

Chen Dong, the mission commander, said he felt at ease after their return, calling his latest space voyage both a training opportunity and a real test.

"The path of human space exploration is not smooth," he said after emerging from the capsule. "It's filled with difficulties and challenges. But that is exactly why we choose to walk this path."

The return capsule deployed a red and white striped parachute as it came down in the late afternoon to a remote site in northern China's Gobi Desert, about five and a half hours after leaving the space station. The impact sent up a large cloud of dust in the barren landscape.

The astronauts were carried out one by one about 30 minutes later and put into waiting chairs that were then loaded into individual orange trucks that took them away across the flat and scrubby desert.

Millions of pieces of space debris are circling the Earth at speeds faster than a bullet flies. The mostly tiny fragments can come from launches and collisions and pose a risk to satellites, space stations and the astronauts who operate outside them.

The temporarily stranded astronauts, who had traveled to the space station in April, conducted experiments with the new crew and were "in good condition, working and living normally," the space agency said earlier this week.

Returning with the astronauts were four mice that also had a longer than planned stay after arriving on Shenzhou-21 about two weeks ago.

The mice were brought to study how weightlessness and confinement would affect them. The study will help in the development of technologies to breed and monitor small mammals in space, the Chinese Academy of Sciences said.

Jiang Yue, at the academy's space application engineering and technology center, said the mice were monitored 24 hours in orbit to observe their activity. The scientists found the mice adapted to the micro-gravity environment in a very short period of time, and that they could eat, drink and sleep on their own. The mice will be sent to a hospital for further study.

China's space program is a source of national pride. State broadcaster CCTV showed the astronauts' return live. A Chinese national flag flapped in a stiff wind after being planted in the ground near where the capsule landed.

Besides building its own space station, China has explored Mars with a robotic rover and aims to land a person on the moon by 2030.

China developed the Tiangong space station after the country was excluded from the International Space Station over U.S. national security concerns. China's space program is controlled by its military.

The Tiangong, which means "Heavenly Palace," hosted its first crew in 2021. It is smaller than the International Space Station, which has been operating for 25 years.

The International Space Station has also had delayed returns, notably that of two NASA astronauts whose one-week test flight of a new Boeing crew capsule in 2024 turned into nine months after problems cropped up with the capsule.

Russian drone and missile attack on Kyiv kills 4 people, injures at least 34

By HANNA ARHIROVA, SAMYA KULLAB and VASILISA STEPANENKO Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia unleashed a major missile and drone barrage on Kyiv early Friday, killing four people, starting fires and scattering debris as the sound of explosions boomed across the city, Ukrainian authorities said. A pregnant woman was among at least 34 people injured.

Emergency crews responded to multiple strikes during the night, said Tymur Tkachenko, head of Kyiv's military administration. Russia used at least 430 drones and 18 missiles in the attack, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

Russia has waged an aerial campaign against Ukraine since its all-out invasion of its neighbor nearly four years ago. U.S.-led diplomatic efforts this year to stop the fighting have so far come to nothing.

Friday's aerial assault, which also targeted Odesa in the south and Kharkiv in the northeast, was mostly aimed at Kyiv, where drones and missiles smashed into high-rise apartment blocks, according to Zelenskyy.

It was "a specially calculated attack to cause as much harm as possible to people and civilians," he said in a post on Telegram.

Moscow denies targeting civilian areas, with the Russian Defense Ministry saying Friday it carried out an overnight strike on Ukraine's "military-industrial and energy facilities." Ukrainian officials scoff at those claims, showing repeated damage to homes and public buildings.

The attack was the biggest on Kyiv in almost three weeks. Most recent Russian aerial attacks have aimed

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 29 of 66

at electricity infrastructure around the country ahead of the bitter winter months.

Ukraine used its American-made Patriot air defense systems to repel the attack and shot down 14 missiles, Zelenskyy said. The Ukrainian leader has pleaded with foreign supporters to send more of the sophisticated systems.

In the Odesa region, Russian drones struck a busy street in Chornomorsk, killing two people and injuring seven others, regional military administration chief Oleh Kiper said.

'My hair was on fire'

Kyiv residents told of harrowing escapes and near misses in the dead of night.

Mariia Kalchenko said it was a miracle she survived after her building was hit.

"I didn't hear anything, I just realized that my hair was on fire," the 46-year-old volunteer rescue dog handler told The Associated Press.

She turned on her flashlight and saw that her dog had moved away in fright. "I turned around and saw that there was no wall, and there was a neighbor's apartment, the neighbor was screaming, there was no door, and the flames were going from the front door into the apartment," she said.

Oleh Hudyma, 59, said she became aware of the attack and intended to go to a bomb shelter but she wasn't quick enough.

"I got up, got dressed, went out, and there was an explosion. I couldn't hear the (drone) engine running, just an explosion, flames, everything flew," she said. "I was in the kitchen and just fell to the floor."

City authorities warned that power and water outages are possible.

Eight of the capital's 10 districts reported damage. Emergency crews fought fires in apartment blocks, debris from explosions was strewn across yards and cars parked in the streets were set ablaze.

In the wider Kyiv region, Russian strikes damaged critical infrastructure and private homes, injuring at least one civilian, the head of the regional military administration, Mykola Kalashnyk, said. A 55-year-old man in Bila Tserkva suffered burns and was hospitalized, he said. Fires broke out in private houses in the capital's suburbs.

The strike came as European Union officials warned this week that Ukraine must continue to crack down on corruption following a major graft scandal that has put top nuclear energy officials under scrutiny. But they also offered assurances that aid will continue to flow as Kyiv strains to hold back Russia's invasion.

Russia says it shot down 216 Ukrainian drones

In response to Russia's continuing onslaught, Ukraine has launched its own domestically developed drones and missiles against targets on Russian soil, especially oil refineries and depots that provide Moscow with income and manufacturing plants that supply the armed forces.

The Russian Defense Ministry said Friday that its air defense forces shot down 216 Ukrainian drones overnight over a number of Russian regions and annexed Crimea. It did not mention missiles.

However, Zelenskyy said Ukraine used a modification of domestically produced Neptune missiles to strike targets deep inside Russia. The Russian Defense Ministry accused Ukraine of hitting civilian facilities and claimed the overnight strike on Kyiv came in response to that.

Over 60 Ukrainian drones were intercepted over the southern Krasnodar region that borders Crimea, according to the Defense Ministry. A total of 45 drones were destroyed over the Saratov region deeper inside Russia, while another 19 were shot down over Crimea.

In Novorossiysk, a port city in the Krasnodar region, the attack damaged an oil depot at the Sheskhari transshipment complex, as well as unidentified "coastal structures," local authorities said. According to the Meduza independent news outlet, Sheskhari is one of the largest oil loading complexes for transshipment of oil and oil products in the south of Russia.

Falling drone debris also damaged a civilian vessel in the port, and three crew members were hospitalized with injuries. Several residential buildings were also damaged, and a man from one of those buildings was hospitalized with injuries, officials said.

In the Saratov region, Gov. Roman Busargin said that the attack damaged unspecified "civilian infrastructure." Unconfirmed media reports said that an oil refinery was hit.

Bodies of 15 Palestinians returned by Israel, health officials in Gaza say

By WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

KHAN YOUNIS, Gaza (AP) — Israel returned the bodies of 15 Palestinians to Gaza on Friday, officials at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis said, in the latest step to fulfilling the terms of the fragile U.S.-brokered ceasefire agreement.

The bodies were returned after militants late Thursday handed over the body of one of the last four remaining Israeli hostages taken during the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that launched the war in Gaza.

Israel identified the returned body as that of Meny Godard, who was abducted from Kibbutz Be'eri in southern Israel. His wife, Ayelet, was killed during the attack.

The armed wings of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad said Godard's body was recovered in southern Gaza.

The remains of 25 hostages have been returned to Israel since the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas began on Oct. 10. There are still three more in Gaza that need to be recovered and handed over. Hamas returned 20 living hostages to Israel on Oct. 13.

For each hostage returned, Israel has released the remains of 15 Palestinians, an exchange central to the ceasefire's first phase. Overall, the number of bodies of Palestinians received so far is 330, of which only 95 have been formally identified, according to Gaza Health Ministry officials.

Health officials in Gaza have said identifying the remains handed over by Israel is complicated by a lack of DNA testing kits.

The exchanges have gone ahead even as Israel and Hamas have accused each other of violating other terms of the deal. Israel has accused Hamas handing over partial remains in some instances and staging the discovery of bodies in others, while Hamas has accused Israel of opening fire at civilians and restricting the flow of humanitarian aid into the territory.

The next parts of the 20-point plan call for creating an international stabilization force, forming a technocratic Palestinian government and disarming Hamas.

The fragile agreement aims to wind down the war that was triggered by the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel that killed about 1,200 people and saw 251 taken hostage.

Israel responded with a sweeping military offensive that has killed more than 69,100 Palestinians in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry, part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals, maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by independent experts.

10 years after the Bataclan massacre, Paris is still scarred by that night of terror

By JOHN LEICESTER and THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Anne-Laure, Djamila, Justine, Guillaume, Nick and so many others — sons, daughters, mothers and fathers slain by Islamic State group gunmen and suicide bombers in Paris were fondly remembered Thursday as France commemorated the night of terror a decade ago that scarred and reshaped the country.

With minutes of silence and somber readings of the 132 victims' names, the French capital mourned the dead and innocence it lost on Nov. 13, 2015, but also proudly recalled how Parisians came together, looked after each other and slowly but surely rebounded in the wake of the three-hour series of coordinated assaults targeting the packed Bataclan concert hall, joyful cafés and the national stadium where France's soccer team was playing.

The bloodshed was France's deadliest in peacetime — a national trauma likened to 9/11. The night hardened France's security reflexes while deepening a sense of solidarity that has endured a decade later. Many Parisians think in terms of "before" and "after," and some still check for exits when they're in

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 31 of 66

crowded places.

"Ten years. The pain remains," French President Emmanuel Macron posted as he led the day of memorials, laying wreaths at attack sites and recalling "the lives cut short, the wounded, the families and the loved ones."

Defiance and sorrow

At the city's Place de la République, Parisians gathered with candles, flowers and handwritten notes as they did in 2015, taking comfort in being together.

"It's a wound that is open. For the last 10 years, we've been saying there was a before and an after, but what comes after?" said Paris resident Patrick Abukrat. "The threat is still there."

Defiance went hand-in-hand with the sadness, as in 2015, when Parisians made a point of exercising their freedoms after the attacks, mustering the courage to drink again in cafés, walk the streets with their families and carry on.

At a rousing commemoration on Thursday evening, the frontman of Californian rock band Eagles of Death Metal that was playing in the Bataclan when it was attacked led a choir in singing "You'll Never Walk Alone," a show tune now best known as a soccer fans' anthem.

"Walk on, with hope in your heart," singer Jesse Hughes belted out.

Enduring pain

The daughter of the first person killed fought tears and described her "void that never closes." Sophie Dias' father, Manuel, was killed when the first bomber detonated outside the Stade de France where France was playing Germany. Speaking at the stadium gate where he was killed, she said his absence "weighs every morning and every evening."

"My father loved life. He believed in freedom, in the simple joy of being together, of sharing precious moments with his family, and he instilled in us the values of the Republic. That's what hatred sought to destroy. But that's precisely what we carry with us today. Stronger than anything, despite the pain, despite the absence and this gaping hole. We remain standing," she said.

Three bombers sought but failed to get inside the stadium. Security agent Salim Toorabally turned away one of them and, after they detonated their explosive vests outside, tended a wounded man.

"He had like these bolts (pieces of metal) lodged in his thigh," Toorabally said in an interview with The Associated Press. "There was blood. I didn't have gloves on, and there were pieces of flesh in my hands."

He still speaks to the man today.

Tributes trace the path of carnage

Macron and first lady Brigitte Macron — joined by Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo — toured all the attack sites, talking to survivors and relatives of those killed, laying wreaths and standing in silence for the dead and hundreds more injured.

So numerous were the victims of the massacre at the Bataclan concert hall that it took four full minutes to read out all their names. The 92 victims there include two men who survived the three-hour siege but who later died by suicide. Another 39 people were killed that night by gunmen who sprayed cafés and restaurants with bullets.

"You never fully heal. You just learn to live differently," said Arthur Dénouveaux, who escaped the Bataclan and leads the victims' association Life for Paris.

Macron lauded police officers and others who saved lives and the French capital's resilience.

"The terrorists faced people far more courageous than them," he said. "Paris held on."

Church bells and the Eiffel Tower pay tribute

The bells of Notre Dame Cathedral and other Paris churches rang out in remembrance and the Eiffel Tower was illuminated in the national colors — blue, white and red.

The commemorations culminated with the inauguration of a Nov. 13 memorial garden opposite City Hall, with granite blocks that rise to evoke the attack sites.

"The Republic isn't dead. One for all. Vive la France," Britpop star Jarvis Cocker, frontman of the band Pulp who has lived in Paris, told the crowd.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 32 of 66

City workers, emergency services personnel and others read out the names of all 132 dead, taking them more than 9 minutes.

The attacks reshaped France's political and emotional landscape, triggering sweeping counterterrorism powers and years of debate over security and liberties. A 2021–2022 trial ended with life imprisonment for Salah Abdeslam, the lone surviving assailant, and convictions for 19 others.

French authorities say the terror threat has evolved significantly since 2015, with anti-terror police and prosecutors now increasingly focusing on young homegrown extremists, including children, who are radicalizing online, often in isolation.

Authorities say they have foiled six alleged Islamic extremist attack plots so far in 2025, involving suspects aged 17 to 22. Three suspected Islamic extremist attacks this year killed two people and injured several others.

Bad Bunny wins album of the year at the 2025 Latin Grammys, capping an electric night

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

It should come as a shock to no one: The 2026 Latin Grammy Awards were all about Bad Bunny. The Puerto Rican superstar won album of the year for his landmark release "Debí Tirar Más Fotos." After thanking his family and all those who worked on the album, he ended his speech with "Puerto Rico, I love you, thank you."

Those are powerful words honoring a record that doubles as a love letter for his island.

The artist born Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio was destined to dominate from the jump. He also won the first award of the night, for música urbana album. Halfway through the show, the singer found himself back on stage accepting the música urbana song trophy for "DTMF." "I never practice my speeches," he said in Spanish. And then he showed up for a third time: to perform "Weltita" with Chuwi.

He wasn't the only one with reason to celebrate: Song of the year went to Karol G, Andrés Jael Correa Ríos and Édgar Barrera for "Si Antes Te Hubiera Conocido." And Alejandro Sanz took home record of the year for "¿Y Ahora Qué?"

Live from Sin City, the 26th annual Latin Grammys were both energetic and eclectic. Take Raphael, the 2025 Person of the Year, who launched into an emotive rendition of "Qué Sabe Nadie" and "Mi Gran Noche," inviting the crowd to sing along.

That was after Santana kicked things off — specifically, Maluma singing Santana's 1970 hit "Oye Como Va" with the guitar legend himself.

It was just the beginning of a memorable medley, talents of today celebrating Santana — Christian Nodal joining in for "Corazón Espinoza" and Grupo Frontera for their 2025 collaboration with the virtuosic musician, "Me Retiro."

