

Groton Daily Independent

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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, 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.



Monday, Nov. 17

Senior Menu: Sweet and sour pork, steamed rice, carrot and broccoli medley, corn, honey fruit salad.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Chef salad at elementary, build your own salad at high school.

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

Groton Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

1st grade GBB practice, 3:30 p.m.

MS GBB vs. Leola/Frederick at Frederick, one combined game at 5 p.m.

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

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1440

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

China Strikes Gold

The Chinese government yesterday announced that a state-run mining group has unearthed the largest gold deposit found in over seven decades. The site is estimated to yield roughly 1,444 tonnes of gold, worth about \$193B at current prices.

The news comes amid a recent surge in gold prices, with the cost per ounce hitting an all-time high of over \$4.3K last month. The World Bank expects gold prices to rise about 42% this year, marking the strongest annual increase since the late 1970s. While gold's value has steadily climbed for several years, the current spike has been largely attributed to the increased accessibility of gold exchange-traded funds and to emerging markets seeking to diversify their holdings amid global economic uncertainty.

China has been gradually unloading US Treasuries over the past decade, with holdings falling to \$730.7B in September—the lowest level since 2008. Meanwhile, the country produced over 377 tonnes of gold last year, a 0.56% increase from 2023.

New prosecutor takes on Georgia election interference case.

Veteran lawyer Pete Skandalakis will assume the case alleging President Donald Trump and others conspired to overturn his Georgia loss in the 2020 election. The original prosecutor, Fani Willis, was disqualified due to a romantic relationship with a special prosecutor she hired. Skandalakis, who heads the nonpartisan group tasked with replacing Willis, said he took the role after several other attorneys declined.

Separately, Trump called on the Justice Department to investigate prominent Democrats and financial institutions' ties to Jeffrey Epstein. The move comes after the House released thousands of emails from the Epstein estate, some of which referenced Trump.

Walmart CEO to retire, will be replaced by another company veteran.

Doug McMillon will step down Jan. 31 after over a decade at the helm. The 59-year-old, who began his Walmart career as a summer associate in high school, is credited with leading the retailer's expansion into e-commerce. Walmart's market cap grew from roughly \$250B to over \$800B under his leadership. John Furner, who heads Walmart's US arm and also began as a store associate, will take over Feb. 1.

Scientists break record for oldest RNA sequencing with woolly mammoth remains.

The RNA came from a roughly 40,000-year-old woolly mammoth named Yuka, whose remains were preserved in Siberian permafrost. The sequencing is significant because RNA decays more quickly than DNA, yet it offers deeper insights into how animals lived. Yuka's RNA, for example, revealed signs of stress, supporting earlier theories he died after a cave lion attack. The oldest RNA previously sequenced came from a 14,300-year-old wolf puppy.

Blue Origin rocket sends NASA's Mars satellites to space.

Jeff Bezos' company successfully launched a rocket carrying NASA spacecraft destined for Mars, and then successfully landed the rocket's booster for the first time. Bad weather foiled a first launch attempt Sunday, and strong solar activity—responsible for the auroras seen across the US—postponed a Wednesday attempt. Data collected by the spacecraft when they enter Mars' orbit in 2027 could offer insights into why the planet, once wet and warm, became dry and dusty.

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Researchers overcome immune hurdle in pig-to-human transplants.

A genetically modified pig kidney survived for 61 days in a brain-dead man, a new record. During this period, researchers collected tissue, blood, and body fluid samples at a pace not possible in living patients. The data provided detailed insights into immune reactions to the transplant, enabling the first successful reversal of a pig organ rejection using a combination of federally approved drugs.

Bad Bunny wins album of the year at Latin Grammy Awards.

The Puerto Rican singer, born Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio, won five of the 12 awards for which he was nominated ahead of his Super Bowl halftime performance in February. His sixth studio album, "DeBÍ TirAR Más FOToS," was named album of the year, marking the first time the 31-year-old took home a prize in one of the show's major categories.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Lisa D. in Coinjock, North Carolina.

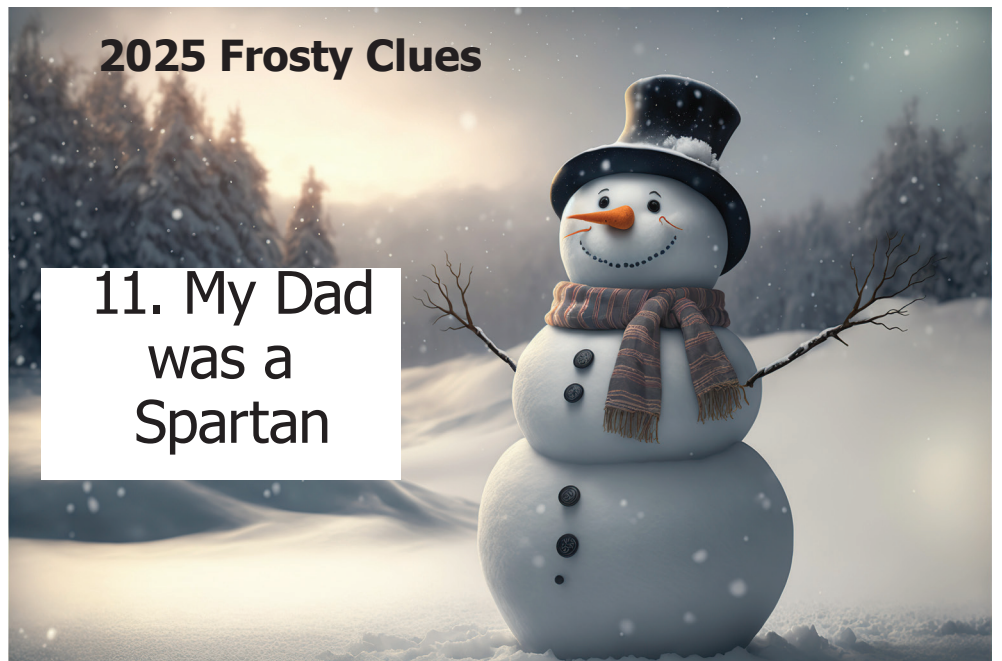
"I recently dislocated my shoulder, so I am in a splint for quite some time. With winter coming, I knew I wouldn't be able to wear a regular coat. I was shopping in a retail store, trying to try on winter capes but was struggling a bit. A very kind woman noticed and came over to help me. She dug through the rack of capes, helping me try on one after another, hanging the discards up, until we finally settled on the best one to go around my splinted arm. I didn't get her name, but she was very lovely, lively and glowed with grace. I was very grateful for her! I will think of her each time I wear it this winter."

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

11. My Dad
was a
Spartan



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

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NSU Men's Basketball

Northern State falls short in season opener

Bethany, Okla. – The Northern State University men's basketball team dropped their opening game of the season on Friday to Oklahoma Baptist. The Wolves rallied back in the second half, however a 9-point deficit following the first proved to be too large of a hill to overcome.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 72, OBU 83

Records: NSU 0-1, OBU 1-0

Attendance: 219

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern tallied 32 points in the first and 40 in the second, while Oklahoma Baptist notched 41 in the first and 42 in the second

The Wolves shot 41.4% from the floor, 25.8% from the 3-point line, and a game leading 80.0% from the foul line in the contest

The notched a game leading eight made 3-pointers, as well as 31 rebounds, six assists, three steals, and two blocks

NSU scored 26 points in the paint, 18 points off the bench, 12 second chance points, and six points off turnovers

The Bison led the contest with 42 rebounds, 48 points in the paint, 18 second chance points, and 15 points off turnovers

The Wolves defense held OBU to 4-of-17 from beyond the arc with just one made 3-pointer in the second half

Cameron Mercadel led four Wolves in double figures with 20 points, hitting 7-of-12 from the floor, including three from beyond the arc

Ty Rogers followed with 17 points and a team leading seven rebounds, while Marshawn Smith led the team off the bench with 15 points, knocking down 6-of-7 from the floor, and five rebounds

Joshua Book was the final Wolf in double figures with ten points, while matching Rogers with a team leading seven rebounds; Book also dished out a team best three assists

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Cameron Mercadel: 20 points, 58.3 field goal%, 1 rebound, 1 assist

Ty Rogers: 17 points, 7 rebounds, 2 steals, 1 assist, 1 block

Marshawn Smith: 15 points, 85.7 field goal%, 5 rebounds, 1 assist, 1 steal

Joshua Book: 10 points, 7 rebounds, 3 assists, 1 block

UP NEXT

Northern returns to the court tomorrow at 7:30 p.m. for a match-up with the tournament host, Southern Nazarene.

Name Released in Codington County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: Meadow Lake Road and 29th Street SE, two miles south of Watertown, SD

When: 9:44 p.m., Wednesday, November 5, 2025

Driver 1: Seth August Fisher, 24-year-old male from Harrisburg, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2012 Harley Davidson Switchback 103

Helmet Used: No

Codington County, S.D.- A Harrisburg man died Friday, Nov. 7 from a Wednesday evening motorcycle crash two miles south of Watertown, SD.

Preliminary information indicates Seth August Fisher, the driver of a 2012 Harley Davidson, was traveling northbound on 29th Street SE. As Fisher approached the intersection of Meadow Lake Road, he lost control and was separated from the motorcycle.

Fisher was taken to Prairie Lakes Hospital with life-threatening injuries and later transferred to a Sioux Falls hospital, where he died from injuries sustained in the crash.

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

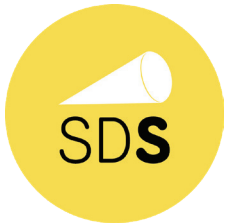
The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

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Our Rudolph Land is up again and I didn't even notice until it came up on my FaceBook memory that we put Rudolph Land on November 14th of last year as well. What are the odds of doing it on the same day two years in a row without trying!



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

SD opts into Trump's education tax credit program

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

South Dakota is the fourth state in the country to commit to President Donald Trump's federal education tax credit program, Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden announced Friday in Sioux Falls.

Under the program, South Dakotans who owe federal income taxes can either send up to \$1,700 to the federal government, or they can donate that \$1,700 to a government-recognized scholarship granting organization to public, private or homeschool entities in the state. The program starts in 2027.

Nebraska's Republican Gov. Jim Pillen announced the state's commitment in September. Republican governors for North Carolina and Tennessee announced their commitment this summer. Oregon, New Mexico and Wisconsin officials said they do not intend to opt into the program. Some critics nationally have questioned whether there will be proper guardrails, accountability and "quality control" in place.

Rhoden called the imminent program a "winning situation" for South Dakota taxpayers.

"I'd just as soon give those dollars to a private school than Uncle Sam," Rhoden said at the announcement, standing in front of a row of students attending the St. Joseph Academy. "I think they know how to spend it a little wiser than the federal government."

Rhoden added that the federal tax credit will "pair well" with South Dakota's existing tax credit program, which allows insurance companies to donate up to a total of \$5 million to a private school scholarship program for students whose families have low incomes.

The program will further support the state's growing alternative instruction movement, Rhoden said, including homeschooling and microschoools popping up throughout the state. Alternative instruction enrollment has nearly tripled in South Dakota in the last decade, making up about 7% of school-age children in the state.

Sara Hofflander, founder of St. Joseph Academy, said the school is "grateful" for the potential extra funding, though she plans to "approach everything cautiously."

"Running an independent school obviously requires a heavy commitment from families," Hoffman said, adding that the extra funding would "lift some of that burden, so we can focus more on the needs of our students."

Historically, "school choice" efforts in the state have met resistance from the public school industry.

Advocates vehemently fought former Gov. Kristi Noem's effort to introduce Education Savings Accounts, which would have provided public funding for private education and homeschool options during the last legislative session, calling the failed effort an attack on public education. Those same advocates referred to the state's education tax credit program as "backdoor school voucher program."

But Rob Monson, executive director for the School Administrators of South Dakota, said the program will benefit public and private education. South Dakotans can direct their tax credit dollars to organizations representing public schools in the state. The funding could be spent on not only tuition and fees for private schools, but tutoring, special needs services for students with disabilities, transportation (such as busing), afterschool care and computers.

"That's a huge win for taxpayers of South Dakota, but also every form of education across the state," Monson said.

South Dakota Education Secretary Joe Graves said the program will support education innovations and a "robust competitive system."

Graves told lawmakers on Thursday, while presenting lackluster test scores to a committee, that "innova-

tion" would be key to improving student outcomes, especially for Native American students and children living in "education deserts."

"We're not doing well enough, and we need to do better," Graves said at Friday's announcement.

If more students attend private or alternative schooling options, that would mean less state funding for public schools because of decreased student enrollment. Monson told South Dakota Searchlight that state revenues could be impacted by participation in the tax credit program, since it would remove federal tax dollars used to support other programs or go toward states. The federal government would still be obligated to fund some federal education programs, Monson added.

The scholarship funds would be available to families whose household incomes do not exceed 300% of their area's median gross income. The U.S. Department of Treasury is expected to issue proposed rules detailing the program's operation.

Graves said he assumes there will be reporting "at some level" of how the funds are spent.

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.

Firm tied to Kristi Noem secretly got money from \$220 million DHS ad contracts

The company is run by the husband of Noem's chief DHS spokesperson and has personal and business ties to Noem and her aides. DHS invoked the 'emergency' at the border to skirt competitive bidding rules for the taxpayer-funded campaign.

BY: JUSTIN ELLIOTT, JOSHUA KAPLAN AND ALEX MIERJESKI

This story was originally published by ProPublica.

On Oct. 2, the second day of the government shutdown, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem arrived at Mount Rushmore to shoot a television ad. Sitting on horseback in chaps and a cowboy hat, Noem addressed the camera with a stern message for immigrants: "Break our laws, we'll punish you."

Noem has hailed the more than \$200 million, taxpayer-funded ad campaign as a crucial tool to stem illegal immigration. Her agency invoked the "national emergency" at the border as it awarded contracts for the campaign, bypassing the normal competitive bidding process designed to prevent waste and corruption.

The Department of Homeland Security has kept at least one beneficiary of the nine-figure ad deal a secret, records and interviews show: a Republican consulting firm with long-standing personal and business ties to Noem and her senior aides at DHS. The company running the Mount Rushmore shoot, called the Strategy Group, does not appear on public documents about the contract. The main recipient listed on the contracts is a mysterious Delaware company, which was created days before the deal was finalized.

No firm has closer ties to Noem's political operation than the Strategy Group. It played a central role in her 2022 South Dakota gubernatorial campaign. Corey Lewandowski, her top adviser at DHS, has worked extensively with the firm. And the company's CEO is married to Noem's chief spokesperson at DHS, Tricia McLaughlin.

The Strategy Group's ad work is the first known example of money flowing from Noem's agency to businesses controlled by her allies and friends.

Government contracting experts said the depth of the ties between DHS leadership and the Strategy Group suggested major potential violations of ethics rules.

"It's corrupt, is the word," said Charles Tiefer, a leading authority on federal contract law and former member of the Commission on Wartime Contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan. He said that the Strategy Group's role should prompt investigations by both the DHS inspector general and the House Oversight Committee.

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"Hiding your friends as subcontractors is like playing hide the salami with the taxpayer," Tiefer added. Federal regulations forbid conflicts of interest in contracting and require that the process be conducted "with complete impartiality and with preferential treatment for none."

"It's worthy of an investigation to ferret out how these decisions were made, and whether they were made legally and without bias," said Scott Amey, a contracting expert and general counsel at the watchdog group Project on Government Oversight.

The revelations come as the amount of money at Noem's disposal has skyrocketed. The so-called Big Beautiful Bill granted DHS more than \$150 billion, and Noem has given herself an unusual degree of control over how that money is spent. This summer, she began requiring that she personally approve any payment over \$100,000.

Asked about the Strategy Group's work for DHS, McLaughlin, the agency spokesperson, said in an interview, "We don't have visibility into why they were chosen."

"I don't know who they're a subcontractor with, but I don't work with them because I have a conflict of interest and I fully recused myself," she said. "My marriage is one thing and work is another. I don't combine them." Her husband, Strategy Group CEO Ben Yoho, didn't respond to questions.

In a written statement, DHS said, "DHS has no involvement with the selection of subcontractors." They added that the Strategy Group does not have a direct contract with the agency, saying "DHS cannot and does not determine, control, or weigh in on who contractors hire."

Contracting experts said that agencies can and do sometimes require that subcontractors be approved by officials. It's not clear how much the Strategy Group has been paid.

This is not the first time that the Strategy Group has gotten public money through a Noem contract. As governor of South Dakota in 2023, her administration set off a scandal by hiring the Ohio-based company to do a different ad campaign, paying it \$8.5 million in state funds. While the state said the contract was done by the book, a former Noem administration official told ProPublica that Noem quietly intervened to ensure the Strategy Group got the deal. ProPublica granted some people anonymity to discuss the deals because of their sensitivity.

The firm also paid up to \$25,000 to one of Noem's closest advisers in South Dakota, previously unreported records show. (The adviser, 28-year-old Madison Sheahan, now serves at DHS as the second-in-command of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Sheahan didn't respond to questions about why she was paid.)

The DHS ad that the company filmed at Mount Rushmore has aired during "Fox & Friends" in recent days. Executives from the Strategy Group traveled to the shoot and hired subcontractors to fill out the film crew, according to records and a person involved in the campaign. The ad's aesthetic sits somewhere between a political campaign ad and a Jeep commercial as Noem tells would-be immigrants to "come here the right way."

