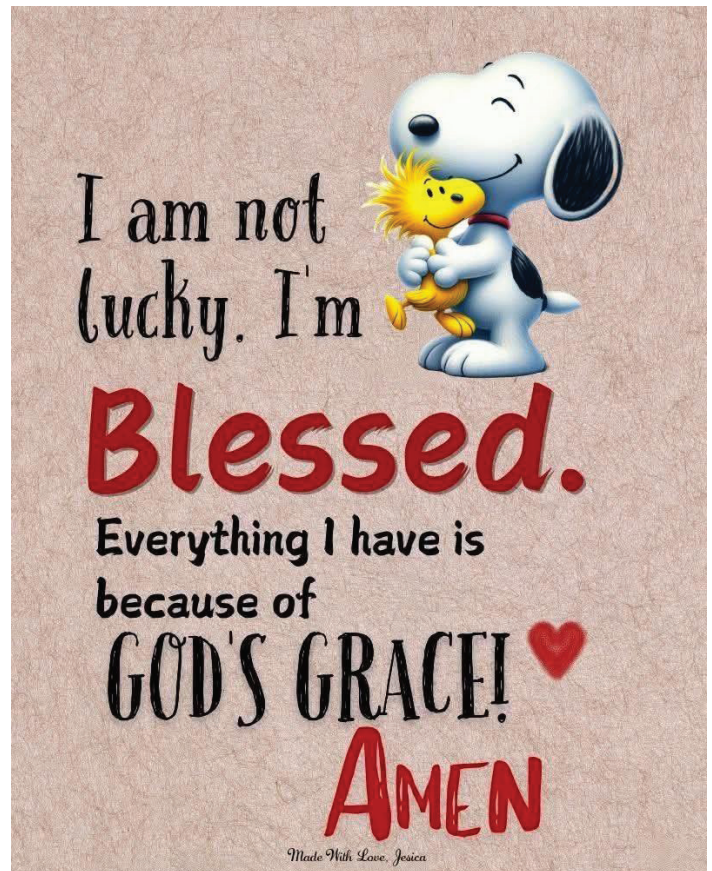


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## Friday, Nov. 21

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

## Sunday, Nov. 23

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m. (Special Congregational Meeting); Choir 6 p.m.

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

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

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

a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

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

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

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

6th grade GBB Practice, 2 p.m.

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

5th grade GBB Practice, 4 p.m.

2nd grade GBB Practice, 4 p.m.

Dance Team Practice, 5 p.m.

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

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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.**

## Dick Cheney Funeral

A funeral service for former Vice President Dick Cheney was held yesterday at Washington National Cathedral. The invitation-only event included former presidents George W. Bush and Joe Biden, along with four of the five living vice presidents. President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance were not invited and did not issue statements.

Cheney died Nov. 3 at age 84 from complications related to pneumonia and cardiac and vascular disease. He served as the 46th vice president (2001-09), secretary of defense (1989-93), Wyoming's at-large congressman (1979-89), and White House chief of staff (1975-77). He played a central role in US foreign policy, spearheading Operation Desert Storm and advocating for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1991.

Bush joined Cheney's daughter, former Rep. Liz Cheney, in delivering tributes. The service was just the second of its kind for a vice president at the cathedral.

## Trump Meets Mamdani

President Donald Trump meets with New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani (D) at the White House today. It comes after the Nov. 4 mayoral election drew more than 2 million ballots—the city's largest turnout in over 50 years.

As the leader of the US' most populous city, it is customary for NYC mayors to meet with the US president. The city relies heavily on federal funding; for fiscal year 2025, NYC receives \$9.7B from the federal government, covering 8.3% of its total spending. While the two leaders have openly criticized each other, Mamdani said he hopes to align with Trump on the affordability crisis. Both campaigned on the cost of living; one in 10 New Yorkers who voted for Trump last year went on to vote for Mamdani.

