

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, Nov. 19

Senior Menu: Oven fried chicken, sweet potatoes, green beans, pears, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Omelets.
School Lunch: Soup and sandwich.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Confirmation, 5:30 p.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.
Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.
6th grade GBB practice, 6 p.m.



Thursday, Nov. 20

Senior Menu: Baked fish, au gratin potato, 3-bean salad, peach cobbler, whole wheat bread.
School Breakfast: Biscuits.
School Lunch: Turkey gravy and mashed potatoes, dressing.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Praise and Thanksgiving, 1:30 p.m. (Program: Sarah, Hostess: Nigeria)
4th grade GBB practice, 4 p.m.
3rd grade GBB practice, 5 p.m.
State Volleyball at Rapid City

Friday, Nov. 21

Senior Menu: Creamed chicken over biscuits, peas and carrots, pineapple.
School Breakfast: Doughnuts.
School Lunch: Garlic cheese bread, green beans.
State Volleyball at Rapid City
MS GBB at Milbank (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)

Saturday, Nov. 22

State Volleyball at Rapid City

Groton Daily Independent
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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.

Congress Votes on Epstein

Congress approved a bill yesterday directing the Justice Department to release unclassified files related to the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein. The House passed the bill 427-1, while the Senate agreed to deem the legislation passed as soon as it arrived in the chamber. President Donald Trump, who initially opposed the measure, is expected to sign it into law.

The Epstein Files Transparency Act directs the attorney general to release records concerning Epstein, his former associate and convicted sex trafficker Ghislaine Maxwell, and others referenced in Epstein's criminal activities. Information tied to ongoing investigations or containing sensitive victim data can be withheld. Trump has urged the Justice Department to investigate prominent Democrats and financial institutions for potential ties to Epstein.

The push for transparency follows the release of more than 20,000 pages of Epstein-related documents last week, some of which mention Trump. The president maintains his friendship with Epstein ended in the early 2000s, before Epstein's 2008 conviction.

MBS Goes to Washington

President Donald Trump welcomed Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to the White House yesterday. The meeting is the first US visit by Saudi Arabia's de facto leader since the 2018 killing of Jamal Khashoggi.

In October of that year, a team of Saudi agents assassinated Khashoggi—a Saudi dissident, Virginia resident, and Washington Post journalist. The incident sparked a diplomatic crisis, taking place in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. US intelligence agencies concluded the crown prince likely ordered the murder. Several European countries, including Germany, Denmark, and Finland, suspended arms sales to Saudi Arabia. Trump vetoed three congressional resolutions that would have taken similar action.

Yesterday's meeting saw Prince Mohammed pledge to invest up to \$1T in the US—roughly the size of Saudi Arabia's entire economic output—and came after Trump announced plans to sell F-35 fighter jets to the country.

Robotaxi Rivalry Revs Up

Amazon's Zoox began offering robotaxi rides to the public in San Francisco yesterday, challenging Alphabet-owned Waymo's Bay Area dominance and marking the first time two rivals are operating in the same city.

Founded in 2014 by an Australian designer and the son of Apple's chairman, Zoox was acquired by Amazon for roughly \$1.3B in 2020. Zoox builds its boxy, all-electric, steering-wheel-free vehicles, while Waymo installs its technology into cars from manufacturers such as Jaguar and Chrysler. This summer, Amazon announced the conversion of a former California bus factory into a Zoox plant projected to make 10,000 robotaxis annually. Roughly 50 Zoox vehicles now operate between San Francisco and Las Vegas, where the company first began offering public rides in September. Rides in both cities are currently limited to select areas and are free, pending regulatory approvals.

Waymo, which has charged for rides in San Francisco since 2023, expanded its routes last week to highways around San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Phoenix.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

"The Joe Rogan Experience" tops Apple's year-end podcast charts by listenership; "The Telepathy Tapes" ranks No. 1 in top series and most shared categories.

Alice and Ellen Kessler, German twins and entertainment duo who rose to international stardom in the 1950s and 1960s, die at 89 by assisted suicide.

Sean "Diddy" Combs faces new sexual assault claims from music producer over alleged 2020 and 2021 incidents; LA County Sheriff's Department is investigating.

Science & Technology

Google rolls out Gemini 3 AI model, built to better grasp nuance and user intent; release comes nearly eight months after Gemini 2.5 and almost two years after 1.0.

Engineers use ultrasonic waves to shake water molecules out of air; method is 45 times more efficient than heat-based systems and could improve access to clean drinking water in desert regions.

First-ever 3D analysis of preserved Neanderthal nasal cavity challenges long-standing theory that Neanderthals developed large noses to adapt to cold climate.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.8%, Dow -1.1%, Nasdaq -1.2%); S&P 500 logs longest slide since August.

Meta wins FTC antitrust case after federal judge rules the tech giant did not monopolize personal social networking services when it acquired Instagram in 2012 and WhatsApp in 2014.

AI company Anthropic valued at around \$350B after up to \$5B investment from Microsoft and up to \$10B investment from Nvidia; Anthropic to commit up to \$30B to Microsoft's Azure cloud computing platform.

Politics & World Affairs

Trump administration takes steps to dismantle the Education Department by transferring key programs to four other agencies, which include the departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, State, and Interior.

Misplaced wire label caused cargo ship to lose power and crash into Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge last year, killing six construction workers.

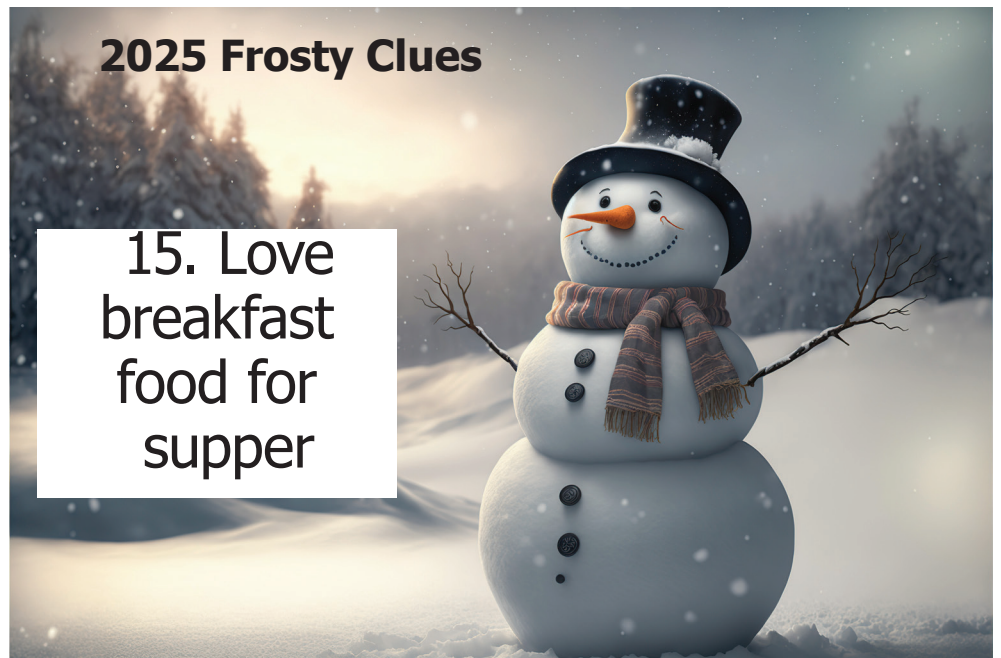
Federal court bars Texas from using its new congressional map in 2026 midterm elections; new map would have shifted up to five districts from Democratic to Republican.

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

15. Love
breakfast
food for
supper



City Council Reviews Roofing Bids, Moves Forward on Airport Electrical Upgrades

The Groton City Council worked through a full agenda Monday night, highlighted by the review of five bids for the City's Buildings Roofing Project. Four bids were complete, while one was submitted as a partial bid.

Complete bids included All Over Roofing at \$131,074.08, Radiant Roofing of Aberdeen at \$111,001.49, The Roofers at \$109,482.24, and Five Star Roofing of Iowa with the low bid of \$108,296.54. Ringneck Construction also submitted a bid, but not all buildings were included. Because the roofing work is being completed through insurance adjusters, the City will receive an insurance payment for the project. The Council tabled acceptance of the bids to allow more time for review, with plans to choose a contractor at the next meeting.

In other business, Darrell Hillestad was on hand to provide an update on airport improvements. Hillestad reported that the baseball concession stand has now been moved into place and will be converted into a pilots lounge. JVT has donated several items from its downtown office to furnish the space. Some drain tile was also replaced after it was discovered the area was not draining properly.

A larger discussion centered around electrical service to the new lounge. Hillestad presented four options: extending secondary power roughly 500 feet from the existing transformer or installing a second transformer on-site. Costs were nearly identical, and the Council opted to move forward with adding a second transformer at the recommendation of Electric Superintendent Todd Gay. Northern Electric will be notified. The City will also assume the \$77 monthly metering charge, which Hillestad has been paying for the past two years, noting that the building is City-owned and should be under City utilities.

The Council again tabled the Koker subdivision plat. The subdivision was originally designed for three lots, but only two water hookups exist. Adding a third hookup would require tearing into a newly constructed street—an option officials were reluctant to pursue. The developers agreed to replat it as two lots. Planning and Zoning will review the revised plat before returning it to the Council.

Discussion also touched briefly on speed zone signs. The 2026 budget includes \$20,000 for the project, but grants remain limited and involve additional requirements. City Attorney Chad Locken noted that while solutions will require creativity, the earliest installation could be 2027.



The former baseball concession stand has a new home at the Groton Municipal Airport. It will be converted into a Pilot's Lounge.



A 500' trench was done to provide power to the Pilot's Lounge; however, the distance of 500 feet is too far and would cost over \$5,000 to install secondary wire, while adding a second transformer would cost roughly the same amount.

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The Council approved the second reading of the 2026 appropriation ordinance. The City will request \$587,512 from Brown County for its levy, along with a \$230,000 opt-out, for a total county request of \$817,512, up by \$23,764 from last year's request.

Councilman Brian Barr raised concerns about standing water on Mark Abeln's property south of town, an issue stemming from earlier city work. The project had stalled for several years, but the Council agreed that low areas will now be filled to correct the problem.

Upcoming community reminders include the Holiday Lighting Contest on December 18, with prizes of \$100, \$75, and \$50 applied as utility bill credits. City offices will be closed November 27-28 for Thanksgiving, and dog licenses are due December 31.

Following executive session, the first reading of Ordinance 793, which sets 2026 salaries, was tabled.

Conde National league

Team Standings: Giants 27, Braves 26, Cubs 22, Mets 21, Stooges 21, Pirates 15

Men's High Games: Tim Olson 176, Chad Furney 162, Austin Schuelke 156

Men's High Series: Chad Furney 451, Tim Olson 438, Skip Kettering 402

Women's High Games: Joyce Walter 180, Sam Bahr 169, Vickie Kramp 158

Women's High Series: Joyce Walter 462, Sam Bahr 460, Vickie Kramp 445

Names Released in Brookings County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 14, mile marker 415, two miles east of Volga, SD

When: 7:17 p.m., Friday, November 14, 2025

Driver 1: Eric John Henderson, 50-year-old male from Arlington, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2005 Chevrolet Impala

Seat belt Used: Yes

Driver 2: Christopher Sipara, 20-year-old male from Brookings, SD, serious, non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 2: 2013 Ford Edge

Seat belt Used: Yes

Brookings County, S.D.- One man died and another was seriously injured in a two-vehicle crash Friday evening two miles east of Volga, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Eric John Henderson, the driver of a 2005 Chevrolet Impala, was traveling westbound on US 14 near mile marker 415 in the passing lane. At the same time, Christopher Sipara, the driver of a 2013 Ford Edge, was traveling eastbound in the westbound lane. The vehicles collided head-on, coming to rest in the westbound lanes of US 14.

Henderson was pronounced deceased at the scene. Sipara was transported to Brookings Hospital with serious, non-life-threatening injuries.

Name Released in Hughes County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: US Highway 14, mile marker 252, two miles east of Blunt, SD

When: 6:43 p.m., Friday, November 14, 2025

Driver 1: Leslie Edwin Wulf, 78-year-old male from Pierre, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2026 GMC Sierra

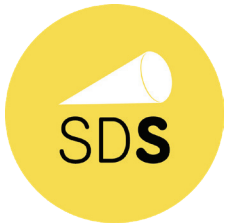
Seat belt Used: Yes

Hughes County, S.D.- A Pierre man died in a single vehicle crash Friday evening two miles east of Blunt, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Leslie Edwin Wulf, the driver of a 2026 GMC Sierra, was traveling eastbound on US Highway 14 near mile marker 252 when the vehicle left the roadway and entered the south ditch. The vehicle continued up a railroad track embankment and over the tracks, then down the other side into a ditch where it rolled, coming to rest on the passenger side. Mr. Wulf died at the scene.

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

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



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South Dakota governor bets on policy over politics while launching campaign to keep his job

Rhoden, formerly lieutenant governor, was elevated when Noem departed

BY: SETH TUPPER

RAPID CITY — South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden launched a campaign to keep his job with an expression of his philosophy.

“Good policy makes good politics,” he said.

The comment came during remarks Tuesday at the Hotel Alex Johnson in downtown Rapid City, where Rhoden formally announced his intention to seek the Republican nomination for governor next year in the June 2 primary election.

He has competition from three other declared candidates for the party’s nomination: U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, businessman Toby Doeden and state House Speaker Jon Hansen.

Rhoden was elevated from lieutenant governor in January when Noem resigned to become secretary of the federal Department of Homeland Security. Since then, while serving the remainder of Noem’s second term, Rhoden has been attempting to prove his policy-over-politics mantra.

During the legislative session that ended in March, Rhoden stepped into a long-running controversy over a company’s proposed carbon capture pipeline through South Dakota. He signed a bill into law that bans such pipelines from using a legal process known as eminent domain to gain access to privately owned land.

He also proposed and convinced legislators to pass legislation containing multiple methods for slowing property tax increases. And he shut down Noem’s effort to build a prison on a strongly opposed location in rural Lincoln County, instead opting to appoint a task force that ultimately selected a site in Sioux Falls and won legislative approval for a \$650 million project.

Rhoden said Tuesday that his policy efforts have succeeded because legislative leaders know he’s sincere about putting politics second.

“Even leaders want to be led, but they want to be led by somebody they trust,” he said. “And I think I’ve developed that reputation.”

Rhoden’s efforts have put him in a competitive position. An October poll of registered Republican voters commissioned by South Dakota News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy found Johnson with 28% support, followed by Rhoden with 27%, Doeden with 15% and Hanson with 10%, plus about 20% of respondents who were undecided.

Johnson came into the race as the presumed favorite, having served four terms in Congress and built up campaign funds in excess of \$6 million from his prior races. The funding status of the other candidates is unknown, because they don’t have a reporting deadline until January.

In response to a question from South Dakota Searchlight about Rhoden’s announcement, Johnson sent a statement saying Rhoden has been “a worthy caretaker for South Dakota.”

“However, the next 20 years could be the best in our state’s history,” Johnson said. “That is going to take energy, vision and a real plan. That is what I’m offering in this race.”

Doeden called himself the only “outsider” in the race.

“Their faces and names are different, but Larry Rhoden and Dusty Johnson are one and the same: career politicians that answer to big donors, special-interest groups, and the rich and powerful,” Doeden said.

Hansen avoided mentioning his opponents by name.

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"If you want to vote for the proven conservative Republican fighter who will put you and your family first again, I am the only candidate in this race for you," Hansen said.

To beat Johnson, Doeden and Hansen, the 66-year-old Rhoden will have to do something he's never done: win his own statewide campaign. Rhoden was twice elected as lieutenant governor while he was Noem's running mate, but when he ran in a five-way race for the Republican nomination for an open U.S. Senate seat in 2014, he finished a distant second to former Gov. Mike Rounds, who went on to win the general election.

Rhoden is a rancher and welder from rural Union Center, a sparsely populated area about 45 miles east of Sturgis where he grew up. He and his wife, first lady Sandy Rhoden, have four grown sons and seven grandchildren.

Rhoden was elected to the state Legislature in 2000 and served for 16 years before becoming lieutenant governor. After he ascended to the governor's office, Rhoden chose Tony Venhuizen — who was representing Sioux Falls in the Legislature at the time — as his lieutenant governor. Venhuizen appeared with Rhoden at the campaign launch Tuesday, confirming that they plan to run together.

Other declared candidates for governor include Democratic college student Robert Arnold and independent Lakota activist Allison Renville.

South Dakota Searchlight's Joshua Haiar contributed to this report.

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

Candidates could pay their way onto ballot under idea proposed by SD's top election official

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

South Dakota's top election official floated potential legislation Tuesday that would allow prospective candidates to pay their way onto the ballot.

Some members of the state Board of Elections responded during their meeting in Pierre by saying they oppose the idea, but the board took no formal action.

"I'll be honest, I'm a hard 'no' on this one," said board member Austin Hoffman, who's also a Republican candidate for state attorney general.

The proposal came from the office of Republican Secretary of State Monae Johnson. Deputy Secretary of State Thomas Deadrick walked the board through a slate of 17 "concepts" for legislation that could be introduced during the annual legislative session that starts in January.

Deadrick said some other states, including Kansas, already allow people to pay to get on a ballot. A spokesperson with the Kansas Secretary of State's Office confirmed to South Dakota Searchlight that while independents in that state collect petition signatures to earn a ballot spot, members of a political party can pay a filing fee to get on the ballot.

The South Dakota proposal would give all candidates two options for qualifying: collecting the required number of petition signatures from registered voters, as they do now, or paying a fee to have their name printed on the ballot. Under the draft, any fees collected would go into the state's general fund. Deadrick did not specify how much candidates would be required to pay.

"We certainly thought it was time to bring it up here and discuss it, and say, 'What do you think of that scenario?'" Deadrick told the board.

Deadrick added that the fee option could be helpful when candidates drop out of a race at the last minute, and there's little time to gather petition signatures before the replacement candidate deadline.

Hoffman was not swayed.