"From the cowboys who tamed the West to the titans who built our cities," Noem says, as images of Trump Tower in Chicago and Trump raising his fist after the assassination attempt last year flash on the screen, "America has always rewarded vision and grit." Noem continues: "You cross the border illegally, we'll find you."

The ad is the latest in a campaign that Noem debuted in February, just a few weeks after she took charge of DHS. "Any delay in providing these critical communications to the public will increase the spread of misinformation, especially misinformation by smugglers," the agency wrote, explaining why it was skipping the competitive bidding process normally required for government contracts. The initial ads featured Noem thanking Trump for securing the border.

The contracts total \$220 million so far, leading the DHS ad budget to triple in the most recent fiscal year, according to Bloomberg. The lion's share of ad contracts is typically used to buy TV airtime or spots on social media. Advertising firms make money by taking an often-hefty commission. Federal records show the contracts have gone to two firms. One is a Republican ad company in Louisiana called People Who Think, which has been awarded \$77 million.

But the majority of the money — \$143 million — has gone to a mysterious LLC in Delaware. The company

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was created just days before it was awarded the deal.

Little is known about the Delaware company, which is called Safe America Media and lists its address as the Virginia home of a veteran Republican operative, Michael McElwain. McElwain has long had his own advertising company (separate from the Delaware one), but there's little evidence that firm could handle a nine-figure federal contract on its own: It reported just five employees when it received COVID-19 relief money a few years ago.

How, where and to whom Safe America Media doled out the \$143 million is unknown. Any subcontractors hired to do work on the DHS ads are not disclosed in federal contracting databases.

The office funding the ad contracts is listed as the DHS Office of Public Affairs, which is run by McLaughlin, contract records show. McLaughlin married Yoho, the Strategy Group CEO, earlier this year.

In its statement, DHS said the agency does its contracting "by the book" and the process is run by career officials. "It is very sad that Pro Publica would seek to defame these public servants," DHS added.

Asked about why the agency chose Safe America Media, DHS said, "The results speak for themselves: the most secure border in American history and over 2 million illegal aliens exiting the United States." McElwain and People Who Think didn't respond to questions.

Yoho was still in college when he first served as campaign manager for a U.S. congressman. Now, at 38 years old, he's a national player in the cutthroat industry of political advertising. Federal election records show tens of millions in payments to his firm during the 2024 election cycle, coming from dozens of Republican congressional candidates. And Noem has proved a particularly lucrative client.

Lewandowski brought Yoho into Noem's inner circle back in South Dakota, according to two people familiar with the matter, putting the young consultant in charge of the ad side of her 2022 gubernatorial reelection campaign. Noem had a more than \$5 million advertising budget for the race, records show. After she won in a landslide, Yoho, who has called Noem a friend, came to South Dakota to attend her inauguration ceremony. He sat off to the side of the stage, next to Lewandowski. (Lewandowski didn't respond to a request for comment.)

By then, Yoho's next big project with Noem was already in the works. In late 2022, Noem was quietly preparing to launch another sprawling ad campaign — only this time, the money would come from state coffers. The stated goal was to encourage workers to move to South Dakota. The upcoming contract opportunity wasn't public yet, but Yoho was already involved in planning the campaign, according to records first reported by Sioux Falls Live.

Then on Jan. 12, 2023, Yoho's company registered to do business in South Dakota under the name Go West Media. The next day, the contract opportunity went live.

Seven companies submitted proposals for the project. Then the pressure from above set in, according to a former Noem administration official involved in the process.

The former official said a top Noem aide told them the governor would be angry if Yoho's company didn't win the contract. "He was very direct: 'She wants to do it,'" they said. Contemporaneous text messages reviewed by ProPublica corroborate that senior Noem administration officials pushed for Yoho to get the contract. Eventually, he did. (In its statement, DHS denied that Noem influenced the process.)

Noem starred in Yoho's ads herself, dressing up as a dentist, a plumber and a state trooper as she touted her state's growing economy. Exactly how much Yoho and the Strategy Group made off the \$8.5 million deal is unclear. Some of the money was used to purchase spots on Fox News, including one during a Republican presidential debate. Some of the money appears to have gone back to South Dakota — into the bank account of another of Noem's top advisers.

Sheahan, now the second-in-command at ICE, was paid up to \$25,000 by Go West in 2023 for "consulting," according to a financial disclosure document Sheahan later filed. At the time, Sheahan was serving as both the operations director for Noem as governor and the political director for Noem's campaign work, according to a copy of her 2023 resume obtained by ProPublica. Her responsibilities included coordinating "daily logistics and operations" for Noem and her team, the resume said. She also managed the "relationship with high level donors" to American Resolve, Noem's network of outside political groups.

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As his firm received millions from the South Dakota state government, Yoho separately continued to work for Noem in other capacities. He worked under Lewandowski on the publicity campaign for Noem's 2024 memoir, according to a person familiar with the matter. (The book became famous for including an anecdote about Noem shooting her dog.)

The Strategy Group also received a stream of payments for social media consulting and media production work over the last few years from Noem's American Resolve PAC. Federal election records show the PAC made its last payment to Yoho's company this February, a couple weeks after Noem took her post as the head of DHS.

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Justin Elliott reports on money and power for ProPublica. He's currently focused on the second Trump administration, but is always looking for under-covered business and politics stories.

Joshua Kaplan, of ProPublica, covers powerful institutions and the people who are seeking to influence them, with a focus on the federal government. He's drawn to topics where he believes that in-depth, nuanced reporting has the potential to reshape the public's understanding and to lead to meaningful change.

Alex Mierjeski covers a wide range of stories as a part of ProPublica's national team. He's contributed to investigations of the Supreme Court and the federal judiciary, as well as President Donald Trump's business dealings.

First freeze dates have trended nearly two weeks later in some SD cities since 1970, report says

Changing climate extends growing season but comes with risks

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

First freeze dates across South Dakota are trending later in the year, which has lengthened the growing season while prolonging risks from weeds, pests and wildfires.

According to an October report on first freeze dates since 1970 from Climate Central, a nonprofit group of scientists and communicators focused on climate change, the first freeze is arriving 12 days later in Sioux Falls, 13 days later in Mitchell and seven days later in Rapid City. Statewide, the trend is 1.4 days later per decade based on county data, according to a Midwestern Regional Climate Center freeze date tool.

The trend is "obvious" in Sioux Falls, said National Weather Service meteorologist Jeff Chapman. Of the top 25 latest first freeze dates in Sioux Falls since 1893, 10 of them are within the last 17 years.

The changes are consistent with what 1990s climate models projected regarding the effects of rising human-caused atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions such as carbon dioxide and methane, said State Climatologist Laura Edwards. Those same models projected continued warming in the coming decades.

"When you look at fall, winter and spring, you're seeing these accelerated warming temperatures," Edwards said. "You don't have to go as far north as Alaska to see the impact of warming temperatures."

Changing climate extends South Dakota growing season

South Dakota's growing season extended more than 18 days from the late 1800s through 2023, according to data from the Environmental Protection Agency. That's a longer extension than Iowa and Nebraska, but a shorter extension than North Dakota and Minnesota, at 32 and 21 days, respectively.

South Dakota farmers are expected to harvest over 1 billion bushels of corn this year — the largest amount in state history — due in part to longer growing seasons, Edwards said.

Northeast and north-central South Dakota are warming faster than other parts of the state. Marshall County is reporting a trend in its first fall freeze of 2.9 days later per decade. Spink County reports 2.7 days later per decade, and Brown and Day counties 2.6 days later per decade.

Western South Dakota has drier conditions, which means the air heats and cools faster than more humid or moist air. Edwards said those conditions likely factor into slower trending first frost dates in northwestern

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counties compared to northeastern counties.

Edwards said the changing climate allows South Dakota farmers to rethink their planting strategy. If their crop insurance allows, they could plant earlier than normal. Farmers could also adopt hybrid corn crops that work well in Iowa and Nebraska, since South Dakota's climate is becoming more like those two states, which are some of the top corn producers in the nation.

Wildfire risk, pests and weeds are trade-offs to longer growing season

Darren Clabo, state wildfire meteorologist and South Dakota Mines associate professor, said later first freezes delay the fall grassfire season into November. Winter and fall are typically the driest times of the year in the state.

When temperatures are above average and conditions are dry in the early fall and into the winter, Clabo said, there is an elevated risk of fire.

"If the grass isn't covered by snow this time of year, we have to be extremely careful with our ignition sources and ensure we aren't the cause of wildfires," Clabo said.

Along with changes in wildfire risks, later frost dates contribute to increased nuisances like pests and weeds, Edwards said.

Insects such as grasshoppers require a "killing frost" to lessen their grip, Edwards said, and just a couple of extra weeks without a frost ushers in another generation of the short-lived insect.

Mosquito season is also extended, which can increase risks from West Nile virus and other diseases carried by the insect. Eric Jones, South Dakota State University Extension weed management specialist, said there are less diverse, more persistent weeds throughout the state due in part to herbicide use, but later first freeze dates "don't do us any favors." The later freeze allows weeds to last longer and produce more seeds to deal with next year. That increases input costs for farmers to control them.

"There might be only one weed left, but it's got 100 seeds," Jones said. "Your problem with just one weed became 100 for next year."

A common fall allergy comes from ragweed pollen. Those ragweed allergies tend to stop as the plants die with frost.

But if the frost doesn't come as early, the plant has a longer time to flower and pollinate, "extending the season of sniffles," Jones said.

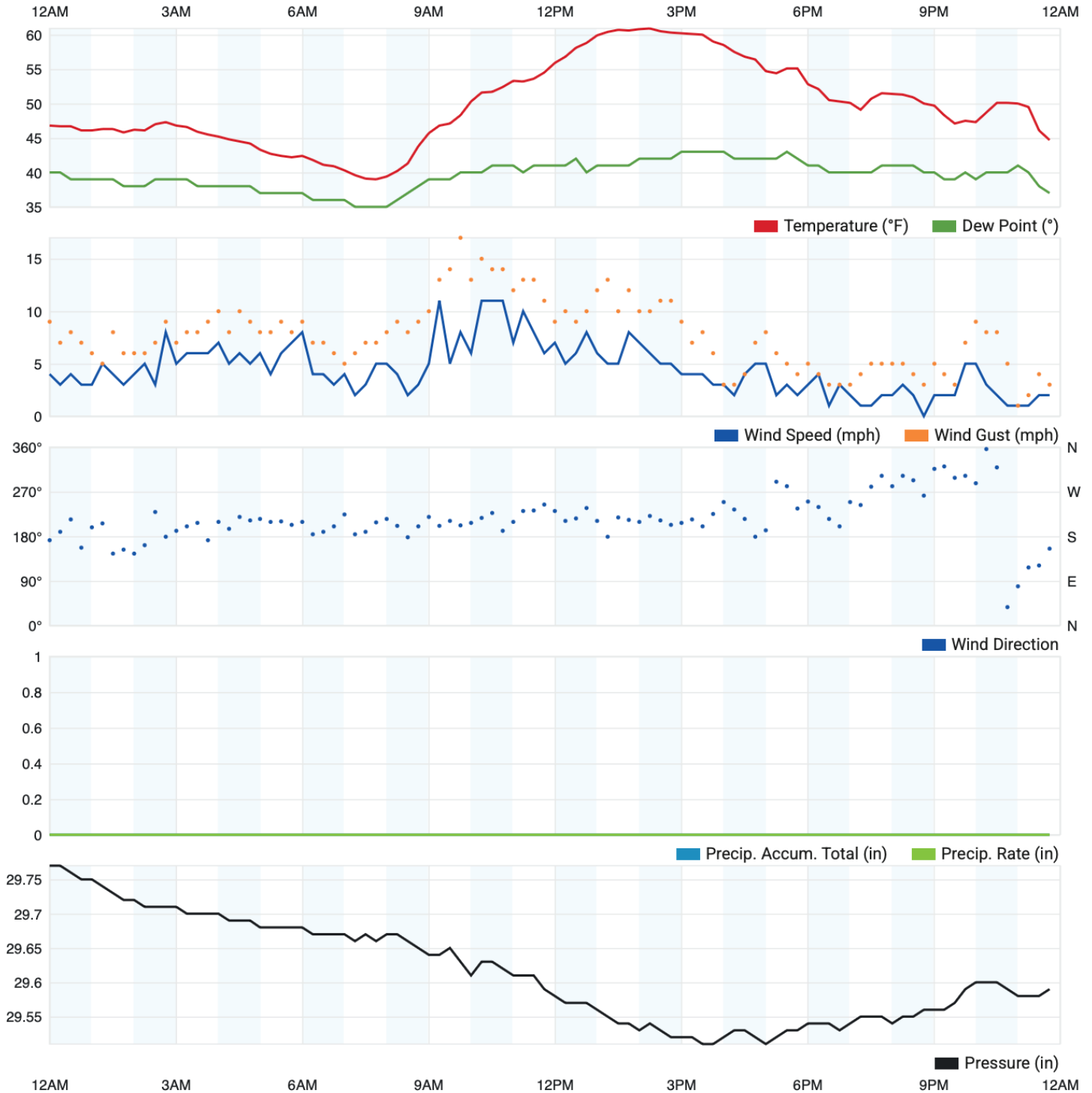
Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a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

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

November 14, 2025



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Today



High: 48 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 30 °F

Mostly Cloudy

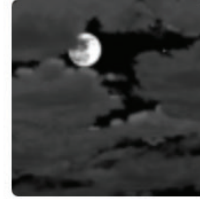
Sunday



High: 48 °F

Mostly Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 32 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Monday



High: 47 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance Rain

What's Ahead

Saturday
A blend of clouds and sun
Highs: 45-55°

Sunday
Increasing clouds through the day
Highs: 40-50°

Monday
30-50% chance light rain with brief periods of snow or freezing rain mix
Highs: 40-50°

Temperatures warmest across south central SD, coldest northeast SD and west central Minnesota

NWS Aberdeen, SD
Sat Nov 15, 2025 3:12 AM

Relatively cooler temperatures will return for the weekend, although, highs in the 40s and 50s are still 5 to 15 degrees above normal for this time of the year. The next chance for precipitation will be Monday. Rain is primarily anticipated, but there could be brief windows of snow or freezing rain mixed in.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 61 °F at 2:08 PM

Low Temp: 39 °F at 7:34 AM

Wind: 18 mph at 9:37 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 72 in 1953

Record Low: -8 in 1900

Average High: 43

Average Low: 20

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.42

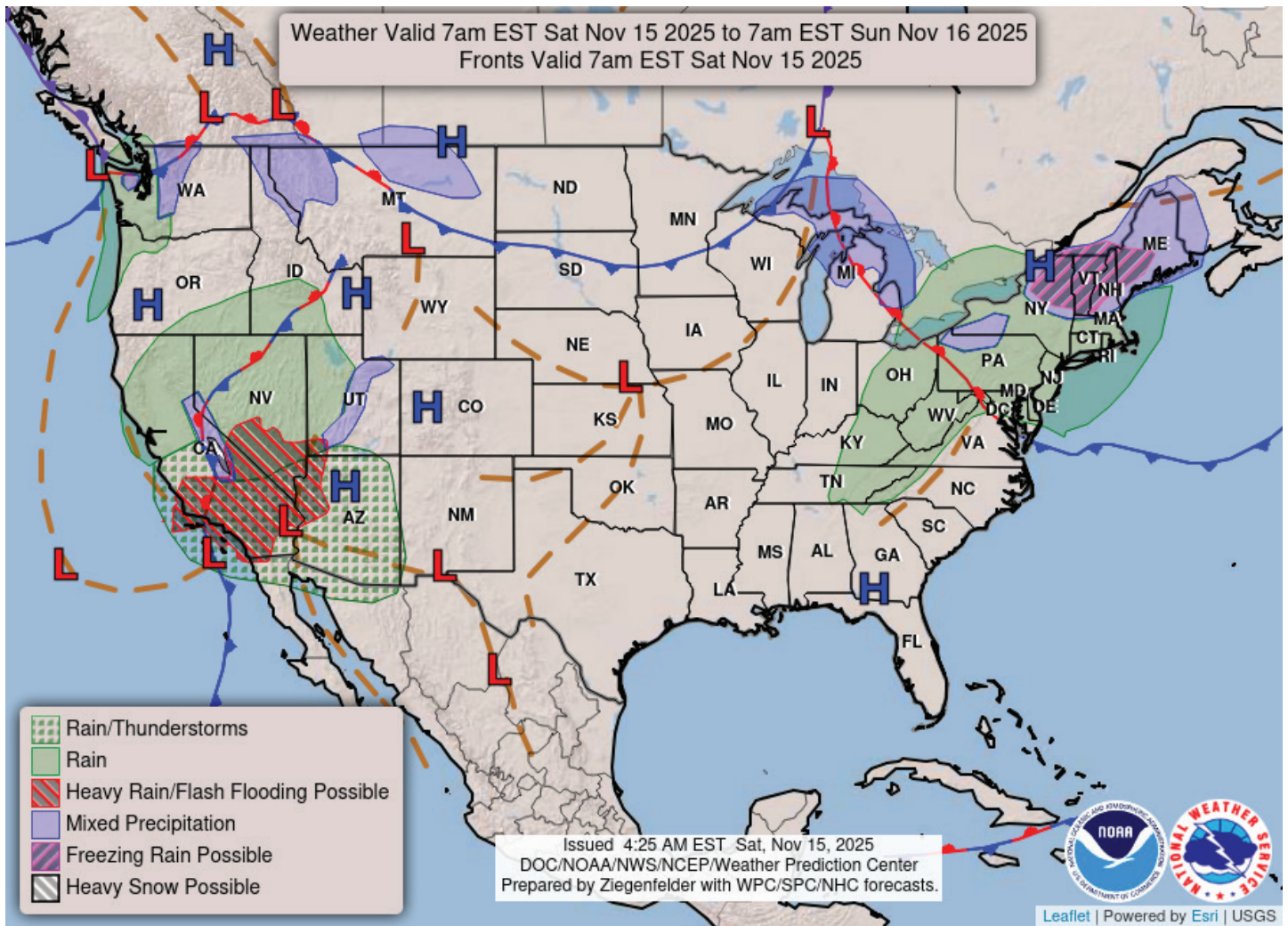
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 20.89

Precip Year to Date: 23.51

Sunset Tonight: 5:02 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:33 am



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Today in Weather History

November 15, 1988: A mixture of sleet, freezing rain and snow fell from north central South Dakota into west central Minnesota before changing over to all snow by the afternoon of the 15th. Snow continued across Minnesota during the morning hours on the 16th, along with increasing winds. The winds and falling snow created near zero visibility due to blowing snow in the northwest and west central Minnesota. A 60 mph wind gust was recorded in Morris, MN. Snow and blowing snow blocked roads, caused power outages and closed schools. Snow in many locations accumulated over a sheet of ice that coated roads from preceding rainfall.