Before being sworn in, Mamdani also requires top-level security clearance. Trump has previously threatened to deport Mamdani, who was born in Uganda and became a US citizen in 2018.

## 'Wicked' Returns

"Wicked: For Good," the second and final installment of the Broadway musical's film adaptation, premieres exclusively in theaters today. Watch the trailer here.

Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande return as Elphaba and Glinda in the sequel aligned with the stage musical's second act, with a few reported tweaks (spoiler alert). "Wicked: For Good" is projected to earn upward of \$200M at the global box office this weekend, shattering the \$162.5M opening weekend record for a Broadway-to-screen adaptation set by the first film. The strong forecast follows a nearly three-decade box office low last month, excluding pandemic-affected 2020 data. "Wicked: Part I" earned two Oscars, a Golden Globe, and ultimately grossed roughly \$756M globally—making it the highest-earning Broadway adaptation ever.

The original production of "Wicked" premiered on Broadway in October 2003, securing three Tonys and a Grammy. It was adapted from a 1995 novel by Gregory Maguire, intended as a prequel to L. Frank Baum's 1900 novel, "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz."

## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Warner Music settles copyright lawsuit with AI startup Udio, inking deal to collaborate on song creation service set to launch in 2026.

The Weeknd's After Hours 'Til Dawn tour grosses over \$1B, a feat first achieved by Taylor Swift's Eras

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tour in 2023.

Lainey Wilson wins Country Music Association Awards' entertainer of the year title.

National Book Awards presents lifetime achievement awards to Roxane Gay and George Saunders and recognizes five literary works—three by authors of Middle Eastern origin whose writings explore the region.

## Science & Technology

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin reveals designs for larger, more powerful rocket, positioning the space exploration company to compete more directly with Elon Musk's SpaceX for NASA contracts.

Scientists identify cells responsible for building facial features, shedding light on how genetic information from both parents combines to shape appearance and the origins of certain facial abnormalities.

Researchers map ancient mammal and reptile species' transition from land back to water using machine-learning algorithms and World War II-era naval statistics, filling a gap in evolutionary history.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close down (S&P 500 -1.6%, Dow -0.8%, Nasdaq -2.2%); bitcoin falls to lowest value since April.

US employers added 119,000 nonfarm jobs in September, more than the 50,000 jobs economists had forecast, per delayed jobs report; unemployment rate rose to 4.4%, the highest level since October 2021.

SoftBank to invest \$3B in Ohio factory for OpenAI data centers as part of \$500B Stargate project, for which SoftBank pledged a total of \$18B.

## Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump criticizes Democratic lawmakers for video urging US military personnel to defy any illegal orders; calls video an act of sedition punishable "by death".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy receives the US' proposed plan to end war with Russia; plan reportedly calls on Ukraine to abandon territory and shrink its military force, weapons arsenal.