"Regardless of the reality of it, the optics of it are you are giving a pay-to-play pathway to being a politician," he said. "To me, going out and talking to the public, and listening to the people, and getting those

signatures is one of the most important parts of that process.”

Multiple other board members echoed the sentiment.

Another proposal would replace South Dakota’s petition signature formulas for candidates with new thresholds tied to the number of registered voters for partisan, independent and new-party candidates. Currently, candidates for some offices get on the ballot by turning in petition signatures from registered voters equal to a small percentage of the votes cast for governor in the last general election, with specific percentages varying by office and party status.

Hoffman “ran the numbers” and provided an example when the new formula would require fewer signatures for somebody running as a Republican and more signatures for somebody running as a Democrat.

“I just don’t see that as being fair,” Hoffman said. Other members agreed.

Deadrick acknowledged the point. He said the idea stems from the difficulty candidates have in identifying the required signature number for their jurisdiction — such as a legislative district, which often includes parts of multiple counties — under the state’s current formula.

Other bill ideas include allowing people to challenge a voter’s registration on the grounds that the voter is not a U.S. citizen, and letting the secretary of state use a federal verification system to confirm the citizenship status of people who apply to register to vote in South Dakota.

Another idea would require anyone signing any type of petition to list their voter registration address, which would have to substantially match the address on file for the signature to count.

Deadrick said the office would send board members more polished versions of the bill proposals in the near future for feedback, before final consideration.

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

NorthWestern Energy plans second natural gas plant in Aberdeen as electricity demand grows

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

NorthWestern Energy is planning to build a second natural gas plant to generate electricity in Aberdeen. The company has filed a notice of its intent to apply for a construction permit to build the \$276 million, 131.2-megawatt facility.

NorthWestern Energy spokesperson Jo Dee Black said although the company plans to seek a permit, it will make a decision later about moving forward with the project.

“This has to be cost efficient and meet the needs of our South Dakota customers,” she said.

The Public Utilities Commission heard the company’s plan at the commission’s Tuesday meeting in Pierre.

Construction could start this spring, with commercial operations set to start by mid-2030, according to documents submitted to the commission. The company said it’s responding to an “imminent” and growing need for electricity.

Consumers in the state used 95.5 billion cubic feet of natural gas in 2023 — up 5.6 billion cubic feet from the 89.9 billion consumed in 2019, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Natural gas consumed for electric power drove most of that consumption.

Population growth and energy demand drive the need for another natural gas plant, Black said.

“As an energy service provider, we need to plan for all the things we need to do to deliver reliable energy service in South Dakota now and into the future,” she said.

If built, the facility will be located on the south side of Aberdeen, near 135th Street and South Fifth Street, on a piece of land already owned by NorthWestern Energy and near an existing natural gas plant. The facility will tap into existing infrastructure.

In addition to the Aberdeen plant, NorthWestern has a natural gas plant in Huron. NorthWestern provides electricity or natural gas to about 842,000 customers in Montana, South Dakota, Nebraska and Yellowstone National Park.

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.

USDA 'crunching numbers' for potential tariff relief, official says 'lots' changed during shutdown

BY: CASSANDRA STEPHENSON

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is "crunching numbers" as it considers potential relief for farmers from tariff-related losses, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Stephen A. Vaden said Monday.

President Donald Trump's administration previously hinted that it might devote up to \$12 billion to aid payments for farmers who were hurt by tariff policies this year, Politico reported in late October.

"This department only woke back up on Thursday of last week," Vaden said, referencing the Nov. 12 conclusion of the longest government shutdown in U.S. history. "Lots of things changed during (the government shutdown)," including trade agreements with China, Southeast Asia, Pakistan and Japan, he added.

"Those have resulted in major commitments to buy American commodities and USDA now needs to take into account the effect that those commodity purchases will have on the market ... going into 2026," Vaden said.

China is a top consumer of U.S. soybean exports, the largest agricultural export in the U.S. China froze purchases of U.S. soybeans this year while battling with Trump over tariffs, leaving U.S. soybean farmers without orders from their largest customer for months.

The White House announced a trade agreement with China in October in which China agreed to purchase at least 12 million metric tons of U.S. soybeans by the end of 2025, and at least 25 million metric tons each year through 2028.

But USDA data logging sales activity from Oct. 2 through Nov. 12 shows China made only two soybean purchases from the U.S. totaling 232,000 metric tons. Just 45 days remain until Jan. 1, 2026.

Asked what would happen if China does not meet the 12 million metric ton agreement by the Jan. 1 deadline, a USDA spokesperson wrote that the "farm economy is in a difficult situation" and Trump is "utilizing all the tools available to ensure farmers have what they need to continue their farming operations."

The USDA will "continue to assess the farm economy and explore the need for further assistance, however, there is nothing new to share at this time," the spokesperson wrote in an email to the Lookout.

Vaden's remarks came during a Monday news conference announcing the second round of federal disaster assistance for farmers through the USDA's Supplemental Disaster Relief Program.

The department is "busy crunching those (trade agreement) numbers now and we'll let you know when we have an announcement, but we would have had an announcement much earlier if we'd been open over the past 45 days, and unfortunately now, thanks to the minority in Congress, we're playing catch-up," he said.

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

Cassandra Stephenson covers issues impacting rural West Tennessee as a Report for America corps member at The Tennessee Lookout.

US Senate agrees with overwhelming House vote to force release of Epstein files

South Dakota's Rep. Johnson votes yes in House; Senate doesn't object to unanimous consent request

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

This story contains mention of sexual abuse and suicide. If you or a loved one are in crisis, help is available 24 hours a day by dialing 988 or visiting [988hotline.org](https://www.988hotline.org).

WASHINGTON — A bill is heading to President Donald Trump's desk compelling the release of unclassified investigative files from the case against convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, a friend to the rich and powerful who died in a Manhattan jail cell in 2019 awaiting federal trial on sex trafficking charges.

Senate Republicans on Tuesday night did not object to a unanimous consent request from Minority Leader Chuck Schumer to accept and pass the legislation, as is, after the U.S. House overwhelmingly approved the measure earlier in the day.

A senior administration official told States Newsroom the president will sign the bill "whenever it gets to the White House."

The lawmakers in the lower chamber voted 427-1 to compel the Department of Justice to release materials related to the government's investigation of the financier who harmed over 1,000 victims, according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Rep. Clay Higgins, R-La., was the lone "no" vote.

Survivors and their supporters watched the vote from the chamber's gallery seats. Among them was Sky Roberts, the brother of the late Virginia Giuffre, who sued Epstein's co-conspirator Ghislaine Maxwell and the British royal family's Andrew Windsor, who recently was stripped of his title of prince. Giuffre died by suicide in April.

"I'm very happy with the outcome, but this is just the beginning, and we have a lot of work ahead of us, a lot more to do," Haley Robson told States Newsroom in an interview after the vote. Robson is prominent among those who have shared their stories of abuse by Epstein.

The bill now goes to Trump, who said Monday he will sign it.

'Courage and advocacy' of survivors cited

Schumer, a New York Democrat, wrote on social media earlier the vote would "not have been possible without the courage and advocacy of Jeffrey Epstein's survivors. They made this vote possible. They risked their safety coming out of the darkness to share their stories and to tell the truth."

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said earlier Tuesday he expected the bill to move through the Senate "fairly quickly" and likely without changes, according to reporting by CNN.

The legislation compels the Justice Department to publicly disclose "all unclassified records, documents, communications, and investigative materials in its possession that relate to Epstein or Maxwell." They include records related to Epstein's detention and death; flight logs from Epstein's planes; names of those connected with Epstein's alleged crimes; records of civil settlements, and sealed and unsealed immunity deals and plea bargains; records pertaining to entities with ties to Epstein's trafficking or financial networks; and internal DOJ communications "concerning decisions to investigate or charge Epstein or his associates."

The bill carves out exceptions for records containing victims' identities, images of death or physical abuse, and information that could jeopardize a federal investigation.

The bill also notes that the "DOJ may not withhold or redact records on the basis of embarrassment, reputational harm, or political sensitivity."

Trump, Johnson opposition

Trump and House Speaker Mike Johnson opposed the House effort to release the files until this week. Johnson said Tuesday morning that he will vote for the measure that has been forced to the floor after

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Reps. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., and Ro Khanna, D-Calif., gathered enough signatures on a discharge petition to override leadership.

The Louisiana Republican told reporters at his regular House leadership press conference that the "forcing mechanism here prevents the very deliberate, professional, careful manner in which Congress is supposed to do this."

"But having now forced the vote, none of us want to go on record and in any way be accused of not being for maximum transparency," Johnson said.

The vote comes less than a week after lawmakers on the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform released some 20,000 pages of emails from Epstein's estate that repeatedly mentioned Trump's name.

In one email from Epstein to Maxwell, the financier and sex offender claimed Trump "knew about the girls."

Trump denies any involvement with Epstein's alleged crimes, and has said that he kicked Epstein out of his private Florida club, Mar-a-Lago, because he alleged the financier had poached young female staffers from the club. Epstein was convicted in Florida of soliciting minors for sex in 2008.

During a press conference in the Oval Office Tuesday alongside the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Trump told reporters, "As far as the Epstein files, I have nothing to do with Jeffery Epstein. I threw him out of my club many years ago because I thought he was a sick pervert."

Trump added, as he has repeatedly said before, that the files are a "Democratic hoax."

Plaskett text messages

The thousands of documents released by Epstein's estate revealed the sex offender's correspondence with academics, journalists, lawmakers and at least one spiritual leader.

Among the revelations were text messages between Epstein and U.S. Democratic Delegate Stacey Plaskett, who represents the U.S. Virgin Islands, where Epstein owned a residence.

An effort by Rep. Ralph Norman, R-S.C., is underway to formally reprimand Plaskett for texting with Epstein during a 2019 congressional hearing that featured testimony from Trump's former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen. News of the text exchange was originally published by the Washington Post.

The official censure would remove Plaskett from the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. A vote was expected Tuesday night.

Plaskett defended herself on the House floor Tuesday afternoon, saying, "We all know that Jeffrey Epstein's actions were absolutely reprehensible as a constituent, as an individual who gave donations to me. When I learned of the extent of his actions after his investigation, I gave that money to women's organizations in my community."

Stories of abuse

Women who told stories of being abused by Epstein as teens rallied outside the U.S. Capitol Tuesday morning, alongside Massie, Khanna and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., whom Trump attacked online this weekend, nicknaming her a "traitor."

Robson told the crowd that as a Republican herself, the advocacy from Massie and Greene is "unbelievable to watch, and we are so grateful."

"And to the president of the United States of America, who is not here today, I want to send a clear message to you: While I do understand that your position has changed on the Epstein files, and I'm grateful that you have pledged to sign this bill, I can't help to be skeptical of what the agenda is," Robson said.

In a Sunday night post on his own social media platform, Trump told Republicans to vote in favor of the bipartisan legislation Tuesday, which lawmakers have named the Epstein Files Transparency Act.

Greene, who also spoke at the press conference, said the administration's refusal to release what are collectively referred to as the Epstein files "has ripped MAGA apart."

"The only thing that will speak to the powerful, courageous women behind me is when action is actually

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taken to release these files, and the American people won't tolerate any other b- - - t," Greene said.

GOP Reps. Nancy Mace of South Carolina and Lauren Boebert of Colorado were the other Republicans to join Massie, Greene and all Democrats to sign the petition.

Grijalva signature

In a second press conference outside the Capitol later Tuesday morning, the House's newest Democratic member, Arizona's Adelita Grijalva, spoke alongside sexual abuse prevention advocates.

"The momentum behind this did not come from politicians. It came from survivors and the public who demanded answers. This is why the discharge petition crossed 218 signatures, despite Speaker Johnson doing everything in his power to prevent this from happening, including calling an early summer release, and delaying myself my swearing in for seven weeks," Grijalva said.

Grijalva became the petition's 218th signature on Wednesday, immediately after her swearing-in ceremony.

Johnson refused to swear in Grijalva, who won her seat on Sept. 23, during the government shutdown despite precedent of other representatives swearing an oath while the House is out of session.

U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly, D-Ariz., also spoke at the press conference, warning that Senate leadership should not "delay this any further."

"They need to schedule a vote on this so this can get passed into law," Kelly said.

Trump told NBC News Monday he would sign the legislation.

Roughly a dozen public protesters stood outside the police barricade surrounding the press conference, holding signs demanding the release of the Epstein files.

Robin Galbraith, 61, of Maryland, held a sign protesting Johnson's refusal to allow an earlier floor vote to disclose the files.

"These survivors deserve justice. And you know, all women and girls deserve justice," Galbraith told States Newsroom in an interview. "Like when you have the richest people in the world trafficking girls, I mean, as somebody who has daughters and sons, we all want to see that children are not victims like this anymore."

FBI memo

In July, the FBI issued a memo stating the department would not publicly release any further information on the Epstein case.

The sudden reversal, after Trump and his supporters campaigned on releasing the files, sparked upheaval among the president's base and trained a magnifying glass on Trump's well-documented friendship with Epstein.

Trump denies any wrongdoing.

The president sued The Wall Street Journal for reporting on a 50th birthday card Trump allegedly gave to Epstein. The card featured a cryptic message and a doodle of a naked woman with Trump's apparent signature mimicking pubic hair. Trump denies that he created and signed the birthday doodle.

The Journal also reported that Attorney General Pam Bondi briefed the president in May that his name appeared in the Epstein case files. The context in which his name appeared is unclear.

A series in the Miami Herald in 2018 by journalist Julie K. Brown drew wide attention to Epstein's crimes and Trump's appointment in 2017 of former Miami federal prosecutor Alex Acosta, who cut a deal in 2008 to end a federal investigation into Epstein, as the secretary of Labor.

SD's Rep. Johnson supports release of files

FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, voted in favor of forcing the release of the Epstein files. He explained his vote Tuesday on X (formerly Twitter).

"Jeffrey Epstein was an absolute monster," Johnson said. "He conducted acts of unspeakable evil, and I'm not sure there's been any topic that has generated more interest in the last few months here in Wash-

ington or across the country than those Epstein files.”

Jennifer Shutt contributed to this report.

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

Trump administration unveils plan to try to dismantle Department of Education

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump’s administration took major steps Tuesday in trying to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education, announcing six interagency agreements signed with other departments that will transfer several of its responsibilities to those agencies.

The announcement was immediately met with intense backlash from Democratic members of Congress, who questioned its legality, and labor unions.

The agreements — with the departments of Labor, Interior, Health and Human Services and State — come as Trump has sought to take an axe to the 46-year-old department in his quest to return education “back to the states.”

The move further fulfills a pledge Trump heavily campaigned on and later tapped Education Secretary Linda McMahon to carry out.

“The announcement really follows the plan that President Trump has had since Day One, and that is returning education to the states — he fully believes, as do I, the best education is that that’s closest to the child and not run from a bureaucracy in Washington, D.C.,” McMahon told Fox News on Tuesday following the announcement.

The secretary likened the initiative to a “test run” and said her department wants to see “if what we think to be true is that they will function much more in a streamlined fashion and much more efficiently if we relocate those programs into other agencies.”

McMahon added that the agency would “move it,” “see how it works” and deliver the “outcomes” to Congress.

She said her department hopes Congress would then vote to codify the permanent move of those programs to those agencies.

But any effort would face a difficult path in the Senate, which requires at least 60 senators to advance most legislation. Republicans hold just 53 Senate seats.

The announcement also came as the U.S. Supreme Court in July allowed the Trump administration to temporarily proceed with mass layoffs and a plan to dramatically downsize the Education Department ordered earlier this year.

That plan — outlined in a March executive order Trump signed — called on McMahon to “take all necessary steps to facilitate the closure” of her own department.

How Education agreements will work

The Education Department clarified in fact sheets it would “maintain all statutory responsibilities and will continue its oversight of these programs” regarding all six interagency agreements.

A senior department official could not yet say how many Education Department employees would be transitioning to these other agencies, and noted that there will be “a bit of a lag” between the signing and when the agreements are fully executed.

The official said the department is “still exploring the best plan” for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, Office for Civil Rights and Federal Student Aid.

The Department of Labor will take on a “growing role” in administering elementary and secondary education programs currently managed under the Education Department’s Office of Elementary and Secondary

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Education, per a fact sheet.

The Education Department said that "with proper oversight by ED, DOL will manage competitions, provide technical assistance, and integrate ED's programs with the suite of employment and training programs DOL already administers."

In another agreement, the Labor Department will also take on a greater role in managing the Education Department's higher education grant programs, such as TRIO and the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs, or GEAR UP.

This also includes the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need program and the Strengthening Historically Black Graduate Institutions program, among others.

The Interior Department will also take on a "growing role" in administering the Education Department's Indian Education programs, per a fact sheet.

Under an agreement with HHS, that agency will oversee the National Committee on Foreign Medical Education and Accreditation's work.

HHS will also "manage existing competitions, provide technical assistance, and integrate" the Education Department's Child Care Access Means Parents in School Program, the department said.

That program, according to the Education Department, "supports the participation of low-income parents in postsecondary education through the provision of campus-based child care services."

The Education Department's agreement with the State Department will let that agency "oversee all foreign education programs," per a fact sheet.

'Outright illegal effort'

Sen. Patty Murray of Washington state, the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, blasted the move as an "outright illegal effort to continue dismantling the Department of Education."

Murray said "it is students and families who will suffer the consequences as key programs that help students learn to read or that strengthen ties between schools and families are spun off to agencies with little to no relevant expertise and are gravely weakened — or even completely broken — in the process."

Rep. Rosa DeLauro, ranking member of the House Appropriations panel, said "any attempt to unilaterally remove programs from the Department of Education will fundamentally alter their purpose," in a Tuesday statement.

"This is not about efficiency — it is about creating so many needless bureaucratic hurdles that the Department of Education is rendered useless — a death by a thousand cuts. Imposing massive, chaotic, and abrupt changes on a whim will waste millions of dollars in duplicative administrative costs and impose wasteful burdens on the American education system," the Connecticut Democrat said.

Rep. Bobby Scott, ranking member of the House Committee on Education and Workforce, decried the move in a Tuesday statement and called on congressional Republicans to "work with Democrats to stop this assault."