Performances hit hard and fast: Aitana brought her dreamy electro-pop, Sanz delivered a medley of "El Vino De Tu Boca" and "Las Guapas," Rauw Alejandro channeled Puerto Rico in Vegas with "Khé?," the bachata "Silencio," "Falsedad" and "Carita Linda." Then: Danny Lux, Kakalo and Ivan Cornejo brought contemporary Mexicana sounds. Pepe Aguilar followed, with his life-affirming mariachi — "El Cihualteco" into "El Fuereño."

Elena Rose slowed things down with "Me Lo Merezco." Karol G and the legendary Mexican singer Marco Antonio Solís dueted the romantic ballad "Coleccionando Heridas."

Two of the biggest groups in regional Mexican music — Grupo Frontera and Fuerza Regida — launched into their joint hit, "Me Jalo," before the latter took over for "Marlboro Rojo." That's a cut from their record-breaking 2025 album "111xpantia." Carín León's lovely raspy vocal tone carried throughout "Ahí Estabas Tú"; then he was joined by Kacey Musgraves for "Lost in Translation." Not long after, León took home the trophy in competitive contemporary Mexican album category for "Palabra De To's (Seca)."

Morat brought the pop-rock with "Faltas Tú" and Ca7riel and Paco Amoroso brought a kind of outsider, artistic spirit. Joaquina delivered a full-bodied "Quise Quererte." Any aspiring artists watching would be

wise to take a page out of the Brazilian singer Liniker's book; "Negona Dos Olhos Terríveis" was one of the night's most joyful. The same, of course, should be said about norteño band Los Tigres del Norte.

The coveted best new artist trophy was handed out to Paloma Morphy.

Traditional tropical album went to Gloria Estefan for "Raíces." Not long afterward, she hit the stage for "La Vecina" and "Chirriqui Chirri," joined by Nathy Peluso for the latter.

Then ranchero/mariachi album went to Christian Nodal for "¿Quién + Como Yo?"

Most of the evening's awards were handed out during a pre-televised Premiere Ceremony. That included: Bad Bunny's "Voy A Llevarte Pa Pr" winning for reggaeton performance. Argentinian duo Ca7riel and Paco Amoroso cleaned house then, too: taking home their first Latin Grammys for short and long form music video, alternative song, as well as alternative music album for "Papota," and pop song for "El dia del amigo." That's five wins, making them the most awarded act at the 2025 show.

The three-hour award show aired live from Las Vegas' MGM Grand Garden Arena. It was hosted by the dynamic duo of Maluma and actor, producer and musician Roselyn Sánchez.

Ammonia gas leak from a tanker truck in Oklahoma sickens dozens and forces evacuations

By CLIFF BRUNT, KATHY McCORMACK and SARAH BRUMFIELD Associated Press

WEATHERFORD, Okla. (AP) — A leaking tanker truck spewed dangerous ammonia gas outside a hotel overnight, filling its hallways with fumes and forcing hundreds of nearby residents of a small Oklahoma city to evacuate, authorities said Thursday. Several dozen people were treated at hospitals.

Officials lifted a shelter-in-place order Thursday morning, hours after firefighters wearing gas masks went door to door in Weatherford, waking people up and telling them to leave because of the anhydrous ammonia leak.

An oil field worker staying at the hotel where the truck had been parked said he heard a "faint pop" Wednesday night and noticed a smell minutes later. He and a coworker left their room and hustled into a hallway and then an elevator filling up with a pungent odor.

Once outside, they saw their vehicles underneath a cloud of ammonia, said Michael Johnson, of Nacogdoches, Texas. "The smell itself punched me," he said.

He took off running, but noticed his roommate wasn't with him and saw that he had run for their trucks. He said a police officer managed to save his coworker.

"His lips were purple and frozen shut," Johnson said. "His eyes were bloodshot red. His skin was all red."

Johnson found one person stumbling and gave him a shirt to put over his mouth. At one point, he looked at the smoke and saw they were surrounded, thinking "We're going to die."

Police said 34 people were treated at a local hospital and 11 patients were taken to Oklahoma City area hospitals. Several victims remained in intensive care late Thursday, but the majority were in stable condition, police said in a statement. Dozens more received treatment at casualty centers.

Five responding officers sustained chemical burns to their airways, police said.

At least 500 to 600 people went to a shelter early Thursday while others were ordered to remain inside their homes for several hours. Some nursing homes were evacuated, and schools were closed for the day.

A leaking gasket from a tanker truck carrying 25,000 pounds (11,340 kilograms) of ammonia was responsible, the EPA said in a written statement. The National Transportation Safety Board said it was investigating.

Anhydrous ammonia is used as a farm fertilizer to help corn and wheat grow. The colorless gas has a suffocating odor and can be deadly, especially at high concentrations, or cause breathing problems and burns to the skin and eyes.

Just last week, an anhydrous ammonia leak forced evacuations near Yazoo City, Mississippi, and two years ago, five people died in Illinois when a tanker truck spilled anhydrous ammonia after it was forced off a road by a passing minivan.

The cleanup in Weatherford — a city of 12,000 people about 70 miles (115 kilometers) west of Oklahoma City — could take several days, the police chief said.

"We pretty much got a lot of this stuff diluted right now," Orefice said, adding that authorities were working with environmental officials.

The EPA said subsequent air monitoring did not detect any ammonia in the local residential area. The levels of pH in the local creek were within normal and the levels detected in the soil were expected to "naturally neutralize over a short period."

The driver of the truck carrying the gas had parked behind a Holiday Inn Express to get a room there for the evening, Orefice said. The cause seemed to be a mechanical failure on a valve or a faulty seal, the police chief said.

Authorities said the air quality was being monitored and that the tanker truck was no longer leaking. A number of agencies were assisting, including hazmat crews and the Oklahoma National Guard.

Trisha Doucet called police for help when she learned the leak was blocks away from where her mother was caring for her bed-bound 89-year-old grandmother. An ambulance was quickly dispatched to get her to safety.

Her grandmother, who is on hospice, was reluctant to leave. "But this is my house," she said.

Doucet, who used to work as an EMT and knew the dangers of anhydrous ammonia, recalled telling her grandmother, "That's the hardest part. I know it's your house, but you really have to go."

Ohtani is unanimous MVP for 4th time in winning NL honor as Judge edges Raleigh for 3rd AL accolade

By DAVID BRANDT AP Baseball Writer

Shohei Ohtani likes winning Most Valuable Player awards. He loves winning the World Series even more.

The two-way Japanese star did both for a second season in a row for the Los Angeles Dodgers, earning his fourth career MVP on Thursday night while unanimously earning the National League honor. He's just the second to win four MVPs after Barry Bonds with seven and the only player to win unanimously more than once.

Considering Ohtani is 31, overtaking Bonds doesn't seem out of the question. Especially if it leads to more Fall Classic opportunities.

"If I'm playing well as an individual that means I'm helping the team win, so in that sense, hopefully I can end up with a couple more MVPs," Ohtani said through an interpreter. "But at the end of the day, it's all about winning games."

In the American League, Aaron Judge became the New York Yankees' fourth three-time winner, edging Seattle's Cal Raleigh with 17 first-place votes to 13 for the switch-hitting catcher. The vote was the closest for an MVP since the Los Angeles Angels' Mike Trout topped Houston's Alex Bregman by 17-13 in 2019.

Judge, who won the AL award in 2022 and 2024, joined Joe DiMaggio, Yogi Berra and Mickey Mantle as three-time MVPs with the Yankees. The 33-year-old outfielder led the majors with a .331 batting average and 1.144 OPS while hitting 53 homers.

When asked about his place in MLB and Yankees lore, Judge acknowledged he's in rare company.

"It's tough for me to wrap my head around," Judge said. "It's mind blowing from my side of things, because I play this game to win, I play this game for my teammates, my family, all the fans in New York."

Later he added: "You've got to pinch yourself every single day. It's truly an incredible honor."

Ohtani won a MVP for the third straight year, his second in the NL with the Dodgers after two in the AL with the Angels. He became the first to win in each league twice after getting the AL honor in 2021 and 2023. Ohtani signed with the crosstown Dodgers the following offseason and won NL MVP in 2024 during his first season in Chavez Ravine. He's also won the World Series in both his seasons with the Dodgers.

Philadelphia Phillies slugger Kyle Schwarber finished second in the NL with 23 second-place votes and New York Mets outfielder Juan Soto was third with four.

Ohtani hit .282 and led the NL with a 1.014 OPS. He also had 55 homers, 102 RBIs and 20 stolen bases.

The right-hander returned to pitching in June after missing 1 1/2 seasons on the mound because of an elbow injury. He struck out 62 batters over 47 innings, slowly increasing his workload while preparing for

the postseason.

Ohtani continued to shine in October with arguably the greatest single game in MLB history. He hit three homers while striking out 10 over six dominant innings on Oct. 17, leading the Dodgers over Milwaukee to finish an NL Championship Series sweep.

Schwarber, who earned a \$50,000 bonus for finishing second, hit an NL-best 56 homers and led the big leagues with 132 RBIs for Philadelphia.

Soto overcame a slow start to the season to have his typically stellar offensive output. The four-time All-Star — who signed a \$765 million, 15-year deal last December — had 43 homers, 105 RBIs and an NL-best 38 stolen bases. He received a \$150,000 bonus for finishing third in the MVP voting.

Judge is the first AL player to win back-to-back MVPs since Detroit's Miguel Cabrera in 2012 and 2013.

Raleigh, nicknamed "Big Dumper," led the big leagues with 60 homers, the most for a player primarily a catcher. He started 119 games behind the plate and another 38 at designated hitter.

The 28-year-old also had a career-high 125 RBIs, leading the Mariners to one of their best seasons in franchise history. Judge said he got to know Raleigh a little during the All-Star break and the catcher asked for some leadership tips.

"Cal's a special player," Judge said. "I could sit here and talk all night about the player he is, but really the kind of leader and person he is really stuck out to me at the All-Star Game."

Cleveland's José Ramírez finished third in the AL.

Arizona's Geraldo Perdomo was fourth in the NL voting, earning him \$2.5 million annual salary increases in 2028 and 2029 along with the price of Arizona's 2030 club option.

You can end a shutdown overnight — but you can't reopen a government that fast

By DEEPTI HAJELA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The longest government shutdown in U.S. history is over — on paper, at least. But the American public isn't done with it yet: Getting everything back up and running doesn't happen all at once.

The disruption of the closure, clocking in at 43 days, varied in its impact. Some people, like unpaid federal workers, were immediately and directly affected. Others included recipients of federal funding through programs like Head Start and food aid through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

As the shutdown progressed, effects rippled. Delays and flight cancellations started racking up for passengers as the Federal Aviation Administration ordered airlines to cut back on flights because of air traffic controller shortages. There were closures at Smithsonian museum sites and the National Zoo (although the animals still got fed).

That's a lot of programs, agencies and systems. Reclaiming "normal" won't be instantaneous. Here's a guide to what reopening looks like:

Federal workers

WHAT HAPPENED: About 1.25 million federal workers haven't been paid since Oct. 1, missing about \$16 billion in wages, according to official estimates. The workers were either furloughed or worked without pay in agencies across the federal government. Many struggled to make ends meet during that time, and the regional economy around Washington, D.C., took a hit.

WHAT NOW: The Office of Personnel Management, which manages the civil service, posted on X that federal workers were expected to be back Thursday, saying that "employees are expected to begin the workday on time. Normal operating procedures are in effect." The pay owed to the workers will come in by Nov. 19. The money will go out in four separate tranches, depending on the agency, according to a senior administration official.

Help with heat

WHAT HAPPENED: The shutdown coincided with the arrival of colder temperatures, and funding for the \$4.1 billion Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program was halted, prompting some states to delay

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 36 of 66

payments for heating bills.

WHAT NOW: A U.S. Department of Health and Human Services spokesperson said Thursday that an agency within HHS will “work swiftly to administer annual awards,” but no timeline was given. Mark Wolfe, executive director of the National Energy Assistance Directors Association, said it could take until mid-December or longer. Wolfe said recipients should still submit applications and tell utility companies they’re waiting for the funds. It’s trickier for people who rely on oil and propane because typically there are no protections. Recipients should check with their state; Vermont backfilled funding and Connecticut has pledged to cover the cost.

Flight disruptions

WHAT HAPPENED: The shutdown caused significant disruptions in aviation, with more and more unpaid air traffic controllers missing work as they dealt with the financial pressures and some of them picked up side jobs. Those staff shortages, combined with some troubling safety data, prompted the government to order airlines to cut some of their flights over the past week to relieve pressure on the system.

WHAT NOW: Those cuts aren’t increasing right now, but the Federal Aviation Administration won’t lift the order until safety metrics improve. Airlines say they expect to resume normal operations quickly after that. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy has said that controllers and other FAA employees should receive 70% of their back pay within 24-48 hours of the end of the shutdown, with the rest to come.

Federal social programs: SNAP

WHAT HAPPENED: Among the most high-profile impacts of the shutdown was on the SNAP program, which serves around 42 million people — about 1 in 8 Americans — in lower-income households. A series of court rulings and shifting policies from the Trump administration led to a patchwork distribution of November benefits. While some states had already issued full benefits, about two-thirds of states had issued only partial benefits or none at all.

WHAT NOW: On Thursday, state officials said they were working quickly to get full benefits to the millions of people who missed their regular monthly payments. Some states said SNAP recipients should receive their full monthly benefits starting Thursday or Friday, though it could take up to a week.

Federal social programs: Head Start

WHAT HAPPENED: When it comes to Head Start, the shutdown had held up the distribution of federal grant payments. Some affected centers remained open by furloughing portions of their staff or tapping into emergency reserves. Others were forced to close, shutting down child care for thousands of families. Head Start serves children from birth to age 5 who come from families that qualify for federal low-income guidelines, are homeless or receive public assistance. The program provides preschool education as well as developmental screenings and free meals.

WHAT NOW: The Office of Head Start will expedite funding and directly contact the impacted programs to share a timeline of when they can expect federal money, said Emily Hilliard, a spokesperson for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The office is already operating at a reduced capacity after experiencing substantial layoffs earlier this year. But even when programs receive their money, program leaders worry of staffing shortages if too many furloughed employees already found other jobs. Some advocates said it could take several weeks for some of the programs across the country to receive funding and restore operations.

Taxes

WHAT HAPPENED: The Internal Revenue Service had closed walk-in assistance centers.

WHAT NOW: The centers are being reopened. The agency said all tax deadlines remain in effect but a backlog of paper correspondence developed during the shutdown, so responses will be delayed. Social Security recipients continued receiving payments throughout the shutdown. Local offices also remained open, though they had temporarily suspended a few services, including replacing Medicare cards and updating earnings records.

Education

WHAT HAPPENED: The Education Department laid off 466 Education Department staffers in the cross-government firings meant to pressure Democratic lawmakers over the shutdown. Those layoffs had been

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 37 of 66

halted by a federal judge. The department furloughed 2,117 employees at the start of the shutdown, but some were brought back for essential work. New grants were also put on hold during the shutdown. Most school districts received the bulk of their federal funding over the summer, but some grants have been delayed.

WHAT NOW: The department said Thursday it had brought back all furloughed staff members or those dismissed in the Trump administration's mass firings. Recipients of Impact Aid, which boosts the budgets of districts with large amounts of federal land that can't be taxed for local schools, were waiting to learn when their payments would be processed.