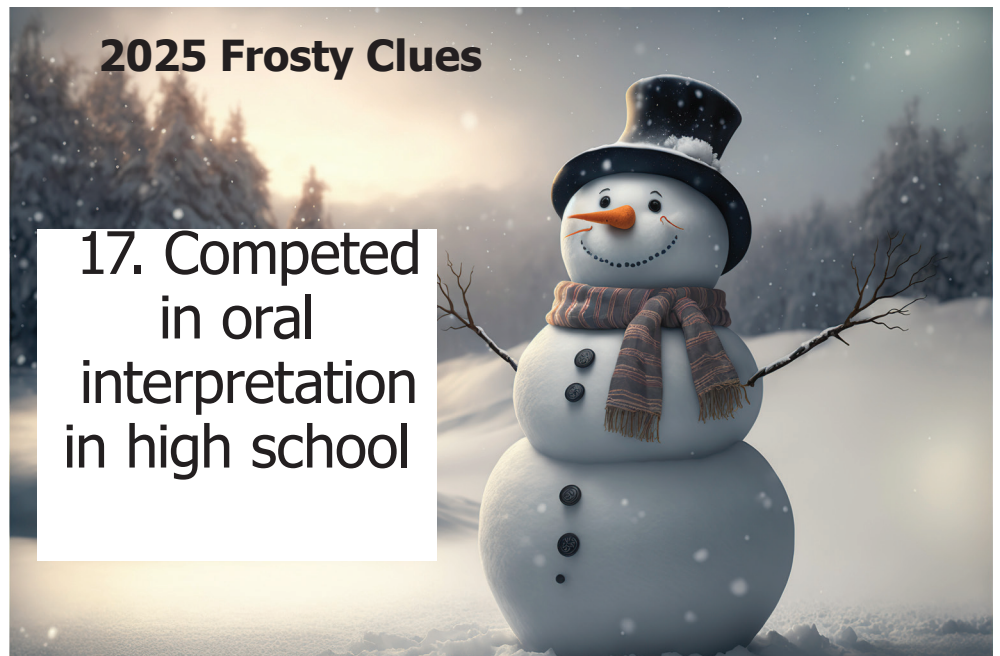
Fire erupts at UN climate summit in Brazil; officials say 13 people were hospitalized for smoke inhalation as of this writing.

## 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

17. Competed  
in oral  
interpretation  
in high school



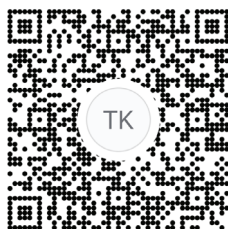
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**Be an angel this holiday season by bringing joy to those in need!**

Tina Kosel  
@Tina-Kosel-1



**venmo**

**If you want to donate to the Angel Tree Fund and want us to buy the presents for you, scan the Venmo code to the left. Thanks for your support of the Groton Angel Tree!**

**Any questions Call/Text Tina at**

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## Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #3 Results