The Virginia Democrat said "the mass transfer of these programs is not only extremely inefficient and wasteful, but it will result in inconsistent enforcement of federal education policy."

He added that "instead of protecting the civil rights of students of color, students with disabilities, English as a Second Language (ESL) students, and low-income students, and closing achievement gaps, the Secretary of Education has spent her tenure dismantling ED."

Unions slam move

Rachel Gittleman, president of American Federation of Government Employees Local 252, which represents Education Department workers, said "this latest ploy by the Trump Administration to dismantle the Congressionally created U.S. Department of Education is not only unlawful — it's an insult to the tens of millions of students who rely on the agency to protect their access to a quality education."

She added that "students, educators and families depend on the Department's comprehensive support for schools, from early learning through graduate programs" and "that national mission is weakened when

its core functions are scattered across other federal or state agencies that are not equipped or positioned to provide the same support and services as ED staff.”

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, one of the largest teachers unions in the country, said “spreading services across multiple departments will create more confusion, more mistakes and more barriers for people who are just trying to access the support they need.”

Weingarten added that “it’s a deliberate diversion of funding streams that have helped generations of kids achieve their American dream” and “will undermine public schools as places where diverse voices come together and where pluralism, the bedrock of our democracy, is strengthened.”

“We are now watching the federal government shirk its responsibility to all kids. That is unacceptable,” she said, adding that “Congress must reclaim its authority over education during upcoming federal funding battles.”

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

Data center growth drives locals to fight for more say **Higher energy bills, heavy water use and noise are among their concerns**

BY: MADYSON FITZGERALD

When local activist Frank Arcoleo found out over the summer that a data center was coming to his neighborhood in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, he said he was furious. There’d been no votes or public hearings.

The first phase of the data center project under development there only required administrative approval from a few city officials, based on the building permit application and state laws.

“So these data centers are going in, and guess what? The public gets nothing to say about it because the city’s already approved it,” Arcoleo said.

Now, Arcoleo is backing a zoning ordinance under consideration by the Lancaster City Council that aims to ensure residents have a say in the future. The ordinance would require data center projects to undergo a special exception hearing from the city’s zoning hearing board. It would also require data centers to adhere to the city’s noise ordinance and for developers to submit a report detailing the project’s planned electricity and water use for the city to review.

Similar efforts are underway across the country, as municipalities move quickly to enact ordinances about where and how data centers are built. A few communities have turned to ballot measures or lawsuits.

But at the same time, some state lawmakers are rushing to pass legislation that would accelerate the development of data center infrastructure.

More data centers are being built nationwide to meet the demand for digital services, including power-hungry artificial intelligence systems. Data centers, which house thousands of servers, are able to store and transmit the data required for internet services to work.

The facilities support a digital society and can provide increased tax revenue. Data center advocates argue they also can bring new jobs and other benefits for states and local communities. But residents and local leaders in several localities across the country — including cities in Delaware, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, New Mexico, Tennessee, Virginia and other states — are concerned about how the facilities could drive up utility bills and harm the environment.

Lancaster’s residents, including Arcoleo, are worried about the amount of energy required to power data centers — which could drive up electricity rates for the entire city, he said.

“Data centers alone will cause dirty electricity sources — coal-fired plants, diesel-fired plants, natural gas-fired plants — that were due to come offline to stay online because we need every kilowatt of power that exists,” said Arcoleo, a member of the progressive advocacy group Lancaster Stands Up. “That affects me too because it ruins my environment.”

But Pennsylvania’s governor has been working to bring more data centers to the state. In June, Democratic Gov. Josh Shapiro announced that Amazon was planning to invest at least \$20 billion to build data center campuses across Pennsylvania — the largest private sector investment in state history. He’s also

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pushing proposals to encourage more energy production in the state, which would supply data centers. But critics say parts of his plan would sideline local officials.

'This is moving so quickly'

Data centers require a great deal of electricity to run, which some state officials worry will drive up electricity demand — and utility bills.

Many data centers also require significant amounts of water to cool their servers. Large data centers can consume up to 5 million gallons of water per day — equivalent to the water use of a town of 10,000 to 50,000 people, according to a report from the Environmental and Energy Study Institute, a nonprofit that provides educational resources to policymakers and the public.

Local leaders and advocates across the country are weighing the potential outcomes in their community. In August, Starwood Digital Ventures submitted plans to New Castle County, Delaware, for a data center project that could consume as much power as 875,000 to almost 1 million homes — nearly twice the 449,000 housing units that exist in the state, according to Spotlight Delaware.

The proposed data center sparked strong opposition from residents at a July town hall, including state House Speaker Melissa Minor-Brown, a Democrat, who organized the event. New Castle County Councilman David Carter was already working on an ordinance that would put up guardrails for data center development in the area.

Under the proposed ordinance, data centers could not be built within 1,000 feet of any residential zoning district. Developers would also be required to coordinate with state regulators to ensure enough water is available to cool the facility's servers. The ordinance also outlines a decommissioning process for data centers that are no longer in use.

"Most of these concerns are things you can manage and plan for, but this is moving so quickly that I think across the country, most jurisdictions are playing catch-up for their codes to best manage these data centers," Carter told Stateline.

Currently, Virginia leads the country in data center development. In the absence of state laws, Virginia's localities began to make their own data center rules.

Earlier this year, local leaders in Loudoun County, Virginia, which has one of the highest concentrations of data centers in the world, amended the county's zoning ordinance to require data center proposals to go through a public hearing process and get approval from the Board of Supervisors.

Loudoun County officials are looking forward to new data center bills coming out of next year's legislative session, said Michael Turner, vice chair of the Board of Supervisors. But he added that decisions regarding data center development should ultimately be left to localities.

"The decision for how local communities can use their land has to be left to the local communities," Turner said. "But there's no question: There's rising tension between local community government, and state and federal government, as this high demand for both data and energy is continually rising."

Meanwhile, Virginia Republican Gov. Glenn Youngkin vetoed a bill in May that would have required data center developers and energy utilities to disclose information to local governments on noise and environmental impacts of a proposed project.

In DeKalb County, Georgia, in October, county leaders voted to extend a local moratorium on new data center applications until Dec. 16 while local leaders assess the impact of the incoming facilities, according to Decaturish. At the same time, county leadership is considering a zoning amendment that would regulate where data centers can be built, how they are designed and other standards.

Local advocates in other areas of the country are pursuing change through the ballot box or lawsuits. Residents in Augusta Charter Township, Michigan, collected enough signatures for a referendum that would let voters decide on rezoning for a proposed data center. Township leaders believe the new facility will generate tax revenue for the community, but residents are concerned about noise and light pollution and higher electric rates, according to Inside Climate News.

In Doña Ana County, New Mexico, residents and an environmental law group filed two lawsuits that allege county commissioners violated state law by approving a data center project that had an incomplete

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application. Local advocates and state lawmakers representing the county say the developers' plan to build a natural gas generating station for the data center would exploit a loophole in a state law that requires utilities to use fully renewable energy resources by 2045, according to Source New Mexico.

Still, some local leaders welcome data centers in their area. In September, AVAIO Digital, a Connecticut-based data center developer, announced that it had broken ground on a \$6 billion data center campus in Brandon, Mississippi, about 15 minutes outside of Jackson.

Shortly after the data center was announced, several concerned residents in Rankin County began a petition demanding that county representatives address concerns about utility bills and pollution.

But Brandon Republican Mayor Butch Lee said he sees the project as an opportunity. As more data centers are built, it will prompt more areas to expand and modernize their electrical grid, he said. Local leaders are also working to ensure that the data center uses recycled water for cooling its systems in an effort to promote conservation practices, he said.

"I don't see any environmental problems," Lee said. "I don't see any water problems. I just see a changing national and global landscape of what the next 100 years is going to be like."

And John Malone, a principal at AVAIO Digital, said the company wants to commit itself to being good neighbors.

"All of these things work better when you're good neighbors. And so we get it — this is a big project coming into your community," Malone said. "Of course, people are going to have questions."

Pennsylvania pushes

Lancaster's residents are not alone. Local leaders in two Pennsylvania townships, East Vincent and North Middleton, are considering similar rules that would restrict where data centers can be built and operated.

They would establish a special zoning designation for data centers and require developers to study how the structures could affect the local environment, water supply, traffic patterns and more.

And a new zoning ordinance adopted by West Pennsboro Township in August requires those studies and confirmation from developers that an electricity supplier in the area will be able to supply enough power for a data center to serve new data centers in the area.

In Pennsylvania, developers are advertising data centers as an economic opportunity for the state's local communities, said Livia Garofalo, a researcher with Data & Society's Trustworthy Infrastructures team. The nonprofit research institute studies the social implications of data-centric technologies.

She said that while some local leaders welcome the potential revenue, others are wary of the major changes data centers have brought to other communities like theirs. A lot of Pennsylvania towns have witnessed the rise and fall of other industries — such as steel and coal — that were said to be good opportunities. Now, they must decide if the data center industry is worth it.

"For some of these communities who are experiencing economic difficulty — especially with a federal shutdown — some of these townships are saying, 'Well, why not?'" Garofalo said.

Lancaster residents are still trying to understand what the new data center means for the city.

But for Josh Nice, who lives in the city's Stadium District neighborhood, there's an "anticipatory grief" — the feeling of worry that comes with an impending loss or change.

"Things like this [data centers] are never designed to benefit communities and working people," said Nice. "They're only designed to exploit communities and enrich stakeholders and rich people."

In Virginia, Turner said he hopes that local communities can work alongside state officials and the federal government in the future to make decisions together.

"All the counties are very concerned about the federal government or the state making broad brush decisions about local land use that can really negatively — and, I mean, negatively — affect local communities," Turner said.

Stateline reporter Madyson Fitzgerald can be reached at mfitzgerald@stateline.org.

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

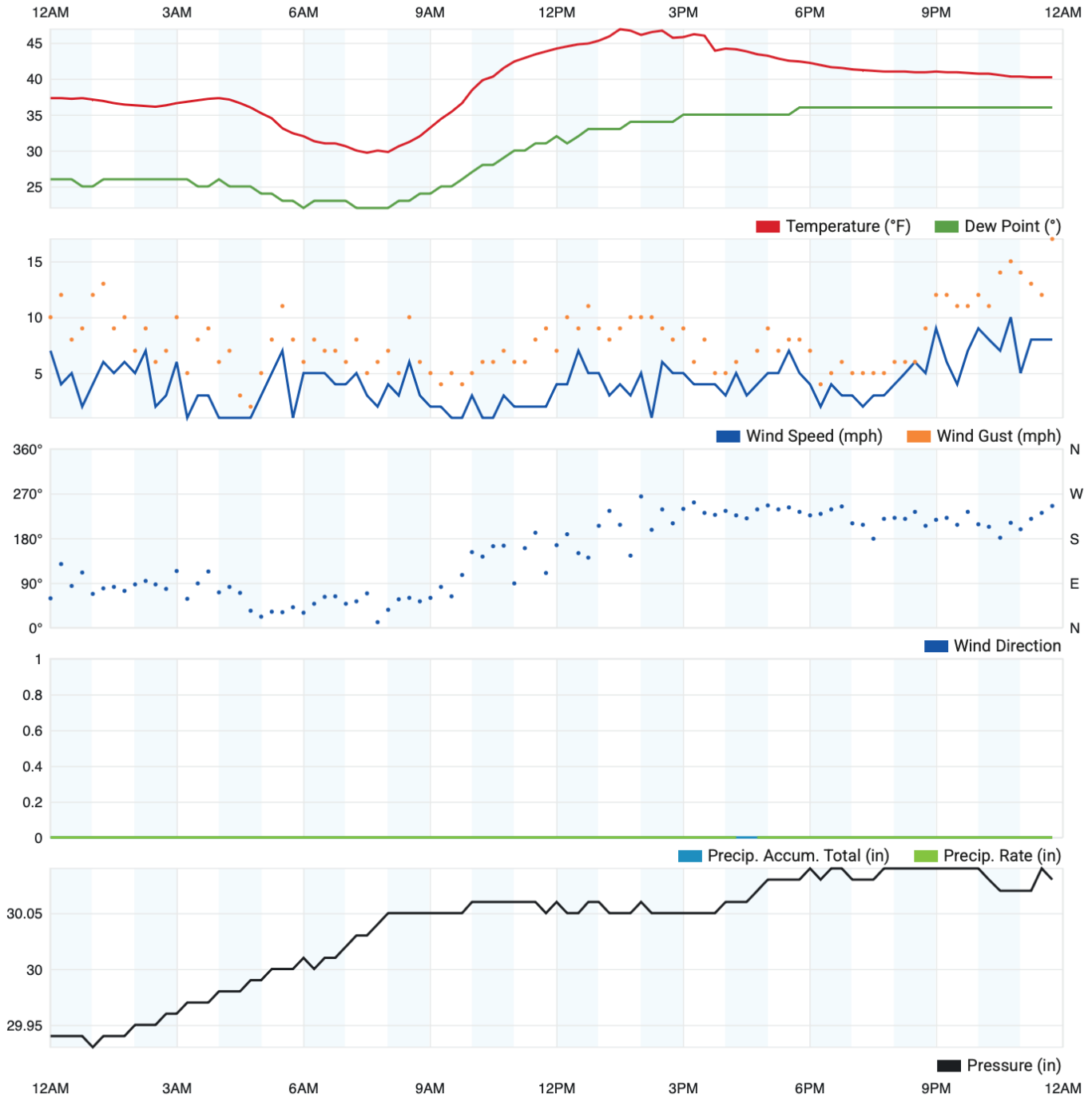
Madyson Fitzgerald is a content producer and staff writer for Stateline.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

November 18, 2025



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Today

Tonight

Thursday

Thursday
Night

Friday



High: 50 °F

Low: 33 °F

High: 48 °F

Low: 23 °F

High: 48 °F

Slight Chance
Rain then
Partly Sunny

Mostly Cloudy

Mostly Sunny

Mostly Clear

Mostly Sunny



End of the Work Week Forecast

Today



Highs: 46-58°
Lows: 28-36°

Sprinkles and
patchy fog this
morning.

Thursday



Highs: 43-49°
Lows: 22-29°

Clouds clearing

Friday



Highs: 44-54°
Lows: 30-35°

November 19, 2025 3:29 AM

Some light rain/sprinkles mainly over north central South Dakota will move out before noon today, leaving behind a dry and mild forecast for the rest of the work week. Highs in the 40s and 50s are 10 to 15 degrees above average for this time of year.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 48 °F at 2:25 PM

Low Temp: 30 °F at 7:34 AM

Wind: 15 mph at 10:46 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 75 in 1908

Record Low: -11 in 1914

Average High: 41

Average Low: 18

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.51

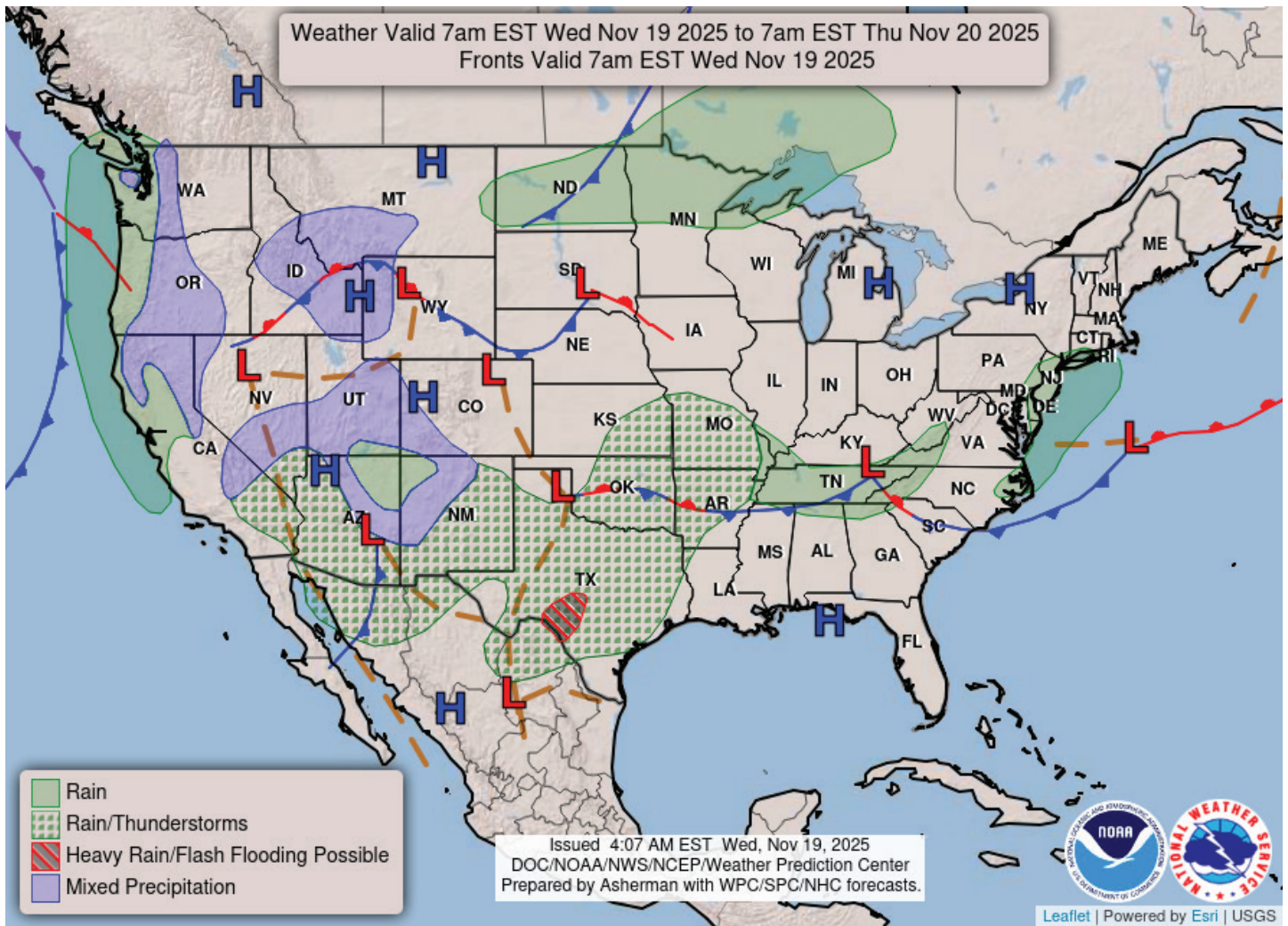
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 20.98

Precip Year to Date: 23.51

Sunset Tonight: 4:58 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:38 am



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Today in Weather History

November 19, 1981: A storm system moved from southeast Nebraska through Iowa on the 18th and spread rain and sleet as well as a few thunderstorms into southern Minnesota. Rain and sleet began changing over to snow during the afternoon on the 18th and continued through the 19th. The most substantial snowfall was in the Minneapolis area. The 10.4 inches of snow reported from the National Weather Service office in the Twin Cities was the heaviest snowfall recorded at the office since March 22nd, to the 23rd, 1965 when 13.6 inches fell. The storm knocked out power and phones to many in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Damage was also done to the Humber H. Humphrey Metrodome, where the weight of the heavy snow caused the newly inflated, fabric dome collapsed and ripped.