The military

WHAT HAPPENED: Members of the U.S. military dealt with weeks of anxiety over whether they would get paid as they continued working. The Trump administration ultimately found ways to pay troops for the two pay periods during the closure. But the process was fraught; the administration located the money just days before each paycheck. Pay arrived days later than usual for many service members with early direct deposit, disrupting their ability to pay bills and forcing some to pay late fees or rack up debt. Reimbursements for the cost of moving between bases, which affects roughly 400,000 military families each year, were paused during the shutdown, advocates said. And weekend drills for many reservists were canceled, eliminating a chunk of pay that can be several hundred dollars each month.

WHAT NOW: Civilians in the Defense Department began returning Thursday. According to a memo provided to The Associated Press, the Air Force said civilians could take a day of administrative leave or work remotely for up to a week. Several military officials said the impacts on active-duty troops have been minimal.

National parks

WHAT HAPPENED: The country's national parks largely stayed open through the shutdown with limited staffing. Outside groups and state governments had picked up the tab during the shutdown to keep visitor centers running and help with trash cleanup at many parks. And the Trump administration tapped into previously collected entrance fees to pay for cleaning restrooms and other basic services. But the efforts didn't stop vandals from defacing rock features along Devils Garden Trail in Arches National Park in Utah and toppling a stone wall at Devil's Den in Gettysburg National Military Park in Pennsylvania.

WHAT NOW: National Park Service employees were ordered back to work Thursday. It will take time for rangers to fully assess parks, including backcountry areas, and more damage could yet be discovered, said Kristen Brengel with the National Parks Conservation Association. No fees were collected during the shutdown, costing parks almost \$1 million a day in lost revenue.

Museums

WHAT HAPPENED: The Smithsonian buildings and the National Zoo were first closed Oct. 12. They are typically open every day except Christmas. The 20 sites together hosted more than 16 million people last year, and the organization has more than 3,600 federal employees. While the zoo has been closed, the popular livestream feeds capturing the famous giant pandas were offline. The normally active social media pages sharing animal updates and colorful photographs were silent. The animals continue to be fed and get care.

WHAT NOW: Two of the Smithsonian's museums along the National Mall – American History and Air and Space – were to reopen Friday. The organization says on its website that the rest of the Smithsonian's sites across the Washington area and New York will reopen by Monday on a rolling basis.

Israel says militants have returned remains of 1 of the last 4 hostages in Gaza

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel said Thursday that militants have handed over the body of one of the last four remaining hostages taken during the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that launched the war in Gaza.

Israel identified the returned body as that of Meny Godard, who was abducted from Kibbutz Be'eri in

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 38 of 66

southern Israel. His wife, Ayelet, was killed during the attack.

The armed wings of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad said Godard's body was recovered in southern Gaza.

Since the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas began on Oct. 10, the remains of 25 hostages have been returned to Israel. There are still three more in Gaza that need to be recovered and handed over.

Godard was a professional soccer player before enlisting in the Israeli military and serving in the 1973 Mideast War, according to Kibbutz Be'eri. He served in a variety of different positions in the kibbutz, including at its printing press.

Israel has been releasing 15 Palestinian bodies for the remains of each hostage as part of the ceasefire agreement. The Gaza Health Ministry said the total number of remains received so far is 315.

Hamas has said recovering bodies is complicated by the widespread devastation in Gaza. Israel has pushed to speed up the returns and in certain cases has said the remains were not those of hostages.

Under the ceasefire deal, Hamas returned 20 living hostages to Israel on Oct. 13. The further exchanges of the dead are the central component of the initial phase of the U.S.-brokered agreement which requires Hamas return all hostage remains as quickly as possible. The exchanges have gone ahead even as Israel and Hamas have accused each other of violating other terms of the deal.

Israeli officials have accused Hamas of handing over partial remains in some instances and staging the discovery of bodies in others.

Hamas has accused Israel of opening fire at civilians and restricting the flow of humanitarian aid into the territory. The number of casualties has dropped since the ceasefire took effect, but officials in Gaza have continued to report deaths from strikes, while Israel has said that soldiers have also been killed in militant attacks.

Health officials in Gaza have said identifying the remains handed over by Israel is complicated by a lack of DNA testing kits.

With just three hostages left, the sides are close to wrapping up the first phase of the ceasefire.

The next parts of the 20-point plan call for creating an international stabilization force, forming a technocratic Palestinian government and disarming Hamas.

The fragile agreement aims to wind down the war that was triggered by the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel that killed about 1,200 people and saw 251 taken hostage.

Israel responded with a sweeping military offensive that has killed more than 69,100 Palestinians in Gaza, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry, part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals, maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by independent experts.

BBC apologizes to Trump over its misleading edit, but says there's no basis for a defamation claim

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The BBC apologized Thursday to U.S. President Donald Trump over a misleading edit of his speech on Jan. 6, 2021 but said it had not defamed him, rejecting the basis for his \$1 billion lawsuit threat.

The BBC said Chair Samir Shah sent a personal letter to the White House saying that he and the corporation were sorry for the edit of the speech Trump gave before some of his supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol as Congress was poised to certify President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election that Trump falsely alleged was stolen from him.

The publicly funded broadcaster said there are no plans to rebroadcast the documentary, which had spliced together parts of his speech that came almost an hour apart.

"We accept that our edit unintentionally created the impression that we were showing a single continuous section of the speech, rather than excerpts from different points in the speech, and that this gave the mistaken impression that President Trump had made a direct call for violent action," the BBC wrote in a retraction.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 39 of 66

Trump's lawyer had sent the BBC a letter demanding an apology and threatened to file a \$1 billion lawsuit for the harm the documentary caused him. It had set a Friday deadline for the BBC to respond.

While the BBC statement doesn't respond to Trump's demand that he be compensated for "overwhelming financial and reputational harm," the headline on its news story about the apology said it refused to pay compensation.

The dispute was sparked by an edition of the BBC's flagship current affairs series "Panorama," titled "Trump: A Second Chance?" broadcast days before the 2024 U.S. presidential election.

The third-party production company that made the film spliced together three quotes from two sections of the 2021 speech into what appeared to be one quote in which Trump urged supporters to march with him and "fight like hell."

Among the parts cut out was a section where Trump said he wanted supporters to demonstrate peacefully.

Director-General Tim Davie, along with news chief Deborah Turness, quit Sunday, saying the scandal was damaging the BBC and "as the CEO of BBC News and Current Affairs, the buck stops with me."

The letter from Trump's lawyer demanded an apology to the president and a "full and fair" retraction of the documentary along with other "false, defamatory, disparaging, misleading or inflammatory statements" about Trump.

Legal experts have said that Trump would face challenges taking the case to court in the U.K. or the U.S. They said that the BBC could show that Trump wasn't harmed because he was ultimately elected president in 2024.

Deadlines to bring the case in English courts, where defamation damages rarely exceed 100,000 pounds (\$132,000) expired more than a year ago. Because the documentary was not shown in the U.S., it would be hard to show that Americans thought less of him because of a program they could not watch.

While many legal experts have dismissed the president's claims against the media as having little merit, he has won some lucrative settlements against U.S. media companies and he could try to leverage the BBC mistake for a payout, potentially to a charity of his choice.

In July, Paramount, which owns CBS, agreed to pay \$16 million to settle a lawsuit filed by Trump over a "60 Minutes" interview with former Vice President Kamala Harris. Trump alleged that the interview was edited to enhance how Harris, the Democratic nominee for president in 2024, sounded.

That settlement came as the Trump-appointed head of the Federal Communications Commission launched an investigation that threatened to complicate Paramount's need for administration approval to merge with Skydance Media.

Last year, ABC News said it would pay \$15 million to settle a defamation lawsuit over anchor George Stephanopoulos' inaccurate on-air assertion that the president-elect had been found civilly liable for raping writer E. Jean Carroll. A jury found that he was liable for sexually abusing her.

The apology and retraction came as BBC said it was looking into a report in the Daily Telegraph that its Newsnight program in 2022 had similarly spliced together parts of the same speech by Trump.

Texas A&M University professors now need approval for some race and gender topics

By JUAN A. LOZANO Associated Press

COLLEGE STATION, Texas (AP) — Texas A&M University System regents on Thursday required professors to receive approval from the school president to discuss some race and gender topics, tightening rules months after a viral video of a student confronting an instructor over her lessons threw the flagship campus into upheaval.

The new policy will apply to all 12 schools within the system, including at Texas A&M, one of the largest universities in the country.

The new policy states that no academic course "will advocate race or gender ideology, or topics related to sexual orientation or gender identity" unless approved in advance by a campus president.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 40 of 66

The new policy appears to be the first time that a public university system in Texas has put in rules on what faculty can talk about in their classroom on the topics of race and gender. Other university systems in Texas have also placed restrictions on classroom instruction or have begun internal reviews of course offerings following a new state law.

Critics of the new policy say it would impede the ability of faculty to teach, undermine academic freedom and could be a violation of First Amendment rights.

"It really strikes at the heart of what education means and what universities do, which is circulate the exchange of knowledge without fear of retaliation, without fear censorship," said Rana Jaleel, chair of the American Association of University Professors' committee on academic freedom.

Various universities and their presidents around the country, including Harvard and Columbia have come under scrutiny from conservative critics and President Donald Trump administration over diversity, equity and inclusion practices and their responses to campus protests.

Last month, Trump asked nine major universities, including the University of Texas at Austin, to agree to various provisions, including commitments to eliminate race and sex from admissions decisions and to promote conservative views on campus.

The new policy defines "race ideology" as a "concept that attempts to shame a particular race or ethnicity, accuse them of being oppressors in a racial hierarchy or conspiracy" or assigns "them intrinsic guilt based on the actions of their presumed ancestors or relatives." The policy defines "gender ideology" as a "concept of self-assessed gender identity replacing and disconnected from the biological category of sex."

"The goal is transparent and document cocurricular review, not policing individual speech," James Hallmark, vice chancellor for the Texas A&M University System's Office of Academic Affairs, told the regents.

A spokesperson for the A&M system didn't immediately reply to an email Thursday seeking comment on how the policy would be implemented.

Regents also approved a related policy saying faculty "will not introduce a controversial matter that has no relation to the classroom subject or teach material that is inconsistent with the approved syllabus."

In approving the policy on race and gender topics, regents did not refer to September's firing of Melissa McCoul, a senior lecturer in the English department at Texas A&M University, after video was made public in which she argued with a female student over gender identity being taught in a children's literature class. McCoul's firing came after political pressure from Republican lawmakers, including Gov. Greg Abbott.

Shortly after McCoul's termination, Texas A&M's then president, Mark A. Welsh III, resigned. He didn't offer a reason for stepping down but he and the school had faced political pressure and criticism, including from Abbott, after the video was made public.

Leonard Bright, president of the American Association of University Professors A&M chapter, said he believes McCoul's case opened the door for regents to put this policy in place.

"Our job is to teach facts, teach the truth, and if ... we have to use a litmus test of whether or not it meets someone's approval, and it could be quite frankly their political approval, then we have no truth," Bright, who is a professor at Texas A&M's Bush School of Government and Public Service, told the AP ahead of the meeting.

During Thursday's meeting, eight Texas A&M professors and instructors, including Bright, spoke against the policy, with many calling for McCoul to be rehired.

Two A&M professors spoke in favor of the policy, including Adam Kolasinski, with the Department of Finance, who said "academic freedom does not mean you get to teach whatever you want."

Regent Sam Torn said the policy was being put in place to "make sure we are educating, not advocating."

A Texas law took effect on Sept. 1 that forbids Texas K-12 schools from teaching about sexual orientation or gender identity. The law does not apply to universities and other institutions of higher education.

Texas A&M is located in College Station, about 95 miles (153 kilometers) northwest of Houston.

James Comey and Letitia James press for dismissal of their cases, challenge prosecutor's appointment

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP) — Lawyers for former FBI Director James Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James asked a judge Thursday to dismiss the cases against them, saying the prosecutor who secured the indictments was illegally installed in the role.

U.S. District Judge Cameron McGowan Currie said she expects to decide by Thanksgiving on challenges to Lindsey Halligan's appointment as interim U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. That decision could help determine the fate of the politically charged cases, which were both shepherded by the hastily installed Halligan and together have amplified concerns that the Justice Department is being used as a weapon to target President Donald Trump's perceived adversaries.

Halligan was installed in the job at Trump's urging by Attorney General Pam Bondi in September, just days before Comey was indicted, in what defense lawyers say was an end-run around the constitutional and statutory rules governing the appointment of U.S. attorneys. They say the maneuver was designed to ensure indictments against the president's political opponents after the prosecutor who had been overseeing the two investigations, but had not brought charges, was effectively forced out.

"Ms. Halligan was the sole prosecutor in the grand jury room, and when the sole prosecutor lacks the authority," said Ephraim McDowell, one of Comey's defense lawyers, "that's not going to be a harmless error."

U.S. attorneys, top federal prosecutors who oversee regional Justice Department outposts across the country, are typically nominated by the president and then confirmed by the Senate. Attorneys general do have the authority to name an interim U.S. attorney who can serve for 120 days, but lawyers for Comey and James argued that once that period expires, the law gives federal judges the exclusive say of who gets to fill the vacancy.

The interim US attorney resigned under pressure

After then-interim U.S. attorney Erik Siebert resigned in September while facing Trump administration pressure to bring charges against Comey and James, Bondi installed Halligan, a White House aide with no prior prosecutorial experience. The appointment followed a Trump post on Truth Social in which he complained to Bondi about the lack of prosecutorial action against his political enemies and said, "JUSTICE MUST BE SERVED, NOW!!!"

Siebert had been appointed by Bondi in January to serve as interim U.S. attorney. Trump in May announced his intention to nominate him, and judges in the Eastern District unanimously agreed after his 120-day period expired that he should be retained in the role.

But after the Trump administration effectively pushed him out in September, the Justice Department again opted to make an interim appointment in place of the courts, something defense lawyers say it was not empowered under the law to do.

"If the government were to prevail here," McDowell said, then it "would never need to go through Senate confirmation again for U.S. attorneys." He said any dismissal of the indictment must be permanent, with no opportunity to bring the case again, to avoid rewarding the government for a violation.

The Justice Department defends Halligan's appointment

The Justice Department maintains that the law does not explicitly prohibit successive appointments of interim U.S. attorneys by the attorney general. Henry Whitaker, a lawyer for the department, argued that the indictment was properly returned by a grand jury and should not be dismissed over what he described as at most a paperwork or clerical error.

"The grand jury made a decision based on the facts and the law, and they followed their oath," Whitaker said.

He also said that even if there were questions about Halligan's appointment, they were resolved by the fact that Bondi had personally ratified the indictment and reviewed the grand jury proceedings. But Currie, the judge, questioned whether that was possible given that a section of the grand jury proceedings that

were produced to her was, for unexplained reasons, missing a section.

A Justice Department spokesperson later said that there was no missing time and that the time period in question concerns when the grand jury was deliberating, which "would not be included in a transcription."