**Team Standings:** Cheetahs 8, Shihtzus 7, Jackelopes 6, Coyotes 6, Foxes 5, Chipmunks 4

**Men's High Games:** Brad Waage 183, 175, 172, Brad Larson 182, Clay Wattier 173

**Women's High Games:** Suzie Easthouse 187, Vicki Jorgensen 171 & 162, Sam Bahr 160

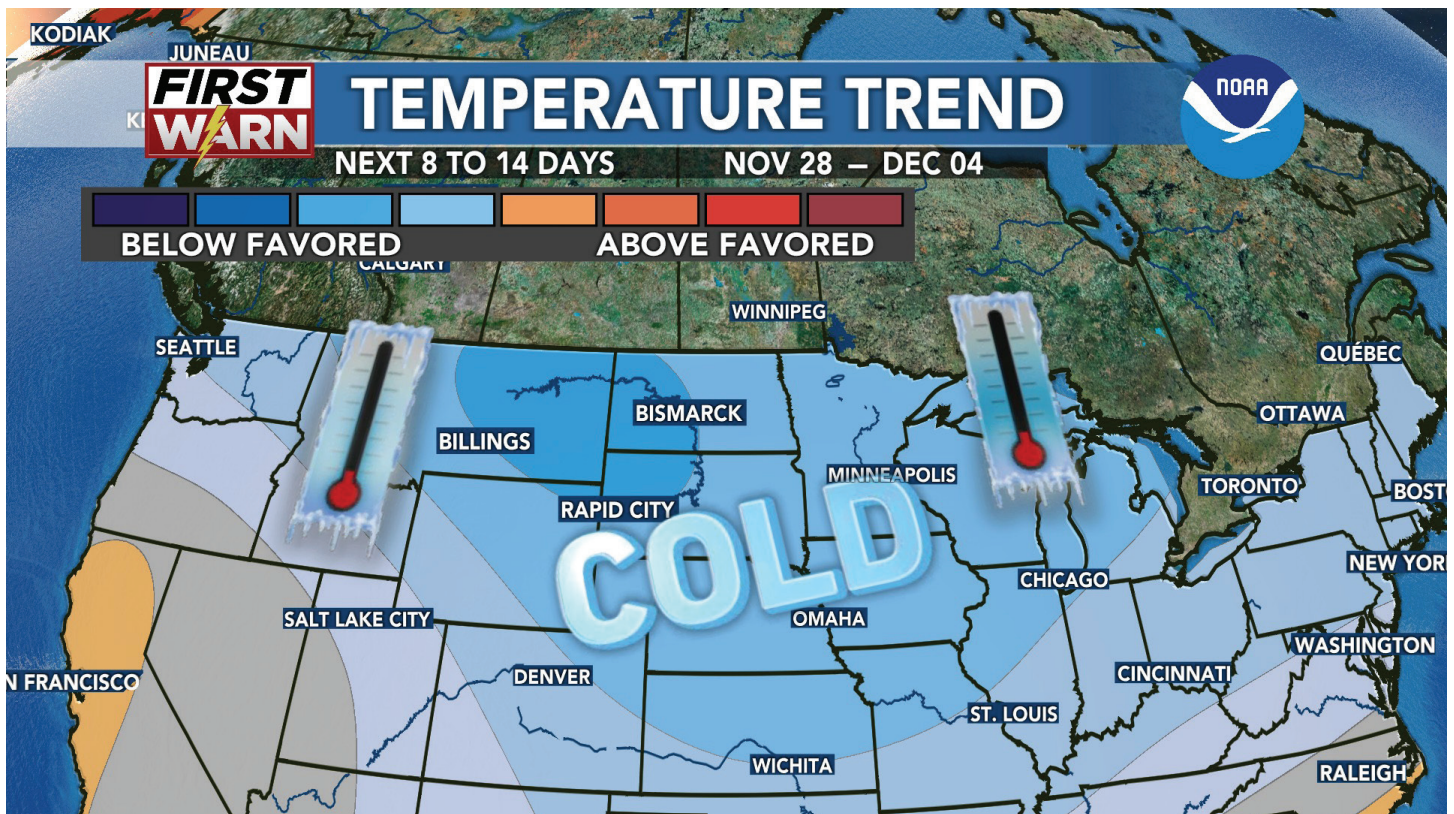
**Men's High Series:** Brad Waage 530, Brad Larson 461, Clay Wattier 443

**Women's High Series:** Vicki Jorgensen 479, Sam Bahr 464, Vicki Walter 428

**Fun Game Winners:** Most Strikes - Shihtzus with 25!

## Pantry October Report

In October, The Pantry - Groton, SD welcomed a total of 74 visits from individuals and families. During these visits Enrich Groton was able to distribute essential food and household items weighing a combined total of 2,630 pounds.



## 8-14 day Outlook: (No hype - just reality!)

After an unusually mild November, the month is still expected to finish on the warm side of normal. However, changes are on the horizon. Forecasters say a shift to below-normal temperatures is favored, along with increased chances for snowfall.