1900 - A record lake-effect snowstorm at Watertown, NY, produced 45 inches in 24 hours. The storm total was 49 inches. (14th-15th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1967 - A surprise snow and ice coating paralyzed Boston during the evening rush hour. (David Ludlum)

1987: On November 15 and 16, intense thunderstorms rumbled through the South-Central US producing 49 tornadoes in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi during a 34 hour period. Of the 49 tornadoes, four were F3, 12 were F2, 27 were F1, and 6 were F0. These severe storms caused 11 deaths and 303 injuries. This storm system also brought heavy rain to central Louisiana where five stations recorded over 10 inches in 24 hours. The highest amount was 14.22 inches at Olla on the 16.

1988 - A tornado hit Southside, AR, killing one person, injuring ten others, and causing more than two million dollars damage, and a tornado near Clarksville AR injured nine persons and caused more than two million dollars damage. A tornado moving through the southwest part of Topeka KS injured twenty-two persons and caused nearly four million dollars damage. A tornado near Jane MO killed one person and injured twelve others, and a tornado moving across the southwest part of O'Fallon MO injured ten persons. Severe thunderstorms also produced hail three and a half inches in diameter east of Denison TX, and wind gusts to 85 mph at Kirksville MO. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing along a powerful cold front began to produce severe weather in the Middle Mississippi Valley before sunrise, and by early the next morning thunderstorms had spawned seventeen tornadoes east of the Mississippi River, with a total of 350 reports of severe weather. There were one hundred reports of damaging winds in Georgia, and five tornadoes, and there were another four tornadoes in Alabama. Hardest hit was Huntsville AL where a violent tornado killed 21 persons, injured 463 others, and caused one hundred million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1996: An intense, lake effect snow event came to an end over western New York, northeastern Ohio, and northwest Pennsylvania. Chardon, Ohio was buried under 68.9 of snow over a six-day period. Edinboro, Pennsylvania checked in with 54.8 inches. 18.5 inches blanketed Cleveland, Ohio and 42 inches fell at Sherman, New York.

2005 - Severe thunderstorms produced over 30 tornadoes in 6 states, resulting in one fatality and at least 35 injuries (Associated Press). Some of the worst damage occurred in Henry county, Tennessee, where numerous homes and businesses were damaged or destroyed.

2006 - Strong winds cause severe damage at a skating rink in Montgomery, Alabama where more than 30 preschoolers were playing. Two children suffered injuries but there were no fatalities. 2007: Tropical Cyclone Sidr, a Category 4 storm on the Saffir-Simpson scale, brings torrential rain 150-mph winds and a four ft storm surge to the Bangladesh coast. At least 3200 people die, and millions are left homeless. Since records began in 1877, Sidr obtained the title of the second-strongest cyclone to make landfall in Bangladesh.

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Daily Devotion

James 1:5-8: 5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

6 But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

7 For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.

8 A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

If our loving, omnipotent Father takes delight in fulfilling His children's needs, then why do some go unmet? Let's look at a few of the reasons:

We don't ask. This may seem simplistic, yet it's astonishing how many of us fail to bring our concerns to the Lord. Our Father is a very personal God, who cares deeply about everything that affects His children. Matthew 10:30 says He even knows the number of hairs on our head. So of course we should share with Him the details of our life.

We ask but doubt God can or will do it. It's a tragic mischaracterization to go before the omnipotent, sovereign God of the universe and essentially say, "You aren't big enough to handle my needs." When you approach God, do so knowing He is able to do all that and more (Philippians 4:19).

We ask God to address the symptom, not the real need. At times we pray and pray about something without seeing any change. The reason may be that we're focusing on the wrong thing or a small part of a much larger issue our Father wants to handle.

The heavenly Father wants to meet all of your needs. Ask Him to help align your requests with His will. Then entrust the outcome to Him.

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

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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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.14.25

1 8 11 12 57 7

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$50,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[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: 15 Hrs 50 Mins 53
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.14.25

14 19 34 42 43 13

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 5 Mins 53
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.12.25

3 7 14 22 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$83,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 5 Mins 53
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.12.25

7 31 32 39 65 11

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 34 Mins 53
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: 16 Hrs 34 Mins 53
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Reaching 67 points is creating a '6-7' frenzy at college basketball games across the country

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — Oklahoma coach Jennie Baranczyk hears the popular catchphrase "6-7" all the time at home, possibly more often than please and thank you.

Getting an earful of it at a women's basketball game, well, that was new for the mother of three.

Baranczyk and the sixth-ranked Sooners became the latest college team to send fans into a frenzy when they hit 67 points in an 89-61 victory against North Alabama on Friday.

Hundreds of students on a field trip screamed their approval along with the ubiquitous phrase and juggled their hands up and down to mimic a video that went viral earlier this year.

Sports viewers might have seen the motion before, perhaps in six or seven NFL games.

"I did not do it because I was like, 'Yep,'" said Baranczyk, who has a son and two daughters. "I knew it. But I'm like, 'Gotta give the people what they want sometimes.'"

Raegan Beers, who finished with 20 points and 11 rebounds in the victory, raved about the OU bench reaction. Teammates, assistant coaches and staffers celebrated simultaneously in similar fashion.

Beers said teammates Payton Verhulst, who made a 3-pointer to give Oklahoma a 66-33 lead, and Zya Vann were trying to draw fouls, presumably so they could shoot free throws.

"We got so excited to do that," Beers said. "We knew the kids were going to get excited about that. That's the joy of this game. That's why I love this game. Just to have that energy in the building and lean into what is trending at the moment, which is 6-7, whatever that means. It was so much fun to have that moment and let the kids enjoy it."

Dictionary.com made the viral term "6-7" its word of the year, and it isn't even really a word. It's a phrase kids and teenagers can't stop repeating and laughing about while parents and teachers can't make any sense of it.

The word — if you can call it that — exploded in popularity over the summer. It's more of an inside joke with an unclear meaning, driven by social media.

Dictionary.com says its annual selection is a linguistic time capsule reflecting social trends and events. But the site admitted it too is a bit confused by "6-7."

"Don't worry, because we're all still trying to figure out exactly what it means," the site said in its announcement last month.

How did "6-7" become a thing?

It all seems to trace back to rapper Skrilla's song from 2024 called "Doot Doot (6-7)."

That song started appearing in TikTok videos with basketball players, including the NBA's LaMelo Ball who stands 6-foot-7.

Then a boy, now known as "The 6-7 Kid," shouted the ubiquitous phrase while another kid next to him juggled his hands in a video that went viral this year.

That's all it took.

So what does "6-7" mean? The real answer is no one knows, but it's widely regarded as harmless. Unlike some other trends that have come and gone, there's not believed to be an inappropriate backstory to the craze.

According to Dictionary.com, the phrase could mean "so-so," or "maybe this, maybe that" when combined with the juggling hands gesture.

Merriam-Webster calls it a "a nonsensical expression used especially by teens and tweens."

Regardless, it's trending at basketball games when a team nears 67 points, and in football games when it's time for a dance.

It happened at the Prairie View-Oklahoma State women's game earlier this week and at an Air Force-South Dakota women's game.

Once a shadowy dealmaker, former Zelenskyy associate is accused in Ukrainian corruption scandal

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Before the revelation of a multi-million dollar embezzlement and kickbacks scandal involving Ukraine's state nuclear energy company brought his name to the forefront, Tymur Mindich was a shadowy presence — navigating deals and moving behind the scenes with unseen influence, known to many, yet rarely spoken of.

Mindich was linked to growing fears over his expanding influence within the country's lucrative industries, his access facilitated by his ties to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. The two were once business partners and Mindich's influence had expanded under Zelenskyy's tenure.

The full extent of that influence was exposed this week when Ukraine's anti-corruption watchdogs released the findings of a 15-month investigation into a \$100 million embezzlement scheme involving top officials and Ukraine's state nuclear power company, accusing Mindich of being the mastermind behind the plot.

Mindich has fled the country, with any criminal proceedings against him likely to be carried out in absentia. Two top government ministers have resigned.

Ukrainian officials, experts and activists contend Mindich's rise to power is closely tied to his privileged relationship with the president and Zelenskyy's inner circle. The investigation does not implicate Zelenskyy himself, and he has openly supported the work of anti-corruption agencies while sanctioning Mindich once its findings were revealed.

"What we were hearing only as rumors now has some evidence," said activist Tetiana Shevchuk of Ukraine's Anti-Corruption Action Center. "For a long time we have heard that Tymur Mindich is a shadow controller of the energy sector."

The entertainment tycoon

Until Zelenskyy's presidency, Mindich, 46, was just one among many wealthy Ukrainian entertainment industry entrepreneurs.

Mindich was a co-owner of Zelenskyy's production company Kwartal 95, named for the comedy troupe that helped catapult the Ukrainian president to fame as a comedian before he entered politics. Zelenskyy transferred his stake in the company to his partners after he was elected.

Despite expanding his business portfolio since Zelenskyy's election, Mindich maintained ties to the entertainment world. Until the corruption probe was exposed this week, he was a producer of the comedy show "Stadium Family" on YouTube. In light of the scandal and his tarnished reputation, the show's owners shut it down this week.

He is also a relative of Leonid Mindich, who was arrested by Ukraine's anti-corruption authorities in June when he was trying to flee the country, according to local reports. He was charged with embezzling \$16 million from an electric power company.

Rise under Zelenskyy

Zelenskyy and Mindich's close friendship is documented. The president used Mindich's armored car during the final stretch of his presidential campaign in 2019. In January 2021, Zelenskyy celebrated his birthday in Mindich's apartment during COVID. The two own apartments in the same building.

After Zelenskyy's 2019 presidential win, Mindich's political ties grew.

He was a close business associate of Ukrainian oligarch Ihor Kolomoysky, who backed Zelenskyy's presidential campaign. Zelenskyy later cut ties with the billionaire and in 2023, Kolomoysky was arrested by Ukrainian security services on fraud and money-laundering charges.

Businesses once associated with Kolomoysky began claiming that Mindich was now their beneficiary. "Gradually, in three years, he became not an oligarch, but a known businessman with an interest in a lot of businesses," said Shevchuk, the anti-corruption activist.

They include agricultural enterprises and the nationalized SENSE Bank. But, his name appeared most often in association with state energy companies, according to current and former Ukrainian officials, activists and experts.

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Ukrainian activists contend that without his close association with Zelenskyy, it would have been impossible for Mindich to cement his rise.

Mindich "would have never been in politics, never been in a position of power or business without his connection to Zelenskyy, and this magnitude is worse because it's happening during war time, and it is related to energy infrastructure at a time when Ukrainians don't have electricity in their homes," Shevchuk said.

An alleged mastermind

The case against Mindich rests on 1,000 hours of wiretaps revealing his significant influence over Herman Haluschenko, Ukraine's energy minister from 2021-2025, until he was named justice minister in July. Haluschenko resigned that post after the investigation became public this week.

While rarely named as a direct beneficiary in official documents, investigators cite extensive wiretapping evidence they allege shows Mindich exerted control over a network of loyalists who pressured contractors for Energoatom, the state nuclear power company, demanding kickbacks of up to 15% to bypass bureaucratic obstacles and do business smoothly.

Investigators allege the illicit funds were siphoned off, laundered through shell companies and funneled into Mindich's pockets and those of his associates.

These findings collected by the National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine, known as NABU, and Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor's Office, or SAPO will be central to any future court proceedings.

A possible drone dealer

NABU is also conducting an investigation into Mindich's alleged dealings with Ukraine's top drone manufacturer, Fire Point, but has not yet revealed its findings. Fire Point, which develops deep-strike drones capable of hitting targets inside Russian territory, has denied any such dealings.

Ukraine's domestic drone industry has seen a swift and remarkable rise, fueled by wartime innovation and urgent military demands. What was once a niche sector quickly evolved into a formidable technological force within just a few years.

Fire Point is among local companies and startups that have rapidly developed advanced drones for reconnaissance, surveillance and combat operations, supported by growing investments. The NABU investigation is looking into whether Mindich is the ultimate beneficiary of the company.

Aficionados fret as Trump moves to make pasta great again

By MIKE CATALINI, GIADA ZAMPANO and PAUL WISEMAN Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Steel: 50%. Copper: 50%. Cars: up to 25%. But an even bigger Trump-era levy looms: 107 % on Italian pasta.

Mamma mia.

It started with the U.S. Commerce Department launching what it says was a routine antidumping review, based on allegations Italian pasta makers sold product into the US at below-market prices and undercut local competitors. That has led to a threat of 92% duties, which would come on top of the 15% tariff President Donald Trump's administration imposed on European exports generally.

The news sent shockwaves through Italy, where 13 producers would be subject to the whopping one-two punch. They say sales in their second biggest export market would shrivel if prices to American consumers more than double. And while the measure would hardly prompt pasta shortages, it still has perplexed importers like Sal Auriemma, whose shop in Philadelphia's Italian market, Claudio Specialty Food, has been operating for over 60 years.

"Pasta is a pretty small sector to pick on. I mean, there's a lot bigger things to pick on," said Auriemma, pointing to luxury items as an alternative.

But pasta? "It's basic food," he said. "Something's got to be sacred."

Pasta adds heft to Italy's economy

Italy is a nation of avid pasta eaters. Less known is that most of the tortellini, spaghetti and rigatoni its factories churn out gets sent abroad. The U.S. accounts for about 15% of its €4 billion (\$4.65 billion) in exports, making it Italy's largest market after Germany, data from farmers' association Coldiretti show.

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The punitive pasta premium has become a cause célèbre for Italy's politicians, executives and economists. Agriculture Minister Francesco Lollobrigida told lawmakers in mid-October that the government was working with the European Commission and engaging in diplomatic efforts, while supporting the companies' legal actions to oppose U.S. sanctions.

EU Trade Commissioner Maros Sefcovic addressed reporters in Rome last month, stressing the lack of evidence backing the U.S. decision and calling the combined 107% levy "unacceptable."

Margherita Mastromauro, president of the pasta makers sector of Unione Italiana Food, told The Associated Press that prices for Italian pasta in the U.S. remain high, and certainly higher than American-made rivals — undermining any dumping claim.

She said that the measures could deal a fatal blow to small- and medium-sized producers. Lucio Miranda, president of consultancy group Export USA, agreed.

"A duty rate of 107% would definitely kill this flow of export," Miranda, who is Italian, said by phone from New York. "It's not going to be something that you can just dump on the consumer and move on, life continues. It will definitely be a deal killer."

Wacky Mac owner cries foul

The Commerce Department's investigation started in 2024 after complaints from Missouri-based 8th Avenue Food & Provisions, which owns pasta brand Ronzoni, and Illinois-based Winland Foods, whose multiple brands include Prince, Mueller's and Wacky Mac.

The office's review focused on La Molisana and Garofalo, chosen as primary respondents because they are Italy's two largest exporters, the Commerce Department said in an emailed statement. Any sale price below either producers' costs or the price they charge in the Italian market would be considered dumping, in line with numerous other reviews of Italian pasta since 1996, it said.

The two companies presented information incorrectly or withheld it, significantly impeding analysis, according to the Commerce Department. And in the face of these alleged deficiencies, the office presented its 92% duty estimate, which it extended to 11 other companies based on an assumption the two companies' behavior was representative.

"After they screwed up their initial responses, the Commerce Department explained to them what the problems were and asked them to fix those problems; they didn't," White House spokesperson Kush Desai said in an emailed response to the AP's questions. "And then Commerce communicated the requirements again, and they didn't answer for a third time."

La Molisana declined to comment when contacted by the AP. Garofalo didn't respond to a request for comment.