November 19, 1996: Widespread freezing rain spread a layer of ice across a large area before changing over to snow during November 19-20. Snowfall amounts were 1 to 3 inches in central South Dakota, 3 to 7 inches across north central South Dakota, 5 to 6 inches in west central Minnesota, and 4 to 12 inches across northeast South Dakota. Travel was difficult, and several schools were closed or delayed. Mail delivery was also slowed or postponed for a day or two. Several, mainly minor accidents, resulting in several minor injuries, occurred as a result of the ice and snow covered roads. Two Milbank buses slid into ditches. Strong north winds led to near-blizzard conditions across northeast South Dakota on the 20th. Some snowfall totals included; 12.0 inches in Clear Lake and near Milbank; 10.1 inches near Mellette; 9.0 inches in Browns Valley; 8.3 inches near Big Stone City; 8.0 inches in Faulkton; and 7.0 inches in Britton and Conde.

1921: The Columbia Gorge ice storm finally came to an end. In Oregon, 54 inches of snow, sleet, and glaze blocked the Columbia River Highway at The Dalles. Apart from traffic on the river itself, all transportation between Walla Walla WA and Portland, OR came to a halt. Nine trains were stopped as railroads were blocked for several days.

1930: A rare, estimated F4 tornado struck the town of Bethany, Oklahoma. Between 9:30 am and 9:58 am CST, it moved north-northeast from 3 miles west of the Oklahoma City limits, and hit the eastern part of Bethany. About 110 homes and 700 other buildings, or about a fourth of the town, were damaged or destroyed. Near the end of the damage path, 3.5 miles northeast of Wiley Post Airfield, the tornado hit the Camel Creek School. Buildings blew apart just as the students were falling to the floor and looking for shelter, and five students and a teacher were killed. A total of 23 people were killed and another 150 injured, with 77 being seriously injured. Damage estimates were listed at \$500,000.

1957 - Nineteen inches of snow covered the ground at Cresco, IA, a record November snow depth for the state. (The Weather Channel)

1981 - An unusually early snowstorm struck the Twin Cities of Minnesota, with as much as a foot of snow reported. The weight of the heavy snow caused the newly inflated fabric dome of the Hubert Humphrey Metrodome in downtown Minneapolis to collapse and rip. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A sharp cold front pushed across the Great Lakes Region and the Mississippi Valley. Northwest winds gusting to 50 mph in Iowa caused some property damage around Ottumwa, and wind chill readings reached 16 degrees below zero at Hibbing MN. Showers and thunderstorms over Florida produced 5.80 inches of rain in six hours at Cocoa Beach. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Strong thunderstorms developed during the mid morning hours and produced severe weather across eastern Texas and the Lower Mississippi Valley into the wee hours of the night. Thunderstorms spawned twenty-one tornadoes, including thirteen in Mississippi. One tornado killed two persons and injured eleven others at Nettleton MS, and another tornado injured eight persons at Tuscaloosa AL. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail in east Texas and northern Louisiana, and Summit MS was deluged with six inches of rain in four hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - Flooding affected the central Appalachians and Eastern Seaboard, with some isolated 8-inch rainfall totals across mountainous areas. There were 11 deaths caused by flooding in the region (Associated Press).



Daily Devotion

Living in Grace

When we trust Christ, He gives us a new life.

Ephesians 2:8-9: 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

Before Paul's conversion, if someone had said that he would impact the world for Jesus, he might have laughed (Acts 22:19-20).

God's grace can impact anyone; no sin is beyond the reach of His forgiveness. Contrary to what many think, being a Christian does not mean adding good deeds to our life. Instead, by God's grace, believers receive forgiveness and a new nature. Then, our inward transformation results in obvious outward changes.

The butterfly's metamorphosis is a good example of this. Once it's in a chrysalis, a caterpillar doesn't merely act or appear different from the outside; it truly changes inwardly as well.

Transformation for believers occurs in many areas. Our attitudes change—salvation by God's grace results in humility and gratitude. Out of thankfulness for all that He has done in our life, we are more compassionate to those around us. Experiencing Christ's forgiveness also results in a longing to serve Him by loving and helping others and sharing God's goodness with them.

While there are still natural consequences for our sin, God offers us forgiveness and redemption through Jesus. He made a way to heal our broken relationship with Him. What's more, our Father transforms our life so we will become more like His Son and reflect His heart to others.

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: 11.18.25

5 10 23 27 30 10

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$60,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 20 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.17.25

2 20 28 36 46 2

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$7,300,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 35 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.18.25

4 8 30 31 37 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 50 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.15.25

6 8 16 23 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$88,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 50 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.17.25

11 18 23 59 69 5

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 19 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.17.25

7 33 50 57 66 23

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$593,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 19 Mins 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Africa hosts its first G20 and urges the rich world to do more against climate disasters

By MICHELLE GUMEDE Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — In South Africa's oldest township, volunteers in wetsuits jump into the thigh-deep water of the polluted Jukskei River to untangle a net that's designed to trap garbage but damaged by heavy rains. Without the nets, the shacks of low-lying Alexandra on the outskirts of Johannesburg could face disastrous flooding.

World leaders with the Group of 20 rich and developing nations will meet this weekend in Johannesburg for the bloc's first summit in Africa. Host South Africa wants to prioritize issues affecting poor countries, including responses to disasters made worse by climate change.

South Africa will urge rich countries and international financial institutions to help more — a plea also being made at global climate talks in Brazil.

Alexandra's over half a million residents live within steps of South Africa's richest financial district, Sandton. But flooding often submerges bridges, leaving the township's children unable to get to school. It is a "big hazard," said Semadi Manganye, a resident and co-founder of the volunteer group, the Alexandra Water Warriors.

Devastating for poor countries

"The ravages of the climate are directly linked to the ravages of inequality," Binaifer Nowrojee, president of the Open Society Foundations, a non-governmental organization promoting democracy and governance, told The Associated Press. "Countries are facing the destructive choice between growing their economies and taking climate action."

The World Bank says the poorest countries were hit by nearly eight times as many natural disasters in the decade from 2010-2020 as they were from 1980-1990.

Southern Africa has been struck by strong tropical storms in the past decade, killing thousands of people and leaving nations with unbearable rebuilding costs. Cyclone Idai, which scientists say was made more powerful by climate change, ripped through Mozambique, Malawi and Zimbabwe in 2019, causing an estimated \$2 billion worth of damage, according to the World Bank. Malawi's gross domestic product is just \$12 billion.

Last year, the El Nino weather phenomenon caused one of the worst droughts in decades in the region, devastating small-scale agriculture and leaving people even poorer.

Lobbying world leaders

Climate financing has been a focus of sharp debate between rich and poor countries at major summits like the G20.

Rich countries agreed at last year's United Nations climate summit to pool at least \$300 billion a year by 2035 to help developing countries deal with the impacts of climate change and weather disasters. But independent experts said much more — an estimated \$1 trillion a year — was needed by 2030.

One of the world's largest polluters, the United States, won't even attend this weekend's G20 summit as it boycotts over U.S. President Donald Trump's widely rejected claims that South Africa is violently persecuting a white minority.

That makes action on climate, or even a meaningful declaration, from the G20 a tall order.

South Africa's own failures

The Alexandra Water Warriors have considered themselves the guardians of their environment since they formed in 2021, planting native trees to reduce urban heat and collecting and recycling trash from the river.

They face the kind of challenges seen in other townships and poor settlements across South Africa, which is the continent's most developed economy but also has some of the world's most dramatic inequality.

An Amnesty International report released this month for the G20 summit said the South African govern-

ment is failing as many as 5 million people who live in informal settlements without proper housing and services and are impacted by the climate crisis. It said they are often forced to live in vulnerable, low-lying areas close to rivers.

Floods in June in South Africa's Eastern Cape province killed more than 100 people. While South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said they were exacerbated by climate change, local officials said they were made deadlier due to poor housing and broken-down infrastructure in one of the country's poorest regions.

Green growth

Ntombi Maponya is one of around 3,000 people working with the Alexandra Water Warriors or other local projects who are rewarded with a small monthly stipend from a private-public collection of donors that includes the South African and Canadian governments.

"When the 25th of every month comes around, you begin to smile," she said.

The effort launched in 2022 has grown from 250 people.

Climate resilience should be seen as a strategy to spur development, said Cameroonian economist Vera Songwe, a former executive secretary of the U.N. Economic Commission for Africa.

"The good news ... is that actually green, sustainable and resilient growth is much faster growth," she told reporters during an event on the debt crisis ahead of the G20.

Israeli airstrike on a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon kills 13 people, Lebanese ministry says

By MOHAMMAD ZAATARI Associated Press

SIDON, Lebanon (AP) — An Israeli airstrike on a Palestinian refugee camp in southern Lebanon on Tuesday killed 13 people and wounded several others, state media and government officials said. It was the deadliest strike on Lebanon since a ceasefire in the Israel-Hezbollah war a year ago.

The drone strike hit a car in the parking lot of a mosque in the Ein el-Hilweh refugee camp on the outskirts of the coastal city of Sidon, the state-run National News Agency said. The Lebanese Health Ministry said 13 people were killed and several others wounded in the airstrike, without giving further details.

Hamas fighters in the area prevented journalists from reaching the scene, as ambulances rushed to evacuate the wounded and the dead.

The Israeli military said it struck a Hamas training compound that was being used to prepare an attack against Israel and its army. It added that the Israeli army would continue to act against Hamas wherever the group operates.

Hamas condemned the attack in a statement saying the strike hit a sports playground and denying that it was a training compound.

Over the past two years, Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon have killed scores of officials from the militant Hezbollah group as well as Palestinian factions such as Hamas.

Saleh Arouri, the deputy political head of Hamas and a founder of the group's military wing, was killed in a drone strike on a southern suburb of Beirut on Jan. 2, 2024. Several other Hamas officials have been killed in strikes since then.

Hamas led the Oct. 7, 2023 attack on southern Israel that killed about 1,200 people. That sparked Israel's offensive on the Gaza Strip that killed tens of thousands of Palestinians, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

A day after the Israel-Hamas war started, Hezbollah began firing rockets toward Israeli posts along the border. Israel responded with shelling and airstrikes in Lebanon, and the two sides became locked in an escalating conflict that became a full-blown war in late September 2024.

That war, the most recent of several conflicts involving Hezbollah over the past four decades, killed more than 4,000 people in Lebanon, including hundreds of civilians, and caused an estimated \$11 billion worth of destruction, according to the World Bank. In Israel, 127 people died, including 80 soldiers.

The war ended in late November 2024 with a U.S.-brokered ceasefire. Since then, Israel has carried out scores of airstrikes in Lebanon, saying that Hezbollah is trying to rebuild its capabilities.

Lebanon's Health Ministry has reported more than 270 people killed and around 850 wounded by Israeli military actions since the ceasefire.

Student escapes as authorities search for 24 other girls abducted in Nigeria

By CHINEDU ASADU and TUNDE OMOLEHIN Associated Press

MAGA, Nigeria (AP) — A schoolgirl who was abducted with 24 others from a dormitory in northwestern Nigeria has escaped and is safe, the school's principal told The Associated Press on Tuesday, as hunters joined security forces in the search for the missing students in forests close to the school.

The girls were kidnapped before dawn on Monday, when gunmen attacked the dorm at the Government Girls Comprehensive Secondary School in Kebbi state's Maga town. Local police said the gunmen scaled the fence to enter the school premises and exchanged gunfire with police officers before seizing the girls and killing a staff member.

No group has claimed responsibility for taking the girls, but analysts and locals say gangs of bandits often target schools, travelers and remote villagers in kidnappings for ransoms. Authorities say the bandits are mostly former herders who have taken up arms against farming communities after clashes between them over strained resources.

Mass school kidnappings are especially common in northern Nigeria, and the Kebbi school is close to conflict hot spots including Zamfara and Sokoto states, where several gangs are known to operate and hide out.

The student who escaped arrived home late Monday, hours after the kidnapping, according to the school principal Musa Rabi Magaji. Another student was able to escape the gunmen in the minutes after the raid and was not abducted, the principal told AP.

"They are safe and sound," Magaji said.

A video verified by AP shows the two schoolgirls, who appear to be in their early teens, lost in thought and surrounded by family and other villagers, with hijabs covering their heads. High schoolers in Nigeria are usually aged between 12 and 17.

Intensified rescue efforts

Security forces and hunters, meanwhile, have intensified efforts to find and rescue the others, local officials said. Security teams swept nearby forests where gangs often hide while others were deployed along major roads leading to the school.

Kebbi Gov. Nasir Idris visited the school on Monday and assured of efforts to rescue the girls, and Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Waidi Shaibu met with soldiers in the hours after the attack and directed "intelligence-driven operations and relentless day-and-night pursuit of the abductors," according to an army statement.

"We must find these children. Act decisively and professionally on all intelligence. Success is not optional," the army chief said.

Families recount predawn attack

By Tuesday morning, the dorm and the classroom block — a walking distance apart — were deserted. In Maga, families waiting for news of their children's freedom expressed anger and frustration.

Resident Abdulkarim Abdullahi, whose daughter and granddaughter — aged 13 and 10, respectively — were among the kidnapped children, said he overheard the noise from his house.

"I was at home when I suddenly heard gunshots from the school. We were told that the attackers entered the school with many motorcycles," said Abdullahi.

Amina Hassan, wife of the school vice principal Hassan Yakubu Makuku, said the assailants broke into their house, which is on the school premises, and fatally shot her husband. He was also the school's chief security officer.

"Three of them entered and asked my husband, 'Are you Malam Hassan?' and he responded, 'Yes, I am.' They told him that we are here to kill you," she told the AP.

School abductions are a strategy to draw attention

At least 1,500 students have been seized in the region since Boko Haram jihadi extremists seized 276 Chibok schoolgirls over a decade ago. But bandits are also active in the region, and analysts say gangs often target schools to gain attention.

Analysts and residents blame the insecurity on a failure to prosecute known attackers, and the rampant corruption that limits weapons supplies to security forces while ensuring a steady supply to the gangs.

"Let's say people have been kidnapped in the markets — it doesn't go far, (or) if people have been kidnapped on the road — it doesn't go far," said Oluwole Ojewale, a security analyst at the Institute for Security Studies. "What gains traction is when (it is) strategic kidnapping, like school children."

Trump dismisses US intelligence that Saudi prince was likely aware of 2018 killing of journalist

By AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday dismissed U.S. intelligence findings that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman likely had some culpability in the 2018 killing of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi as Trump warmly welcomed the de facto ruler of Saudi Arabia on his first White House visit in seven years.

The U.S.-Saudi relationship had, for a time, been sent into a tailspin by the operation targeting Khashoggi, a fierce critic of the kingdom.

But seven years later, the dark clouds over the relationship have been cleared away. And Trump is tightening his embrace of the 40-year-old crown prince, who he said is an indispensable player in shaping the Middle East in the decades to come.

Trump in his defense of the crown prince derided Khashoggi as "extremely controversial" and said "a lot of people didn't like that gentleman." Prince Mohammed denies involvement in the killing of Khashoggi, who was a Saudi citizen and Virginia resident.

"Whether you like him or didn't like him, things happen," Trump said when asked about the killing by a reporter during an Oval Office appearance with Prince Mohammed. "But (Prince Mohammed) knew nothing about it. And we can leave it at that. You don't have to embarrass our guest by asking a question like that."

But U.S. intelligence officials determined that the Saudi crown prince likely approved the killing by Saudi agents of U.S.-based journalist inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, according to U.S. findings declassified in 2021 at the start of the Biden administration. Trump officials, during his first administration, refused to release the report.

Prince Mohammed said Saudi Arabia "did all the right steps" to investigate Khashoggi's death.

"It's painful and it's a huge mistake," he said.

Trump, who said the two leaders have become "good friends," even commended the Saudi leader for strides made by the kingdom on human rights without providing any specific detail.

New investment from Saudis

The crown prince for his part announced Saudi Arabia was increasing its planned investments in the U.S. to \$1 trillion, up from \$600 billion that the Saudis announced they would pour into the United States when Trump visited the kingdom in May.

Echoing rhetoric that Trump likes to use, the crown prince called the U.S. the "hottest country on the planet" for foreign investment.

"What you're creating is not about an opportunity today. It's also about long-term opportunity," Prince Mohammed said.

Trump's family has a strong personal interest in the kingdom. In September, London real estate developer Dar Global announced that it plans to launch Trump Plaza in the Red Sea city of Jeddah.

It's Dar Global's second collaboration with the Trump Organization, the collection of companies controlled by the U.S. president's children, in Saudi Arabia.

Trump pushed back on suggestions that there could be a conflict of interest in his family's dealings with

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the Saudis.

"I have nothing to do with the family business," Trump said.

Trump's comments about Khashoggi's killing and defense of his family's business in Saudi Arabia were blasted by human rights and government oversight activists.