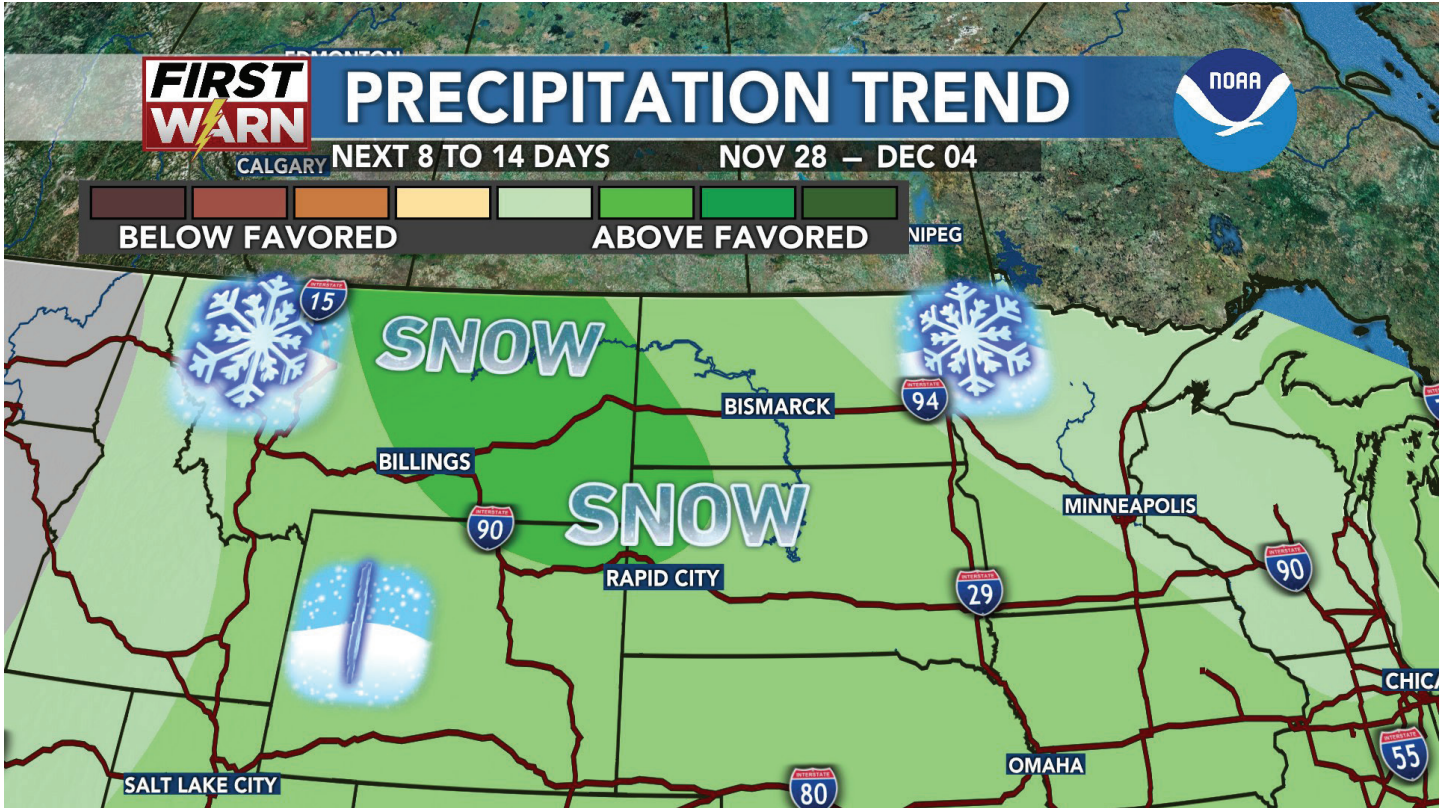
While it's too early to pin down the specifics of any major winter storm, confidence is high that colder weather and at least some snow are on the way. The first Alberta Clipper is expected to move in on Tuesday, ushering in a noticeable drop in temperatures. Highs on Thanksgiving Day are projected to remain in the 20s.

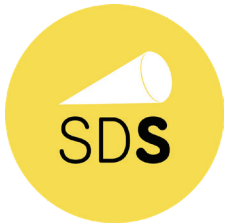
Following the holiday, the pattern could support a more significant system, but meteorologists caution that it is still too early for firm details.

For now, no hype and no doomsday predictions—just a straightforward message: winter is coming.

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## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Governor says lawmaker will be 'set straight' on suggestion to regulate agricultural water polluters**

**Legislator says he hopes his comments will 'bring folks to the table'**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER**

SIoux FALLS — South Dakota Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden pushed back Thursday on a lawmaker's suggestion that the agricultural industry should be more tightly regulated to improve water quality.

"Rest assured," Rhoden told town hall attendees, "he's going to be set straight on a few of his issues in a very kind, civil way. But I will have conversations."