The sanctions would be applied not just to imports going forward, but also the 12 months through June 2024, according to the Commerce Department. It added that only 16% of total Italian pasta imports may be affected. Its final decision is scheduled for Jan. 2, which could be extended by 60 days.

'Completely senseless'

A little over an hour's drive northeast from Naples is Benevento, a sleepy hilltop town of 55,000 people famed for its ancient Roman theater and Aglianico red wine. It's also home to Pasta Rummo, founded in 1846, which prides itself on its seven-phase, "slow work" production method.

CEO Cosimo Rummo is outraged by the threat to his company's annual 20 million euros in exports to the U.S.

"These tariffs are completely senseless," Rummo said in a phone interview. "These are fast-moving consumer goods ... Who would ever buy a pack of pasta that costs 10 dollars, the same price as a bottle of wine?"

He added that he has no intention to start producing pasta stateside, as some companies have done and so would be spared the prospective levy. That includes Barilla, which for decades has been the main Italian pasta brand in the U.S. and now has large-scale production facilities there.

An unsavory prospect

When the transatlantic imbroglia started simmering, Robert Tramonte of Arlington, Virginia sought as-

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surances. The owner of The Italian Store called his supplier, who told him there's enough pasta inventory stocked in the warehouse to keep prices steady until Easter.

Tramonte's clients count on him for top-shelf product and he was relieved that, at least for the time being, they won't have to shell out for the real deal. Or worse -- perish the thought! -- purchase made-in-America pasta.

"They've tried to make Italian products and use the same ingredients, but the source wasn't Italy," he said. "And they just didn't taste the same."

Winning ticket for \$980 million jackpot sold in Georgia, Mega Millions says

By The Associated Press undefined

A Mega Millions player in Georgia won the \$980 million jackpot on Friday, overcoming abysmal odds to win the huge prize.

The numbers selected were 1, 8, 11, 12 and 57 with the gold Mega Ball 7.

The winner overcame Mega Millions' astronomical odds of 1 in 290.5 million by matching all six numbers. The next drawing will be on Tuesday.

A winner can choose an annuity or the cash option — a one-time, lump-sum payment of \$452.2 million before taxes. If there are multiple jackpot winners, the prize is shared.

There were four Mega Millions jackpot wins earlier this year, but Friday's drawing was the 40th since the last win on June 27, a game record, officials said.

In September, two Powerball players in Missouri and Texas won a nearly \$1.8 billion jackpot, one of the largest in the U.S. The current Mega Millions jackpot isn't among the top 10 U.S. lottery jackpots but would be the eighth-largest for Mega Millions since the game began in 2002.

Other prizes

Mega Millions offers lesser prizes in addition to the jackpot. The odds of winning any of these is 1 in 23.

There were more than 800,000 winners of non-jackpot prizes from the Nov. 11 drawing.

Tickets are \$5 each and are sold in 45 states, Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Half the proceeds from each Mega Millions ticket remains in the jurisdiction where the ticket was sold. Local lottery agencies run the game in each jurisdiction and how profits are spent is dictated by law.

Gambling addictions

Sometimes gambling can become addictive.

The National Council on Problem Gambling defines problem gambling as "gambling behavior that is damaging to a person or their family, often disrupting their daily life and career."

It is sometimes called gambling addiction or gambling disorder, a recognized mental health diagnosis. The group says anyone who gambles can be at risk.

Its National Problem Gambling Helpline, 1-800-522-4700, connects anyone seeking assistance with a gambling problem to local resources.

Trump scraps tariffs on beef, coffee and tropical fruit in a push to lower grocery store prices

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump announced Friday that he was scrapping U.S. tariffs on beef, coffee, tropical fruits and a broad swath of other commodities — a dramatic move that comes amid mounting pressure on his administration to better combat high consumer prices.

Trump has built his second term around imposing steep levies on goods imported into the U.S. in hopes of encouraging domestic production and lifting the U.S. economy. His abrupt retreat from his signature tariff policy on so many staples key to the American diet is significant, and it comes after voters in off-year elections this month cited economic concerns as their top issue, resulting in big wins for Democrats

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in Virginia, New Jersey and other key races around the country.

"We just did a little bit of a rollback on some foods like coffee," Trump said aboard Air Force One as he flew to Florida hours after the tariff announcement was made.

Pressed on his tariffs helping to increase consumer prices, Trump acknowledged, "I say they may, in some cases" have that effect.

"But to a large extent they've been borne by other countries," the president added.

Meanwhile, inflation — despite Trump's pronouncements that it has vanished since he took office in January — remains elevated, further increasing pressure on U.S. consumers.

The Trump administration has insisted that its tariffs had helped fill government coffers and weren't a major factor in higher prices at grocery stores around the country. But Democrats were quick to paint Friday's move as an acknowledgement that Trump's policies were hurting American pocketbooks.

"President Trump is finally admitting what we always knew: his tariffs are raising prices for the American people," Virginia Democratic Rep. Don Beyer said in a statement. "After getting drubbed in recent elections because of voters' fury that Trump has broken his promises to fix inflation, the White House is trying to cast this tariff retreat as a 'pivot to affordability.'"

Grocery bill worries

Trump slapped tariffs on most countries around the globe in April. He and his administration still say that tariffs don't increase consumer prices, despite economic evidence to the contrary.

Record-high beef prices have been a particular concern, and Trump had said he intended to take action to try and lower them. Trump's tariffs on Brazil, a major beef exporter, had been a factor.

Trump signed an executive order that also removes tariffs on tea, fruit juice, cocoa, spices, bananas, oranges, tomatoes and certain fertilizers. Some of the products covered aren't produced in the United States, meaning that tariffs meant to spur domestic production had little effect. But reducing the tariffs will still likely mean lower prices for U.S. consumers.

The Food Industry Association, which represents retailers, producers and a variety of related industry firms and services, applauded Trump's move to provide "swift tariff relief," noting that import U.S. taxes "are an important factor" in a "complex mix" of supply chain issues.

"President Trump's proclamation to reduce tariffs on a substantial volume of food imports is a critical step ensuring continued adequate supply at prices consumers can afford," the association said in a statement.

In explaining the tariff reductions, the White House said Friday that some of the original levies Trump relished imposing on nearly every country on earth months ago were actually no longer necessary given the trade agreements he'd since hammered out with key U.S. trading partners.

Indeed, Friday's announcement follows the Trump administration having reached framework agreements with Ecuador, Guatemala, El Salvador and Argentina meant to increase the ability of U.S. firms to sell industrial and agricultural products in these countries, while also potentially easing tariffs on agricultural products produced there.

During an interview that aired earlier in the week with Laura Ingraham of Fox News Channel, Trump hinted that lower tariffs might be coming.

"Coffee, we're going to lower some tariffs," the president said then. "We're going to have some coffee come in."

Tariff checks?

Despite pulling back on so many tariffs, Trump used his comments aboard Air Force One on Friday night to repeat his past assertions that his administration would use revenue the federal government has collected from import levies to fund \$2,000 checks for many Americans.

The president suggested such checks could be issued in 2026, but was vague on timing, saying only, "Sometime during the year." Trump, however, also said federal tariff revenue might be used to pay down national debt — raising questions about how much federal funding would be needed to do both.

Trump rejected suggestions that attempting direct payments to Americans could exacerbate inflation concerns — even as he suggested that similar checks offered during the coronavirus pandemic, and by previous administrations to stimulate the economy, had that very effect.

"This is money earned as opposed to money that was made up," Trump said. "Everybody but the rich will get this. That's not made up. That's real money. That comes from other countries."

At Trump's urging, Bondi says US will investigate Epstein's ties to Clinton and other political foes

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Acceding to President Donald Trump's demands, U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi said Friday that she has ordered a top federal prosecutor to investigate sex offender Jeffrey Epstein's ties to Trump political foes, including former President Bill Clinton.

Bondi posted on X that she was assigning Manhattan U.S. Attorney Jay Clayton to lead the probe, capping an eventful week in which congressional Republicans released nearly 23,000 pages of documents from Epstein's estate and House Democrats seized on emails mentioning Trump.

Trump, who was friends with Epstein for years, didn't explain what supposed crimes he wanted the Justice Department to investigate. None of the men he mentioned in a social media post demanding the probe has been accused of sexual misconduct by any of Epstein's victims.

Hours before Bondi's announcement, Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that he would ask her, the Justice Department and the FBI to investigate Epstein's "involvement and relationship" with Clinton and others, including former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers and LinkedIn founder and Democratic donor Reid Hoffman.

Trump, calling the matter "the Epstein Hoax, involving Democrats, not Republicans," said the investigation should also include financial giant JPMorgan Chase, which provided banking services to Epstein, and "many other people and institutions."

"This is another Russia, Russia, Russia Scam, with all arrows pointing to the Democrats," the Republican president wrote, referring to special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation of alleged Russian interference in Trump's 2016 election victory over Bill Clinton's wife, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Asked later Friday whether he should be ordering up such investigations, Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One: "I'm the chief law enforcement officer of the country. I'm allowed to do it."

In a July memo regarding the Epstein investigation, the FBI said, "We did not uncover evidence that could predicate an investigation against uncharged third parties."

The president's demand for an investigation — and Bondi's quick acquiescence — is the latest example of the erosion of the Justice Department's traditional independence from the White House since Trump took office.

It is also an extraordinary attempt at deflection. For decades, Trump himself has been scrutinized for his closeness to Epstein — though like the people he now wants investigated, he has not been accused of sexual misconduct by Epstein's victims.

None of Trump's proposed targets were accused of sex crimes

A JPMorgan Chase spokesperson, Patricia Wexler, said the company regretted associating with Epstein "but did not help him commit his heinous acts."

"The government had damning information about his crimes and failed to share it with us or other banks," she said. The company agreed previously to pay millions of dollars to Epstein's victims, who had sued arguing that the bank ignored red flags about criminal activity.

Clinton has acknowledged traveling on Epstein's private jet but has said through a spokesperson that he had no knowledge of the late financier's crimes. He also has never been accused of misconduct by Epstein's known victims.

Clinton's deputy chief of staff Angel Ureña posted on X Friday: "These emails prove Bill Clinton did nothing and knew nothing. The rest is noise meant to distract from election losses, backfiring shutdowns, and who knows what else."

Epstein pleaded guilty in Florida in 2008 to soliciting prostitution from an underage girl, but was spared a long jail term when the U.S. attorney in Florida agreed not to prosecute him over allegations that he had

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paid many other children for sexual acts. After serving about a year in jail and a work release program, Epstein resumed his business and social life until federal prosecutors in New York revived the case in 2019. Epstein killed himself while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges.

Summers and Hoffman had nothing to do with either case, but both were friendly with Epstein and exchanged emails with him. Those messages were among the documents released this week, along with other correspondence Epstein had with friends and business associates in the years before his death.

Nothing in the messages suggested any wrongdoing on the men's part, other than associating with someone who had been accused of sex crimes against children.

Summers, who served in Clinton's cabinet and is a former Harvard University president, previously said in a statement that he has "great regrets in my life" and that "my association with Jeffrey Epstein was a major error of judgement."

On social media Friday night, Hoffman called for Trump to release all the Epstein files, saying they will show that "the calls for baseless investigations of me are nothing more than political persecution and slander." He added, "I was never a client of Epstein's and never had any engagement with him other than fundraising for MIT." Hoffman bankrolled writer E. Jean Carroll's sexual abuse and defamation lawsuit against Trump.

After Epstein's sex trafficking arrest in 2019, Hoffman said he'd only had a few interactions with Epstein, all related to his fundraising for MIT's Media Lab. He nevertheless apologized, saying that "by agreeing to participate in any fundraising activity where Epstein was present, I helped to repair his reputation and perpetuate injustice."

Bondi, in her post, praised Clayton as "one of the most capable and trusted prosecutors in the country" and said the Justice Department "will pursue this with urgency and integrity to deliver answers to the American people."

Trump called Clayton "a great man, a great attorney," though he said Bondi chose him for the job.

Clayton, the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission during Trump's first term, took over in April as U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York — the same office that indicted Epstein and won a sex trafficking conviction against Epstein's longtime confidante, Ghislaine Maxwell, in 2021.

Trump changes course on Epstein files

Trump suggested while campaigning last year that he'd seek to open up the government's case files on Epstein, but changed course in recent months, blaming Democrats and painting the matter as a "hoax" amid questions about what knowledge he may have had about Epstein's yearslong exploitation of underage girls.

On Wednesday, Democrats on the House Oversight Committee released three Epstein email exchanges that referenced Trump, including one from 2019 in which Epstein said the president "knew about the girls" and asked Maxwell to stop.

White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt accused Democrats of having "selectively leaked emails" to smear Trump.

Soon after, Republicans on the committee disclosed a far bigger trove of Epstein's email correspondence, including messages he sent to longtime Trump ally Steve Bannon and to Britain's former Prince Andrew, now known as Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor. Andrew settled a lawsuit out of court with one of Epstein's victims, who said she had been paid to have sex with the prince.

The House is speeding toward a vote next week to force the Justice Department to release all files and communications related to Epstein.

"I don't care about it, release or not," Trump said Friday. "If you're going to do it, then you have to go into Epstein's friends," he added, naming Clinton and Hoffman.

Still, he said: "This is a Democrat hoax. And a couple, a few Republicans have gone along with it because they're weak and ineffective." —

Bedayn reported from Denver. Associated Press writer Chris Megerian aboard Air Force One contributed to this report.

Trump cuts ties with 'Wacky' Marjorie Taylor Greene, once among his top MAGA-world defenders

By MEG KINNARD Associated Press

President Donald Trump has publicly called it quits with one of his most stalwart MAGA-world supporters, calling Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene "Wacky" Marjorie" and saying he would endorse a challenger against her in next year's midterms "if the right person runs."

The dismissal of Greene — once the epitome of "Make America Great Again," sporting the signature red cap for President Joe Biden's 2024 State of the Union address and acting as a go-between for Trump and other Capitol Hill Republicans — appeared to be the final break in a dispute simmering for months, as Greene has seemingly moderated her political profile. The three-term U.S. House member has increasingly dissented from Republican leaders, attacking them during the just-ended federal government shutdown and saying they need a plan to help people who are losing subsidies to afford health insurance policies.

Accusing the Georgia Republican of going "Far Left," Trump wrote that all he had witnessed from Greene in recent months is "COMPLAIN, COMPLAIN, COMPLAIN!" adding, of Greene's purported irritation that he doesn't return her phone calls, "I can't take a ranting Lunatic's call every day."

In a response on X, Greene wrote Friday that Trump had "attacked me and lied about me." She added a screenshot of a text she said she had sent the president earlier in the day about releasing the Jeffrey Epstein files, which she said "is what sent him over the edge."

Greene called it "astonishing really how hard he's fighting to stop the Epstein files from coming out that he actually goes to this level," referencing next week's U.S. House vote over releasing the Epstein files.

Writing that she had supported Trump "with too much of my precious time, too much of my own money, and fought harder for him even when almost all other Republicans turned their back and denounced him," Greene added, "I don't worship or serve Donald Trump."

Trump's post seemingly tied a bow of finality to fissures that widened following this month's off-cycle elections, in which voters in the New Jersey and Virginia governor races flocked to Democrats in large part over concerns about the cost of living.

Last week, Greene told NBC News that "watching the foreign leaders come to the White House through a revolving door is not helping Americans," saying that Trump needs to focus on high prices at home rather than his recent emphasis on foreign affairs. Trump responded by saying that Greene had "lost her way."

Asked about Greene's comments earlier Friday as he flew from Washington to Florida, Trump reiterated that he felt "something happened to her over the last month or two," saying that, if he hadn't gone to China to meet leader Xi Jinping, there would have been negative ramifications for jobs in Georgia and elsewhere because China would have kept its curbs on magnet exports.

Saying that people have been calling him, wanting to challenge Greene, Trump added, "She's lost a wonderful conservative reputation."

Greene's discontent dates back at least to May, when she announced she wouldn't run for the Senate against Democratic incumbent Jon Ossoff, while attacking GOP donors and consultants who feared she couldn't win. In June, she publicly sided with Tucker Carlson after Trump called the commentator "kooky" in a schism that emerged between MAGA and national security hardliners over possible U.S. efforts at regime change in Iran.

That only intensified in July, when Greene said she wouldn't run for governor. Then, she attacked a political "good ole boy" system, alleging it was endangering Republican control of the state. Greene embarked on a charm offensive in recent weeks, with interviews and appearances in media aimed at people who aren't hardcore Trump supporters. Asked on comedian Tim Dillon's podcast if she wanted to run for president in 2028, Greene said in October, "I hate politics so much" and just wanted "to fix problems" — but didn't give a definitive answer.

That climaxed with an appearance on Bill Maher's HBO show "Real Time," followed days later by a Nov. 4 appearance on ABC's "The View." Some observers began pronouncing Greene as reasonable as she

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trashed Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana for not calling Republicans back to Washington and coming up with a health care plan.

"I feel like I'm sitting next to a completely different Marjorie Taylor Greene," said "The View" co-host Sunny Hostin.

"Maybe you should become a Democrat, Marjorie," said co-host Joy Behar.

"I'm not a Democrat," Greene replied. "I think both parties have failed."