Comey has pleaded not guilty to charges of making a false statement and obstructing Congress, and James, a Democrat, has pleaded not guilty to mortgage fraud allegations. The challenges to Halligan's appointment are part of a multiprong effort to get the prosecutions tossed before trial. Their lawyers have separately argued that the prosecutions are improperly vindictive and motivated by the president's personal animus toward their clients and should therefore be dismissed.

Trump's history with Comey and James

Comey, as FBI director in the early months of Trump's first term, infuriated the president through his oversight of an investigation into potential ties between Russia and Trump's 2016 campaign. Trump fired Comey in May 2017. The two have been open adversaries since, with Comey labeling Trump "unethical" and comparing him to a Mafia boss and Trump branding Comey an "untruthful slime ball" and calling for him to be punished because of the Russia investigation.

James has been a frequent target of Trump's ire, especially since she won a staggering judgment against him and the Trump Organization in a lawsuit alleging he defrauded banks by overstating the value of his real estate holdings on financial statements. An appeals court overturned the fine, which had ballooned to more than \$500 million with interest, but upheld a lower court's finding that Trump had committed fraud.

Trump's next immigration crackdown will target Charlotte, North Carolina, a sheriff says

By ALLEN G. BREED and ERIK VERDUZCO Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — The latest city bracing for the Trump administration's immigration crackdown is Charlotte, North Carolina, which could see an influx of federal agents as early as this weekend, a county sheriff said Thursday.

Mecklenburg County Sheriff Garry McFadden said in a statement that two federal officials confirmed a plan for U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents to start an enforcement operation Saturday or early next week in North Carolina's largest city. His office declined to identify those officials. McFadden said details about the operation haven't been disclosed and his office hasn't been asked to assist.

Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin declined to comment, saying, "Every day, DHS enforces the laws of the nation across the country. We do not discuss future or potential operations."

President Donald Trump has defended sending the military and immigration agents into Democratic-run cities like Los Angeles, Chicago and even the nation's capital, saying the unprecedented operations are needed to fight crime and carry out his mass deportation agenda.

Charlotte is another such Democratic stronghold. A statement of solidarity from several local and state officials estimated the city is home to more than 150,000 foreign-born people. The city's population is about 40% white, 33% Black, 16% Hispanic and 7% Asian.

The Trump administration has used this summer's fatal stabbing of Ukrainian refugee Iryna Zarutskahas on a light-rail train in Charlotte as proof that Democratic-led cities fail to protect their residents from violent crime. A man with a lengthy criminal record has been charged with murder.

Activists, faith leaders, and local and state officials say they already started preparing the immigrant community for a crackdown, sharing information about resources and attempting to calm fears. Nearly 500 people participated in a call organized by the group CharlotteEAST on Wednesday.

"The purpose of this call was to create a mutual aid network," said City Councilmember-Elect JD Mazuera Arias. CharlotteEAST executive director Greg Ascitutto urged residents to connect with groups providing support.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department has clarified that it "has no authority to enforce federal immigration laws," and is not involved in planning or carrying out these operations.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 43 of 66

Mazuera Arias and others said they had already begun receiving unconfirmed reports of what appeared to be plainclothes officers in neighborhoods and on transit.

"This is some of the chaos that we also saw in Chicago," state Sen. Caleb Theodros, who represents Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, said Thursday.

Gregory Bovino, the Border Patrol chief who led Customs and Border Protection's recent Chicago operation and was central to the immigration operation in Los Angeles, had been coy about where agents would target next.

The Trump administration's "Operation Midway Blitz" began in the Chicago area in early September, over the objections of local leaders. It initially involved limited arrests by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers in the suburbs but expanded to include hundreds of Customs and Border Protection agents.

Their tactics grew increasingly aggressive. More than 3,200 people suspected of violating immigration laws have been arrested across the region.

The Department of Homeland Security, which oversees both immigration agencies, has offered few details on the arrests beyond highlighting a handful of people who were living in the U.S. without legal permission and had criminal records.

The group Indivisible Charlotte and the Carolina Migrant Network will train volunteers Friday on what rights people have when interacting with immigration authorities and how to spot federal immigration agents.

"They're not always wearing vests that say 'ICE,'" said Tony Siracusa, spokesperson for Indivisible Charlotte.

The groups will also discuss potential "pop up protests," but he stressed that the activists weren't encouraging people to go get arrested.

Siracusa said locals are "not freaking out, but very definitely concerned."

Daniela Andrade, communications director at the Carolina Migrant Network, noted that organizers canceled a Hispanic heritage festival this year out of concerns about immigration enforcement. The group had been holding in-person "know your rights" sessions for immigrants since the beginning of the year but switched to virtual events even before Thursday's news.

"It's the concern of family separation, of being removed from a community where many people have lived here for years," she said.

Seal escapes orca hunt by jumping onto photographer's boat

By CEDAR ATTANASIO Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — A wildlife photographer out on a whale watching trip in waters off Seattle captured dramatic video and photos of a pod of killer whales hunting a seal that survived only by clambering onto the stern of her boat.

Charvet Drucker was on a rented 20-foot (6-meter) boat near her home on an island in the Salish Sea about 40 miles northwest of Seattle when she spotted a pod of at least eight killer whales, also known as orcas.

The orcas' coordinated movements and tail slaps suggested they were hunting. Drucker used the zoom lens on her camera to spot a harbor seal that was trying to flee from the pod. One of her shots showed the seal flying through the air above the scrum of orcas frothing the water, and she assumed she was witnessing the seal's last moments alive.

But as the orcas got closer to the boat, Drucker and her group realized the pod was still chasing the seal. In line with wildlife boating regulations, they had cut the engine to prevent any injury to the whales. The seal clambered out of the water and onto a swimming platform at the stern of the boat near the motor — claiming it as a life raft of sorts.

Wildlife regulations also prohibit touching or interfering with the seal, but Drucker began filming video.

"You poor thing," Drucker can be heard saying, as the seal looks up at her. "You're good, just stay, buddy."

The orcas did not give up immediately, but instead appeared to team up to rock the boat and make the

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 44 of 66

seal fall off. Drucker's cellphone video shows the orcas lining up and moving in on the boat with staggered dives to create waves. The "wave-washing" technique has been documented since by scientists since at least the 1980s, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The seal on Drucker's boat slid off at least once, but managed to climb back on, and the orcas swam away after about 15 minutes.

Drucker has photographed dead seals in the mouths of orcas before, and she says she's generally happy when the whales get to eat.

"I'm definitely Team Orca, all day, every day. But once that seal was on the boat, I kind of turned (into) Team Seal," she said in an interview with The Associated Press on Thursday.

The killer whales that hunt seals and a diverse set of marine animals in the area are known as Bigg's or "transient" orcas. They are better fed than other more specialized species like the salmon-focused "resident" orcas who are on the endangered species list, according to NOAA.

Wall Street drops to one of its worst days since April on worries about AI stocks and interest rates

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market tumbled Thursday to one of its worst days since its springtime sell-off, as Nvidia and other AI superstar stocks kept dropping on worries their prices shot too high. Also hurting the market were questions about whether coming cuts to interest rates that Wall Street has been banking on will actually happen.

The S&P 500 sank 1.7% and pulled further from its all-time high set late last month. It was the worst day in a month for the index at the heart of many 401(k) accounts and the second-worst since April's plunge after President Donald Trump shocked the world with his "Liberation Day" tariffs.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 797 points, or 1.7%, from its record set the day before, while the Nasdaq composite lost 2.3%.

Nvidia was the heaviest weight on the market after the chip company fell 3.6%. Other stocks swept up in the artificial-intelligence frenzy also struggled, including drops of 7.4% for Super Micro Computer, 6.5% for Palantir Technologies and 4.3% for Broadcom.

Questions have been rising about how much higher AI darlings can go following their already spectacular gains. At the start of this month, Palantir was sporting a stunning rise of nearly 174% for the year so far, for example.

Such sensational performances have been one of the top reasons the U.S. market has hit records despite a slowing job market and high inflation. AI stock prices have shot so high, though, that they're drawing comparisons to the 2000 dot-com bubble, which ultimately burst and dragged the S&P 500 down by nearly half.

In the meantime, stocks outside of AI also fell across Wall Street as traders worried that the Federal Reserve may not deliver another cut to interest rates in December, as many had been expecting.

Wall Street loves lower interest rates because they can goose the economy and prices for investments, even though they can also worsen inflation. A halt in cuts could undercut U.S. stock prices after they already ran to records in part on expectations for more reductions.

Expectations have come down sharply in recent days that the Fed will cut its main interest rate for a third time this year. Traders now see roughly a coin flip's chance of that, 51.9%, down from nearly 70% a week ago, according to data from CME Group.

Recent comments from Fed officials have helped drive the doubt.

Susan Collins, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, said late Wednesday that it's likely appropriate to leave interest rates steady "for some time." That was a turnaround from a speech last month, when she supported another cut.

The Fed's job became more difficult recently because of the U.S. government's shutdown, which delayed updates on the job market and other signals about the economy. That left it less certain about whether

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 45 of 66

the slowing job market or high inflation is the bigger threat.

The stock market mostly rose through the U.S. government's shutdown, as it has often done historically, but Wall Street is bracing for potential swings as the government gets back to releasing those updates. The fear is that the data could persuade the Fed to halt its cuts to rates.

The "looming data deluge may spur additional volatility in the coming weeks," according to Doug Beath, global equity strategist at Wells Fargo Investment Institute.

On Wall Street, The Walt Disney Co. helped lead the market lower after falling 7.7%. The entertainment giant reported profit for the latest quarter that topped analysts' expectations, but its revenue fell short.

That helped offset a jump of 4.6% for Cisco Systems after the tech giant delivered profit and revenue that were bigger than analysts estimated.

Another one of the relatively few stocks to rise was Berkshire Hathaway, the company run by famed investor Warren Buffett. He is known for loving bargains and won't buy stocks when he considers them too expensive. Berkshire Hathaway rose 2.1%.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 113.43 points to 6,737.49. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 797.60 to 47,457.22, and the Nasdaq composite sank 536.10 to 22,870.36.

In the bond market, Treasury yields pushed higher, which put downward pressure on prices for stocks and other investments.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.12% from 4.08% late Wednesday.

In stock markets abroad, indexes sagged in Europe following modest gains in Asia.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 index rose 0.4%, even as Japanese tech giant SoftBank Group lost another 3.4%. It's been struggling since it said earlier this week that it had sold all of its \$5.8 billion stake in Nvidia.

Another loser was bitcoin, whose price fell back below \$99,000. It had been nearing \$125,000 last month.

US aircraft carrier nears Venezuela in flex of American military power

By BEN FINLEY, REGINA GARCIA CANO and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The most advanced U.S. aircraft carrier is expected to reach the waters off Venezuela in days, a flex of American military power not seen in Latin America for generations.

Experts disagree on the possibility that American warplanes will catapult off the USS Gerald R. Ford to bomb targets inside Venezuela and further pressure authoritarian President Nicolás Maduro to step down. Still, whether it may serve that purpose or only patrols the Caribbean as the U.S. blows up boats it accuses of trafficking drugs, the presence of the 100,000-ton warship alone is sending a message.

"This is the anchor of what it means to have U.S. military power once again in Latin America," said Elizabeth Dickinson, the International Crisis Group's senior analyst for the Andes region. "And it has raised a lot of anxieties in Venezuela but also throughout the region. I think everyone is watching this with sort of bated breath to see just how willing the U.S. is to really use military force."

The Ford's impending arrival is a major moment in the Trump administration's campaign in South America, which it describes as a counterdrug operation. It escalates the already massive buildup of military firepower in the region, with added pressure from bomber training runs near the Venezuelan coast, CIA operations that have been publicly authorized inside the country and boat strikes in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific Ocean that have killed over 75 people.

The U.S. has long used aircraft carriers as tools of deterrence to pressure and influence other nations, often without employing any force at all. They carry thousands of sailors and dozens of warplanes that can strike targets deep inside another country.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Thursday formally named the mission Operation Southern Spear, emphasizing the growing significance and permanence of the military's presence in the region. Once the Ford arrives, the mission will encompass nearly a dozen Navy ships as well 12,000 sailors and Marines.

Trump administration says it's focused on fighting drug trafficking

Secretary of State Marco Rubio insists that President Donald Trump is focused on stopping drugs from

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 46 of 66

entering the U.S. by combatting "organized criminal narcoterrorists."

"That's what he's authorized. That's what the military's doing. That's why our assets are there," he told reporters Wednesday after meeting his counterparts from the Group of Seven democracies in Canada.

But Rubio also says the U.S. doesn't recognize Maduro, who was widely accused of stealing last year's election, as the leader of Venezuela and called the government a "transshipment organization" that openly cooperates with those trafficking drugs toward the U.S.

Some experts say deploying the Ford appears to be geared more toward a government change in Venezuela than drug trafficking.

"There's nothing that an aircraft carrier brings that is useful for combating the drug trade," Dickinson said. "I think it's clearly a message that is much more geared toward pressuring Caracas."

Bryan Clark, a former Navy submariner and defense analyst at the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank, said the Trump administration would not have deployed the Ford "if they didn't intend to use it."

"I think this administration is very open to using military force to accomplish particular objectives," Clark said. "I think they're going to want to actually do some military operations unless Maduro steps down in the next month or so."

After Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth briefed lawmakers last week, Rep. Jim Himes, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, said they gave no indication that the strikes would be stopping but also indicated that they were targeting cocaine traffickers and not overtly intending to overthrow Maduro.

Mark Cancian, a retired Marine colonel and a senior adviser with the Center for Strategic and International Studies, expects U.S. warships to launch missiles from other ships before launching any American warplanes. He said Venezuela has relatively sophisticated missile defense systems from Russia that could put American pilots at risk.

"Because they have so many systems, some are relatively new, and all are mobile, we probably wouldn't get them all," Cancian said. "So there's some risk that we could lose some aircraft."

Venezuela mobilizes for possible attack

Venezuela's government this week touted a "massive" mobilization of troops and civilians to defend against possible U.S. attacks. Venezuelan Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino López said in a statement that "land, air, naval, riverine, and missile assets" would be part of a two-day readiness effort "to confront imperialist threats."

State television showed members of the military, police and militias standing in formations across the country. Padrino also delivered remarks, broadcast on state television, standing by a surface-to-air missile system in a military base in the capital, Caracas.

Maduro, who faces charges of narcoterrorism in the U.S., has insisted the Trump administration's intentions are to force him from power. Venezuela's U.S.-backed political opposition has renewed its promise of an imminent government change.

David Smilde, a Tulane University professor who has studied Venezuela for more than 30 years, said the U.S. military does not have enough manpower in the region, even with the aircraft carrier, for an invasion.

"It's consistent with this desire to demonstrate credible force, which they had already," Smilde said of the carrier. "It doesn't change the equation. I don't think that the fact that it is there means that they necessarily have to strike. It just means that Trump and Hegseth have not forgotten about this, and they are still onboard in trying to generate a regime change through a show of force."

Smilde said Venezuela's political opposition has long told U.S. officials that "just a credible threat of force" would cause Maduro's government to crumble. For Trump, he said, that would be the best outcome of this operation.