Human rights groups say Saudi authorities continue to harshly repress dissent, including by arresting human rights defenders, journalists and political dissidents for criticism against the kingdom. They also note a surge in executions in Saudi Arabia that they connect to an effort to suppress internal dissent.

"President Trump has Jamal Khashoggi's blood on his hands," said Raed Jarrar, advocacy director for DAWN, a U.S.-based group advocating for democracy and human rights in the Arab world that was founded by Khashoggi.

Rolling out the red carpet

Trump warmly received Prince Mohammed when he arrived at the White House Tuesday morning for a pomp-filled arrival ceremony that included a military flyover and a thundering greeting from the U.S. Marine band.

Technically, it wasn't a state visit, because the crown prince is not the head of state. But Prince Mohammed has taken charge of the day-to-day governing for his father, King Salman, 89, who has endured health problems in recent years.

Later, Trump and first lady Melania Trump welcomed the crown prince for a black-tie dinner in the White House East Room. The boldface names who attended included Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, tech entrepreneur Elon Musk and soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo.

Trump at the dinner announced he was designating Saudi Arabia as a major non-NATO ally. The designation, while largely symbolic, provides foreign partners with certain benefits in the areas of defense, trade and security cooperation.

The president also announced that the two leaders had signed a new defense agreement, but the White House did not immediately release details of the pact. Ahead of the visit, the Saudis had signaled they were looking for formal assurances from Trump defining the scope of the U.S. military protection for the kingdom.

"A stronger and more capable alliance will advance the interests of both countries," Trump said. "And it will serve the highest interest of peace."

Fighter jets and business deals

On the eve of Prince Mohammed's arrival, Trump announced he had agreed to sell the Saudis F-35 fighter jets despite some concerns within the administration that the sale could lead to China gaining access to the U.S. technology behind the advanced weapon system. The White House announced the two leaders formalized the F-35 agreement Tuesday as well as a deal for the Saudis to purchase nearly 300 tanks from the U.S.

They also signed agreements signifying closer cooperation on capital markets and critical minerals markets, as well as efforts against money laundering and terrorist financing.

Trump's announcement on the fighter jets was surprising because some in the Republican administration have been wary about upsetting Israel's qualitative military edge over its neighbors, especially at a time when Trump is depending on Israeli support for the success of his Gaza peace plan.

Abraham Accord talks

The visit comes at a moment when Trump is trying to nudge the Saudis toward normalizing relations with Israel.

The president in his first term had helped forge commercial and diplomatic ties between Israel and Bahrain, Morocco and the United Arab Emirates through an effort dubbed the Abraham Accords.

Trump sees expansion of the accords as essential to his broader efforts to build stability in the Middle East after the two-year Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Getting Saudi Arabia — the largest Arab economy and the birthplace of Islam — to sign on would spur a domino effect, he argues.

But the Saudis have maintained that a path toward Palestinian statehood must first be established be-

fore normalizing relations with Israel can be considered. The Israelis remain steadfastly opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state.

"We want to be part of the Abraham Accords, but we want also to be sure that we secure a clear path of a two-state solution," Prince Mohammed said.

Fear spreads as federal immigration crackdown in North Carolina expands to Raleigh

By GARY D. ROBERTSON and TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Federal agents expanded their North Carolina immigration crackdown to the area around the state capital of Raleigh on Tuesday, with fear spreading in at least one immigrant-heavy suburb where restaurants closed and many people stayed home.

The North Carolina operation began over the weekend in the state's largest city, Charlotte, where officials said more than 130 people have been arrested.

Speaking at a Raleigh City Council meeting, Mayor Janet Cowell said there had been "confirmed sightings" of Border Patrol officers operating in Wake County, which includes Raleigh, and nearby Durham County, which includes the city of Durham. She said earlier that she did not know how large the operation would be or how long agents would be present.

She encouraged residents to call the police department if they felt unsafe and urged protesters to remain peaceful.

"And just be particularly kind to your neighbors today," she added.

Federal officials have said the crackdowns will reduce crime, though leaders in both Charlotte and Raleigh said crime was down. The officials have also criticized so-called sanctuary policies that limit cooperation between local authorities and immigration agents in a handful of jurisdictions.

Anxiety spreads swiftly in Raleigh suburb

Federal officials have given no information about activity in the Raleigh area.

But in Cary, a sprawling Raleigh suburb where officials say almost 20% of the population was born outside the U.S. and the large Asian population tripled in the 1990s, fear spread quickly.

An area resident recorded as a large black SUV with darkly tinted windows and Texas license plates drove through Cary's downtown, eventually linking up with another SUV. The vehicles stopped at a construction site, where Pamela Hoile recorded Border Patrol agents detaining four workers. Speaking by phone after posting the video on Facebook, she described herself as a "very outraged, horrified and concerned citizen."

The Chatham Square shopping center, which is usually bustling at midday with workers eating at mom-and-pop ethnic restaurants, was quiet. Most of the restaurants — Mexican, Indian and Chinese among them — were closed. Nearby, the often-full parking lot at an Indian grocery store was largely empty, and traffic inside was nonexistent.

Esmeralda Angel's family closed their restaurant, the Esmeralda Grill, to avoid any confrontations between customers and federal agents. At their separate grocery store, they were delivering items to customers who were avoiding going out in public.

The family businesses had scaled back to help their community, she said, but knew it would hurt financially.

"Taco Tuesday is the busy day for all of these restaurants," Angel said of the weekly specials. "But I think everyone would rather close than operate."

Congresswoman calls deployment 'profound abuse of power'

U.S. Rep. Valerie Foushee, a Democrat who represents Durham, part of Raleigh and some suburbs, said Tuesday that the deployment of federal immigration agents in North Carolina "is a profound abuse of power, a violation of civil rights and a stain on our democracy."

The region's South Asian community has grown dramatically in recent decades, including many people drawn to the Research Triangle region by high-tech jobs.

Satish Garimella is mayor pro tempore in Morrisville, about 15 miles (24 kilometers) west of downtown Raleigh. Close to half of the town's 30,000 people are Asian.

Garimella, who grew up in India but is now a U.S. citizen, said the expected arrival of immigration agents is "creating a lot of panic," and he recommended residents carry identity documents.

"You just don't know when you will be questioned and what things are needed," Garimella said.

The Trump administration turned to North Carolina after immigration crackdowns in Los Angeles and Chicago, both deep blue cities in deep blue states run by nationally prominent officials who are often loudly critical of President Donald Trump. They also increased operations in Portland, Oregon, where more than 560 immigration arrests were made in October, according to U.S. Border Patrol Chief Michael Banks.

North Carolina was a more surprising target.

The mayors of Charlotte and Raleigh are both Democrats, as is the governor, but none are known for wading into national political battles. In a state where divided government has become the norm, Gov. Josh Stein in particular has tried to get along with the GOP-controlled state legislature. The state's two U.S. senators are both Republican, and Trump won the state in the last three presidential elections.

State was drawn into national debates

A handful of cities and counties in North Carolina have been drawn into America's debates over crime and immigration, two of the most important issues to the White House.

The most prominent was the fatal stabbing this summer of Ukrainian refugee Iryna Zarutka on a Charlotte light-rail train, an attack captured on video. The suspect was from the U.S., but the Trump administration repeatedly highlighted that he had been arrested more than a dozen times.

While the Department of Homeland Security has said it is focusing on the state because of sanctuary policies, most North Carolina county jails have long honored "detainers," or requests from federal officials to hold an arrested immigrant for a limited time so agents can take custody of them.

Some common noncooperation policies have existed in few places, including Raleigh and Charlotte, where the police do not help with immigration enforcement.

In Mecklenburg County, the jail did not honor detainer requests for several years, until after state law effectively made it mandatory starting last year. Wake County, where Raleigh is located, had a similar policy.

DHS said about 1,400 detainers across North Carolina had not been honored since October 2020, putting the public at risk.

Matt Mercer, a spokesperson for the North Carolina Republican Party, said in a text message that the arrival of immigration agents to Raleigh would show that failures by "radical Democrats will finally be taken seriously."

Federal judges block Texas from using its new US House map in the 2026 midterms

By JOHN HANNA Associated Press

A federal court on Tuesday blocked Texas from using a redrawn U.S. House map that touched off a nationwide redistricting battle and is a major piece of President Donald Trump's efforts to preserve a slim Republican majority ahead of the 2026 elections.

The ruling is a blow to Trump's rush to create a more favorable political landscape for Republicans in next year's midterms, at least for now. Texas filed an appeal Tuesday evening with the U.S. Supreme Court after Gov. Greg Abbott and other Republicans publicly defended the map, which was engineered to give Republicans five additional House seats.

In a 2-1 ruling, a panel of federal judges in El Paso sided with opponents who argued that Texas' unusual summer redrawing of congressional districts would harm Black and Hispanic residents. The decision was authored by U.S. District Judge Jeffrey V. Brown, a Trump nominee from the president's first term.

"To be sure, politics played a role in drawing the 2025 Map. But it was much more than just politics. Substantial evidence shows that Texas racially gerrymandered the 2025 Map," the ruling states.

The decision comes amid an widening national battle over redistricting. Missouri and North Carolina followed Texas with new maps adding an additional Republican seat each.

To counter them, California voters approved a ballot initiative to give Democrats an additional five seats

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there. The Trump administration filed a federal lawsuit challenging that map, with Attorney General Pam Bondi calling it "a brazen power grab."

In a post on X, California Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom celebrated the Texas ruling: "Donald Trump and Greg Abbott played with fire, got burned — and democracy won."

Republicans insist they had only partisan motives

Texas Republicans insisted they drew the new map only for partisan advantage. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2019 that partisan gerrymandering is a political question and not one for the federal courts to decide.

"Texas's map was drawn the right way for the right reasons," Bondi posted on X.

Civil rights groups representing Black and Hispanic voters argued the map reduced the influence of minority voters, making it a racial gerrymander that violates the federal Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution. They sought an order blocking Texas from using the map while their case proceeded, which the judges granted.

If the ruling stands, Texas will be forced to use the map drawn by the GOP-controlled Legislature in 2021 for next year's elections.

"Today's decision is a critical victory for voting rights and a powerful rebuke of Texas's brazen attempt to dilute the political power of Latino and Black voters," said Abha Khanna, a partner in the Elias Law Group, a Democratic firm representing minority voters opposing the new Texas map.

Judges say the Trump administration signaled race-based motives

The judges signaled that they think the map's critics have a substantial chance of winning their case at trial. An appointee of Democratic President Barack Obama joined Brown in the majority, while an appointee of Republican President Ronald Reagan dissented.

The majority said that absent their injunction blocking the map's use for now, minorities would be forced to have congressional representation based on "likely unconstitutional racial classifications for at least two years."

The two appeals judges concluded that a major reason that Abbott and Republican lawmakers moved was a letter from the head of the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division in July, directing Texas to redraw four districts that it said violated the Voting Rights Act.

Harmeet Dhillon, the assistant U.S. attorney general overseeing the division, cited a ruling last year by the conservative federal appeals court for Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals declared that the landmark Voting Rights Act of 1965 does not allow separate minority groups to "aggregate their populations" to argue that a map illegally dilutes minority voters' ability to elect the candidate of their choice. The court said each group's situation must be analyzed separately.

Dhillon's letter to Texas officials dealt with four so-called "coalition" districts, one in the Dallas area and three in the Houston area, where no group has a majority but minority voters together outnumber non-Hispanic white voters. Dhillon argued that those districts must be dismantled as "vestiges of an unconstitutional racially based gerrymandering past."

The judges said Dhillon's conclusion was "legally incorrect," but, added, "The Legislature adopted those racial objectives."

"The redistricting bill's sponsors made numerous statements suggesting that they had intentionally manipulated the districts' lines to create more majority-Hispanic and majority-Black districts," the ruling said.

GOP map eliminated minority coalition districts

Republicans hold 25 of Texas' 38 congressional seats, with Democrats holding two of their 13 seats in districts Trump carried in 2024. Had the new map been in place last year, Trump would have carried 30 congressional districts by 10 percentage points or more, making it likely that the GOP would have won that many seats as well.

The new map decreased from 16 to 14 the number of congressional districts where minorities comprise a majority of voting-age citizens.

Texas eliminated five of the state's nine coalition districts. Five of the six Democratic lawmakers drawn

into districts with other incumbents are Black or Hispanic.

"The state's intent here is to reduce the members of Congress who represent Black communities, and that, in and of itself, is unconstitutional," said Derrick Johnson, national president of the NAACP, which was among the parties suing Texas over redistricting.

Republicans argued that the map is better for minority voters. While five "coalition" districts are eliminated, there's a new, eighth Hispanic-majority district, and two new Black-majority districts.

Critics consider each of those new districts a sham, arguing that the majority is so slim that white voters, who tend to turn out in larger numbers, will control election results.

But in a statement Tuesday, Abbott said it's "absurd" to claim that the map is discriminatory.

"The Legislature redrew our congressional maps to better reflect Texans' conservative voting preferences – and for no other reason," he said.

Congress acts swiftly to force release of Epstein files, and Trump agrees to sign bill

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Both the House and Senate acted decisively Tuesday to pass a bill to force the Justice Department to publicly release its files on the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, a remarkable display of approval for an effort that had struggled for months to overcome opposition from President Donald Trump and Republican leadership.

When a small, bipartisan group of House lawmakers introduced a petition in July to maneuver around Speaker Mike Johnson's control of the House floor, it appeared a longshot effort — especially as Trump urged his supporters to dismiss the matter as a "hoax."

But both Trump and Johnson failed to prevent the vote. The president in recent days bowed to political reality, saying he would sign the bill. And just hours after the House vote, senators agreed to approve it unanimously, skipping a formal roll call.

The decisive, bipartisan work in Congress Tuesday further showed the pressure mounting on lawmakers and the Trump administration to meet long-held demands that the Justice Department release its case files on Epstein, a well-connected financier who killed himself in a Manhattan jail while awaiting trial in 2019 on charges he sexually abused and trafficked underage girls.

For survivors of Epstein's abuse, passage of the bill was a watershed moment in a years-long quest for accountability.

"These women have fought the most horrific fight that no woman should have to fight. And they did it by banding together and never giving up," said Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene as she stood with some of the abuse survivors outside the Capitol Tuesday morning.

"That's what we did by fighting so hard against the most powerful people in the world, even the president of the United States, in order to make this vote happen today," added Greene, a Georgia Republican.

In the end, only one lawmaker in Congress opposed the bill. Rep. Clay Higgins, a Louisiana Republican who is a fervent supporter of Trump, was the only "nay" vote in the House's 427-1 tally. He said he worried the legislation could lead to the release of information on innocent people mentioned in the federal investigation.

The bill forces the release within 30 days of all files and communications related to Epstein, as well as any information about the investigation into his death in federal prison. It would allow the Justice Department to redact information about Epstein's victims or continuing federal investigations, but not information due to "embarrassment, reputational harm, or political sensitivity."

Even before the bill's passage Tuesday, thousands of pages of emails and other documents from Epstein's estate have been released from an investigation by the House Oversight Committee.

Those documents show Epstein's connections to global leaders, Wall Street powerbrokers, influential political figures and Trump himself. In the United Kingdom, King Charles III stripped his disgraced brother

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Prince Andrew of his remaining titles and evicted him from his royal residence after pressure to act over his relationship with Epstein.

Trump's reversal on the Epstein files

Trump has said he cut ties with Epstein years ago, but tried for months to move past the demands for disclosure.

Still, many in the Republican base continued to demand the release of the files. Adding to that pressure, survivors of Epstein's abuse rallied outside the Capitol Tuesday morning. Bundled in jackets against the November chill and holding photos of themselves as teenagers, they recounted their stories of abuse.

"We are exhausted from surviving the trauma and then surviving the politics that swirl around it," said one of the survivors.

Another, Jena-Lisa Jones, said she had voted for Trump and had a message for the president: "I beg you Donald Trump, please stop making this political."

The group of women also met with Johnson and rallied outside the Capitol in September, but have had to wait months for the vote.

That's because Johnson kept the House closed for legislative business for nearly two months and refused to swear-in Democratic Rep. Adelita Grijalva of Arizona during the government shutdown. After winning a special election on Sept. 23, Grijalva had pledged to provide the crucial 218th vote to the petition for the Epstein files bill. But only after she was sworn into office last week could she sign her name to the discharge petition to give it majority support in the 435-member House.

It quickly became obvious the bill would pass, and both Johnson and Trump began to fold. Trump on Sunday said Republicans should vote for the bill.

Yet Greene told reporters that Trump's decision to fight the bill had betrayed his Make America Great Again political movement.

"Watching this turn into a fight has ripped MAGA apart," she said.

How Johnson handled the bill

Rather than waiting until next week for the discharge position to officially take effect, Johnson held the vote under a procedure that requires a two-thirds majority.

But Johnson also spent a morning news conference listing off problems that he sees with the legislation. He argued that the bill could have unintended consequences by disclosing parts of federal investigations that are usually kept private, including information on victims.

"This is a raw and obvious political exercise," Johnson said.

Still, he voted for the bill. "None of us want to go on record and in any way be accused of not being for maximum transparency," he explained.

Meanwhile, the bipartisan pair who sponsored the bill, Reps. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., and Ro Khanna, D-Calif., warned senators against doing anything that would "muck it up," saying they would face the same public uproar that forced both Trump and Johnson to back down.

"We've needlessly dragged this out for four months," Massie said, adding that those raising problems with the bill "are afraid that people will be embarrassed. Well, that's the whole point here."

Senate acts quickly

Even as the bill cleared his chamber, Johnson pressed for the Senate to amend it to protect the information of "victims and whistleblowers." But Senate Majority Leader John Thune quickly shut down that notion.

As senators gathered in the chamber Tuesday evening for the first votes of the week, it became clear no one would object to passing the bill as written.

Just before Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer called to pass the bill by unanimous consent, Oklahoma Sen. Markwayne Mullin, a Republican who is close to Trump, walked in the chamber and gave Schumer a thumbs-up. He then walked over to Schumer and shook his hand.

"This is about giving the American people the transparency they've been crying for," said Schumer, D-N.Y. "This is about holding accountable all the people in Jeffrey Epstein's circle who raped, groom, targeted and enabled the abuse of hundreds of girls for years and years."