FAA takes first steps to restore flights after shutdown strain, but some limits remain

By RIO YAMAT and JOSH FUNK Associated Press

The Federal Aviation Administration on Friday halved the number of flights that U.S. airlines must cut from their schedules at 40 airports as the country's aviation system recovers from a shortage of air traffic controllers during the record government shutdown.

The agency said airlines will only have to cancel 3% of their flights beginning at 6 a.m. Saturday instead of 6%. Citing safety concerns, the FAA first ordered flights reduced at the busy airports on Nov. 7 as absences mounted at air traffic facilities and airport towers. Controllers were among the federal employees who were required to work while going unpaid during the shutdown.

Cancellations peaked last Sunday at nearly 3,000 flights, about 10% of the ones scheduled, as a result of the FAA order combined with continued controller shortages and bad weather in parts of the country. The numbers started to improve as the week went on and more controllers returned to work amid news of a possible shutdown deal in Congress, prompting the FAA to pause plans for further increases.

The rollback comes amid improved staffing levels after the 43-day shutdown ended Wednesday night, the FAA and Department of Transportation said, adding that they will continue to monitor the situation throughout the weekend and evaluate when normal operations can resume.

Before the FAA released its updated guidance, airlines already seemed to be anticipating a change. Despite the restrictions still in place, just 2% of flights scheduled to depart Friday from the U.S. were canceled, according to the aviation analytics firm Cirium. By Friday evening, the flight-tracking site FlightAware was showing 273 cancellations for Saturday.

The unprecedented order started with 4% cuts that later grew to 6%, leading to the cancellation of more than 11,800 flights between Nov. 7 and Friday. The FAA originally had a 10% target.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy has repeatedly said safety metrics must improve before the order is lifted entirely.

Duffy hasn't shared the specific safety data that prompted the cuts, but he cited reports during the shutdown of planes getting too close in the air, more runway incursions and pilot concerns about controllers' responses.

How long it will take for the aviation system to stabilize is unclear. The flight restrictions upended airline operations in just a matter of days. Many planes were rerouted and aren't where they're supposed to be. Airlines for America, the trade group of U.S. airlines, warned there could be residual effects for days.

Some experts predicted the problems could linger longer. But airline executives were optimistic that flying could quickly rebound ahead of the busy Thanksgiving travel week once the FAA order to cut flights is lifted.

In an appearance on "CBS Mornings" after the shutdown ended, Delta Air Lines CEO Ed Bastian predicted a return to normalcy "a lot faster than people think."

"And normal for us is an incredibly safe, incredibly reliable, great experience," he said. "Thanksgiving is going to be a great holiday period of travel."

The nationwide shortage of controllers isn't new, but the shutdown put a spotlight on the problem and likely made it worse. Duffy said that by the end of the shutdown, 15 to 20 controllers were retiring daily and some younger controllers were leaving the profession.

Officials in North Carolina city vow to resist looming federal immigration crackdown

By ERIK VERDUZCO Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — Officials and community leaders opposing a pending federal immigration crackdown in North Carolina's largest city characterized it Friday as an invasion and urged Charlotte residents to protest peacefully and record agents' actions from a distance.

"We are living in the strangest of times," said Mecklenburg County Commissioner Susan Rodriguez-McDowell, the granddaughter and wife of immigrants. "A time when a felonious reality TV personality is occupying the White House. Unfortunately we have seen this movie before, and now they want to film an episode of Shock and Awe show here in our city."

On Thursday, Sheriff Garry McFadden confirmed that federal officials, whom he declined to identify, told him U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents would start an enforcement operation there by Saturday or early next week. The Department of Homeland Security, which oversees CBP, won't comment on future or potential operations. But the community is preparing for the types of enforcement actions seen in Chicago and other Democratic-led cities.

"We've seen what has taken place in other cities across this country when the federal government gets involved," state Rep. Jordan Lopez said. "We have seen the undisciplined agents pointing weapons at unarmed civilians, the indiscriminate rounding up of civilians who are sleeping in their homes" in Chicago.

"We have seen the worst of law enforcement," Lopez added.

Local and state officials say they have received no formal notification from President Donald Trump's administration about a mission to Charlotte. But local organizations are informing immigrants of their rights as well as training volunteers on recognizing federal agents, protesting and safely documenting any attempts to perform a sweep.

Elizabeth Westbay, a Charlotte resident, attended one such training Friday evening that was organized by Indivisible Charlotte and the Carolina Migrant Network. She said the large turnout made her feel hopeful after seeing the toll of federal immigration crackdowns in other places.

"Everything I've heard online about what could be coming, and you see everything that's happening in D.C. and Chicago, and it's like this creeping dread that it's coming your way," Westbay said. "So I felt kind of compelled to come and be prepared."

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

North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein, a Democrat in a state with a Republican-majority legislature, said Friday that the "vast majority" of those detained in these operations have no criminal convictions and some are U.S. citizens.

"If you see any inappropriate behavior, use your phones to record and notify local law enforcement, who will continue to keep our communities safe long after these federal agents leave," Stein said.

Charlotte is another Democratic stronghold. A statement of solidarity from several local and state officials estimated that the city is home to more than 150,000 foreign-born people. Its 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 Zarutka on a light-rail train in Charlotte to argue that Democratic-led cities fail to protect residents from violent crime. A man with a lengthy criminal record has been charged with murder in that case.

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department has clarified that it doesn't have the authority to enforce federal immigration laws and isn't involved in planning or carrying out such operations.

Council member-elect JD Mazuera Arias, a Colombian who grew up in the U.S. and became a naturalized citizen in 2021, said he knows what it's like to fear a knock at the door and pledged that local resources and tax dollars won't go toward immigration enforcement operations. He said sweeps like those in Chicago

have been about “quotas” and “control,” not public safety or rounding up hardened criminals.

“Our Queen City will not become a staging ground for fear,” said the incoming councilman, who ran to represent East Charlotte, an area with a large immigrant population. “We will not confuse cruelty with safety.”

Cameron Pruette, executive director of the city’s Freedom Center for Social Justice, urged people to shop at immigrant-owned businesses and to “peacefully and prayerfully and with moral clarity take action in this moment.”

“This is about the color of someone’s skin, about where they come from and about causing fear and division,” he said. “So, I ask everyone: Take action, stand together, and we will get through this.”

College football coach John Beam from ‘Last Chance U’ has died after being shot

By MIKE CATALINI and HAVEN DALEY Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Oakland’s celebrated former football coach John Beam, who was featured in the Netflix series “Last Chance U” that showcased his success with players others wouldn’t gamble on, died Friday, a day after being shot on the college campus where he worked.

Police arrested the 27-year-old suspect Friday. Authorities said he knew the 66-year-old coach, and it was a targeted attack.

The shooting at Laney College rattled Oakland, with scores holding a vigil outside the hospital before he died. He was remembered as someone who would help anyone.

Mayor Barbara Lee described Beam as a “giant” in the city who mentored thousands of young people, including her own nephew, and “gave Oakland’s youth their best chance” at success.

“For over 40 years, he has shaped leaders on and off the field, and our community is shaken alongside his family,” Lee said.

Suspect’s brother is stunned

Authorities credited technology, specifically cameras at the college campus, private residences and on public transit, in tracking the suspect identified as Cedric Irving Jr.

Irving was arrested without incident at a commuter rail station in Oakland just after 3 a.m. on Friday and police recovered the gun. He was being held at a local jail on charges of murder and carrying a concealed weapon, according to Alameda County’s inmate locator. He is scheduled to be arraigned on Tuesday morning. It wasn’t immediately clear if he had an attorney who could speak on his behalf.

Irving’s brother, Samuael Irving, told the San Francisco Chronicle that he was stunned to learn of the arrest and that his brother excelled academically and athletically in high school, where he ran track and played football. The brother said Cedric grew distant from the family in recent years after an argument with their father. Irving recently lost his job as a security guard after an altercation, his brother said, and then was evicted from his apartment.

“I hope it isn’t him,” Samuael Irving said quietly. “The Cedric I knew wasn’t capable of murder — but the way things had been going, I honestly don’t know.”

Police said the shooting happened Thursday before noon, and officers arrived to find Beam shot.

Oakland Assistant Chief James Beere said the suspect went on campus for a “specific reason” but did not elaborate on what that was. “This was a very targeted incident,” he said.

Beere did not say how Beam and the suspect knew each other but said the suspect was known to loiter around the Laney campus. The suspect had played football at a high school where Beam had worked but not at the time the coach was employed there.

Few other details were available. It was the second shooting in two days at a school in Oakland.

Coach had deep relationships with players

The Netflix docuseries focused on athletes at junior colleges striving to turn their lives around, and Beam’s Laney College Eagles starred in the 2020 season. Beam developed deep relationships with his players while fielding a team that regularly competed for championships.

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Two of Beam's former players — brothers Nahshon and Rejzohn Wright, now in the NFL with the Chicago Bears and New Orleans Saints — posted on social media after the shooting.

"You mean the world to me," Rejzohn Wright said in a post with a photo of Beam.

His brother shared a photo of the coach alongside a broken heart emoji.

Piedmont Police Chief Fred Shavies, who previously served as a deputy chief in the Oakland Police Department said he was a friend, mentee and long time admirer of Beam.

"John was so much more than a coach," he said. "He was a father figure to thousands of not only men but young women in our community."

Shavies said he met Beam when he was in the eighth grade, and he supported him after Shavies lost his father in high school, calling him "an absolutely incredible human being." He asked how did Beam leave his mark on so many people "with just 24 hours in a day, right?"

Beam's family said in a statement that he was a "loving husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, coach, mentor and friend."

"Our hearts are full from the outpouring of love," the family said, requesting privacy.

Beam, who was serving as athletic director, joined Laney College in 2004 as a running backs coach and became head coach in 2012, winning two league titles. He retired from coaching in 2024 but stayed on at the school to shape its athletic programs. According to his biography on the college's website, at least 20 of his players went on to the NFL.

Beam's shooting came a day after a student was shot at Oakland's Skyline High School. The student is in stable condition. Beam had previously worked at Skyline High School, and the suspect had played football there after Beam had already left for another job.

The mayor said the back-to-back shootings on Oakland campuses demonstrate "the gun violence crisis playing out in real time." She gave no indication that they were connected.

Wall Street scrambles back from a big morning loss as Nvidia and bitcoin swing

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — An early swoon shook the U.S. stock market on Friday, as Nvidia, bitcoin, gold and other high flyers swung on an increasingly antsy Wall Street, but it quickly calmed.

After starting the day with a sharp drop of 1.3%, the S&P 500 erased all of it and then meandered up and down before finishing with a slight dip of 0.1%. The Nasdaq composite flipped to a gain of 0.1%, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average trimmed its loss to 309 points, or 0.7%, after earlier being down nearly 600.

AI stocks were again at the center of the action, a day after dragging Wall Street to one of its worst drops since its springtime sell-off. Nvidia, which has become the poster child of the frenzy around artificial-intelligence technology, began the day with a loss of 3.4%. It then stormed back to a rise of 1.8% and yanked the market in its wake.

Critics have been warning that the U.S. stock market could be primed for a drop because of how high prices have shot since April, leaving them looking too expensive. They pointed in particular to stocks swept up in the AI mania. Nvidia's stock has more than doubled in four of the last five years, for example, and the chip company is still up more than 40% for this year so far.

Even with sharp swings for the S&P 500 the last couple of weeks, the index that dictates the movements for many 401(k) accounts remains within 2.3% of its record set late last month.

"Occasional market drops are the price of the ticket for the ride," said Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management.

Outside of tech, Walmart edged down 0.1% after saying CEO Doug McMillon will retire in January in a surprise move. It had been down as much as 3.6% in the morning. McMillon helped the retailer embrace technology more.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 3.38 points to 6,734.11. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 309.74 to

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47,147.48, and the Nasdaq composite rose 30.23 to 22,900.59.

One way companies can tamp down criticism about too-high stock prices is to deliver solid growth in profits. That's raising the stakes for Nvidia's profit report coming Wednesday, when it will say how much it earned during the summer.

If it falls short of analysts' expectations, more drops could be on the way. That would have a big effect on the market because Nvidia has grown to become Wall Street's largest stock by value. That gives Nvidia's stock movements a bigger effect on the S&P 500 than any other's, and it can almost single-handedly steer the index's direction on any given day.

Another way for stock prices broadly to look less expensive is if interest rates fall. That's because bonds paying less in interest can make investors willing to pay higher prices for stocks and other kinds of investments.

Treasury yields had been falling for most of this year on expectations that the Federal Reserve would cut its main interest rate several times. And the Fed has indeed cut twice already in hopes of shoring up the slowing job market.

But questions are rising about whether a third cut will actually come after the Fed's next meeting in December, something that traders had earlier seen as very likely. The downside of lower interest rates is that they can make inflation worse, and inflation has stubbornly remained above the Fed's 2% target.

Fed officials have pointed to the U.S. government's shutdown, which delayed the release of updates on the job market and other signals about the economy. With less information and less certainty about how things are going, some Fed officials have suggested it may be better just to wait in December to get more clarity.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.14% from 4.11% late Thursday.

Bitcoin is one of the investments that can get a boost from lower interest rates. It fell below \$95,000, back to where it was in May. It had been near \$125,000 only in October.

The price of gold, meanwhile, sank 2.4%. It shot to records throughout the year as investors looked for something that could protect from high inflation and big debt loads built by the U.S. and other governments worldwide. But interest rates staying higher can hurt gold, which pays its investors nothing in interest or dividends.

In stock markets abroad, indexes dropped across Europe and Asia. South Korea's Kospi fell 3.8% for one of the world's largest losses.

London's FTSE 100 sank 1.1% amid speculation the U.K. government may ditch plans to raise income taxes, which would have helped chip away at its debt.

US military's 20th strike on alleged drug-running boat kills 4 in the Caribbean

By BEN FINLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military's 20th strike on a boat accused of transporting drugs has killed four people in the Caribbean Sea, the U.S. military said Friday, coming as the Trump administration escalates its campaign in South American waters.

The latest strike happened Monday, according to a social media post on Friday by U.S. Southern Command, which oversees military operations in the Caribbean and Latin America. The latest strike brings the death toll from the attacks that began in September to 80, with the Mexican Navy suspending its search for a survivor of a strike in late October after four days.

Southern Command's post on X shows a boat speeding over water before it's engulfed in flames. The command said intelligence confirmed the vessel "was involved in illicit narcotics smuggling, transiting along a known narco-trafficking route, and carrying narcotics."

Southern Command's post marked a shift away from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's practice of typically announcing the attacks on social media, although he quickly reposted Southern Command's statement.

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Hegseth had announced the previous two strikes on Monday after they had been carried out on Sunday. Meanwhile, the Trump administration is expanding the U.S. military's already large presence in the region by bringing in the USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier. The nation's most advanced warship is expected to arrive in the coming days after traveling from the Mediterranean Sea.

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 as about 12,000 sailors and Marines.

The Trump administration has insisted that the buildup of warships is focused on stopping the flow of drugs into the U.S., but it has released no evidence to support its assertions that those killed in the boats were "narcoterrorists." The strikes have targeted vessels largely in the Caribbean Sea but also have taken place in the eastern Pacific Ocean, where much of the cocaine from the world's largest producers is smuggled.

Some observers say the aircraft carrier is a big new tool of intimidation against Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, who faces charges of narcoterrorism in the U.S. Experts disagree on whether American warplanes may bomb land targets to pressure Maduro to step down.

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

Maduro has said the U.S. government is "fabricating" a war against him. Venezuela's government this week touted a "massive" mobilization of troops and civilians to defend against possible U.S. attacks.

Trump has justified the attacks by saying the United States is in "armed conflict" with drug cartels and claiming the boats are operated by foreign terror organizations that are flooding America's cities with drugs.

Lawmakers, including Republicans, have pressed for more information on who is being targeted and the legal justification for the strikes.

Rubio and Hegseth met with a bipartisan group of lawmakers who oversee national security issues last week, providing one of the first high-level glimpses into the legal rationale and strategy behind the strikes.

Senate Republicans voted a day later to reject legislation that would have put a check on Trump's ability to launch an attack against Venezuela without congressional authorization.

Government will release September jobs report next week, ending data drought from federal shutdown

By PAUL WISEMAN and CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Labor Department will release its numbers on September hiring and unemployment next Thursday, a month and a half late, marking the beginning of the end of a data drought caused by the 43-day federal government shutdown.

The statistical blackout meant that the Federal Reserve, businesses, policymakers and investors have largely been in the dark about inflation, job creation, GDP growth and other measures of the U.S. economic health since late summer.

Thomas Simons and Michael Bacolas at Jefferies, a financial firm, wrote in a commentary Friday that over 30 reports from the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Commerce Department's Bureau of Economic Analysis and Census Bureau were delayed by the political standoff.

The Labor Department did not release its weekly report on the number of Americans signing up for unemployment benefits for seven straight weeks. That jobless claims report is seen as a potential early indicator of where the labor market is headed.

The Labor Department did release its consumer price index for September — the most popular measurement of inflation — nine days late on Oct. 24. The government made an exception for that report because of its urgency: It is used to calculate the annual cost of living adjustment for tens of millions of Americans receiving Social Security and other federal benefits.

The interruption of federal economic statistics came at an awkward time. President Donald Trump's policies — sweeping, ever-changing import taxes and massive deportations of people working in the United

States illegally — are creating uncertainty about the economic outlook.