Pushback on intelligence

The U.S. actions have faced pushback in the region, in Congress and among rights organizations. However, Senate Republicans voted last week to reject legislation that would have put a check on Trump's ability to launch an attack against Venezuela.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 47 of 66

Colombian President Gustavo Petro, who was recently hit with U.S. sanctions over allegations of aiding the drug trade, on Tuesday announced he was cutting off intelligence sharing with the longtime North American ally until the strikes stop. But he softened his stance the following day, saying the sharing would continue as long as agencies guarantee it won't be used in actions that jeopardize human rights.

Rubio pushed back on reports that the United Kingdom has halted some intelligence sharing in the region over concerns about the strikes, saying U.S. assets in the region provide such information.

The U.S. is not "asking anyone to help us with what we're doing — in any realm. And that includes the military," he said.

Mexico, however, is stepping up its cooperation with the U.S. in targeting drug trafficking. President Claudia Sheinbaum said Thursday that her administration made an agreement with the U.S. for Mexico's navy to intercept boats in international waters near Mexico that the U.S. alleges are carrying drugs to avoid any more strikes off its coast.

'A use-it-or-lose-it kind of situation'

The Ford, originally deployed to the Mediterranean Sea, was within the U.S. Southern Command region but not yet in the Caribbean. The carrier was in the mid-Atlantic on Thursday, a defense official who wasn't authorized to discuss the matter said on condition of anonymity.

Clark said sending the Ford to South America would have a minimal impact on costs and readiness in the short term because it still has a month or two left on its regularly scheduled deployment.

Cancian, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the U.S. can't afford to have the Ford "dawdling around the Caribbean" for long. It's such a powerful military asset that it may be needed elsewhere, such as the Middle East.

"It's a use-it-or-lose-it kind of situation," he said.

Blue Origin launches huge rocket carrying twin NASA spacecraft to Mars

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Blue Origin launched its huge New Glenn rocket Thursday with a pair of NASA spacecraft destined for Mars.

It was only the second flight of the rocket that Jeff Bezos' company and NASA are counting on to get people and supplies to the moon — and it was a complete success.

The 321-foot (98-meter) New Glenn blasted into the afternoon sky from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, sending NASA's twin Mars orbiters on a drawn-out journey to the red planet. Liftoff was stalled four days by lousy local weather as well as solar storms strong enough to paint the skies with auroras as far south as Florida.

In a remarkable first, Blue Origin recovered the booster following its separation from the upper stage and the Mars orbiters, an essential step to recycle and slash costs similar to SpaceX. Company employees cheered wildly as the booster landed upright on a barge 375 miles (600 kilometers) offshore. An ecstatic Bezos watched the action from Launch Control.

"Next stop, moon!" employees chanted following the booster's bull's-eye landing. Twenty minutes later, the rocket's upper stage deployed the two Mars orbiters in space, the mission's main objective. Congratulations poured in from NASA officials as well as SpaceX's Elon Musk, whose booster landings are now routine.

New Glenn's inaugural test flight in January delivered a prototype satellite to orbit, but failed to land the booster on its floating platform in the Atlantic.

The identical Mars orbiters, named *Escapade*, will spend a year hanging out near Earth, stationing themselves 1 million miles (1.5 million kilometers) away. Once Earth and Mars are properly aligned next fall, the duo will get a gravity assist from Earth to head to the red planet, arriving in 2027.

Once around Mars, the spacecraft will map the planet's upper atmosphere and scattered magnetic fields, studying how these realms interact with the solar wind. The observations should shed light on the processes behind the escaping Martian atmosphere, helping to explain how the planet went from wet and warm to dry and dusty. Scientists will also learn how best to protect astronauts against Mars' harsh

radiation environment.

"We really, really want to understand the interaction of the solar wind with Mars better than we do now," Escapade's lead scientist, Rob Lillis of the University of California, Berkeley, said ahead of the launch. "Escapade is going to bring an unprecedented stereo viewpoint because we're going to have two spacecraft at the same time."

It's a relatively low-budget mission, coming in under \$80 million, that's managed and operated by UC Berkeley. NASA saved money by signing up for one of New Glenn's early flights. The Mars orbiters should have blasted off last fall, but NASA passed up that ideal launch window — Earth and Mars line up for a quick transit just every two years — because of feared delays with Blue Origin's brand-new rocket.

Named after John Glenn, the first American to orbit the world, New Glenn is five times bigger than the New Shepard rockets sending wealthy clients to the edge of space from West Texas. Blue Origin plans to launch a prototype Blue Moon lunar lander on a demo mission in the coming months aboard New Glenn.

Created in 2000 by Bezos, Amazon's founder, Blue Origin already holds a NASA contract for the third moon landing by astronauts under the Artemis program. Musk's SpaceX beat out Blue Origin for the first and second crew landings, using Starships, nearly 100 feet (30 meters) taller than Bezos' New Glenn.

But last month NASA Acting Administrator Sean Duffy reopened the contract for the first crewed moon landing, citing concern over the pace of Starship's progress in flight tests from Texas. Blue Origin as well as SpaceX have presented accelerated landing plans.

NASA is on track to send astronauts around the moon early next year using its own Space Launch System, or SLS, rocket. The next Artemis crew would attempt to land; the space agency is pressing to get astronauts back on the lunar surface by decade's end in order to beat China.

Twelve astronauts walked on the moon more than a half-century ago during NASA's Apollo program.

Newsom's ex-aide indicted on corruption, fraud charges. Here's what to know about the case.

By TRÂN NGUYỄN Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California Gov. Gavin Newsom's former chief of staff was arrested and indicted on federal corruption charges this week, roughly a year after she disclosed the investigation to Newsom's office and was placed on leave.

Dana Williamson is accused of helping in a scheme to steal campaign money from former federal Health Secretary Xavier Becerra, filing fraudulent tax forms for personal expenses and making false statements to law enforcement.

Neither Becerra nor Newsom are accused of any wrongdoing in the indictment. Becerra, now a candidate for California governor, called the news "a gut punch."

Newsom's office noted Wednesday that Williamson no longer worked in the office and later revealed Williamson had been placed on leave in November 2024 after telling the office she was under criminal investigation. Her leave was not publicly disclosed at the time. Newsom's office formally announced her departure and his hiring of a new chief of staff that December.

Here's what to know:

A political power player

A longtime Democratic power broker in the Capitol circle, Williamson worked as an adviser to former Gov. Gray Davis and as a Cabinet secretary for former Gov. Jerry Brown before opening her own political affairs firm. She served as Becerra's campaign manager when he ran for state attorney general in 2018.

She was named Newsom's chief of staff in late 2022, a job she held for roughly two years.

Williamson is known for her savvy and aggressive style, often unafraid to spar publicly and privately with those who disagree with her.

Federal authorities said the investigation into Williamson began under the Biden administration more than three years ago.

Charges of fraud, false statements

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 49 of 66

The indictment, first reported by the Sacramento Bee, includes 23 charges of conspiracy to commit bank and wire fraud, bank fraud, wire fraud, conspiracy to defraud the United States and obstruct justice, subscribing to false tax returns, and making false statements.

She entered a not guilty plea in federal court Wednesday.

Williamson is accused of developing a plan to help Sean McCluskie, a longtime Becerra aide, siphon \$225,000 from one of Becerra's dormant state campaign accounts to pad his salary after he accepted a job as his chief of staff in Washington.

She then allegedly arranged for another person, an unnamed former public official, to take over the operation before joining Newsom's office.

Williamson is said to falsify business contracts related to Paycheck Protection Program loans that her business received during the COVID-19 pandemic. She also allegedly filed fraudulent tax forms from 2021 to 2023 to claim more than \$1 million in business deductions for personal expenses, such as luxury handbags and jewelry; private jet travel; vacations in Mexico; installation of a home HVAC system; and several hundred thousand dollars paid to various relatives for fake jobs.

She could face up to 20 years in prison if convicted.

The other co-conspirators

The federal indictment lists four other co-conspirators.

McCluskie, Becerra's ex-aide, signed a plea agreement Oct. 30 in which he admitted to one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud and wire fraud. Lobbyist Greg Campbell also signed a plea deal admitting to one count of conspiracy to commit bank fraud and wire fraud and one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States.

Prosecutors didn't name the last co-conspirator, who took over handling the payments from Williamson when she joined Newsom's office.

The scheme began after McCluskie agreed to take the job as Becerra's chief of staff in 2022, a role that resulted in a pay cut of roughly \$180,000, according to his plea agreement.

Williamson used her political consulting company to bill Becerra's campaign account for purported services. The money would then be sent to Campbell's company as a conduit before reaching McCluskie's wife.

Newsom not accused of wrongdoing

Newsom is not mentioned in the indictment, and it does not allege any wrongdoing by Williamson related to her state government job.

But Williamson's attorney, McGregor Scott, told Los Angeles Times that federal authorities under the Biden administration asked her to cooperate in a probe into the governor more than a year ago. He didn't provide any details.

"She told them she had no information to provide them, and then we wind up today with these charges," Scott said in a statement to The Times. He did not respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press.

Newsom's office said the governor was unaware of any investigation involving him, a spokesperson said in a statement Thursday.

Scott was the U.S. attorney in Sacramento during President Donald Trump's first term and under former President George W. Bush. He criticized how the federal government handled Williamson's arrest, saying she was not given an option to surrender and that federal authorities are aware that Williamson is undergoing serious health challenges.

Though the arrest sent shock waves in Sacramento, few lawmakers, lobbyists or other Capitol insiders have publicly commented on it. Republican Assemblyman David Tangipa said the indictment revealed wider problems. "This is not just one bad actor," he said in a campaign email. "It's a symptom of a broken culture of power and privilege in Sacramento."

Williamson released on bond

Williamson was released Wednesday on a \$500,000 bond under travel restrictions. Her house will be used as collateral.

As part of her conditions for release, Williamson will have to surrender her passport and is prohibited

from consuming alcohol or drugs. She also cannot contact any of the co-conspirators. The next hearing is scheduled for Dec. 11.

Airlines are optimistic about a quick recovery ahead of Thanksgiving once the FAA ends flight cuts

By JOSH FUNK AP Transportation Writer

Airlines are optimistic they can resume normal operations just a few days after the government lifts its order to cut some flights at 40 busy airports, but it's not clear how soon that will happen even though the federal shutdown is over.

The Federal Aviation Administration did announce Wednesday night that airlines won't have to cut more than 6% of flights at those airports because air traffic controller staffing has improved significantly in the last few days. Originally the order that took effect last Friday called for those flight cuts to increase to 8% Thursday and top out at 10% on Friday.

A number of air traffic controllers missed work while they were going without pay during the shutdown, and the spike in understaffing at airport towers and regional control centers prompted the flight cut order due to concerns about safety. The existing shortage of several thousand controllers is so bad that even a small number of absences in some locations caused problems.

Officials at FAA and the Transportation Department didn't offer any updates Thursday morning about when they will decide to lift the order. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy has said the decision will be based on the safety data that experts at the FAA are watching closely.

The airlines say they will be ready and expect that normal operations will resume within three or four days after the order is lifted. Some experts have suggested that problems might linger longer than that and could affect Thanksgiving travel, so it is difficult to predict whether the airlines will be able to recover from this as quickly as they do after a major snowstorm disrupts their operations and leaves planes and crews out of position.

Airlines focused cuts on smaller regional routes to minimize the impact on main hubs. By late Thursday afternoon, only a little over 1,000 flights had been cancelled across the country. Aviation analytics firm Cirium said nearly 95% of all flights nationwide Thursday were on time.

"We are eager to resume normal operations over the next few days once the FAA gives clearance. We look forward to welcoming 31 million passengers—a new record—to our flights during the upcoming Thanksgiving travel period, beginning next Friday," the Airlines for America trade group said Thursday.

Duffy has said that controllers and other FAA employees should receive 70% of their back pay within 24-48 hours of the end of the shutdown with the rest to come over the next couple paychecks. The financial pressure on controllers drove some of them to seek out side jobs to help make ends meet and call out of work while they dealt with the stress.

Last Saturday, the staff shortages peaked when 81 different FAA facilities warned they were running low on workers, forcing the airlines to cut additional flights. On Thursday morning, the FAA didn't list any staffing warnings at airports and other radar facilities across the country.

There was talk of offering both air traffic controllers and Transportation Security Administration officers \$10,000 bonuses for working during the shutdown. Duffy has suggested the bonuses might go only to controllers who never missed a shift during the shutdown, but Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said she planned to give the bonuses to any officers who went "above and beyond" while working without pay. She handed out a couple of dozen checks to officers at a news conference Thursday.

American Airlines CEO Robert Isom and Chief Operating Officer David Seymour told employees in a letter Thursday that they are already seeing improvements as controller staffing stabilized over the last day or so even though more flight cuts will be needed until FAA lifts the order. But travelers should already be seeing fewer delays and cancellations on the day of their flights.

The two executives said they believe American Airlines' planning and efforts to minimize disruptions will help the carrier bounce back fast and "deliver a strong Thanksgiving operation," noting that millions of

travelers “deserve the certainty.”

Justice Department sues to block California US House map in clash that could tip control of Congress

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL R. BLOOD Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Justice Department on Thursday sued to block new congressional district boundaries approved by California voters last week, joining a court battle that could help determine which party wins control of the U.S. House in 2026.

The complaint filed in California federal court targets the new congressional map pushed by Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom in response to a similar Republican-led effort in Texas backed by President Donald Trump. It sets the stage for a high-stakes legal and political fight between the Republican administration and the Democratic governor, who’s seen as a likely 2028 presidential contender.

“California’s redistricting scheme is a brazen power grab that tramples on civil rights and mocks the democratic process,” Attorney General Pam Bondi said in an emailed statement. “Governor Newsom’s attempt to entrench one-party rule and silence millions of Californians will not stand.”

Newsom spokesperson Brandon Richards said in a statement, “These losers lost at the ballot box and soon they will also lose in court.”

The legal move against heavily Democratic California marks the first time the Justice Department has sued over a flurry of unusual, mid-decade House map revisions across the country that were drawn to maximize partisan advantage in advance of next year’s elections.

Three Republican-led states — Texas, along with Missouri and North Carolina — have not faced federal legal action after revamping district lines following Trump’s call for new maps to expand GOP numbers in the House. Civil rights advocates have argued that the new boundaries in Texas and Missouri illegally disadvantage minority communities at the ballot box.

California voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 50, a constitutional amendment changing the congressional boundaries to give Democrats a shot at winning five seats now held by Republicans in next year’s midterm elections.

The Justice Department is joining a case challenging the new map that was brought by the California Republican Party last week. The Trump administration accuses California of racial gerrymandering in violation of the Constitution by using race as a factor to favor Hispanic voters with the new map. It asks a judge to prohibit California from using the new map in any future elections.

“Race cannot be used as a proxy to advance political interests, but that is precisely what the California General Assembly did with Proposition 50 — the recent ballot initiative that junked California’s pre-existing electoral map in favor of a rush-job rejiggering of California’s congressional district lines,” the lawsuit says.

Prop 50 was Newsom’s response to Trump’s maneuvers in Texas, where Republicans rejiggered districts in hopes of picking up five seats of their own ahead of the 2026 midterm elections, when House control will be on the line.

Democrats need to gain just a handful of seats next year to take control of the chamber, which would imperil Trump’s agenda for the remainder of his term and open the way for congressional investigations into his administration. Republicans hold 219 seats, to Democrats’ 214.