US Mint presses final pennies as production ends after more than 230 years

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — The U.S. ended production of the penny Wednesday, abandoning the 1-cent coins that were embedded in American culture for more than 230 years but became nearly worthless.

When it was introduced in 1793, a penny could buy a biscuit, a candle or a piece of candy. Now most of them are cast aside to sit in jars or junk drawers, and each one costs nearly 4 cents to make.

"God bless America, and we're going to save the taxpayers \$56 million," Treasurer Brandon Beach said at the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia before hitting a button to strike the final penny. The coins were then carefully placed on a tray for journalists to see. The last few pennies were to be auctioned off.

Billions of pennies are still in circulation and will remain legal tender, but new ones will no longer be made.

Other coins have been discontinued, but the half-penny in 1857 was the last U.S. coin to be discontinued because of its low value, according to the U.S. Treasury Department.

Most penny production ended over the summer, officials said. During the final pressing, workers at the mint stood quietly on the factory floor as if bidding farewell to an old friend. When the last coins emerged, the men and women broke into applause and cheered one another.

"It's an emotional day," said Clayton Crotty, who has worked at the mint for 15 years. "But it's not unexpected."

President Donald Trump ordered the penny's demise as costs climbed and the 1-cent valuation became virtually obsolete.

"For far too long the United States has minted pennies which literally cost us more than 2 cents," Trump wrote in an online post in February. "This is so wasteful!"

Still, many Americans have a nostalgia for them, seeing pennies as lucky or fun to collect. And some retailers voiced concerns in recent weeks as supplies ran low and the end of production drew near. They said the phaseout was abrupt and came with no government guidance on how to handle transactions.

Some businesses rounded prices down to avoid shortchanging shoppers. Others pleaded with customers to bring exact change. The more creative among them gave out prizes, such as a free drink, in exchange for a pile of pennies.

"We have been advocating abolition of the penny for 30 years. But this is not the way we wanted it to go," Jeff Lenard of the National Association of Convenience Stores said last month.

Proponents of eliminating the coin cited cost savings, speedier checkouts at cash registers and the fact that some countries have already eliminated their 1-cent coins. Canada, for instance, stopped minting its penny in 2012.

Some banks began rationing supplies, a somewhat paradoxical result of the effort to address what many see as a glut of the coins. Over the last century, about half the coins made at mints in Philadelphia and Denver have been pennies.

But they cost far less to produce than the nickel, which costs nearly 14 cents to make. The diminutive dime, by comparison, costs less than 6 cents to produce, and the quarter nearly 15 cents.

No matter their face value, collectors and historians consider them an important historical record. Frank Holt, an emeritus professor at the University of Houston who has studied the history of coins, laments the loss.

"We put mottoes on them and self-identifiers, and we decide — in the case of the United States — which dead persons are most important to us and should be commemorated," he said. "They reflect our politics, our religion, our art, our sense of ourselves, our ideals, our aspirations."

As Trump expands immigration arrests into North Carolina, here's what to know

By The Associated Press undefined

U.S. immigration agents carrying out an enforcement push in North Carolina's largest city have arrested more than 130 people and are now moving into an area around the state's capital city.

The immigration sweep that started in Charlotte over the weekend comes on the heels of similar operations in Los Angeles and Chicago, as crackdowns — and the threat of crackdowns — develop in cities nationwide.

It's the latest phase of Republican President Donald Trump's mass deportation efforts that have sent the military and immigration agents into Democratic-run cities.

Here's what to know:

Why the Border Patrol is targeting North Carolina

The Department of Homeland Security says it's focusing on the southern state because of so-called sanctuary policies that limit cooperation between local authorities and immigration agents.

Most county jails in North Carolina have long helped federal officials by holding arrested immigrants so agents can take custody of them. But a few jails resisted until a state law effectively made it mandatory last year.

Politics could also be playing a role. The state's governor is a Democrat and so are the mayors of Charlotte and Raleigh, the state's two biggest cities.

Few details on over 100 people arrested in Charlotte

So far, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency says more than 130 people have been arrested in Charlotte.

It says those arrested include people with criminal records. But the agency has offered few other details.

Charlotte has been in the middle of nationwide debates over crime and immigration, most notably after the fatal stabbing this summer of a Ukrainian refugee on a commuter train. While the suspect was from the U.S., the Trump administration repeatedly accused Democrats of backing soft-on-crime policies.

One of the nation's fastest growing regions, Charlotte alone has more than 150,000 foreign-born residents.

Where agents are going next in North Carolina

The mayor of Raleigh on Tuesday said there have been "confirmed sightings" of Border Patrol officers operating in the county that's home to the state's capital city and some nearby cities.

Mayor Janet Cowell earlier said she doesn't know how large or how long the operation might be, and immigration authorities haven't given details. Like the mayor in Charlotte, Cowell says crime is lower in Raleigh this year compared to a year ago.

How North Carolina leaders have responded

Republican leaders say the increased enforcement is needed to restore safety to Charlotte.

But the state's governor, Democrat Josh Stein, says it's increasing fears and dividing residents. He says Border Patrol agents are picking up random people and targeting them based on their skin color.

New Orleans up next for immigration sweep

Homeland Security leaders are preparing to send border agents into New Orleans and southeast Louisiana in just a few weeks, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press and three people familiar with the operation.

The two-month immigration crackdown dubbed "Swamp Sweep" is expected to begin in earnest on Dec. 1.

Department officials declined to comment on the operation.

Judge blocks National Guard in Memphis

In Memphis, Tennessee, where National Guard troops have been patrolling neighborhoods and commercial areas since October, a judge this week blocked their deployment as part of Trump's crime-fighting operation.

The judge, however, is giving the government five days to appeal. Democratic state and local officials sued to stop the deployment, saying it can only happen during civil unrest when there's a rebellion or invasion.

NTSB finds 2 blackouts struck huge cargo ship before it crashed into Baltimore bridge

By BRIAN WITTE and JOSH FUNK Associated Press

ANNAPOLIS, Md. (AP) — The loss of electrical power from a loose wire caused a huge cargo ship to lose propulsion and steering before crashing into Baltimore's Francis Scott Key Bridge, causing it to collapse last year and kill six construction workers, National Transportation Safety Board officials said Tuesday.

The board approved the findings and a set of recommendations to prevent similar tragedies during a hearing in Washington. Investigators managed to identify one loose wire out of thousands on the container ship called the Dali. The label on the wire slid down too close to the end and prevented it from being fully inserted into the terminal.

The board also found the crew didn't have enough time to recover propulsion and avoid collision because the Dali was so close to the bridge when it lost power.

"The crew's actions were as timely as they could be, and they were appropriate and also impressive considering the circumstance," board member Michael Graham said.

Graham also said the maritime shipping industry needs to strengthen its safety systems and better manage risks to be more in line with the rigorous approach taken in aviation.

"Many of these issues we have discussed today as part of this accident could have been identified, addressed, and either mitigated or eliminated," Graham said.

The Dali was leaving Baltimore bound for Sri Lanka when it crashed into a supporting column of the bridge about 1:30 a.m. on March 26, 2024, causing the bridge to collapse into the Patapsco River.

Six men on a road crew, who were filling potholes during an overnight shift, fell to their deaths. The collapse snarled commercial shipping traffic through the Port of Baltimore for months before the channel was fully opened that June.

Lack of countermeasures and communication for highway workers

The lack of countermeasures to reduce the bridge's vulnerability to collapse after being struck by a ship also contributed to the disaster, the board said. Countermeasures could have been implemented if a vulnerability assessment had been conducted by the Maryland Transportation Authority as recommended by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Authorities, the board said.

The Maryland agency said in a statement after the NTSB meeting that it maintains the bridge collapse and tragic loss of life "were the sole fault of the Dali and the gross negligence of its owners and operators."

The board also found that the lack of effective and immediate communications to notify the highway workers to evacuate the bridge contributed to the loss of life. But the pilot at the controls of the Dali quickly notified law enforcement, who stopped all traffic from entering the bridge, preventing further deaths.

"This tragedy should have never occurred," NTSB Chair Jennifer Homendy said. "Lives should have never been lost. As with all accidents that we investigate, this was preventable."

Two blackouts and thousands of wires

The Dali, which sailed under the Singapore flag, experienced two power blackouts on its way out of Baltimore.

The crew got the power back on after the first blackout, but a second shortly thereafter was caused by a lack of fuel because the flushing pump used to supply the generators doesn't restart automatically the way the main pumps do. The flushing pump must be restarted manually by a crew member leaving the engine room and heading down two decks in complete darkness to reach that pump.

NTSB investigator Todd Gianelloni said the crew did periodically inspect the 947-foot (289-meter) container ship, but there were no instructions on how to check individual wire connections, and doing so would have been labor intensive and impractical on a ship with thousands of wires.

Gianelloni said the NTSB believes that if the crew had used infrared thermal imaging to inspect the connections, the loose critical wire might have been discovered ahead of time. Investigators noted that infrared thermal imaging, which can detect problems that aren't visible, is frequently used in the maritime industry.

Homendy noted there was no issue with the ship's fuel. That was something speculated about shortly

after the crash.

NTSB investigator Bridget Quinn said the growing size of container ships over the years has presented a greater threat to bridges, but the Baltimore bridge wasn't adequately fortified to protect against today's massive cargo ships, even though stakeholders in the port first discussed improving bridge pier protections as early as two decades before the collapse.

Frustration with response

Board members expressed frustration with the way several of the companies involved responded to the NTSB investigation.

Homendy questioned why the ship's operator, Synergy, still hasn't updated its policies to advise its crews not to use the fuel flushing pump to supply fuel to the generators the way the Dali crew did. Synergy and the other companies involved in manufacturing and operating the container ship have had access to all of NTSB's findings as the investigation unfolded.

"It's been 20 months, right? I mean, that's the reason you're a party to our investigation. So you should take that action," Homendy said.

Homendy said she was also frustrated with Hyundai Heavy Industry declining to consider reconfiguring the engines of these ships. Instead the shipmaker argued that crews should just be trained better to use an emergency procedure that NTSB investigators already determined wouldn't have helped in an emergency like this.

Higher bridge cost estimates

The meeting came a day after Maryland officials more than doubled the estimated bridge replacement cost, to between \$4.3 billion and \$5.2 billion, and added two years to the projected completion date — now 2030.

U.S. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy again criticized the way Maryland officials are managing this project after the cost estimate doubled.

"The Trump administration does not write blank checks, and as the Secretary warned (Gov.) Wes Moore, oversight of this project is sorely needed to ensure taxpayers dollars are being used efficiently," a Transportation Department spokesman said.

Stocks drop after another jarring day as worries about too-high prices keep dogging Nvidia, bitcoin

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market fell following another jarring day on Tuesday, as worries keep dogging Nvidia, bitcoin and other Wall Street stars that their prices shot too high.

After quickly sliding to a morning loss of 1.5%, the S&P 500 clawed back nearly all of it before sinking again. It finished with a fall of 0.8% and pulled further from its all-time high set late last month. The Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 498 points, or 1.1%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 1.2%.

Nvidia was again the heaviest weight on the market, and its drop of 2.8% brought its loss for the month so far to more than 10%. That's a steep enough fall that Wall Street has a name for it: a correction.

What Nvidia does matters disproportionately to savers' 401(k) accounts because its immense size means it's the most influential stock on Wall Street. It single-handedly steers the direction of the S&P 500 some days, after fervent demand for its artificial-intelligence chips helped it briefly top \$5 trillion in total value.

The U.S. stock market's recent struggles are a sharp turnaround from its nearly relentless rally since April, when Wall Street last sold off after President Donald Trump shocked the world with stiff tariffs.

That rally was so strong that critics say it may have carried prices too high, too fast and left the market at risk of a sharp drop. They point in particular to stocks swept up in the AI mania, which have been surging at spectacular speeds for years.

Nvidia's price more than doubled in four of the last five years, for example, while Palantir Technologies' stock more than doubled in the first six and a half months of this year.

Many big investors still seem to expect stock prices to rise further, according to the latest monthly survey of global fund managers by Bank of America Global Research. But when asked what the No. 1 risk for the market is, one with a lower probability of happening but a chance of very big damage, 45% pointed to an AI bubble. That beat out potential trouble in the bond market, inflation and trade wars.

A record percentage of investors is also saying companies are "overinvesting," according to the survey. The worry is that all the dollars pouring into AI chips and data centers worldwide may not produce the kind of revolution that AI proponents have been predicting, or at least not as profitable a one.

Other high-flying areas of the market with their own evangelists have also been struggling lately. Bitcoin's price briefly fell below \$90,000 in the morning, down from nearly \$125,000 last month. It later recovered some of its losses and climbed back toward \$93,000.

Home Depot also helped drag the market lower after falling 6%. It reported a weaker profit for the summer than analysts expected and cited a variety of reasons. Chief among them was a lack of storms, which would have driven customers to buy more home-improvement supplies. CEO Ted Decker also pointed to "consumer uncertainty and continued pressure in housing" for preventing an expected increase in demand.

Reporting stronger profits is one of the ways a company can make its stock price look less expensive, because stock prices tend to track with earnings over the long term. That's raising the stakes for Wednesday's profit report from Nvidia, which could either help halt its stock's slide or worsen it.

Elsewhere on Wall Street, Cloudflare fell 2.8% after an earlier issue at the internet infrastructure provider caused global outages for ChatGPT and other services.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 55.09 points to 6,617.32. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 498.50 to 46,091.74, and the Nasdaq composite sank 275.23 to 22,432.85.

In the bond market, Treasury yields likewise oscillated through the day. The yield on the 10-year Treasury eventually eased to 4.11% from 4.13% late Monday.

Yields have been swinging amid doubts about whether the Federal Reserve will cut its main interest rate at its next meeting in December, something that traders had earlier seen as very likely. What the Fed does is critical for the market because stock prices ran to records in part because of expectations for continued cuts to rates.

The Fed has cut rates twice already this year in hopes of shoring up a slowing job market. But lower interest rates can make inflation worse, and inflation has stubbornly remained above the Fed's 2% target.

In stock markets abroad, indexes tumbled across Europe and Asia.

South Korea's Kospi sank 3.3%, Japan's Nikkei 225 dropped 3.2% and France's CAC 40 fell 1.9% for some of the world's larger drops.

Trump administration takes major step toward dismantling the Education Department

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Education Department is handing off some of its biggest grant programs to other federal agencies as the Trump administration accelerates its plan to shut down the department.

The changes announced Tuesday represent a major step forward for the administration's dismantling of the department, which has mainly involved cutting jobs since President Donald Trump called for its elimination with an executive action in March.

Six new agreements signed by the Education Department will effectively move billions of dollars in grant programs to other agencies. Most notable is one that will put the Department of Labor over some of the largest federal funding streams for K-12 schools, including Title I money for schools serving low-income communities.

Opponents have urged against such a shake-up, saying it could disrupt programs that support some of the nation's most vulnerable student populations.

States rely on Education Department officials for expertise that other agencies might not have, said Angélica Infante-Green, Rhode Island's K-12 education chief.

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"People might think it's just funding and giving them the money, but it's not," Infante-Green said in an interview. "It is about how to co-mingle some of the funds to educate a child. So if a child is in special education but is also a multilingual learner and they're in poverty, how do you use that to educate the child holistically?"

Student loans and civil rights enforcement stay at Education for now

Department officials said the programs will continue to be funded at levels set by Congress. They did not say whether the changes would bring further job cuts at the department, which has been thinned by waves of mass layoffs and voluntary retirement offers.

"The Trump Administration is taking bold action to break up the federal education bureaucracy and return education to the states," Education Secretary Linda McMahon said in a statement. "Cutting through layers of red tape in Washington is one essential piece of our final mission."

The action leaves in place the Education Department's \$1.6 trillion student loan portfolio and its funding for students with disabilities, though McMahon has suggested both would be better managed by other federal departments. Also unaffected is the department's Office for Civil Rights, which works with students and families who bring allegations of discrimination.

McMahon and her staff have spent months hammering out the deals, which allow the department to lop off large parts of its footprint without action from Congress. It's being done through formal agreements that agencies often make with one another when their work overlaps.

The Education Department tested the idea in June with a deal that moved adult education programs to Labor. The new agreements take it a step further and lay the groundwork for more.

Grant programs go to other departments including Interior and State

Under the new plan, Labor will oversee almost all grant programs that are now managed by the Education Department's offices for K-12 and higher education. Along with the \$18 billion Title I program, that includes smaller funding pools for teacher training, English instruction and TRIO, a program that helps steer low-income students to college degrees.

It will effectively outsource the department's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education and Office of Postsecondary Education, two of the agency's largest units. Two major roles of the postsecondary office will remain with the Education Department: oversight of student loan policy and the accreditation of colleges for eligibility to receive students' federal financial aid.

Another deal will put Health and Human Services in charge of a grant program for parents who are attending college, along with management of foreign medical school accreditation. The State Department will take on foreign language programs. Interior will oversee programs for Native American education.

A union representing department workers said students, educators and families depend on the agency's support for schools.

"That national mission is weakened when its core functions are scattered across other federal or state agencies that are not equipped or positioned to provide the same support and services as ED staff," AFGE Local 252 President Rachel Gittleman said.

McMahon has campaigned for shuttering the department

McMahon has increasingly pointed to what she sees as failures of the department as she argues for its demise. In its 45 years, she says it has become a bloated bureaucracy while student outcomes continue to lag behind. She points to math and reading scores for the country's K-12 students, which plummeted in the wake of pandemic restrictions.

Her vision would abolish the Education Department and give states wider flexibility in how they spend money that's now earmarked for specific purposes, including literacy and education for homeless students. That, however, would require approval from Congress. The task is complicated by the fact that some of the department's core work has long had bipartisan support.

The new deals are part of a broader plan to prove that America's schools and colleges can operate without the department. As part of the plan, officials say McMahon will continue touring the country to highlight the successes of local schools — and she will also spend more time making her pitch to lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

DHS plans to deploy 250 border agents to Louisiana in major immigration sweep, AP sources say

By JACK BROOK and SARA CLINE Associated Press/Report for America

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Around 250 federal border agents are set to descend on New Orleans in the coming weeks for a two-month immigration crackdown dubbed “Swamp Sweep” that aims to arrest roughly 5,000 people across southeast Louisiana and into Mississippi, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press and three people familiar with the operation.