And the economy has sent conflicting signals: Economic growth looked solid at midyear and unemployment has been low. But job growth has lost momentum, and inflation has remained stubbornly above the Federal Reserve's 2% target, partly because of the impact of Trump's tariffs.

Jefferies' Simons expects the September employment report to show that employers added 65,000 jobs that month — unimpressive, but up from a meager 22,000 in August. He figures that unemployment remained at a low 4.3%.

Investors and policymakers hungry for data

The data cutoff has caused consternation on Wall Street and deepened divisions among Fed officials over whether to cut interest rates for a third straight time at their next meeting in December.

This week, some Fed policymakers have suggested that a lack of data is one reason they may support holding off on another rate cut.

As a result, fresh reports on jobs and inflation in the coming weeks and months will carry huge weight at the Fed because new numbers could help resolve disagreements between those who support another interest rate reduction and those who are opposed.

Even with the government reopened, however, it could take a few more weeks for the data to fully recover. Earlier this week, Kevin Hassett, a top White House economist, said only a part of October's jobs report -- originally scheduled to be released Nov. 7 -- will eventually be released.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics will likely have enough data from businesses to calculate how many jobs were gained or lost last month. Much of that is submitted electronically. But a separate survey of households, which is used to calculate the unemployment rate, didn't take place during the shutdown.

As a result, for the first time in 77 years, the BLS may not calculate an unemployment rate for the month of October.

Other White House officials have previously said there also won't be an October inflation report, because the data couldn't be gathered due to the government shutdown. That will pose a challenge for the Fed, which is seeking to determine whether inflation is headed back to 2%.

The data interruption occurred just a couple of months after Trump fired the director of the BLS, Erika McEntarfer, after it produced employment figures Aug. 1 that he didn't like. They showed only modest job gains in July and sharply smaller increases in May and June than previously estimated.

Still, economists said the upcoming reports should be free from bias. Currently, there are no political appointees at the agency, after Trump withdrew his nominee to head the BLS Sept. 30.

"The data are being produced by roughly the same set of people as in the past," Aaron Sojourner, senior economist at the W.E. Upjohn Institute, said.

Protesters arrested, officers injured in clash outside Chicago-area immigration facility

CHICAGO (AP) — Authorities arrested 21 protesters Friday and said four officers were injured outside a Chicago-area federal immigration facility that activists say functions as a de facto detention center and is plagued by inhumane conditions.

The Cook County Sheriff's Office said most faced charges of obstruction, disorderly conduct, and walking on a highway. One also faced a charge of mob action. Their ages ranged from 23 to 67.

The office said the four officers were injured while trying to redirect protesters off a roadway and back behind a barrier. Two Broadview police officers and one Cook County Sheriff's Police officer were taken to a hospital. The Sheriff's Police officer sustained a lower leg injury and was treated and released. The Broadview Police Department said its officers' injuries were not life threatening. An Illinois state trooper was treated at the scene.

Just moments before the clash, demonstrators were singing and chanting. Around 10 a.m., a large group, knowing they were going to be arrested, allegedly crossed the protest barrier and attempted to walk up toward the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility.

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Some protesters carried signs reading, "God's Love Knows No Borders" and "God Demands Freedom." Some of them prayed. The crowd numbered about 300 before it began to disperse.

The facility in Broadview, Illinois, has been the site of frequent protests, particularly on Fridays, against a federal immigration crackdown dubbed "Operation Midway Blitz." It has led to more than 3,200 arrests in the Chicago metropolitan area since September of people suspecting of violating immigration laws .

The aggressive tactics used by agents from Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement have repeatedly come under fire through legal challenges as well as street protests.

Russian drone and missile attack on Kyiv kills 6 people and injures at least 35

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 six people, leaving gaping holes in apartment buildings and starting fires as the sound of explosions boomed across the city and lit up the night sky. A pregnant woman was among at least 35 people wounded, Ukrainian authorities said.

Russia used at least 430 drones and 18 missiles in the nighttime attack, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said.

Russia has waged a devastating 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 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.

Top European defense officials meeting in Berlin on Friday vowed to keep up their support for Ukraine. Ukrainian Defense Minister Denys Shmyhal joined the meeting remotely.

The Azerbaijan Embassy in Kyiv was damaged by debris from an Iskander missile — a development that Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev said was "unacceptable." Azerbaijan is a key transport corridor for Russia's trade with Iran and other partners in the Middle East.

In the Odesa region, Russian drones struck a busy street on market day in Chornomorsk, killing two people and wounding 11 others, including a 19-month-old girl, 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 he 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," he said. "I was in the kitchen and just fell to the floor."

Iryna Synyavska, 62, said three people were killed in two apartments next to hers.

"My neighbor and his father were killed by the ceiling that collapsed. In the next door (apartment), an elderly woman lived there, she was over 80," Synyavska said. "Her daughter was visiting her. Her body was only just recovered because the walls fell down."

Eight of the capital's 10 districts reported damage. In the wider Kyiv region, Russian strikes damaged critical infrastructure, the head of the regional military administration, Mykola Kalashnyk, said.

Russia accuses Ukraine of hitting civilian sites

Ukraine has responded by launching 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, including the 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.

Attack on Russia's Novorossiysk port

In Novorossiysk, a port city in the Krasnodar region, an attack damaged an oil depot at the Sheskhari transshipment complex, as well as unidentified "coastal structures," local authorities said.

A source in Ukraine's Security Service confirmed the Novorossiysk attack to The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

Novorossiysk is the second biggest port in Russia for oil exports, the source said, adding that the attack damaged oil-loading stands at the piers, pipeline infrastructure and the units, sparking a large fire.

Ukraine also struck the positions of a S-300/S-400 air defense system in Novorossiysk, the source said.

Falling drone debris also damaged a civilian vessel in the port, and three crew members were hospitalized with injuries, Russian officials said. 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 damage unspecified "civilian infrastructure." Unconfirmed media reports said that an oil refinery was hit.

Scrapyard workers recount horrific scene after UPS plane crash destroyed their Kentucky business

By BRUCE SCHREINER and DYLAN LOVAN Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Supervisor Adam Bowman was loading metal onto a truck at a scrapyard just south of the Louisville, Kentucky, airport when he heard what he first thought was a transformer explosion and quickly realized was more horrific.

"I turned around and I see over the fence just a huge cloud of black smoke and just a fireball that was indescribable," Bowman said. "I'm thinking this is a plane coming down."

And it was: A UPS cargo plane had crashed as it tried to take off, sparking a devastating ripple effect that hit Grade A Auto Parts & Recycling and caused blasts at nearby Kentucky Petroleum Recycling.

Bowman said he initially didn't know whether to run or take cover but chose the latter, diving between giant aluminum bales and curling up as tight as he could as explosions and fires erupted without warning.

The horrors were just starting for him, his co-workers and customers who had gone to turn scrap metal into cash at Grade A, a sprawling 30-acre facility.

Back on his feet and scrambling for survival, Bowman heard someone cry for help. Through black smoke

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he spotted a man unable to flee, so badly burned his clothes were scorched off.

"I told him, 'Get on my back. We're going to get up front. We're going to get you help,'" Bowman told The Associated Press.

Chaos at the scrapyard

On the other side of the scrapyard, Joey Garber had been reviewing emails in his office at Grade A when the power flickered off, the building shook and he heard a series of explosions.

The plane had crashed about 5:15 p.m. on Nov. 4, after its left wing caught fire and an engine fell off as it was departing for Honolulu from UPS Worldport, the company's global aviation hub in Louisville. The National Transportation Safety Board is investigating the crash, which was captured in dramatic video.

Garber said he ran out the door and saw the flames and black smoke. After that, it was chaos as people struggled to find a path to safety.

Garber, 30, chief operating officer and a son of the Grade A owner, said he saw two employees holding onto each other, somehow crawling out of a fire. He spotted another coworker and shouted for her to run toward him. Then another explosion rocked the scrapyard.

"The heat that came off that explosion was so hot that we all stopped moving," he told the AP. "I remember looking at my boots thinking to myself: 'You've got to move your feet again. You can't stay here. You've got to go.'"

Burned man rescued

Outside, once he thought the risk of flying debris had diminished, Bowman rose to a hellish scene.

"Everything was on fire," he said.

He said he ran toward a building but reversed course when another explosion erupted nearby. He called his wife and parents to let them know he was OK. When his dad asked what had happened, Bowman recalls replying: "I'm pretty sure a plane went down and I think everybody's gone."

Soon after, he heard the plea for help from the burned man.

"All I can think is this guy's got a strength and will that he's got to have some people he loves he's trying to get to," Bowman said.

Bowman, 44, said he carried the man piggyback, trying to reassure him, and contacted a coworker who steered through the chaos in his pickup truck. They loaded the man into the truck and drove until they found emergency workers for help.

Bowman asked for the man's name and learned he was Matthew Sweets, 37.

Sweets, an electrician and father of two, would die days later, one of the 14 people killed in the crash.

A question of rebuilding

More than a week later, Garber marvels at the miracles for those who were able to make their way to safety.

Bowman becomes choked with emotion while recounting his actions but downplays his act of selflessness. He wonders what will become of the now-charred scrapyard where he spent 15 years building a career.

Sean Garber, owner and CEO of Grade A, said the physical heart of the business was destroyed, and he doesn't know if he will rebuild on the site.

"I'd like to say 'yes,' but I just simply don't know," he said Thursday.

He was on a business trip in Florida when he heard his recycling business — which averaged 200 to 300 customers daily — had been wiped out.

His chief financial officer called in a panic, saying the power was out and that it felt like an earthquake hit. Then she alerted him the scrap metal office had blown up. When she turned the camera to FaceTime, Garber heard explosions and saw a fiery mushroom cloud.

It would leave him mourning the deaths of three employees — John Loucks, 52; Megan Washburn, 35; and Trinadette "Trina" Chavez, 37 — and the customers who died, including a man and his young granddaughter. Three pilots also were killed.

Sean Garber said he has shared a roller coaster of emotions with his employees since the crash — the initial shock that turned to grief over their lost co-workers. Now there is anger that the tragedy happened, he said.

Grade A workers were tightknit, spending as much time among each other as they did their own families, Bowman said. Then in a flash, three of them were gone. The survivors wonder how such a horror ever happened.

"I told the whole team that everyone that walked away, we have an obligation to our friends and our co-workers who didn't to live our lives to the fullest," Joey Garber said.

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 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

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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."

Court blocks new rules limiting which immigrants can get commercial drivers' licenses

By JOSH FUNK AP Transportation Writer

The Transportation Department's new restrictions that would severely limit which immigrants can get commercial driver's licenses to drive a semitrailer truck or bus have been put on hold by a federal appeals court.

The court in the District of Columbia ruled Thursday that the rules Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy announced in September a month after a truck driver not authorized to be in the U.S. made an illegal U-turn and caused a crash in Florida that killed three people can't be enforced right now.

The court said the federal government didn't follow proper procedure in drafting the rule and failed to "articulate a satisfactory explanation for how the rule would promote safety." The court said the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's own data shows that immigrants who hold these licenses account for roughly 5% of all commercial driver's licenses but only about 0.2% of all fatal crashes, the court said.

Duffy has been pressing this issue in California because the driver in the Florida crash received a license in California, and an audit of that state's records showed that many immigrants received licenses in California that were valid long after their work permits expired. Earlier this week, California revoked 17,000 commercial driver's licenses because of that problem. Those licenses were invalidated under the older existing rules — not by the new proposed restrictions affected by this court order.

The court ruling focused on procedural issues such as whether the Transportation Department properly consulted with states before issuing the new rules.

"This is not a ruling on the merits of the case. Secretary Duffy will continue working to keep unqualified, foreign drivers off American roads," a Transportation Department spokesman said.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom's office didn't respond immediately Friday to questions about the ruling. Newsom's office has said the state followed guidance it received from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security when issuing these licenses to noncitizens.

Duffy has said the Florida crash, along with fatal truck crashes in Texas and Alabama earlier this year, highlighted questions about these licenses. A fiery California crash that killed three people last month involved a truck driver in the country illegally, only added to the concerns.

The driver in the Florida crash, Harjinder Singh, appeared before a judge in St. Lucie County, Florida, on Thursday, where his attorneys asked to continue his court proceedings into January as they prepare for trial. Singh has pleaded not guilty to three counts of vehicular homicide and three counts of manslaughter.

The new restrictions on these licenses would only allow immigrants who hold three specific classes of visas to be eligible to get the licenses. States would also have to verify an applicant's immigration status in a federal database. The licenses would be valid for up to one year unless the applicant's visa expires sooner.

Under the new rules, only 10,000 of the 200,000 noncitizens who have commercial licenses would qualify for them, which would only be available to drivers who have an H-2a, H-2b or E-2 visa. H-2a is for temporary agricultural workers while H-2b is for temporary nonagricultural workers, and E-2 is for people who make substantial investments in a U.S. business. But the rules won't be enforced retroactively, so those 190,000 drivers would be allowed to keep their commercial licenses at least until they come up for renewal.

Trucking trade groups like the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association have supported the new rule. There is a bill in Congress that would enshrine the new restrictions on commercial driver's licenses in law.

"For too long, loopholes in this program have allowed unqualified drivers onto our highways, putting professional truckers and the motoring public at risk," said Todd Spencer, the trucking association's president.

Duffy has said that California and five other states had improperly issued commercial driver's licenses to noncitizens, but California is the only state Duffy has taken action against because it was the first one where an audit was completed. The reviews in the other states have been delayed by the government shutdown, but the Transportation Department is urging all of them to tighten their standards.

Duffy has revoked \$40 million in federal funding because he said California isn't enforcing English language requirements for truckers, and he said earlier this week that he may take another \$160 million from the state over these improperly issued licenses if they don't invalidate every illegal license and address all the concerns.

Cases jump to 23 in the botulism outbreak tied to baby formula. Here's what to know

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

Nearly two dozen babies in 13 states have been sickened in a growing outbreak of infantile botulism linked to recalled ByHeart infant formula, federal health officials said Friday.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration reported 23 cases of confirmed or suspected illness in babies who consumed ByHeart formula since August. That's an increase of 10 babies treated for the rare and potentially deadly disease since the outbreak was announced Nov. 8. The most recent case was reported on Nov. 11.

No deaths have been reported.

"Parents and caregivers should stop using any ByHeart infant formula products immediately," the FDA said.

ByHeart, a New York-based manufacturer of organic infant formula, has recalled all its products sold in the U.S. The company, which accounts for about 1% of the U.S. infant formula market, had been selling about 200,000 cans of the product each month.

It can take up to 30 days for symptoms of infantile botulism to develop, medical experts said.

Here's what to know about the outbreak and infant botulism.

The outbreak begins

The outbreak has sickened babies aged about 2 weeks to about 6 months, the FDA said. All the infants were hospitalized after consuming ByHeart powdered formula.

California officials confirmed that a sample from an open can of ByHeart baby formula fed to an infant who fell ill contained the type of bacteria that can lead to illness.

ByHeart officials said they recalled their products "in close collaboration" with the FDA, despite the fact that no previously unopened product tested positive for the illness-causing bacteria. The type of bacteria that produces the toxin is widespread in the environment and could come from sources other than the formula, company officials have said.

FDA inspectors have been to the company's infant formula production plants in Allerton, Iowa; and Portland, Oregon, this week.

Families of at least two babies treated for botulism after drinking ByHeart formula sued the company this week. Lawsuits filed in federal courts allege that the formula they fed their children was defective and ByHeart was negligent in selling it. They seek financial payment for medical bills, emotional distress and other harm.

The FDA is investigating a rise in cases of infantile botulism. Since August, at least 84 babies have been treated for the disease, which represents "an increasing trend line of cases," according to Dr. Jessica Khouri, senior medical officer at California's Infant Botulism Treatment and Prevention Program.

Many of those babies consumed ByHeart formula, which Khouri called "unprecedented" for exposure to

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a common product in a short period of time.

The FDA said that shows that "ByHeart brand formula is disproportionately represented among sick infants in this outbreak."

Illnesses began between Aug. 9 and Nov. 11, federal officials said. Cases were reported in Arizona, California, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas and Washington.

Investigators have not identified any other infant formula brands or other sources of exposure in the outbreak, officials said.

Causes of infant botulism

Infant botulism typically affects fewer than 200 babies in the U.S. each year. As of Sept. 20, 133 cases had been reported in the U.S. according to the most recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention records. There were 145 cases reported all of last year.

The infection is caused by a type of bacteria that produces a toxin in the large intestine. The bacterium is spread through hardy spores present in the environment that can cause serious illness, including paralysis.

Infants are particularly vulnerable to infection because their gut microbiomes are not developed enough to prevent the spores from germinating and producing the toxin. They can be sickened after exposure to the spores in dust, dirt or water or by eating contaminated honey.

Symptoms can take weeks to develop and can include poor feeding, loss of head control, drooping eyelids and a flat facial expression. Babies may feel "floppy" and can have problems swallowing or breathing.

Baby formula has previously been linked to sporadic cases of illness, but no known outbreaks of infant botulism tied to powdered formula have previously been confirmed, according to research studies.

Infant botulism treatment

The only treatment is known as BabyBIG, an IV medication made from the pooled blood plasma of adults immunized against botulism. California's infant botulism program developed the product and is the sole source worldwide.