The showdown between the nation’s two most populous states has spread nationally, with Missouri, North Carolina and Ohio adopting new district lines that could provide a partisan advantage. Other states are considering similar moves.

The national implications of California’s ballot measure were clear in both the money it attracted and the high-profile figures who became involved. Tens of millions of dollars flowed into the race, including a \$5 million donation to opponents from the Congressional Leadership Fund, the super political action committee tied to House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La.

Former Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger opposed it, while former President Barack Obama, a Democrat, appeared in ads supporting it, calling it a “smart” approach to counter Republican moves aimed

at safeguarding House control.

The contest provided Newsom with a national platform and he has confirmed he will consider a White House run in 2028.

States scramble to send full SNAP food benefits to millions of people after government shutdown ends

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

With the longest U.S. government shutdown over, state officials said Thursday that they are working quickly to get full SNAP food benefits to millions of people who made do with little-to-no assistance for the past couple of weeks.

A back-and-forth series of court rulings and shifting policies from President Donald Trump's administration has led to a patchwork distribution of November benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. While some states already had issued full SNAP benefits, about two-thirds of states had issued only partial benefits or none at all before the government shutdown ended late Wednesday, according to an Associated Press tally.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which runs the program, issued new guidance Thursday, instructing: "State agencies must take immediate steps to ensure households receive their full November allotments promptly."

The federal food program serves about 42 million people, about 1 in 8 Americans, in lower-income households. They receive an average of around \$190 monthly per person, though that doesn't necessarily cover the full cost of groceries for a regular month.

Because of the uncertainty over benefits, the USDA told states to exclude November from a federal requirement that most adult SNAP recipients work, volunteer or participate in job training for at least 80 hours a month. Under normal circumstances, recipients can only go three months in a span of three years without meeting the work requirements.

States shifting from zero to full speed for benefits

In some states where SNAP recipients had received nothing during November, officials said they are working to load money on to people's electronic benefit cards by Friday, if not sooner.

The Arkansas Department of Human Services said Thursday that full November SNAP benefits are expected to be available at midnight for people to buy groceries.

"This has been difficult for our beneficiaries, and we are incredibly appreciative to our partners across the state who helped bridge the gap through food pantries, donation drives, and other assistance efforts," department Secretary Janet Mann said in a statement.

Officials in South Carolina and West Virginia, which also had not issued November benefits, said the full monthly amount should be available by Friday. And Alabama said full SNAP benefits should be issued Thursday.

North Carolina, which issued partial benefits last week, said full monthly SNAP benefits should be loaded on people's electronic cards by Friday. Colorado said it was switching from delivering partial to full SNAP benefits Thursday.

The Illinois Department of Human Services, which previously issued partial November benefits, said Thursday that it is "working to restore full SNAP benefits." But it won't happen instantly.

"We anticipate that the remaining benefit payments will be made over several days, starting tomorrow," the department said in a statement, and that "all SNAP recipients will receive their full November benefits by November 20th."

Paused SNAP payments stirred stress for some families

The delayed SNAP payments posed another complication for Lee Harris' family since his spouse was laid off a few months ago.

Harris, 34, said the North Little Rock, Arkansas, family got help from his temple and received food left by someone who was moving. With that assistance — and the knowledge that other families have greater

needs — they skipped stopping by the food pantry they had sometimes used.

They and their three daughters have been able to keep meals fairly close to normal despite missing a SNAP payment this week. But they still have experienced stress and uncertainty.

“Not knowing a definite end,” Harris said, “I don’t know how much I need to stretch what I have in our pantry.”

Federal legislation funds SNAP for a year

The USDA told states Oct. 24 that it would not fund SNAP benefits for November amid the government shutdown. Many Democratic-led states sued to have the funding restored.

After judges ruled the Trump administration must tap into reserves to fund SNAP, the administration said it would fund up to 65% of its regular allocations. When a judge subsequently ordered full benefits, some states scrambled to quickly load SNAP benefits onto participants’ cards during a one-day window before the Supreme Court put that order on hold Friday.

Meanwhile, other states went forward with partial benefits, and still others issued nothing while waiting for further USDA guidance about the situation.

Amid the uncertainty over federal SNAP funding, some states tapped into their own funds to provide direct aid to SNAP recipients or additional money for nonprofit food banks.

The legislation to reopen the U.S. government provides full SNAP benefits not only for November but also for the remainder of the federal fiscal year, which runs through next September. Citing that legislation, the Justice Department on Thursday dropped its request for the Supreme Court to continue blocking a judicial order to pay full SNAP benefits.

No car? No problem. Building apartments near public transit could help address the housing crisis

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — After years of living on the street and crashing on friends’ couches, Quantavia Smith was given the keys to a studio apartment in Los Angeles that came with an important perk — easy access to public transit.

The 38-year-old feels like she went from a life where “no one cares” to one where she has a safe place to begin rebuilding her life. And the metro station the apartment complex was literally built upon is a lifeline as she searches for work without a car.

“It is more a sense of relief, a sense of independence,” said Smith, who moved in July. She receives some government assistance and pays 30% of her income for rent — just \$19 a month for an efficiency with a full-market value of \$2,000.

“Having your own space, you feel like you can do anything.”

Metro areas from Los Angeles to Boston have taken the lead in tying new housing developments to their proximity to public transit, often teaming up with developers to streamline the permitting process and passing policies that promote developments that include a greater number of units.

City officials argue building housing near public transit helps energize neglected neighborhoods and provide affordable housing, while ensuring a steady stream of riders for transit systems and cutting greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the number of cars on the road.

“Transit-oriented development should be one of, if not the biggest solution that we’re looking at for housing development,” said Yonah Freemark, research director at the Urban Institute’s Land Use Lab, who has written extensively on the topic.

“It takes advantage of all of this money we’ve spent on transportation infrastructure. If you build the projects and don’t build anything around the areas near them, then it’s kind of like money thrown down the drain,” Freemark said.

Transit housing projects from DC to LA

The Santa Monica and Vermont Apartments where Smith lives is part of an ambitious plan by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority to build 10,000 housing units near transit sites by

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 54 of 66

2031 — offering developers land discounts in exchange for affordable housing development and other community benefits.

In Washington D.C., the transit authority has completed eight projects since 2022 that provided nearly 1,500 apartments and a million square feet of office space. About half were in partnership with Amazon, which committed \$3.6 billion in low-cost loans and grants for affordable housing projects in Washington, as well as Nashville, Tennessee, and the Puget Sound area in Washington state. Almost all are within a half-mile of public transit.

“Big cities face the greatest challenges when it comes to traffic congestion and high housing costs,” Freemark said. “Building new homes near transit helps address both problems by encouraging people to take transit while increasing housing supply.”

Among projects Boston has built, the Pok Oi Residents in Chinatown is a 10-minute walk to the subway and a half-dozen bus stops. That’s a draw for Bernie Hernandez, who moved his family there from a Connecticut suburb after his daughter got into a Boston university.

“The big difference is commuting. You don’t need a car,” said Hernandez, who said he can walk to the grocery store and pharmacy. His 17-year-old daughter takes the subway to school. Now, his car mostly sits idle, saving him money on gas and time spent in traffic.

“You get to go to different places very quickly. Everything is convenient,” Hernandez said.

States take aim at zoning regulations

States from Massachusetts to California are passing laws targeting restrictive zoning regulations that for decades prohibited building multifamily developments and contributed to housing shortages.

Last month, California Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a state law allowing taller apartment buildings on land owned by transit agencies and near bus, train and subway lines.

“Building more homes in our most sustainable locations is the key to tackling the affordability crisis and locking in California’s success for many years to come,” said State Sen. Scott Wiener, a Democrat who authored the bill.

California joins Colorado, which requires cities to allow an average of 40 housing units per acre within a quarter-mile of transit, and Utah, which mandates about 50 units per acre. In Washington, the governor signed a bill this year allowing taller housing developments in mixed-use commercial zones near transit.

“We want to ensure that there are mixed-income, walkable, vibrant homes all around those transit investments and that people have the option of using cars less to improve the environmental health of our communities,” said Democratic Rep. Julia Reed, who authored the Washington bill.

“It’s about giving people the opportunity to drive less and live more.”

Housing takes center stage in Massachusetts

Massachusetts Democratic Gov. Maura Healey has made housing a priority.

Among her most potent tools is a 2021 law that requires 177 towns or communities nearby to create zoning districts allowing multi-family housing. The state provided nearly \$8 million to more than 150 communities to help create these zones, while threatening to cut funding for those that don’t. More than 6,000 housing units are in development as a result.

“You put housing nearby public transit” Healey said. “It’s great for people. They can literally get up, leave their home, walk to a commuter rail and get to work.”

Among the first to comply was Lexington, which has approved 10 projects, including a \$115 million complex with 187 housing units and retail space.

Walking past earth-moving equipment and dump trucks at the construction site earlier this year, project manager Quinlan Locke said: “This is a landscape yard. It’s commercial. It’s meant for trucking.”

But, he added, in “two years from now, it’s going to be meant for people who live here, work here and play here. This is going to become someone’s home.”

Opposition to zoning changes

Some advocates argue the lofty goals of transit housing are falling short due to fierce local resistance and lack of funding and support at the federal and state levels.

Higher mortgage interest rates, more government red tape, rising construction costs and lack of invest-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 55 of 66

ment at transit stations also have contributed to a troubling trend — nine times more housing units built far from public transit versus near it in the past two decades, according to a 2023 Urban Institute study.

In Massachusetts, 19 communities still haven't created new zones. Some unsuccessfully sued the state to halt the law, while residents rejected new zones in others. Lexington eventually shrank its zone from 227 acres to 90 acres after residents complained.

"If we allow the state to come in and dictate how we zone, what else are they going to come in and dictate?" said Anthony Renzoni, a selectman from the town of Holden, which sued the state and is drawing up a new zoning map after residents rejected the first one.

New housing, a new life

In Los Angeles, the six-story complex where Smith lives in East Hollywood is home to 300 new residents since opening in February. It's revitalizing the area around the metro site, with a Filipino grocery, medical clinic and farmers market opening early next year.

Half the 187 units are reserved for formerly homeless residents like Smith, who had been living in a rundown motel paid for with a voucher and before that on the street. She's been assigned a case worker and is getting help with basic life skills, budgeting and finding work.

Equally important: Smith, who can't afford a car, doesn't need one.

"I'm very very fortunate to be somewhere where the transit takes me where I want to go," she said. "Where I want to go is not that far."

Starbucks workers kick off 65-store US strike on company's busy Red Cup Day

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

More than 1,000 unionized Starbucks workers went on strike at 65 U.S. stores Thursday to protest a lack of progress in labor negotiations with the company.

The strike was intended to disrupt Starbucks' Red Cup Day, which is typically one of the company's busiest days of the year. Since 2018, Starbucks has given out free, reusable cups on that day to customers who buy a holiday drink. Starbucks Workers United, the union organizing baristas, said Thursday morning that the strike had already closed some stores and was expected to force more to close later in the day.

Starbucks Workers United said stores in 45 cities would be impacted, including New York, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, San Diego, St. Louis, Dallas, Columbus, Ohio, and Starbucks' home city of Seattle. There is no date set for the strike to end, and more stores are prepared to join if Starbucks doesn't reach a contract agreement with the union, organizers said.

Starbucks emphasized that the vast majority of its U.S. stores would be open and operating as usual Thursday. The coffee giant has 10,000 company-owned stores in the U.S., as well as 7,000 licensed locations in places like grocery stores and airports.

As of noon Thursday on the East Coast, Starbucks said it was on track to meet or exceed its sales expectations for the day at its company-owned stores.

"The day is off to an incredible start," the company said in a statement.

Around 550 company-owned U.S. Starbucks stores are currently unionized. More have voted to unionize, but Starbucks closed 59 unionized stores in September as part of a larger reorganization campaign.

Here's what's behind the strike.

A stalled contract agreement

Striking workers say they're protesting because Starbucks has yet to reach a contract agreement with the union. Starbucks workers first voted to unionize at a store in Buffalo in 2021. In December 2023, Starbucks vowed to finalize an agreement by the end of 2024. But in August of last year, the company ousted Laxman Narasimhan, the CEO who made that promise. The union said progress has stalled under Brian Niccol, the company's current chairman and CEO. The two sides haven't been at the bargaining table since April.

Workers want higher pay, better hours

Workers say they're seeking better hours and improved staffing in stores, where they say long customer

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 56 of 66

wait times are routine. They also want higher pay, pointing out that executives like Niccol are making millions and the company spent \$81 million in June on a conference in Las Vegas for 14,000 store managers and regional leaders.

Dochi Spoltore, a barista from Pittsburgh, said in a union conference call Thursday that it's hard for workers to be assigned more than 19 hours per week, which leaves them short of the 20 hours they would need to be eligible for Starbucks' benefits. Spoltore said she makes \$16 per hour.

"I want Starbucks to succeed. My livelihood depends on it," Spoltore said. "We're proud of our work, but we're tired of being treated like we're disposable."

The union also wants the company to resolve hundreds of unfair labor practice charges filed by workers, who say the company has fired baristas in retaliation for unionizing and has failed to bargain over changes in policy that workers must enforce, like its decision earlier this year to limit restroom use to paying customers.

Starbucks stands by its wages and benefits

Starbucks says it offers the best wage and benefit package in retail, worth an average of \$30 per hour. Among the company's benefits are up to 18 weeks of paid family leave and 100% tuition coverage for a four-year college degree. In a letter to employees last week, Starbucks' Chief Partner Officer Sara Kelly said the union walked away from the bargaining table in the spring.

Kelly said some of the union's proposals would significantly alter Starbucks' operations, such as giving workers the ability to shut down mobile ordering if a store has more than five orders in the queue.

Kelly said Starbucks remained ready to talk and "believes we can move quickly to a reasonable deal." Kelly also said surveys showed that most employees like working for the company, and its barista turnover rates are half the industry average.

Limited locations with high visibility

Unionized workers have gone on strike at Starbucks before. In 2022 and 2023, workers walked off the job on Red Cup Day. Last year, a five-day strike ahead of Christmas closed 59 U.S. stores. Each time, Starbucks said the disruption to its operations was minimal. Starbucks Workers United said the new strike is open-ended and could spread to many more unionized locations.

The number of non-union Starbucks locations dwarfs the number of unionized ones. But Todd Vachon, a union expert at the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations, said any strike could be highly visible and educate the public on baristas' concerns.

Unlike manufacturers, Vachon said, retail industries depend on the connection between their employees and their customers. That makes shaming a potentially powerful weapon in the union's arsenal, he said.

Improving sales

Starbucks' same-store sales, or sales at locations open at least a year, rose 1% in the July-September period. It was the first time in nearly two years that the company had posted an increase. In his first year at the company, Niccol set new hospitality standards, redesigned stores to be cozier and more welcoming, and adjusted staffing levels to better handle peak hours.

Starbucks also is trying to prioritize in-store orders over mobile ones. Last week, the company's holiday drink rollout in the U.S. was so successful that it almost immediately sold out of its glass Bearista cup. Starbucks said demand for the cup exceeded its expectations, but it wouldn't say if the Bearista will return before the holidays are over.