Senate President Pro Tempore Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, said during a legislative committee meeting Wednesday that it might be time to "get serious" about new regulations on agriculture to address the state's polluted rivers and lakes.

"And that's pretty scary for folks, especially for those that are in the community that starts with the letter 'A' and ends with 'G,'" Karr said during the meeting. "We can sit here and talk about it, and dance around it all day. I think you can have some incentives, but we're going to have to look at some restrictions as well, and regulate."

Karr's comments came after Legislative Research Council staff shared a report that over three-quarters of monitored river and stream miles in the state fail to fully support at least one of their intended uses — such as swimming, fishing or boating — with similar problems in many lakes.

Rhoden, a rancher, said during his Thursday town hall at the Canopy by Hilton hotel in Sioux Falls that Karr's comments were "misinformation," saying they were "made out of ignorance." He added that "nobody on the planet has a bigger, more vested interest in protecting our environment and natural resources" than farmers and ranchers.

Rhoden told the media after the event that making a "carte blanche statement that we need more regulations is unhelpful, to say the least."

In an interview later Thursday with South Dakota Searchlight, Karr said Rhoden reached out to him to talk about the comments. Karr said he hopes the discussion and the controversy around his comments will lead to a larger conversation surrounding South Dakota's surface water quality.

He added that he "didn't mean to pick on ag in particular," but that the state will "have to look at restrictions and runoff" in rural and urban settings to improve surface water quality. The agricultural community has already risen up in defense, Karr said, as he predicted in his Wednesday comments.

"There's been a pretty strong reaction," Karr said, "but I'm hoping it'll bring folks to the table to say that 75% failure in our rivers and streams is something we can't live with."

South Dakota has "proactive" programs in place to address water quality in the state, Rhoden said, including grants to reduce livestock waste runoff into waterways. Karr said he's been speaking with water districts for years to learn about the state's surface water quality problems, and he played a role in the \$3 million infusion into a Big Sioux River grant program with 2021 legislation.

A recent final report on that program said it resulted in 67 buffer projects spanning 83 linear miles under 10-year contracts. The buffers prevent an estimated 1,500 pounds of phosphorus, 6,500 pounds of nitrogen and 1,000 tons of sediment from entering the Big Sioux River watershed each year.

Rep. Drew Peterson, R-Salem, a farmer, told South Dakota Searchlight that farmers and ranchers in his district are "highly regulated," conservation-minded and "pay taxes to the watershed districts to improve

water quality.”

“For someone to imply we are lax, unregulated and don’t care — that’s not fair to every producer and ag taxpayer working hard on this issue, and simply not true,” Peterson said.

Glenn Muller, executive director of the South Dakota Pork Producers Council, brought up the issue at the town hall, asking for Rhoden’s response.

Muller told South Dakota Searchlight that he would prefer the state further study the issue, to identify how different sectors of agriculture and other industries affect water quality. That would help create more targeted solutions, he said.

In response to Karr’s comments, Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen said that “top-down mandates” can be more expensive without being more effective.

“You can go too far the other way,” Venhuizen said, “and create a lot of new burdens that don’t really get you much in terms of value.”

*South Dakota Searchlight Reporter Joshua Haiar contributed to this report.*

*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.*

## State continues to incentivize dairies as industry struggles to find workers

**Boards affiliated with Governor’s Office of Economic Development approve \$17 million in aid to businesses**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER**

As some South Dakota dairy farmers struggle to find workers and as the state’s unemployment rate remains the lowest in the nation at 1.9%, South Dakota’s economic development office continues to approve incentives for the industry.

Two boards affiliated with the state Governor’s Office of Economic Development approved \$17 million of aid for businesses this month, according to a press release from the department. Most of it was for dairy operations.

“When businesses grow in our small towns, it creates a ripple effect that strengthens the whole community,” said Commissioner Bill Even, who leads the office. “Each of these projects represents a partnership between the state, local leaders and business owners working together to move South Dakota forward.”