BabyBIG works to shorten hospital stays and decrease the severity of illness in babies with botulism. Because the infection can affect the ability to breathe, infants often need to be placed on ventilators.

All of the children in the ByHeart outbreak have received the medication, the CDC said. The treatment is delivered in vials that cost \$69,300 apiece, California officials said.

Potential impact on U.S. formula supplies

There is little danger of infant formula shortages because ByHeart represents a small share of the market. That's far different from the crises in late 2021 and 2022, when four infants were sickened by a different germ after consuming formula made by Abbott Nutrition. Two of the babies died. No direct link was found between the Abbott products and the infections caused by a different germ, *cronobacter sakazakii*, but FDA officials closed the company's Michigan plant after contamination and other problems were detected.

Abbott recalled top brands of infant formula, triggering a nationwide shortage that lasted months.

In 2022, ByHeart recalled five batches of infant formula after a sample at the company's packaging plant tested positive for *cronobacter sakazakii*. In 2023, the FDA sent a warning letter to the company detailing "areas that still require corrective actions."

Reviewing infant formula ingredients

Federal health officials have vowed to overhaul the U.S. food supply and are taking a new look at infant formula.

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. has directed the FDA to review the nutrients and other ingredients in infant formula, which fills the bottles of millions of American babies.

The effort, dubbed "Operation Stork Speed," is the first deep look at the ingredients since 1998.

FDA officials are reviewing comments from industry, health experts and public to decide next steps.

Judge says he'll approve opioid settlement with OxyContin maker Purdue and Sackler family

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal bankruptcy court judge on Friday said he will approve OxyContin-maker Purdue Pharma's latest deal to settle thousands of lawsuits over the toll of opioids that includes some money for thousands of victims of the epidemic.

The deal overseen by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Sean Lane would require members of the Sackler family who own the company to contribute up to \$7 billion over 15 years. The new agreement replaces one the U.S. Supreme Court rejected last year, finding it would have improperly protected members of the family against future lawsuits. The judge said he would explain his decision in a hearing on Tuesday.

It's among the largest in a series of opioid settlements brought by state and local governments against drugmakers, wholesalers and pharmacies. It could close a long chapter — and maybe the entire book — on a legal odyssey over efforts to hold the company to account for its role in an opioid crisis connected to 900,000 deaths in the U.S. since 1999, including from heroin and illicit fentanyl.

Lawyers and judges involved have described it as one of the most complicated bankruptcies in U.S. history. Ultimately, attorneys representing Purdue, cities, states, counties, Native American tribes, people with addiction and others were nearly unanimous in urging the judge to approve the bankruptcy plan for Purdue, which filed for protection six years ago as it faced lawsuits with claims that grew to trillions of dollars.

Purdue lawyer Marshall Huebner told the judge that he wishes he could "conjure up \$40 trillion or \$100 trillion to compensate those who have suffered unfathomable loss." But without that possibility, he said: "The plan is entirely lawful, does the greatest good for the greatest number in the shortest available timeframe."

The opposition is much quieter this time around

The saga has been emotional and full of contentious arguments between the many groups that took Purdue to court, often exposing a possible mismatch between the quest for justice and the practical role of bankruptcy court.

The U.S. Supreme Court rejected a previous deal because it said it was improper for Sackler family members to receive immunity from lawsuits over opioids. In the new arrangement, entities who don't opt into the settlement can sue them. Family members are collectively worth billions, but much of their assets are held in trusts in offshore accounts that would be hard to access through lawsuits.

This time, the government groups involved have reached an even fuller consensus and there's been mostly subdued opposition from individuals. Out of more than 54,000 personal injury victims who voted on whether the plan should be accepted, just 218 said no. A larger number of people who are part of that group didn't vote.

Unlike with other proceedings, there were no protests outside the courthouse.

A handful of objectors spoke during the three-day hearing, sometimes interrupting the judge. Some said that only the victims, not the states and other government entities, should receive the funds in the settlement. Others wanted the judge to find the members of the Sackler family criminally liable — something Lane said is beyond the scope of the bankruptcy court, but that the settlement doesn't bar prosecutors from pursuing.

A Florida woman whose husband struggled with addiction after being given OxyContin following an accident told the court that the deal isn't enough.

"The natural laws of karma suggest the Sacklers and Purdue Pharma should pay for what they have done," Pamela Bartz Halaschak said via video.

Deal would be among the biggest opioid settlements

A flood of lawsuits filed by government entities against Purdue and other drugmakers, drug wholesalers and pharmacy chains began about a decade ago.

Most of the major ones have already settled for a total of about \$50 billion, with most of the money going

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to fight the opioid crisis. There's no mechanism for tracking where it all goes or overarching requirement to evaluate whether the spending is effective. Those hit the hardest generally haven't had a say.

Besides contributing cash, members of the Sackler family would formally give up ownership of the company. None have been on its board or received payments since 2018. Unlike a similar hearing four years ago, none were called to testify in this week's hearing.

The company would get a name change — to Knoa Pharma — and new overseers who would dedicate future profits to battling the opioid crisis. That could happen in the spring of 2026.

Family members would be barred from involvement in companies that sell opioids anywhere in the world. And they would not have their names added to institutions in exchange for charitable contributions. The name has already been removed from museums and universities.

Company documents, including many that would normally be subject to lawyer-client privilege, are to be made public.

Some people hurt by Purdue's opioids would receive some money

Unlike the other major opioid settlements, individuals harmed by Purdue's products would be in line for some money as part of the settlement. About \$850 million would be set aside for them, with more than \$100 million of that amount carved out to help children born dealing with opioid withdrawal.

All of money for the individual victims would be delivered next year.

About 139,000 people have active claims for the money. Many of them, however, have not shown proof that they were prescribed Purdue's opioids and will receive nothing. Assuming about half of the individual claimants would qualify, lawyers expect that those who had prescriptions for at least six months would receive about \$16,000 each and those who had them more briefly would get around \$8,000, before legal fees that would reduce what people actually receive.

One woman who had a family member suffer from opioid addiction told the court by video Thursday that the settlement doesn't help people with substance use disorder.

"Tell me how you guys can sleep at night knowing people are going to get so little money they can't do anything with it," asked Lauren Ferrante of Staten Island, New York.

Christopher Shore, a lawyer representing a group of individual victims, said in court Friday that the settlement is a better deal than taking on Sackler family members in court. "Some Sacklers are bad people," he said, "but the reality is that sometimes bad people win in litigation."

Most of the money is to go to state and local governments to be used in their efforts to mitigate damage of the opioid epidemic. Overdose death numbers have been dropping in the past few years, a decline experts believe is partly due to the impact of settlement dollars.

Emails reveal Epstein's network of the rich and powerful despite sex offender status

By JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

By the time Jeffrey Epstein pleaded guilty in 2008 to soliciting prostitution from an underage girl, he had established an enormous network of wealthy and influential friends. Emails made public this week show the crime did little to diminish the desire of that network to stay connected to the financier.

Thousands of documents released by the House Oversight Committee on Wednesday offer a new glimpse into what Epstein's relationships with business executives, reporters, academics and political players looked like over a decade.

They start with messages he sent and received around the time he finished serving his Florida sentence in 2009 and continue until the months before his arrest on federal sex trafficking charges in 2019.

During that time, Epstein's network was eclectic, spanning the globe and political affiliations: from the liberal academic Noam Chomsky to Steve Bannon, the longtime ally of President Donald Trump.

Some reached out to support Epstein amid lawsuits and prosecutions, others sought introductions or advice on everything from dating to oil prices. One consulted him on how to respond to accusations of sexual harassment.

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Epstein was charged with sex trafficking in 2019, and killed himself in jail a month later. Epstein's crimes, high-profile connections and jailhouse suicide have made the case a magnet for conspiracy theorists and online sleuths seeking proof of a cover-up.

The emails do not implicate his contacts in those alleged crimes. They instead paint a picture of Epstein's influence and connections over the years he was a registered sex offender.

Epstein kept a diverse political network

Epstein emailed current and former political figures on all sides, sending news clips and discussing strategy or gossip often in short, choppy emails laden with spelling and grammatical errors.

In several emails in 2018, Epstein advised Bannon on his political tour of Europe that year. Bannon first forwarded Epstein a news clip that described the German media as "underestimating" Bannon and that he was "As Dangerous as Ever."

"I love it," Epstein responded.

Epstein wrote that he'd just spoken to "one of the country leaders that we discussed" and that "we should lay out a strategy plan. . . how much fun."

Several months later, Epstein sent some advice: "If you are going to play here, you'll have to spend time, Europe by remote doesn't work."

"It's doable but time consuming," Epstein continued in a follow-up email, "there are many leaders of countries we can organize for you to have one on ones."

Just a few months earlier, Epstein was insulting Trump — whose movement Bannon was a representative of — in emails to Kathryn Ruemmler, the former White House counsel under President Barack Obama.

Ruemmler sent a message to Epstein calling Trump "so gross." A portion of that message was redacted, but Epstein replied, "worse in real life and up close."

In other emails with Ruemmler, Epstein detailed a whirlwind of well-known people he appears to have been meeting, hosting or speaking with that week, including an ambassador, a tech giant, foreign business people, academics and a film director.

"You are a welcome guest at any," he wrote.

Jennifer Zuccarelli, a spokesperson for Goldman Sachs, where Ruemmler now works, declined to comment. Epstein's wealthy social circles

The financier emailed often with people in the upper echelons of wealth around the world, brokering introductions and chatting about politics and foreign affairs.

That included Silicon Valley investor Peter Thiel, who Epstein sent an email to in 2014 saying "that was fun, see you in 3 weeks."

Four years later, Epstein asked if Thiel was enjoying Los Angeles, and, after Thiel said he couldn't complain, replied "Dec visit me Caribbean." It's unclear if Thiel ever responded.

In emails with Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, an Emirati businessman, Epstein complimented Bannon, saying in 2018 that "We have become friends you will like him."

"Trump doesn't like him," responded Sulayem.

A year earlier, Sulayem asked Epstein about an event where it appeared Trump would be in attendance, asking, "Do you think it will be possible to shake hand with Trump?"

"Call to discuss," Epstein wrote back.

In January 2010, biotech venture capitalist Boris Nikolic was attending the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and Epstein emailed to ask, "any fun?"

Nikolic replied that he had met "your friend" Bill Clinton, as well as then-French President Nicolas Sarkozy and "your other friend," Prince Andrew, "as he has some questions re Microsoft."

But then Nikolic said he was getting sick of meetings. Later, he wrote Epstein that "it would be blast that you are here." He mentioned flirting with a 22-year-old woman.

"It turns out she is with her husband. Did not have chance to check him out. But as we concluded, anything good is rented ;)" Nikolic wrote.

Epstein kept in touch with academics

The theoretical physicist and cosmologist Laurence Krauss was among them. In 2017, Krauss reached out to Epstein via email for advice on responding to a reporter writing a story about allegations of sexual harassment against him.

"Is this a reasonable response? Should I even respond? Could use advice," Krauss asked Epstein.

In an explicit exchange, Epstein asked Krauss if he'd had sex with the person in question and then suggested he should not reply to the journalist.

"No. We didn't have sex. Decided it wasn't a good idea," replied Krauss.

Krauss said in an email to The Associated Press that he never hid the fact that he knew Epstein, and interacted with him several times.

"I sought out advice from essentially everyone I knew when false allegations about me were circulated in the press in 2018," said Krauss. "I was as shocked as the rest of the world when he was arrested" in 2019.

In an August 2015 email exchange, Epstein told Chomsky, the famed linguist and social scientist, to only fly to Greece if he feels well, joking he previously had to send a plane for another "lefty friend" to see a doctor in New York.

In the same exchange, which dipped into academic arguments about warning signs on currency collapses, behavioral science models, and Big Data, Epstein offered his residences for Chomsky's use.

"you are of course welcome to use apt in new york with your new leisure time, or visit new Mexico again," Epstein wrote.

The emails also show that Epstein kept up a friendly relationship with Larry Summers, who was the treasury secretary under President Bill Clinton and former Harvard University president, and bantered about the 2016 presidential race and Trump.

Other emails showed a closer relationship. In 2019, Summers was discussing interactions he had with a woman, writing to Epstein that "I said what are you up to. She said 'I'm busy'. I said awfully coy u are."

Epstein replied, "you reacted well.. annoyed shows caring. , no whining showed strenght."

Summers issued a statement saying he has "great regrets in my life."

"As I have said before, my association with Jeffrey Epstein was a major error of judgement," the statement said.

Chomsky, Thiel, Bannon, and Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem did not immediately respond to requests for comment, which were sent through email addresses available on their own or their organizations' websites.

New prosecutor takes on the Georgia election case against Trump and others

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A longtime prosecutor announced he will take over the Georgia election interference case against President Donald Trump and others, after Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis was removed from the case and no one else wanted the job.

The nonpartisan Prosecuting Attorneys' Council of Georgia was tasked with replacing Willis after she was disqualified over an "appearance of impropriety" created by a romantic relationship with the special prosecutor she'd chosen to lead the case. The organization's executive director, Pete Skandalakis, said Friday that he would take the case on himself.

"Several prosecutors were contacted and, while all were respectful and professional, each declined the appointment," Skandalakis said in an emailed statement.

Legal action against Trump is unlikely to proceed while he is president. However, 14 other defendants still face charges, among them former New York mayor and Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani as well as former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows.

Trump earlier this week announced pardons for people accused of backing his efforts to overturn the 2020 presidential election — including those charged in Georgia — but Skandalakis has said that has no bearing on these state charges.

How Skandalakis ended up with the case

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After the Georgia Supreme Court in September declined to hear Willis' appeal of her disqualification, it fell to the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council to find a new prosecutor. Skandalakis can continue to follow Willis' vision for the prosecution, decide to pursue only some charges or dismiss the case altogether.

He said he could have let the deadline pass or told the court no prosecutor was available, which would have led to the case's dismissal, but he decided that wasn't "the right course of action."

"The public has a legitimate interest in the outcome of this case," he wrote. "Accordingly, it is important that someone make an informed and transparent determination about how best to proceed."

Skandalakis said Willis' office delivered 101 boxes of documents on Oct. 29 and an eight-terabyte hard drive with the full investigative file on Nov. 6. Although he hasn't completed his review, he took on the case so he can finish assessing it and decide what to do next.

Steve Sadow, Trump's lead attorney in Georgia, said he is confident that "fair and impartial review" will lead to a dismissal of the case against his client.

"This politically charged prosecution has to come to an end," he said in an email.

Allyn Stockton, an attorney for Giuliani, called Skandalakis' decision an "interesting twist," but added, "everything I know about Mr. Skandalakis is that he is a fair minded and honorable man who is void of any political agenda."

A spokesperson for Willis declined to comment, deferring to the Prosecuting Attorneys' Council.

Skandalakis, who has led the small, nonpartisan council since 2018, said in his filing that he will get no extra pay for the case, with Fulton County reimbursing expenses. He previously spent about 25 years as the elected Republican district attorney for the Coweta Judicial Circuit, southwest of Atlanta.

"I doubt anything will ever move forward with the president," Georgia State University law professor Anthony Michael Kreis said, noting that Skandalakis' appointment is temporary and charges can't proceed against Trump while he's in office.

As for the president's co-defendants, Kreis said the council's resources are scarce, which "may lead to a simplification of the case or plea deals."

How the case unraveled for Willis

Willis announced the sprawling indictment against Trump and 18 others in August 2023, using the state's anti-racketeering law to allege a wide-ranging conspiracy to illegally overturn Trump's narrow loss to Democrat Joe Biden in Georgia.

Defense attorneys sought Willis' removal after one revealed in January 2024 that Willis had a romantic relationship with Nathan Wade, the special prosecutor she had hired to lead the case. The defense attorneys alleged a conflict of interest and said Willis profited from the case when Wade used his earnings to pay for vacations the pair took.

During an extraordinary hearing the next month, Willis and Wade testified about their relationship's intimate details, saying the romance didn't begin until after Wade was hired and that they split the costs for vacations and other outings.

Judge Scott McAfee rebuked Willis for a "tremendous lapse in judgment" but found no disqualifying conflict of interest, ruling she could stay on the case if Wade resigned, which he did hours later.

Defense attorneys appealed, and the Georgia Court of Appeals removed Willis from the case in December 2024, citing an "appearance of impropriety." The state Supreme Court declined to hear Willis' appeal.

Skandalakis' earlier role in the case against Trump

This is not the first time Skandalakis has been involved in this case. Even before Willis obtained an indictment, a judge barred her from seeking criminal charges against Georgia Lt. Gov. Burt Jones, one of 16 state Republicans who signed a certificate that Trump had won Georgia and declaring themselves the state's "duly elected and qualified" electors.

A state senator in the wake of the election, Jones also sought a special legislative session to overturn Biden's win.

As Willis investigated, Jones argued she had a conflict of interest because she hosted a fundraiser for his Democratic opponent in the lieutenant governor's race. Judge Robert McBurney ruled in July 2022 that

Willis' actions created an "actual and untenable" conflict of interest.

Skandalakis appointed himself to handle that issue as well and ultimately chose not to pursue charges against Jones.

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.

Israel returns 15 Palestinian bodies to Gaza, where displaced families endure winter rains

By WAFSA SHURFAFA 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 bodies of 27 unidentified Palestinians were interred in Gaza on Friday.