What to know about how Florida will teach McCarthyism and the Cold War

By KATE PAYNE Associated Press/Report for America

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) — Students in Florida's public schools will soon be learning an interpretation of McCarthyism and the Cold War fight against communism that is steeped in the rhetoric of that era, after state education officials voted to approve sweeping new social studies teaching standards Thursday.

The standards, which represent the core content Florida students are expected to learn, detail a com-

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 57 of 66

munist "infiltration" of Civil Rights advocacy groups, include instruction on the use of "McCarthyism" as an insult" and reference "slander against anti-communists," including the terms "red-baiter and Red Scare."

The standards soften decades of reflection on work by former U.S. Sen. Joseph McCarthy, who led a political movement to root out what he saw as communism in political, civil rights and artistic communities during the early 1950s. The effort stripped employment opportunities and social reputations from many of the people McCarthy accused.

The new teaching benchmarks, which were prompted by a law signed by Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis in 2024, have alarmed some educators and experts on McCarthyism, who say the standards appear deeply ideological and directed at "teaching students what to think, rather than how to think."

"If I were a teacher, I would feel really scared by this," said Tawny Paul, a professor of history and director of the Public History Initiative at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Collectively, Florida's sprawling new "History of Communism" standards span 29 pages, roughly three times the length dedicated to the teaching of American History (9 pages) and Civics and Government (11 pages).

The Florida Board of Education approved the standards Thursday, setting up textbook publishers and educators to implement them in the 2026-2027 school year.

Here's what to know.

What's in the new standards?

Florida's new history of communism teaching standards span Plato's Republic and the history of utopias to the Russian Revolution and the 1989 protests at Tiananmen Square. McCarthy and the House Committee on Un-American Activities are painted as champions of anti-communism, rather than the more commonly accepted interpretation that they fomented one of the most repressive chapters in modern American history.

Absent from the standards' rendering of the Red Scare is the devastating impact the purge had on American society and free speech, said Ellen Schrecker, a retired Yeshiva University history professor and an expert on McCarthyism. She noted the movement spanned society and was marked by public inquisitions, ideological loyalty tests, blacklists and mass firings.

"McCarthyism was, up until the current moment, the longest lasting and most widespread episode of political repression within the United States," Schrecker said.

What's behind this push?

Last year, DeSantis signed into law legislation that required the State Board of Education to adopt new teaching standards on the history of communism for the 2026-2027 school year.

The move follows the Republican-controlled Legislature's designation of Nov. 7 as Victims of Communism Day in Florida's public schools, to include at least 45 minutes of instruction on figures like Mao Zedong and Fidel Castro.

Overseeing implementation of the standards is the state's new education commissioner, Anastios Kamoutsas, who grew up in Miami as the grandchild of Cuban exiles who fled the Castro regime.

Miami's Cuban diaspora and its anti-communist fervor has long dominated the city's politics. In recent years, Cuban Americans have helped deliver Miami-Dade County for the Republican Party, a watershed political feat that has helped strengthen their cultural clout in today's GOP.

What's the reaction been?

Members of Florida's State Board of Education, who are appointed by DeSantis, applauded the standards as historically grounded and necessary, backed by four of the five public speakers who addressed the topic at Thursday's meeting.

Meanwhile, Schrecker, the McCarthyism expert, said the standards present "a very narrow and repressive view of American history" that reinforces the status quo and obscures historical moments that sparked social and political change.

Paul, the UCLA professor, worries how the dictates of the curriculum may limit teachers' willingness to engage their students on some of the country's darkest chapters, and its contemporary challenges.

What about Florida's Black history standards?

In 2023, civil rights activists decried Florida's changes to its public school curriculum on Black history, specifically a requirement that Florida school teach that enslaved people "developed skills which, in some instances, could be applied for their personal benefit."

The changes sparked widespread outcry from teachers, parents, and some Black conservatives, including Florida Republican Rep. Byron Donalds, who spoke out against the curriculum and said at the time that he planned to work with the state board to "bring refinement" to that topic. Such changes have yet to be made.

Donalds is now running to succeed term-limited DeSantis, with the endorsement of President Donald Trump.

Lifelong drugs for autoimmune diseases don't work well. Now scientists are trying something new

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

Scientists are trying a revolutionary new approach to treat rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis, lupus and other devastating autoimmune diseases — by reprogramming patients' out-of-whack immune systems.

When your body's immune cells attack you instead of protecting you, today's treatments tamp down the friendly fire but they don't fix what's causing it. Patients face a lifetime of pricey pills, shots or infusions with some serious side effects — and too often the drugs aren't enough to keep their disease in check.

"We're entering a new era," said Dr. Maximilian Konig, a rheumatologist at Johns Hopkins University who's studying some of the possible new treatments. They offer "the chance to control disease in a way we've never seen before."

How? Researchers are altering dysfunctional immune systems, not just suppressing them, in a variety of ways that aim to be more potent and more precise than current therapies.

They're highly experimental and, because of potential side effects, so far largely restricted to patients who've exhausted today's treatments. But people entering early-stage studies are grasping for hope.

"What the heck is wrong with my body?" Mileydy Gonzalez, 35, of New York remembers crying, frustrated that nothing was helping her daily lupus pain.

Diagnosed at 24, her disease was worsening, attacking her lungs and kidneys. Gonzalez had trouble breathing, needed help to stand and walk and couldn't pick up her 3-year-old son when last July, her doctor at NYU Langone Health suggested the hospital's study using a treatment adapted from cancer.

Gonzalez had never heard of that CAR-T therapy but decided, "I'm going to trust you." Over several months, she slowly regained energy and strength.

"I can actually run, I can chase my kid," said Gonzalez, who now is pain- and pill-free. "I had forgotten what it was to be me."

'Living drugs' reset rogue immune systems

CAR-T was developed to wipe out hard-to-treat blood cancers. But the cells that go bad in leukemias and lymphomas — immune cells called B cells — go awry in a different way in many autoimmune diseases.

Some U.S. studies in mice suggested CAR-T therapy might help those diseases. Then in Germany, Dr. Georg Schett at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg tried it with a severely ill young woman who had failed other lupus treatment. After one infusion, she's been in remission — with no other medicine — since March 2021.

Last month, Schett told a meeting of the American College of Rheumatology how his team gradually treated a few dozen more patients, with additional diseases such as myositis and scleroderma — and few relapses so far.

Those early results were "shocking," Hopkins' Konig recalled.

They led to an explosion of clinical trials testing CAR-T therapy in the U.S. and abroad for a growing list of autoimmune diseases.

How it works: Immune soldiers called T cells are filtered out of a patient's blood and sent to a lab, where

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 59 of 66

they're programmed to destroy their B cell relatives. After some chemotherapy to wipe out additional immune cells, millions of copies of those "living drugs" are infused back into the patient.

While autoimmune drugs can target certain B cells, experts say they can't get rid of those hidden deep in the body. CAR-T therapy targets both the problem B cells and healthy ones that might eventually run amok. Schett theorizes that the deep depletion reboots the immune system so when new B cells eventually form, they're healthy.

Other ways to reprogram rogue cells

CAR-T is grueling, time consuming and costly, in part because it is customized. A CAR-T cancer treatment can cost \$500,000. Now some companies are testing off-the-shelf versions, made in advance using cells from healthy donors.

Another approach uses "peacekeeper" cells at the center of this year's Nobel Prize. Regulatory T cells are a rare subset of T cells that tamp down inflammation and help hold back other cells that mistakenly attack healthy tissue. Some biotech companies are engineering cells from patients with rheumatoid arthritis and other diseases not to attack, like CAR-T does, but to calm autoimmune reactions.

Scientists also are repurposing another cancer treatment, drugs called T cell engagers, that don't require custom engineering. These lab-made antibodies act like a matchmaker. They redirect the body's existing T cells to target antibody-producing B cells, said Erlangen's Dr. Ricardo Grieshaber-Bouyer, who works with Schett and also studies possible alternatives to CAR-T.

Last month, Grieshaber-Bouyer reported giving a course of one such drug, teclistamab, to 10 patients with a variety of diseases including Sjögren's, myositis and systemic sclerosis. All but one improved significantly and six went into drug-free remission.

Next-generation precision options

Rather than wiping out swaths of the immune system, Hopkins' Konig aims to get more precise, targeting "only that very small population of rogue cells that really causes the damage."

B cells have identifiers, like biological barcodes, showing they can produce faulty antibodies, Konig said. Researchers in his lab are trying to engineer T cell engagers that would only mark "bad" B cells for destruction, leaving healthy ones in place to fight infection.

Nearby in another Hopkins lab, biomedical engineer Jordan Green is crafting a way for the immune system to reprogram itself with the help of instructions delivered by messenger RNA, or mRNA, the genetic code used in COVID-19 vaccines.

In Green's lab, a computer screen shines with brightly colored dots that resemble a galaxy. It's a biological map that shows insulin-producing cells in the pancreas of a mouse. Red marks rogue T cells that destroy insulin production. Yellow indicates those peacemaker regulatory T cells — and they're outnumbered.

Green's team aims to use that mRNA to instruct certain immune "generals" to curb the bad T cells and send in more peacemakers. They package the mRNA in biodegradable nanoparticles that can be injected like a drug. When the right immune cells get the messages, the hope is they'd "divide, divide, divide and make a whole army of healthy cells that then help treat the disease," Green said.

The researchers will know it's working if that galaxy-like map shows less red and more yellow. Studies in people are still a few years away.

Could you predict autoimmune diseases - and delay or prevent them?

A drug for Type 1 diabetes "is forging the path," said Dr. Kevin Deane at the University of Colorado Anschutz.

Type 1 diabetes develops gradually, and blood tests can spot people who are brewing it. A course of the drug teplizumab is approved to delay the first symptoms, modulating rogue T cells and prolonging insulin production.

Deane studies rheumatoid arthritis and hopes to find a similar way to block the joint-destroying disease.

About 30% of people with a certain self-reactive antibody in their blood will eventually develop RA. A new study tracked some of those people for seven years, mapping immune changes leading to the disease long before joints become swollen or painful.

Those changes are potential drug targets, Deane said. While researchers hunt possible compounds to test, he's leading another study called StopRA: National to find and learn from more at-risk people.

On all these fronts, there's a tremendous amount of research left to do — and no guarantees. There are questions about CAR-T's safety and how long its effects last, but it is furthest along in testing.

Allie Rubin, 60, of Boca Raton, Florida, spent three decades battling lupus, including scary hospitalizations when it attacked her spinal cord. But she qualified for CAR-T when she also developed lymphoma — and while a serious side effect delayed her recovery, next month will mark two years without a sign of either cancer or lupus.

"I just remember I woke up one day and thought, 'Oh my god, I don't feel sick anymore,'" she said.

That kind of result has researchers optimistic.

"We've never been closer to getting to — and we don't like to say it — a potential cure," said Hopkins' Konig. "I think the next 10 years will dramatically change our field forever."

Pirates ace Paul Skenes wins first Cy Young Award and Tigers star Tarik Skubal goes back-to-back

By WILL GRAVES AP National Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The individual trophy cases for Paul Skenes and Tarik Skubal are growing increasingly full.

The next step in the evolution of baseball's two best pitchers is winning — preferably where they are.

The 23-year-old Skenes capped his blistering rise to stardom by capturing the National League Cy Young Award on Wednesday night. The Pittsburgh Pirates ace was a unanimous choice by the Baseball Writers' Association of America, the honor coming minutes after Skubal won baseball's premier pitching prize in the American League for the second straight year as the anchor of the Detroit Tigers.

As gratified as they are by the recognition, both said they are eager for their respective teams to get in on the act in 2026.

That's where things get tricky.

The 28-year-old Skubal is entering his final year of club control, and while he would like to stay in Detroit beyond next season, he's also well aware the Tigers could trade him as a business decision, considering the hefty raise the left-hander figures to command should he hit the open market as a free agent.

It's much the same for Skenes, who remains under team control for the rest of the decade but found himself pushing back against a report that he's already told teammates he is eager to move on.

"I don't know where that came from," Skenes said. "The goal is to win and the goal is to win in Pittsburgh."

The Pirates finished last in the NL Central in 2025, well off the pace of front-running Milwaukee. The first pitcher since Dwight Gooden with the New York Mets in the mid-1980s to win Rookie of the Year one season and a Cy Young Award the next remains optimistic Pittsburgh is closer to contending than most think.

"The way that fans see us outside of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh is not supposed to win," Skenes said. "There are 29 fan bases that expect us to lose. I want to be a part of the 26 guys that change that."

Skenes — selected first overall by the Pirates in the 2023 amateur draft after a standout career at Air Force and LSU — did his part in 2025, leading the majors in ERA (1.97) while striking out 216 batters in 187 1/3 innings during his first full season in the big leagues.

Yet even with his brilliance, Skenes needed a little late help from Pittsburgh's woeful offense to avoid becoming the first Cy Young-winning starting pitcher to finish with a losing record. Skenes won three of his final four decisions to finish 10-10.

That so-so win/loss mark didn't stop the towering 6-foot-6 right-hander from placing atop all 30 ballots. Philadelphia left-hander Cristopher Sánchez received every second-place vote, and World Series MVP Yoshinobu Yamamoto of the Los Angeles Dodgers finished third.

Sánchez's 2029 option price increased by \$1 million to \$15 million and his 2030 option price by \$1 million to \$16 million as a result of being a Cy Young Award finalist.

Skubal received 26 first-place votes in the AL from a separate BBWAA panel. The other four went to

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 61 of 66

runner-up Garrett Crochet of the Boston Red Sox. Hunter Brown of the Houston Astros came in third.

Although disappointed to be out of contention, Skenes said playing out the string was "a blessing" individually in some ways.

"It allowed me to try some new things in August and September that I wouldn't have gotten to try if we were playing for the playoffs," he explained.

Skubal and the Tigers have gotten a taste of October baseball each of the last two seasons, thanks in large part to his ascendance.

A year after taking a massive step forward by winning the AL pitching Triple Crown on his way to being a unanimous Cy Young winner, Skubal backed it up by serving as the anchor for the Tigers during a volatile season in which they squandered a 15 1/2-game lead in the AL Central and were caught by Cleveland down the stretch.

Detroit got a bit of revenge in the wild-card round, beating the division-champion Guardians in three games following a 14-strikeout gem by Skubal in the series opener.

Yet as fun as the season was at times, the disappointment of falling short of the ultimate goal lingers.

"Ending the season on a loss is not a fun thing," Skubal said. "You can be proud of what we accomplished, but you want to end the season with a win ... the one in October or maybe deep in November you get to play in."

Skubal is the 12th hurler to win baseball's top pitching honor in consecutive years, joining a group that includes Hall of Famers Randy Johnson and Pedro Martínez, who was the last American League pitcher to go back-to-back, for Boston in 1999 and 2000.

"I think a lot of it is not being complacent with who I am today," Skubal said. "I still think there's more to tap into. I don't think this is the finished version of myself."

And he doesn't think this is the finished version of the Tigers.

"You want to win this award as many times as you can in your career, but I'd gladly trade a Cy Young for a World Series," Skubal said.

Skubal was 13-6 with an AL-leading 2.21 ERA and 240 strikeouts in 195 1/3 innings during the regular season. Then he went 1-0 with a 1.74 ERA in three playoff starts for Detroit, which was eliminated by Seattle in their Division Series.