The deployment, which is expected to begin in earnest on Dec. 1, marks the latest escalation in a series of rapid-fire immigration crackdowns unfolding nationwide — from Chicago to Los Angeles to Charlotte, North Carolina — as the Trump administration moves aggressively to fulfill the president’s campaign promise of mass deportations.

In Louisiana, the operation is unfolding on the home turf of Republican Gov. Jeff Landry, a close Trump ally who has moved to align state policy with the White House’s enforcement agenda. But, as seen in other blue cities situated in Republican-led states, increased federal enforcement presence could set up a collision with officials in liberal New Orleans who have long resisted federal sweeps.

Gregory Bovino, the Border Patrol commander tapped to run the Louisiana sweep, has become the administration’s go-to architect for large-scale immigration crackdowns — and a magnet for criticism over the tactics used in them. His selection to oversee “Swamp Sweep” signals that the administration views Louisiana as a major enforcement priority for the Trump administration.

The Department of Homeland Security declined to comment on the operation. “For the safety and security of law enforcement we’re not going to telegraph potential operations,” spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said.

In Chicago, Bovino drew a rare public rebuke from a federal judge who said he misled the court about the threats posed by protesters and deployed tear gas and pepper balls without justification during a chaotic confrontation downtown. His teams also oversaw aggressive arrest operations in Los Angeles and more recently in Charlotte, where Border Patrol officials have touted dozens of arrests across North Carolina this week after a surging immigration crackdown that has included federal agents scouring churches, grocery stores and apartment complexes.

Planning documents reviewed by the AP show Border Patrol teams preparing to fan out across neighborhoods and commercial hubs throughout southeast Louisiana, stretching from New Orleans through Jefferson, St. Bernard and St. Tammany parishes and as far north as Baton Rouge, with additional activity planned in southeastern Mississippi.

Agents are expected to arrive in New Orleans on Friday to begin staging equipment and vehicles before the Thanksgiving holiday, according to the people familiar with the operation. They are scheduled to return toward the end of the month, with the full sweep beginning in early December. The people familiar with the matter could not publicly discuss details of the operation and spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity.

To support an operation of that scale, federal officials are securing a network of staging sites: A portion of the FBI’s New Orleans field office has been designated as a command post, while a naval base five miles south of the city will store vehicles, equipment and thousands of pounds of “less lethal” munitions like tear gas and pepper balls, the people said. Homeland Security has also asked to use the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans for up to 90 days beginning this weekend, according to documents reviewed by the AP.

Once “Swamp Sweep” begins, Louisiana will become a major testing ground for the administration’s expanding deportation strategy, and a focal point in the widening rift between federal authorities intent on carrying out large-scale arrests and city officials who have long resisted them.

Here's what's in the opioid settlement against OxyContin maker Purdue and the Sackler family

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

Members of the Sackler family who own OxyContin maker Purdue Pharma must pay billions of dollars to settle a flood of lawsuits over the harms of opioids, in a new deal formally approved by a federal bankruptcy judge on Tuesday.

The Sacklers must contribute up to \$7 billion over 15 years. Most of the money will go to government entities to fight the opioid crisis, which has been linked to 900,000 deaths in the U.S. since 1999. Thousands of victims could be paid thousands of dollars each, with some distributions beginning next year for people who had OxyContin prescriptions and their survivors.

"This plan is not perfect," U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Sean Lane said as he laid out his reasoning for approving the settlement, which he indicated he would do last week. "The court wishes it could do more to ease the suffering of the opioid crisis." Still, he said the settlement is equitable, in the parties' best interests, and overwhelmingly supported by groups with claims against Purdue.

The agreement replaces one the U.S. Supreme Court rejected last year, saying the earlier proposal would have improperly shielded Sackler family members from future lawsuits. The new agreement allows entities that do not opt into the payments to still sue members of the family.

The deal is among the largest in a series of opioid settlements brought by state and local governments against drugmakers, wholesalers and pharmacies that totaled about \$50 billion.

Why the judge said he approved the deal

Lane said the plan offers more certainty and value than years of litigation would. Suing the Sackler family members would have no guarantee of success, he said, and it could be hard to collect because much of their wealth is held in off-shore trusts. The family has consistently said they would fight claims against them.

He also noted that states and individuals would get less if Purdue were liquidated, as only \$3.4 billion would have been available, including \$2 billion owed to the federal government as part of the company's criminal plea deal. The federal penalties were to be largely waived if a broader settlement could be reached.

Money will go to governments and some individuals

Sackler family members were collectively paid more than \$10 billion by Purdue in the decade before they stopped involvement with the company in 2018. About half of that went to taxes. Under the deal, they will provide most of the settlement's \$7 billion. As in other opioid settlements, money distributed to states, local governments and Native American tribes must be used primarily on the opioid crisis. About \$850 million will be set aside for individual victims, including children born with opioid withdrawal.

People with addiction and survivors of those who died must have proof they were prescribed OxyContin to participate. However, it could be a challenge for some to find medical records or photos of prescription bottle labels dating back decades.

Those who can provide documentation could receive \$8,000 or around \$16,000, depending on how long they received the drug and how many other people qualify. The money for individual victims is to be distributed next year.

Not only money is at stake

The Sackler family will also relinquish ownership of Purdue, although that won't be a major challenge since no family member has served on its board or received money from the company since 2018. Purdue will be replaced with a new company, Kinoa Pharma, controlled by a board appointed by the states and designed to operate in the public interest.

The Sacklers are also agreeing not to seek naming rights at institutions in exchange for donations, a common practice by the family before many organizations cut ties with them.

The company will publicly release a trove of internal documents that could shed more light on how the company promoted and monitored opioids.

One part of an earlier settlement will not return: a requirement for Sackler family to hear directly from people harmed by OxyContin.

A long legal saga could be wrapping up

Purdue filed for bankruptcy in 2019 as it faced thousands of opioid-related lawsuits. A judge approved a settlement two years later, but the Supreme Court struck it down because it protected the Sacklers from lawsuits over opioids even though they were not personally declaring bankruptcy. The new plan avoids that issue by allowing those who don't opt into the deal to still sue the family.

Few parties objected to the settlement this time, although opioid victims who represented themselves raised concerns during last week's hearing. One of them told the judge on Tuesday she planned to appeal.

Mixed emotions from two moms affected by the crisis

Kay Scarpone of New Hampshire, whose son died of an overdose, served for years on a committee of creditors in Purdue's bankruptcy. She's glad the deal was accepted but saddened to say goodbye to the far-flung friends she worked alongside.

She said she participated to help "take what you can get from the Sackler family and do the best thing you can do, which is get money into the hands of the victims." Still, Scarpone expects many will be upset once they see the actual payout sizes.

For Susan Ousterman, a Pennsylvania mother whose son also died of an overdose, the ruling is only disheartening. It's another reminder, she said, of "how complicit the system is."

"These people will walk free. They're criminals," she said Tuesday of the Sacklers. "They scare me far more than any drug dealer."

Meta prevails in historic FTC antitrust case, won't have to break off WhatsApp, Instagram

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Meta has prevailed over an existential challenge to its business that could have forced the tech giant to spin off Instagram and WhatsApp after a judge ruled that the company does not hold a monopoly in social networking.

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg issued his ruling Tuesday after the historic antitrust trial wrapped up in late May. His decision runs in sharp contrast to two separate rulings that branded Google an illegal monopoly in both search and online advertising, dealing regulatory blows to the tech industry that for years enjoyed nearly unbridled growth.

The Federal Trade Commission "continues to insist that Meta competes with the same old rivals it has for the last decade, that the company holds a monopoly among that small set, and that it maintained that monopoly through anticompetitive acquisitions," Boasberg wrote in his ruling. "Whether or not Meta enjoyed monopoly power in the past, though, the agency must show that it continues to hold such power now. The Court's verdict today determines that the FTC has not done so."

The federal agency had argued that Meta maintained a monopoly by pursuing an expression CEO Mark Zuckerberg made in 2008: "It is better to buy than compete." True to that maxim, Facebook has systematically tracked potential rivals and acquired companies that it viewed as serious competitive threats.

During his April testimony, Zuckerberg pushed back against claims that Facebook bought Instagram to neutralize a threat. In his line of questioning, FTC attorney Daniel Matheson repeatedly brought up emails — many of them more than a decade old — written by Zuckerberg and his associates before and after the acquisition of Instagram.

While acknowledging the documents, Zuckerberg has often sought to downplay the contents, saying he wrote the emails early in the acquisition process and that the notes did not fully capture the scope of his interest in the company. But the case was not about the acquisitions of Instagram and WhatsApp more than a decade ago, which the FTC approved at the time, but about whether Meta holds a monopoly now. Prosecutors, Boasberg wrote in the ruling, could only win if they proved "current or imminent legal violation."

The FTC's complaint said Facebook also enacted policies designed to make it difficult for smaller rivals to enter the market and "neutralize perceived competitive threats," just as the world shifted its attention to mobile devices from desktop computers.

Meta said Tuesday's decision "recognizes that Meta faces fierce competition."

"Our products are beneficial for people and businesses and exemplify American innovation and economic growth. We look forward to continuing to partner with the Administration and to invest in America," said Jennifer Newstead, chief legal officer, in a statement.

The social media landscape has changed so much since the FTC filed its lawsuit in 2020, Boasberg wrote, that each time the court examined Meta's apps and competition, they changed. Two opinions to dismiss the case — filed in 2021 and 2022 — didn't even mention popular social video platform TikTok. Today, it "holds center stage as Meta's fiercest rival."

Quoting the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, "that no man can ever step into the same river twice," Boasberg said the same is true for the online world of social media as well.

"The landscape that existed only five years ago when the Federal Trade Commission brought this antitrust suit has changed markedly. While it once might have made sense to partition apps into separate markets of social networking and social media, that wall has since broken down," he wrote.

Emarketer analyst Minda Smiley said Meta's win "is not necessarily surprising considering the lengths it's gone to in recent years to keep up with TikTok."

"But from a regulatory standpoint, Meta is far from out of the woods: next year, major social networks will face landmark trials in the US regarding children's mental health," she added. "Still, today's win is surely a boost for the company as it battles criticism and questions over how its massive AI spending will ultimately benefit Meta in the long run."

Facebook bought Instagram — then a scrappy photo-sharing app with no ads and a small cult following — in 2012. The \$1 billion cash and stock purchase price was eye-popping at the time, though the deal's value fell to \$750 million after Facebook's stock price dipped following its initial public offering in May 2012.

Instagram was the first company Facebook bought and kept running as a separate app. Up until then, Facebook was known for smaller "acqui-hires" — a type of popular Silicon Valley deal in which a company purchases a startup as a way to hire its talented workers, then shuts the acquired company down. Two years later, it did it again with the messaging app WhatsApp, which it purchased for \$22 billion.

WhatsApp and Instagram helped Facebook move its business from desktop computers to mobile devices, and to remain popular with younger generations as rivals like Snapchat (which it also tried, but failed, to buy) and TikTok emerged. However, the FTC has a narrow definition of Meta's competitive market, excluding companies like TikTok, YouTube and Apple's messaging service from being considered rivals to Instagram and WhatsApp.

Investors didn't appear surprised at the ruling. Shares of the Menlo Park, California-based company were down \$1.52 at \$600.49 in afternoon trading Tuesday, in line with broader market trends.

The US plan for Gaza won UN backing. Carrying it out could be far more difficult

By LEE KEATH Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The U.N. Security Council has backed the United States' ambitious plan for the future of the Gaza Strip. How and when it will be carried out remain largely unknown.

In a twist unimaginable across the tumultuous history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the plan would mean U.S. President Donald Trump becomes the de facto ruler of Gaza. The territory remains devastated by Israel's campaign to eliminate Hamas after its Oct. 7, 2023, attack that sparked the war.

An international body known as the Board of Peace, chaired by Trump, is to govern Gaza and oversee reconstruction under a 2-year, renewable U.N. mandate. An armed International Stabilization Force is to keep security and ensure the disarming of Hamas, a key demand of Israel.

Major questions hang over nearly every part of the plan and the timeframe for implementation. In the meantime, nearly all Palestinians remain displaced and dependent on humanitarian aid, Hamas retains significant control over nearly half of Gaza and the rebuilding of the territory has barely begun.

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Challenges at every step

Some talks over the next steps have taken place behind the scenes among the U.S., Israel, Qatar, Egypt and other countries. But serious negotiations have not begun because Israel and Hamas remain in the first phase of the ceasefire deal that came into effect in October. The militant group is still required to hand over the bodies of the last three hostages.

The U.N. resolution passed Monday gave the plan international legitimacy. That opens the door for Arab and Muslim-majority nations to participate, particularly by contributing troops to the ISF. The U.S. is hoping that the more those countries are involved, the more palatable the international rule will be for Gaza's more than 2 million people.

But the Palestinian public's acceptance is far from certain. Without it, the Board of Peace risks becoming seen as a foreign occupation working on behalf of Israel, further thwarting their dream of self-determination and statehood.

The plan gives Palestinians almost no voice in governing Gaza. Because of Israel's fierce opposition, it doesn't promise statehood, offering only a vague reference that it might one day be possible. It also gives only an ambiguous timetable for reconstruction to begin and for the Israeli military to withdraw from the around 50% of the Gaza Strip that it still holds since the ceasefire began.

Will disarmament happen?

Disarming Hamas and demilitarizing Gaza are the keystones to the whole plan. But there's no detail on how that will happen.

So far, the militant group has not agreed to disarm. In a statement after the U.N. resolution's passage, Hamas said the fate of its weapons is connected to ensuring a path to the end of the Israeli occupation and the creation of a Palestinian state.

The International Stabilization Force is tasked with ensuring disarmament and the destruction of Hamas' military infrastructure. The ISF will also oversee a Palestinian police force, made up of vetted members trained by Egypt and Jordan.

A number of nations have been cited as possible contributors to the ISF, including Egypt, Indonesia, Turkey and Azerbaijan. But none has committed to sending troops yet, and Israel opposes Turkey participating in the force.

They are unlikely to want their soldiers to take Hamas' weapons by force. Hamas warned that trying to do so would turn the ISF "into a party to the conflict in favor of the occupation."

Hamas is under heavy pressure, particularly from Qatar and Egypt, to find a compromise. One possible idea is a "decommissioning" – handing the arsenal over to the ISF for safekeeping -- which Hamas could argue is not a permanent surrender of its right to armed resistance.

Without disarmament, much of the rest of the plan could stall. Israel's troop withdrawal is linked to the pace of Hamas demilitarization and the deployment of the ISF. Reconstruction is also unlikely to happen in most of Gaza unless Hamas disarms.

Many Palestinians fear the end result will be a partition of Gaza between an Israeli-controlled zone, where some reconstruction might take place, and the rest, where almost all of the population of more than 2 million live with little rebuilding.

Who will make up the Board of Peace?

Trump has said the board will be made up of "distinguished leaders" from other countries, including former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and that its members will be named in the coming weeks.

But who they will be is unknown, and even Blair's participation has not been confirmed.

The U.N. resolution gives the Board complete say in Gaza with powers over the ISF, reconstruction and economic recovery. The Board is also to oversee a "technocratic, apolitical committee of competent Palestinians" who will run the day-to-day civil service in Gaza.

Who are these independent Palestinians?

The members of the Palestinian committee are to have no connection to either Hamas or the Palestinian Authority, which currently administers scattered parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Israel has

rejected any role for the PA in Gaza.

The plan doesn't specify who will select the members, but that likely will fall to the Board of Peace. Israel will want to have a strong say in who can be included.

In an online post, Palestinian political analyst and pollster Khalil Shikaki said the committee should be picked through an "an all Palestinian" process to boost its support, consulting among political factions, trade syndicates, local leaders and women's and youth organizations.

But if the Board and the committee are seen as a tool for the U.S. or Israel, prominent Palestinians may be reluctant to join. In its statement Monday, Hamas denounced the "international guardianship" that the U.N. resolution places on Gaza, saying it aims to further Israel's interests.

What is all this leading to?

The plan emphasizes two goals for Gaza – demilitarization and reconstruction. Anything beyond that remains largely blank.

The U.N. resolution offers the possibility of the Palestinian Authority eventually taking control of Gaza if it carries out a slate of internal reforms to the satisfaction of the Board of Peace – everything from fighting corruption, increasing efficiency to holding elections.

The Palestinian Authority welcomed the U.N. resolution in a statement Monday and said it was prepared to step in to govern Gaza. But Israeli opposition raises doubts whether that will ever be allowed to happen.

Under pressure from Arab allies, the United States inserted a reference to Palestinian statehood in the U.N. resolution.

But it remains only a vague nod. It states that if the Palestinian Authority "faithfully" carries out reforms and if Gaza redevelopment advances, "conditions may finally be in place for a credible pathway to Palestinian self-determination and statehood."

The lack of a clear path to self-determination threatens to complicate every other step. For example, Shikaki wrote, without a path to statehood, "disarmament will be seen as capitulation; with it, demobilization can be framed as part of national strategy."

For much of the population, the priority is to see reconstruction and a revival of Gaza's economy so families have livelihoods. If that comes, it could paper over reluctance toward international rule, at least for a time. If it doesn't or if Palestinians see no progress toward self-determination, resentment is likely to mount.

The potential for chaos is high with the multiple divisions within Gaza. Already, the territory has Hamas, several Israeli-backed armed gangs that oppose the militant group and the Israeli military itself. Add to those a Palestinian police force, international troops, Palestinians who join the administration and those who oppose it – and the scene becomes even more volatile.

Zelenskyy will visit Turkey in a new bid to jump-start talks to end Russia's invasion

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Tuesday that he will travel to Turkey this week in an attempt to jump-start negotiations on ending Russia's full-scale invasion, which began nearly four years ago.