Displaced families endure wet, wintry conditions

As winter settles over Gaza and the first rains begin, displaced families are struggling to keep their makeshift shelters from collapsing under the weather.

As cloudy skies Friday threatened another downpour in Gaza City, Abdel Rahim Halawa, a father of seven children, worked to fasten a tarp over his tent made of wood, blankets and sheets of plastic.

"All of the mattresses and blankets got drenched this evening. If more rain comes on us, we don't know how we can live anymore," he said.

Some families have taken shelter in what remains of destroyed buildings. One family lives inside a section of concrete held up by a single crooked column, its open side covered with a piece of tarp.

"Yes, it might collapse. Some committees came and told us it's forbidden to live inside of it, but we have no alternative, especially in the winter with the severe cold," said Saed Salhi, who is living in the structure with four members of his family, all displaced from their home in Jabaliya in northern Gaza.

UN human rights chief says settler violence must end

The U.N.'s human rights chief, Volker Türk, on Friday joined a chorus of condemnation over a recent string of attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank, urging an end to the violence and for Israel to hold the perpetrators accountable.

U.N. Human Rights Commissioner spokesperson Thameen Al-Kheetan said more than 260 attacks by Israeli settlers against Palestinians and their property in the West Bank were recorded in October, more than in any month since 2006.

"We reiterate that the Israeli government's assertion of sovereignty over the occupied West Bank and

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its annexation of parts of it are in breach of international law, as the International Court of Justice has confirmed," said Al-Kheetan.

Israeli settlers on Thursday torched and defaced a mosque in a Palestinian village in the central West Bank. That followed violence two days earlier during which dozens of masked Israeli settlers set fire to vehicles and other property in the Palestinian villages of Beit Lid and Deir Sharaf.

The attacks on the two Palestinian villages prompted Israeli President Isaac Herzog to denounce them as "shocking and serious." The Israeli army's chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, said the military "will not tolerate the phenomena of a minority of criminals who tarnish a law-abiding public."

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Wednesday that there's concern that the events in the West Bank "could undermine what we're doing in Gaza."

Israeli officials have sought to cast settler violence as the work of a few extremists. But Palestinians and rights groups say that the violence is widespread and carried out by settlers across the territory, with impunity from Israel's far-right government. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hasn't commented on the surge in violence.

The Palestinian Health Ministry in the West Bank said six teenagers — aged 15 to 17 — were shot and killed by Israeli fire in four separate incidents over the last two weeks. In the most recent incident Thursday, two 15-year-old boys were killed near the village of Beit Ummar.

The Israeli military said that in three of the incidents its soldiers were responding to "terrorists" hurling either Molotov cocktails or explosives or carrying out a "terror attack." In the other, the military said troops acted according to "standard operating procedures" and opened fire against Palestinians throwing rocks to "remove the threat."

What's next for Gaza

The next parts of the 20-point ceasefire 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.

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 2025 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.

"I want to dedicate this award to all the children and young people of Latin America, especially those of Puerto Rico. Never stop dreaming, never stop being yourselves, no matter where you come from. Never forget where you come from, but never forget where you are going," he said. "There are many ways to show patriotism and defend our land: we choose music."

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 Edgar Barrera for "Si Antes Te Hubiera Conocido." And Alejandro Sanz took home record of the

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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 día 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.

A closer look at the unapproved peptide injections promoted by influencers and celebrities

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Unapproved peptide drugs have become a trendy new hack among wellness influencers, fitness coaches and celebrities, pitched as a way to build muscle, shed pounds and look younger.

Online stores will offer injectable vials for \$300 to \$600 each. Longevity and wellness clinics offer in-office evaluations and injections, sometimes with membership fees of thousands of dollars per month.

But many of the products have never been extensively studied in humans, raising concerns that they could cause allergic reactions, metabolic problems and other dangerous side effects.

Here’s a closer look at the science, the hype and the potential risks surrounding the trend.

What are peptides?

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Within the human body, peptides are short chains of amino acids that perform essential functions. Insulin, for example, controls blood sugar levels and helps break down foods into energy. Likewise the popular weight loss drugs, GLP-1s — short for glucagon-like peptides — are based on a hormone found in the intestines that helps regulate blood sugar.

The Food and Drug Administration has approved both substances as drugs. But there are many more peptides that have never been approved by regulators as safe and effective, though some have shown interesting study results in rodents and other animals.

Why are peptides so popular right now?

Synthesized peptides are not new. Some doctors have prescribed them for decades off-label, or for unapproved uses, in patients with gastric ulcers, nervous system disorders and other conditions.

In recent years, peptides have become a focus for wellness gurus and other public figures with large online followings. That's driven interest in using obscure peptides for unsubstantiated uses like healing injuries, improving complexion and even extending life. Peptides in this group include an alphabet soup of injectable compounds, including BPC-157, thymosin alpha, GHK-Copper and many more. Some are banned by sports regulators as doping substances.

Experts who have studied the field are particularly concerned that some people are combining multiple peptides.

"These influencers are often advocating taking a stack of peptides each month, so it could be two, three, four different peptides," said Dr. Eric Topol of Scripps Research Translational Institute. "This is really what I consider dangerous."

Interest in the trend is being amplified by celebrities.

Joe Rogan has repeatedly talked about using BPC-157 to recover from injuries. Jennifer Aniston has talked about using weekly peptide injections to improve her skin and currently serves as a paid spokesperson for a company selling peptide-enriched supplements.

"If any celebrity is using a peptide, and they're saying this is what worked for me, then of course it's going to be more mainstream and people are going to be looking into it," said Kay Robins, a clinical nurse and operator of Pure Alchemy Wellness, a clinic outside of San Diego that sells peptide infusions and injections.

Robins says she no longer offers BPC-157 and other peptides that have been targeted by the FDA.

How are peptides regulated by the FDA?

Most of the unproven peptides promoted online are technically being sold illegally.

Any substance that is injected to produce a health benefit or prevent a medical condition is classified as a drug, which cannot be sold without FDA approval.

The agency considers many peptides to be biologics, the most complicated and potentially high-risk type of drugs, requiring extra precautions in their manufacture and storage. In recent years, the agency has added more than two dozen peptides to a list of substances that should not be produced by pharmacies due to safety risks.

Some companies market their peptides as dietary supplements, particularly those sold as pills, gummies or powders.

While dietary supplements are less tightly regulated than drugs, the FDA still requires them to only contain ingredients found on a list of approved substances. Most peptides are not on that list and therefore are ineligible to be sold as supplements.

Experts generally agree that consuming peptides by mouth likely has little or no effect, since they will dissolve in the gut.

Who is making these peptides?

Most of the injectable peptides sold in the U.S. are produced by compounding pharmacies, which custom-mix medications that aren't available from drug manufacturers. Pharmacies are regulated at the state level and are generally not subject to the same scrutiny as companies overseen by FDA.

In recent years, compounding pharmacies have jumped into the market for blockbuster GLP-1 drugs. Under FDA regulations, compounding pharmacies can produce their own versions of a prescription drug when there's a shortage.

Earlier this year the FDA determined that the shortage of GLP-1s had ended, meaning compounders were expected to halt production. But many have continued making custom versions of the drugs — adding extra ingredients like vitamin B, which they say benefits patients.

“There had never been the monetary incentive to push the envelope of what is legally permissible with compounding before,” said Nathaniel Lacktman, a lawyer specializing in FDA-related issues. “The dollars weren’t there.”

Some of the industry’s new production capacity has gone into producing unapproved peptides, such as BPC-157.

The trend recently caught the attention of the FDA, which has added more than two dozen peptides to an interim list of substances that should not be compounded due to safety concerns.

What’s the connection between peptides and the MAHA movement?

Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is among those who have touted the potential benefits of peptides. He has repeatedly vowed to end “FDA’s war” on peptides, which have become popular among many followers of his Make America Healthy Again movement.

Some of Kennedy’s friends and associates are also prominent marketers of peptides, including self-described “biohacker” Gary Brecka and functional medicine physician and author Dr. Mark Hyman.

Some in the peptide field expect Kennedy to roll back FDA’s restrictions on the industry, which could include releasing a list of peptides that the agency will no longer try to keep off the market.

The trend of unproven peptides is spreading through influencers and RFK Jr. allies

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — More Americans are injecting themselves with unapproved chemicals that are pitched as ways to build muscle, rejuvenate skin and extend life, the latest example of the nation’s fascination with alternative therapies and wellness hacks.

Behind the trend is the surging popularity of GLP-1 weight loss medications, a class of so-called peptides approved to help users quickly shed pounds.

But the peptides being promoted by influencers, celebrities and wellness gurus are different: Many have never been approved for human use and much of their purported evidence comes from studies in rats and other animals. Several peptides, such as BPC-157 and TB-500, are banned by international sports authorities as doping substances.

“None of them are proven,” said Dr. Eric Topol, a research methods expert and director of Scripps Research Translational Institute. “None of them have gone through what would be considered adequate clinical trials, but nonetheless many people are taking these. It’s actually quite extraordinary.”

Those who’ve highlighted peptides’ benefits include Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has built a national following among Americans who are deeply skeptical of health experts, pharmaceutical companies and traditional medicine.

For years, the Food and Drug Administration has been trying to crack down on the space, sending warning letters to clinics that promote the products and adding more than two dozen peptides to a list of ingredients that should not be made by specialty pharmacies that often custom mix the formulations.

That approach may be coming to an end.

Kennedy has vowed to end “FDA’s war” on peptides and other alternative treatments that are embraced by many in his Make America Healthy Again movement.

Some of Kennedy’s friends and associates are among the biggest proponents, including self-described “biohacker” and “longevity expert” Gary Brecka, who sells peptide injectables, patches and nasal sprays through his website for \$350 to \$600 each.

In a May appearance on Brecka’s podcast, Kennedy again promised to “end the war at FDA” on peptides, stem cells, psychedelics and other fringe therapies.

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"Music to my ears," Brecka replied.

Brecka declined to be interviewed for this story.

Peptides are now part of the 'circus' of unproven wellness products

Peptides are essentially the building blocks of more complex proteins. Inside the human body, peptides trigger hormones needed for growth, metabolism and healing.

The FDA has approved a number of peptides as medications, including insulin for diabetics who don't naturally produce it and human growth hormone for children with developmental disorders caused by low levels of the hormone.

But many other peptides promoted online have never been approved, making them technically illegal to market as drugs. Under current FDA guidance these peptides also are ineligible for compounding — the process in which pharmacies mix made-to-order medications for patients.

That hasn't stopped celebrities and influencers from touting them.

Joe Rogan, for example, has repeatedly praised BPC-157, a peptide derived from acids found in the gut.

"I had tendonitis in my elbow, I started using BPC-157 and it was gone in two weeks," Rogan told his podcast audience last year.

He is among the celebrity clients listed on the website of Ways 2 Well, a Texas-based company that offers peptides, stem cells, vitamin infusions and other alternative treatments.

It's all part of "the circus of unproven, expensive and possibly dangerous" offerings promoted by wellness and longevity clinics, said Topol, who has written about the industry.

For \$99, Ways 2 Well offers a "peptide consult" with a physician, after which the company ships the peptide vials along with a "full kit with dosing, instructions and syringes," according to its website.

Company founder Brigham Buhler is a former pharmaceutical sales rep. He did not respond to requests for comment.

Peptides are often pitched as a 'natural' alternative to modern medicine

Andrea Steinbrenner, a consulting executive, said she became intrigued by peptides after hearing about their benefits for "longevity, repair, anti-aging and energy," from an acquaintance who runs a clinic outside of San Diego.

Steinbrenner and her husband now receive monthly infusions at the clinic, in addition to daily supplements.

"I think peptides are popular right now because we are the aging generation and we are looking for alternatives to modern day medicine," she said. "I absolutely believe in modern day, western medicine—it's necessary. But there's a lot of other things in the universe that the earth supplies."

Peptide proponents often suggest their products are safe because they are based on substances found in the body.

"Unlike synthetic pharmaceuticals, peptides are naturally recognized by your body," Brecka told his more than 2 million Instagram followers in February.

Critics point out that the peptides for sale are often imperfect synthetics and are taken at doses much higher than any peptides in the body, raising the risk of allergic reactions and other harms.

Brecka sells more than a half-dozen peptides, including ipamorelin and CJC-1295 — both of which the FDA has flagged for serious safety risks.

Like other peptides sold on Brecka's website, the ipamorelin vials carry the labeling: "research use only."

Research claims are often a ploy to dodge regulators

The "research use" language is pervasive across the peptide space, even in forums where users trade tips for buying, dosing and "stacking" different drug combinations.

One Facebook group instructs members what words to avoid: "instead of 'taking' you are 'researching' peptides."

Lawyers who work in the field say the language is an attempt to skirt FDA regulations. The agency does not oversee chemicals that aren't intended for human use.

It's often unclear whether such peptides are being produced in the U.S. by pharmacies and mislabeled for research, or whether they are being purchased from chemical manufacturers, many located in China and not subject to FDA drug quality standards.

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"Research-grade peptides are going to have junk in them," said Paul Knoepfler, a cellular biologist at the University of California Davis. "They're going to have chemicals used in the purification process and fragments of peptides that you don't want."

On platforms like TikTok, companies in China and other countries offer to ship dozens of peptide varieties to the U.S. for as little as \$5 a vial.

"What's actually in there?" Knoepfler said. "If someone injects it under their skin, what are they getting?"

FDA has worked to restrict peptides for years

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the FDA issued over a half-dozen warning letters to businesses promoting peptides with "immune-boosting powers."

Then in 2023, the agency added nearly 20 peptides to a list of substances that should not be compounded due to safety risks. Pharmacies violating the measure risk fines, legal action or potential loss of their state licenses.

That triggered pushback from wellness entrepreneurs and compounding pharmacies, including lawsuits.

One coalition, Save Peptides, warned its followers: "Our basic human rights to access alternative medical care using regenerative peptides is being stripped away by the FDA."

A lawsuit brought by a large compounding pharmacy alleged that regulators had skipped legally required steps when adding peptides to FDA's list of high-risk substances. The litigation forced the agency to backtrack, and the FDA late last year agreed to convene two public meetings of outside advisers to review several peptides flagged for safety risks.

In each case, the experts agreed with the FDA, voting that the substances were too risky to be compounded.

Some in the industry disagree.

"Physicians should have every available arrow in the quiver to treat illness and, because of the FDA's inaction, they don't," said Lee Rosebush, who helped bring the lawsuit against FDA and represents a group of large compounding pharmacies.

Changes may be coming

The FDA, under Kennedy's authority, recently removed a number of experts from the compounding advisory panel.

That could pave the way for appointing more peptide-friendly experts who might vote to allow some of the drugs that the FDA previously barred. Alternately, the FDA could simply release a list of peptides and tell pharmacies and clinics that the agency won't enforce bans against them.

For now, doctors say they are fielding more questions from patients excited about peptides and seeking prescriptions.

"Patients should be really asking their health care professionals: Are these medications safe long term?" says Dr. Anita Gupta of the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, who served on FDA's compounding committee until earlier this year. "That's the question I would ask if I was a patient."

Today in History: November 15 Union troops begin 'Sherman's March'

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Nov. 15, the 319th day of 2025. There are 46 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Nov. 15, 1864, late in the U.S. Civil War, Union forces led by Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh (teh-KUM'-seh) Sherman began their "March to the Sea" from Atlanta; the campaign ended with the capture of Savannah, Georgia, on Dec. 21.

Also on this date:

In 1777, the Second Continental Congress approved the Articles of Confederation.

In 1806, explorer Zebulon Pike sighted the mountain now known as Pikes Peak in present-day Colorado.

In 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt laid the cornerstone of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C.

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In 1959, four members of the Clutter family of Holcomb, Kansas, were found murdered in their home. (Two men were later convicted of the killings and hanged in a case made famous by the Truman Capote book "In Cold Blood.")

In 1966, the spaceflight of Gemini 12, the final mission of NASA's Gemini program, ended successfully as astronauts James A. Lovell and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin Jr. splashed down safely in the Atlantic after spending four days in orbit.

In 1969, a quarter of a million protesters staged a peaceful demonstration in Washington against the Vietnam War.

In 2012, the Justice Department announced that BP had agreed to plead guilty to a raft of charges in the 2010 Deepwater Horizon oil spill and pay a record \$4.5 billion, including nearly \$1.3 billion in criminal fines.

In 2019, Roger Stone, a longtime friend and ally of President Donald Trump, was convicted of all seven counts in a federal indictment accusing him of lying to Congress, tampering with a witness and obstructing the House investigation into whether Trump coordinated with Russia during the 2016 campaign. The president commuted Stone's 40-month sentence days before Stone to report to prison and fully pardoned him in December 2020.

In 2022, the world population reached 8 billion, based on United Nations projections.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Petula Clark is 93. Actor Sam Waterston is 85. Classical conductor Daniel Barenboim is 83. Pop singer Anni-Frid "Frida" Lyngstad (ABBA) is 80. Fashion designer Jimmy Choo is 77. Actor Beverly D'Angelo is 74. Former "Tonight Show" bandleader Kevin Eubanks is 68. Actor Jonny Lee Miller is 53. Actor Sean Murray is 48. Golf Hall of Famer Lorena Ochoa is 44. Actor Shailene Woodley is 34. NBA All-Star Karl-Anthony Towns is 30.