Crochet led the American League in innings (205 1/3) and strikeouts (255).

Brown's top-three finish earned Houston an extra pick after the first round of next July's amateur draft under the prospect promotion incentive in the 2022 collective bargaining agreement.

Skubal's historic run comes with a chance for him to cash in as potential free agency looms. Economics aside, Skubal would be just fine sticking in the Motor City.

"I've given everything I have to this organization. I want to be a Tiger for a very, very long time," he said. "I'm just going to do what I do and not really focus on any of that stuff."

Skenes and Skubal both started the All-Star Game this year. The only other time the two All-Star Game starters won the Cy Young Awards in the same season was 2001, when Johnson and Roger Clemens accomplished the feat.

MVP awards for both leagues will be handed out Thursday.

Dodgers two-way star Shohei Ohtani is a heavy favorite to repeat in the NL and win for the fourth time overall, including twice in the AL.

New York Yankees slugger Aaron Judge is seeking his third AL MVP in what could be a close vote with another top contender, Seattle catcher Cal Raleigh.

Families of two babies sickened by infantile botulism sue ByHeart over recalled formula

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

The parents of at least two babies sickened in an infantile botulism outbreak are suing the makers of the ByHeart baby formula at the heart of a nationwide recall.

Stephen and Yurany Dexter, of Flagstaff, Arizona, said their 4-month-old daughter, Rose, had to be flown by air ambulance to a children's hospital two hours from home and treated for several weeks this summer.

Michael and Hanna Everett, of Richmond, Kentucky, said their daughter, Piper, also 4 months, was rushed to a hospital Nov. 8 with worsening symptoms of the rare and potentially deadly disease.

The lawsuits, filed in federal courts in two states, allege that the ByHeart formula the babies consumed was defective and that the company was negligent in selling it. They seek financial payment for medical bills, emotional distress and other harm.

Both families said they bought the organic formula to provide what they viewed as a natural, healthier alternative to traditional baby formulas, and that they were shocked and angered by the suffering their children endured.

"I wouldn't guess that a product designed for a helpless, developing human in the United States could cause something this severe," said Stephen Dexter, 44.

"She's so little and you're just helplessly watching this," said Hanna Everett, 28. "It was awful."

Outbreak began in August

Rose Dexter and Piper Everett are among at least 15 infants in a dozen states who have been sickened in the outbreak that began in August, according to federal and state health officials. No deaths have been reported.

Both received the sole treatment available for botulism in children less than a year old: an IV medication called BabyBIG, made from the blood plasma of people immunized against the neurotoxins that cause the illness.

Investigations into more potential botulism cases are pending after ByHeart, the New York-based formula manufacturer, recalled all of its formula nationwide on Tuesday. At least 84 U.S. babies have been treated for infantile botulism since August, including those in the outbreak, California officials said.

The company sells about 200,000 cans of formula per month. It can take up to 30 days for signs of infantile botulism infection to appear, medical experts said.

California officials confirmed that a sample from an open can of ByHeart formula fed to an infant who fell ill contained the type of bacteria that can lead to illness.

The lawsuits filed Wednesday could be the first of many legal actions against ByHeart, said Bill Marler, a Seattle food safety lawyer who represents Dexter.

"This company potentially faces an existential crisis," he said.

ByHeart officials didn't respond to questions about the new lawsuits but said they would "address any legal claims in due course."

"We remain focused on ensuring that families using ByHeart products are aware of the recall and have factual information about steps they should take," the company said in a statement.

Parents fretted as babies grew sicker

In Rose Dexter's case, she received ByHeart formula within days of her birth in July after breast milk was insufficient, her father said. Stephen Dexter said he went to Whole Foods to find a "natural option."

"I'm a little concerned with things that are in food that may cause problems," he said. "We do our best to buy something that says it's organic."

But Rose, who was healthy at birth, didn't thrive on the formula. She had trouble feeding and was fussy and fretful as she got sicker. On Aug. 31, when she was 8 weeks old, her parents couldn't wake her.

Rose was flown by air ambulance to Phoenix Children's Hospital, where she stayed for nearly two weeks.

Hanna Everett said she used ByHeart to supplement breastfeeding starting when Piper was 6 weeks old.

"It's supposed to be similar to breast milk," she said.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 63 of 66

Last weekend, Piper started showing signs of illness. Everett said she became more worried when a friend told her ByHeart had recalled two lots of its Whole Nutrition Infant Formula. When a family member checked the empty cans, they matched the recalled lots.

"I was like, 'Oh my god, we need to go to the ER,'" Everett recalled.

At Kentucky Children's Hospital, Piper's condition worsened rapidly. Her pupils stopped dilating correctly and she lost her gag reflex. Her head and arms became limp and floppy.

Doctors immediately ordered doses of the BabyBIG medication, which had to be shipped from California, Everett said. In the meantime, Piper had to have a feeding tube and IV lines inserted.

In both cases, the babies improved after receiving treatment. Rose went home in September and she no longer requires a feeding tube. Piper went home this week.

They appear to be doing well on different formulas, the families said.

What's next in Congress on the push to release the Epstein files

By MATT BROWN and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House is speeding toward a vote next week on releasing files related to the sex trafficking investigation into Jeffrey Epstein, a step that comes after months of resistance from Republican leaders.

They have no choice but to allow consideration of the bill after a petition on the measure reached the necessary 218 signatures. It comes at a time when new documents are raising fresh questions about Epstein and his associates, including a 2019 email that Epstein wrote to a journalist that said President Donald Trump "knew about the girls." The White House has accused Democrats of selectively leaking the emails to smear the Republican president.

Public speculation has been rampant for years about Epstein's operation, death and connection to powerful and wealthy individuals, including Trump, former President Bill Clinton, tech billionaires and celebrity academics, among others.

Why is the House about to vote?

Reps. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., and Thomas Massie, R-Ky., introduced a petition in July to force a vote on their bill, the Epstein Files Transparency Act.

The effort was backed by all House Democrats and four Republicans, including Massie and Reps. Lauren Boebert of Colorado, Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and Nancy Mace of South Carolina.

Minutes after Democrat Adelita Grijalva of Arizona was sworn into office Wednesday, she signed her name to the Epstein petition, pushing it to the magic number of 218 — a majority in the 435-member House.

Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., said following Grijalva's swearing-in that he would expedite the petition process to bring a vote on the bill to the House floor early next week.

Johnson has pushed back on claims that he has obstructed the Epstein legislation to protect Trump or others. He told reporters Wednesday that the Republican majority took issue with the phrasing of the measure, which he claimed did not adequately protect victims. Johnson has also pointed repeatedly to the Epstein investigation being conducted by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, which has resulted in thousands of pages of documents being released, including more than 20,000 on Wednesday.

What does the bill do?

The bill would force the Justice Department to release all files and communications related to Epstein, as well as any information about the investigation into his death in federal prison. Information about Epstein's victims or ongoing federal investigations would be allowed to be redacted, per the bill.

The department, however, would not be allowed to redact information due to "embarrassment, reputational harm, or political sensitivity, including to any government official, public figure, or foreign dignitary."

Is it going to pass?

Johnson, who had dismissed the petition as a "moot point," said he will bring the measure to a vote next week. If everyone who signed the petition supports it on the floor, it will pass.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 64 of 66

But the bill appears likely to pick up additional Republican votes — potentially dozens or more — now that it is moving forward. Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., who did not sign the discharge petition, has said he plans to back it.

The tougher test will come in the Senate, where Republicans hold a 53–47 majority and it would likely take 60 votes to move the bill to final passage.

Asked in September whether the Senate would take up the Epstein bill if it passed the House, Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said, “I can’t comment on that at this point.”

Thune added that the Justice Department “has already released tons of files related to this matter.”

“I trust them in terms of having the confidence that they’ll get as much information out there as possible in a way that protects the rights of the victims,” Thune said.

Can Trump stop it?

If the measure passes the Senate, it would go to Trump, who almost certainly would veto it. He has opposed the discharge petition from the start, even reaching out Wednesday to two Republicans who had signed it.

“The Democrats are trying to bring up the Jeffrey Epstein Hoax again because they’ll do anything at all to deflect on how badly they’ve done on the Shutdown, and so many other subjects,” Trump posted on his Truth Social platform. “Only a very bad, or stupid, Republican would fall into that trap.”

A president’s veto can be overridden with a two-third vote in both chambers. That has only happened twice since 2009.

Massie said Trump can avoid the entire ordeal by releasing all the Epstein files held by the federal government.

“There’s still time for him to be the hero,” Massie said of Trump.

Takeaways from the newly released Epstein documents

By JESSE BEDAYN and SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

A House committee released thousands of documents related to Jeffrey Epstein on Wednesday, many of them emails the convicted sex offender sent to his rich or influential friends, or to reporters, over many years.

Democrats on the House Oversight Committee initially released three emails where Epstein mentioned President Donald Trump. Republicans on the committee responded by disclosing the bigger trove of documents and accused the Democrats of cherry-picking a few messages out of context in an effort to make Trump look bad.

Epstein served about a year in jail after pleading guilty in 2008 to soliciting prostitution from someone under age 18 but then went on to renew relationships with many influential figures in business, academics and politics.

Epstein killed himself in jail in 2019, a month after his arrest on sex trafficking charges.

Here’s some takeaways from the documents released Wednesday.

Epstein said Trump ‘knew about the girls,’ but it’s unclear what he meant

Trump and Epstein were friends for years but at some point had a falling out, even before underage girls started to come forward to accuse Epstein of sexual abuse.

Journalists sometimes reached out to Epstein, perhaps hoping he might have dirt to spill on Trump. One of those writers was Michael Wolff, who has written extensively about Trump. In a 2019 email to Wolff, Epstein mentioned that one of his best-known accusers, Virginia Giuffre, had worked at Trump’s Mar-a-Lago club.

“She was the one who accused Prince Andrew,” Epstein wrote.

Giuffre, who died by suicide earlier this year, had said that Epstein’s longtime companion Ghislaine Maxwell recruited her from Mar-a-Lago to give sexualized massages to Epstein. And Trump had long claimed that he banned Epstein from coming to Mar-a-Lago.

Epstein said in an email to Wolff that Trump hadn’t asked him to resign from the club, because he hadn’t

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 65 of 66

been a member.

"Of course he knew about the girls as he asked Ghislaine to stop," Epstein added.

In July, Trump said he had banned Epstein from Mar-a-Lago because his one-time friend was "taking people who worked for me," including Giuffre.

Before her death, Giuffre said that she only met Trump once and that he was not among the people who abused her. She didn't think Trump knew of Epstein's misconduct with underage girls.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said that Democrats had leaked select emails to "create a fake narrative to smear President Trump."

Mentions of former Prince Andrew

In lawsuits and interviews, Giuffre accused Epstein and Maxwell of pressuring her into sexual encounters with Britain's former Prince Andrew, starting when she was 17 years old. Those allegations eventually cost Andrew — now known as Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor — his official titles and his royal residence near Windsor Castle.

In 2011, Epstein emailed a reporter and attacked Giuffre's credibility.

"Yes she was on my plane, and yes she had her picture taken with Andrew as many of my employees have," wrote Epstein, before arguing that "this girl is a total liar."

Epstein wrote that he'd ask if then-Prince Andrew's "people" would cooperate with the reporter for a story.

Mountbatten-Windsor has always denied Giuffre's allegations.

That same year, Epstein, whose writing paid little heed to grammar or spelling, also mentioned Giuffre and Trump in an email that Epstein sent to Maxwell.

"I want you to realize that that dog that hasn't barked is Trump. Virginia spent hours at my house with him,, he has never once been mentioned," Epstein wrote.

"I have been thinking about that," Maxwell responded.

In other emails, Epstein strategized how to respond to Giuffre's stories, which included an account of meeting former President Bill Clinton on Epstein's island in the Caribbean.

"Presidents at dinner on Caribbean islands. (Clinton was never ever there, easy to confirm). Sharing a bath with a Prince (bathtub too small even for one adult). sex slave being paid thousands of dollars. (while at the exact same time, she was working as a hostess in a burger bar)."

Clinton has acknowledged traveling on Epstein's private jet but has said through a spokesperson that he had no knowledge of Epstein's crimes. Clinton has not been accused of wrongdoing by any of the women who say Epstein abused them, including Giuffre.

Relationship with the press

Many of the documents were email exchanges between Epstein and journalists he had longstanding relationships with, or who solicited his insights on financial markets and Trump.

He was asked, typically off the record, to weigh in on everything from the president's relationships with foreign leaders to the impact of oil prices on wealthy families in Saudi Arabia.

Epstein offered to broker introductions between journalists and powerful people numerous times. He also contested the accusations against him.

In a 2016 email to a reporter, Epstein denied ever spending time with former President Bill Clinton or Vice President Al Gore on his island.

"You can also add, fresh political juice by stating that Clinton was never on the island," Epstein wrote. "I never met Al Gore. No dinners on the island either, no matter how much detail has been in the press."

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, November 14, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 163 ~ 66 of 66

Today in History: November 14

Marshall University football team killed in plane crash

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Nov. 14, the 318th day of 2025. There are 47 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Nov. 14, 1970, a chartered Southern Airways plane crashed while trying to land in West Virginia, killing all 75 people on board, including the Marshall University football team and its coaching staff.

Also on this date:

In 1851, Herman Melville's novel "Moby-Dick; Or, The Whale" was published in the United States, almost a month after being released in Britain.

In 1889, journalist Nellie Bly began an attempt to travel around the world in 80 days; she would successfully complete the journey in a little more than 72 days via ships, trains and other means of transport.

In 1910, Eugene B. Ely became the first aviator to take off from a ship as his Curtiss "Pusher" biplane lifted off the deck of the cruiser USS Birmingham off Hampton Roads, Virginia. The flight by the civilian pilot marked the beginnings of naval aviation.

In 1940, during World War II, German bombing raids destroyed much of the English city of Coventry.

In 1960, 6-year-old Ruby Bridges, under escort by federal marshals, became the first Black child to desegregate an all-white elementary school in New Orleans.

In 1965, the U.S. Army's first major military engagement of the Vietnam War began with the start of the five-day Battle of Ia Drang.

In 1969, Apollo 12 blasted off for the moon, three months after Apollo 11 became the first manned mission to land on it.

In 1972, the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed above the 1,000 level for the first time, ending the day at 1,003.16.

In 1993, Miami Dolphins coach Don Shula became the NFL's winningest coach with a victory over the Philadelphia Eagles. Including an earlier stint coaching the Baltimore Colts, Shula finished his 33-year career with 347 victories, 19 of them in postseason play.

In 2020, supporters of Republican President Donald Trump — unwilling to accept Democrat Joe Biden's election victory — rallied around the country, including Washington, D.C., where thousands turned out.

Today's Birthdays: Britain's King Charles III is 77. Filmmaker Zhang Yimou is 75. Musician Yanni is 71. Five-time Tour de France winner Bernard Hinault is 71. Basketball Hall of Famer Jack Sikma is 70. Rapper Joseph Simmons (Reverend Run of Run-DMC) is 61. News anchor Bill Hemmer is 61. Actor Josh Duhamel is 53. Rock drummer Travis Barker (blink-182) is 50. Actor-comedian Vanessa Bayer is 44. Tennis player Sofia Kenin is 27.