The Kremlin said that Russia would not be sending anyone to Turkey, and it was not immediately clear if there would be U.S. participation in the talks. Zelenskyy told a news conference in Spain that he would meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to discuss "a just peace for Ukraine."

Zelenskyy's statement came as Ukraine's military said it had again used American-supplied ATACMS missiles to attack targets inside Russia, although it did not provide further details. Kyiv says that the use of longer-range missiles is vital in preventing strikes against Ukrainian cities, while the Kremlin has warned that the use of American weapons to strike targets inside its territory risks greater pressure on Russian-U.S. relations.

A senior Turkish official told The Associated Press that U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff would join Zel-

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enskyy in Turkey, but backtracked later in the day and said Witkoff wouldn't be coming.

Zelenskyy did not confirm whether U.S. representatives would also take part. "We see some positions and signals from the United States," he said. "Well, let's see tomorrow."

Three U.S. officials said they were not aware of any imminent overseas travel by Witkoff, though they acknowledged he is not a government employee and sometimes travels without U.S. government support.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the matter, said Witkoff would be in Washington for much of this week to attend events related to a state visit by the Saudi crown prince on Tuesday and Wednesday.

A top Turkish spokesman said the talks in Turkey will be held in Ankara and will center on how to establish a ceasefire and a lasting settlement. They also will touch on Ukraine-Turkey relations, Burhanettin Duran, Turkey's head of presidential communications, said on the social platform X.

Turkey provided a setting for low-level talks between Ukraine and Russia earlier this year, though the only significant progress in Istanbul was on exchanging prisoners of war. U.S.-led international peace efforts have brought no breakthrough, either.

Looming U.S. sanctions

U.S. President Donald Trump has expressed frustration with Russian President Vladimir Putin's refusal to budge from his demands for putting an end to the war.

Heavy new American sanctions on Russia's all-important oil industry, devised to push Putin to the negotiating table, are due to take effect on Friday. The sanctions against oil companies Rosneft and Lukoil seek to starve Putin's war machine of cash and halt its grinding war of attrition, which has claimed tens of thousands of lives in Ukraine.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday that "there will be no Russian representative in Turkey" on Wednesday, although he insisted that Moscow is ready to negotiate.

"For now, these contacts are taking place without Russian participation. We will await information on what would actually be discussed in Istanbul," Peskov said during his daily conference call with reporters.

Washington's sanctions also carry the threat of secondary penalties against anyone violating them, raising the stakes for Putin. China and India are major importers of Russian oil.

In the meantime, Zelenskyy has been traveling to European capitals to gather support for Ukraine's war effort, meeting Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez on Tuesday. Madrid said it would provide Ukraine with aid worth \$946 million for defense and reconstruction.

The Ukrainian leader was in Paris on Monday where he signed a letter of intent to buy up to 100 Rafale warplanes from France, along with drones and ground-to-air systems.

Ukraine hits sites in Russia-occupied Donetsk

On the battlefield, Ukraine launched a surprise aerial attack on energy infrastructure in occupied parts of its eastern Donetsk region.

The Russian-appointed head of the partially occupied region, Denis Pushilin, on Tuesday morning reported an "unprecedented" Ukrainian attack that damaged two thermal power stations and left many areas without power. A day earlier, Pushilin also reported Ukrainian drones attacking energy infrastructure in the region, denying power to around 500,000 consumers. The occupied part of the region has also endured water shortages.

The commander of Ukraine's Unmanned Systems Forces, Maj. Robert Brovdi, published footage that he said showed strikes Tuesday on two thermal power plants located in the Russian-controlled parts of Donetsk.

Ukrainian forces, despite being heavily outnumbered, are fighting hard to prevent Russia's army from capturing any more of Donetsk.

In Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, meanwhile, a 17-year-old girl was killed and 10 other people were wounded in a Russian missile strike on the town of Berestyn, located about 110 kilometers (70 miles) from the Russian border, regional head Oleh Syniehubov said.

Russian drones sparked multiple fires in the central Ukrainian city of Dnipro last night, injuring two people, said Vladyslav Haivanenko, the head of the regional military administration. The drones damaged

six residential buildings, as well as the local offices of Ukraine's public broadcaster Suspilne, though the company said the building was empty at the time.

Corruption scandal dogs Zelenskyy

At home, Zelenskyy remains under political pressure over a \$100 million embezzlement and kickback scandal involving top officials and Ukraine's state nuclear power company. The scandal broke last week and brought the resignations of two members of Zelenskyy's Cabinet.

Petro Poroshenko, a former Ukrainian president and the leader of the European Solidarity opposition party, demanded the dismissal of the entire Ukrainian government on Tuesday.

A dozen lawmakers from his party stood alongside him in the Verkhovna Rada, Ukraine's Parliament, holding up placards protesting corruption. Poroshenko and his supporters blocked any other speakers from going up, halting the parliamentary session.

Zelenskyy has pledged to weed out entrenched corruption, but has been dogged by graft scandals that have caused public outrage.

Zelenskyy said that he would meet with senior officials in his government on Thursday, as well as with the leadership of Ukraine's Parliament and his political party, called Servant of the People.

The LA County sheriff is investigating a new sex battery claim against Sean 'Diddy' Combs

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said it's investigating a new sexual battery allegation against hip-hop mogul Sean "Diddy" Combs, who is serving a four-year prison sentence on prostitution-related convictions.

A male music producer and publicist said he was asked in late 2020 to come to a photo shoot involving clothing belonging to the late rapper Notorious B.I.G. at a Los Angeles warehouse, according to a police report. Once there, Combs exposed himself, told the man to perform a sex act, then tossed a dirty shirt that once belonged to the rapper at the man, according to the police report.

The accuser, whose name is redacted from the police report, said he did not tell anyone for several years because he felt embarrassed. He came forward to police in Largo, Florida, this September, shortly after Combs was convicted on other charges.

Combs rejects the latest allegations, his civil attorney, Jonathan Davis, said in a statement in which he also said he could not address every "meritless allegation."

"Let me make it absolutely clear, Mr. Combs categorically denies as false and defamatory all claims that he sexually abused anyone," Davis said.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department said Monday that it received an official copy of the report from the Florida department on Friday, and will investigate the allegations.

The report also details a March 2021 encounter in which the accuser claims two men covered his head before Combs came into the room, called him a snitch and sexually assaulted the accuser, according to the police report.

Combs was convicted in July of flying his girlfriends and male sex workers around the country to engage in drug-fueled sexual encounters in multiple places over many years. However, he was acquitted of sex trafficking and racketeering charges that could have put him behind bars for life.

He is set to be released in May 2028, though he can earn reductions in his time behind bars through his participation in substance abuse treatment and other prison programs.

B.I.G., whose real name was Christopher Wallace, collaborated with Combs on music. He was fatally shot in Los Angeles in 1997.

Poland says 2 Ukrainians working for Russia are suspected in railway track blast

By CLAUDIA CIOBANU Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Two Ukrainian citizens working for Russia are suspected of blowing up a railway line in Poland over the weekend, Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Tuesday.

Speaking to the Sejm, the lower house of the Polish parliament, Tusk said the two suspects had been collaborating with the Russian secret services for a long time. He said their identities were known but could not be revealed to the public because of ongoing investigations. The pair have already left Poland, exiting via the Terespol border crossing to Belarus, he said.

Tusk has described the weekend explosion on a rail line linking Poland's capital, Warsaw, to the border with Ukraine as an "unprecedented act of sabotage."

In a separate incident, which Polish officials also now confirm as sabotage, power lines over another segment of the same rail line further south were also damaged.

When asked to comment on Polish statements saying that two Ukrainian nationals working for Russia had sabotaged a railway line, presidential spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said it would be "strange if Russia wasn't blamed first."

"Russia is accused of all forms of hybrid and direct warfare taking place in Poland," Peskov told Russian media Tuesday. "In this regard, Russophobia is, of course, in full bloom."

Western officials have accused Russia and its proxies of staging dozens of attacks and other incidents across Europe since the invasion of Ukraine more than three years ago, according to data collected by the AP. Moscow's goal, Western officials say, is to undermine support for Ukraine, spark fear and divide European societies.

A meeting of the governmental National Security Committee took place in Warsaw earlier Tuesday with the participation of military commanders, heads of the intelligence services and a representative of the president.

Army patrols have been sent to check the safety of railways and other key infrastructure in the east of the country, the defense minister said.

Polish prosecutors have initiated an investigation into "acts of sabotage of a terrorist nature" directed against railway infrastructure and committed for the benefit of foreign intelligence.

"These actions brought about an immediate danger of a land traffic disaster, threatening the lives and health of many people and property on a large scale," prosecutors said in a statement.

In the first incident, an explosion damaged the tracks near the village of Mika, about 100 kilometers (60 miles) southeast of Warsaw. In a separate incident, power lines were destroyed in the area of Puławy, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) from Lublin. Trains carrying passengers were forced to stop at both locations, but no one was hurt.

"The explosion was most likely intended to blow up the train," Tusk said on Monday in reference to the Mika incident.

The damage caused at both locations has been repaired.

Trump says Christians are being persecuted in Nigeria. The reality is more complicated

By CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

LIGARI, Nigeria (AP) — The villagers in northwestern Nigeria were settling in for church service when motorcycle-riding gunmen invaded, shooting at random and seizing at least 62 people, including the pastor and several children.

They were marched into the nearby bush, then forced to walk for two days to a forest hideout. There, they said, they were held for nearly a month while relatives and other villagers sold anything they could — farmland, livestock, motorcycles — to raise the ransom demanded for their release.

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They got little food and sleep, were told to renounce Christianity, and saw two fellow hostages killed, four of the villagers who were eventually freed told The Associated Press in interviews at their church in the Ligari community, in Nigeria's Kaduna state.

"I told my people even if they see my dead body, they should not deny Jesus and they should remain strong," said the Rev. Micah Bulus, resident pastor of Kauna Baptist Church.

Since the attack last November, the community has experienced more violence, like much of the conflict-battered north. On Monday, gunmen abducted 25 schoolgirls and killed at least one staff member at a boarding school in Kebbi, another northwestern state.

In Ligari, villagers say nearly every household has seen a relative, friend or neighbor killed or abducted. It's part of the longstanding security crisis in Nigeria — a place now singled out by U.S. President Donald Trump for "the killing of Christians" by "radical Islamists."

Victims and church leaders echo Trump's claims that Christians are persecuted. They say they've long been attacked, kidnapped or killed because of their faith.

But many insist the reality isn't as simple as Trump's narrative, which casts Christianity as facing an "existential threat" in Nigeria. Experts and residents say some attacks target Christians, but most emphasize that in the widespread violence that has long plagued the West African nation, everyone is a potential victim, regardless of background or belief.

"They don't ask you whether you are a Muslim or a Christian," 32-year-old Abdulmalik Saidu said of the gunmen regularly stalking his northwestern state, Zamfara. "All they want is just money from you. (Even) if you have money, sometimes they will kill you."

Saidu, a Muslim, said his brother was shot dead during a kidnapping operation along a major highway, and the family never recovered his body, for fear of attacks. In Kaduna, an imam told AP that he's lost a grandson, cousin and brother, and his family has been displaced twice due to violence. Other religious leaders say mosques have been destroyed, people have fled, and desperate Muslims — like their Christian neighbors — have been forced to sell goods and belongings for ransom.

"The kind of pain we've gone through for the past years — this issue affects both faiths," said the imam, Idris Ishaq.

'A war against Nigeria'

Nigeria's population of 220 million is split almost evenly between Christians, who live predominantly in the south, and Muslims, mostly in the north — where attacks have long been concentrated and where levels of illiteracy, poverty and hunger are among the country's highest. Nationwide, Muslims constitute a slight majority.

Experts and data from two nonpartisan sources — the U.S.-based Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project and Council on Foreign Relations — show Christians are often targets in a small percentage of overall attacks that appear to be motivated by religion, in some northern states.

But the numbers and analysts also indicate that across the north, most victims of overall violence are Muslims.

Analysts and residents blame the killings on rampant corruption that limits weapons supplies to security forces, the failure to prosecute attackers, and porous borders that ensure steady weapons supplies to gangs.

"These attacks are indiscriminate: They attack state institutions, they target Nigerians in their places of worship, they target Nigerians in civilian locations," said Bulama Bukarti, a Nigerian conflict researcher and human rights lawyer. "In essence, it is a war against Nigeria."

In the northeast, Boko Haram jihadi extremists and, more recently, an Islamic State-backed breakaway faction have since 2009 waged an insurgency to enforce their brutal interpretation of Shariah law. In 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped 276 schoolgirls — mostly Christian, but some Muslim — from a school in Chibok, in Borno state. The unprecedented attack marked a new era of fear across Nigeria. Mass abductions, particularly of students, have been on the rise since.

In the northwest and central regions, rogue gangs attack villages, travelers and farming communities comprised mostly of Christians. The gangs aren't connected to Boko Haram and generally aren't motivated by religion. The ransoms they demand can reach thousands of dollars.

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The Ligari community, with the church where 62 were kidnapped, is less than 20 kilometers (12 miles) from Kaduna's capital. But its rocky road, vast forest, and lack of security posts mean villagers get little security intervention.

"My wife has been kidnapped twice, and I have been kidnapped once," said Micah Musa, a farmer who complained that officers never came to the family's aid. "Everything I had has been destroyed."

Analysts say numbers can't tell the whole story

Trump named Nigeria a "country of particular concern" — a U.S. declaration for nations it says fail to act on religious freedom violations — and this month told defense officials to begin preparing for military action here. On Monday, the State Department reiterated to AP that the U.S. "stands ready, willing, and able to act" in Nigeria.

Trump's declaration followed a campaign by Republican lawmakers who say 100,000 Christians have been killed in Nigeria — a figure also cited by TV talk-show host Bill Maher. The number now echoes among Nigeria's Christian communities, but experts say it's likely inflated.

The ACLED — which uses local news reports for its data — says 52,915 civilians have been killed in Nigeria through targeted political violence since 2009, with both Christian and Muslim victims.

"It is important to note that while attacks against Christians are both real and deeply concerning, communities across religious lines are affected," said Ladd Serwat, senior Africa analyst at ACLED.

The Council on Foreign Relations' Nigeria security tracker, which also uses news reports, shows that more than 100,000 Nigerians have died in armed violence since 2011 — but that figure includes civilians and security forces, which are overstretched and often targeted by gangs.

Analysts say breakdowns by religion simply aren't possible. Religious identities aren't always reported, recordkeeping amid violence is difficult, and attack motivations can be unclear.

Like Christians, some Muslims say they're targeted for their faith. Mosques have been attacked during prayers, and worshippers inside killed or abducted. Experts say that in all cases, religious or economic motives could be at play.

Desperate families strike deals with gangs

Arrests in attacks are rare. The lack of law enforcement has pushed some communities into deals with gangs, allowing them to access their farmlands — a sign of growing desperation.

"The message the government sends is that you can commit heinous crimes and get away with it," researcher Bukarti said.

In June, gunmen killed at least 150 people in the Yelewata community in north-central Nigeria. Security forces arrived long after the attackers left, villager Titus Tsegba told AP. His wife and four children were among those killed.

After the November church attack in Kaduna, freed hostages said they felt abandoned, with no support from security forces. They noted that despite trekking through nearby communities for two days to the kidnappers' hideout, they saw no law enforcement presence.

Some deals with gangs have resulted in fewer killings, Kaduna pastor Simon Shuaibu said. But villagers depend on farming, he said, and gangs force them to pay before harvesting or face kidnapping.

Tabitha Danladi, 55, and her husband were kidnapped in June. She was released and told to raise money to free him, she said.

"I've sold everything," said Danladi, who struggles to feed her four children while paying the ransoms. "But we don't know if he's still alive."

To some, Trump's words bring hope

When Trump threatened military intervention, Nigerian officials largely rejected the notion.

But some see it as a wake-up call for a government they say has ignored them.

"Many Nigerians have reacted to Trump's statements with, at minimum, anger and frustration at the Nigerian government, if not in some cases an outright embrace of the possibility of a U.S. intervention," said James Barnett, an Africa researcher with the Washington-based Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank.

In Kaduna, the Rev. John Hayab, a Baptist pastor, said Trump brought needed attention.

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"If there's any voice that can wake them up ... please let that voice be increased," he said. "We've been crying out all these years; actions were not taken."

Today in History: November 19 Lincoln delivers Gettysburg Address

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 19, the 323rd day of 2025. There are 42 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Nov. 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address at the dedication of a national cemetery at the site of the Civil War battlefield of Gettysburg in Pennsylvania.

Also on this date:

In 1959, Ford Motor Co. announced it was halting production of the unpopular Edsel.

In 1969, Apollo 12 astronauts Charles Conrad and Alan Bean made the second crewed landing on the moon.

In 1977, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat became the first Arab leader to visit Israel.

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev met for the first time as they began their summit in Geneva.

In 1998, Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr testified before the House Judiciary Committee during impeachment hearings against President Bill Clinton. (The full House approved two articles of impeachment against Clinton that December; Clinton was later acquitted in a Senate trial).

In 2017, Charles Manson, the cult leader behind the murders of actress Sharon Tate and six others in Los Angeles in 1969, died in a California hospital at the age of 83 after nearly a half-century in prison.

In 2022, five people were killed and 25 injured when a shooter opened fire at an LGBTQ+ nightclub in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Today's Birthdays: Talk show host Dick Cavett is 89. Media mogul and philanthropist Ted Turner is 87. Fashion designer Calvin Klein is 83. Poet Sharon Olds is 83. Sportscaster and former NFL wide receiver Ahmad Rashad is 76. Broadcast journalist Ann Curry is 69. Former NASA astronaut Eileen Collins is 69. Writer-filmmaker Charlie Kaufman is 67. Actor Allison Janney is 66. Actor Meg Ryan is 64. Actor-filmmaker Jodie Foster is 63. Olympic gold medal-winning sprinter Gail Devers is 59. Entrepreneur Jack Dorsey is 49. Olympic gold medal-winning gymnast Kerri Strug is 48. Actor Reid Scott is 48. Film director Barry Jenkins ("Moonlight") is 46. Actor Adam Driver is 42. NHL forward Patrick Kane is 37.