Drumgoon Dairy, near Lake Norden, lost 38 of its 50 employees this summer after a federal Department of Homeland Security audit flagged workers for inaccurate, outdated or incomplete proof of U.S. citizenship or permission to work in the country. Dairy audits in the state increased this year, farmers have said, and Drumgoon has struggled to hire local employees to replace the workers in the aftermath.

That hasn’t stopped state officials from continuing to direct aid to the dairy industry. Warner-based Silverstreak Dairies was awarded up to \$12 million this month in Livestock Nutrient Management Bonds to build manure containment systems as part of the company’s recent \$32 million expansion, which doubled its capacity to 5,400 head.

Annie Vannurden, a partner in the Warner operation, told South Dakota Searchlight it employs 30 people. With the recent expansion, Silverstreak pivoted toward more technology to address workforce shortages, including introducing a post-milking robot and using collars to monitor cows’ needs and reduce the amount of human interaction.

The Livestock Nutrient Management Bond program issues tax-exempt bonds to purchasers — typically local banks — who set the repayment terms and interest rates for the company borrowing the money. This is the first bond in the program approved so far this year.

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Vannurden said the bond program helps dairy farms invest in their operations and technological upgrades rather than pay higher interest to other loan programs.

"It just shows that South Dakota cares about its dairy farms, people in agriculture and the environment," Vannurden said, adding, "because they want us to be thoughtful and mindful and complete in our manure handling and compliance."

Silverstreak Dairies is headquartered in Pierz, Minnesota, and operates eight dairies — the Warner dairy is the company's sole South Dakota operation. The Warner operation was previously awarded \$8.74 million in a Livestock Nutrient Management Bond in February 2024.

Two Reinvestment Payment Program grants were awarded this month to Pipestone Management. Up to \$1.3 million will support the construction of a new 12,000-head breed-to-wean sow farm at Edmunds County-based Century Swine RE. Another \$862,806 in grants were awarded to Miner County's Hord Family Farms of SD to construct an 8,773-head breed-to-wean sow farm.

The state awarded another Reinvestment Payment Program grant of up to nearly \$2 million to Whitewood Dairy to build a 9,500-head facility. According to a report in the Kingsbury Journal newspaper, the dairy would be in Kingsbury County, in the eastern part of the state.

The Reinvestment Payment Program offers state grants to companies to offset the sales and use taxes charged on the construction of new or expanded facilities, or upgrading equipment. The state has approved eight grants from the program so far this year totaling about \$14 million.

Two South Dakota Works loans were awarded this month: \$80,000 to Sioux Falls-based Driven Properties, of Driven Fire Consultants fire sprinkler design and consulting firm, to support the purchase of a Rapid City office building; and \$900,000 to Social Fan, of GameDay Social, to consolidate its operations in Sioux Falls while expanding its in-house production of college athletics apparel.

The South Dakota Works program offers state loans to businesses for construction, buying equipment and general expenses. The loans are typically less than \$1 million.

The state has approved 11 loans from the program so far this year totaling \$8 million.

*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.*

## Progress on overdose deaths could be jeopardized by federal cuts, critics say

**Trump administration's rejection of 'harm reduction' measures also worries states**

**BY: SHALINA CHATLANI**

The Trump administration has made deep cuts to the main federal agency focused on fighting opioid addiction, potentially jeopardizing the nation's recent progress on reducing overdose deaths, some public health officials and providers say.

Created in 1992, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, known as SAMHSA, hands out billions in grants for mental health and addiction services. The agency, which is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, had a budget of about \$7.5 billion last year.

Since January, the Trump administration has reduced the agency's staff by more than half, scrapped \$1.7 billion in block grants for state health departments and eliminated roughly \$350 million in addiction and overdose prevention funding, according to a recent analysis by STAT, a health news website. The agency is currently without an administrator and is missing 12 of its 17 senior leaders.

Dr. Yngvild Olsen, the former director of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment at SAMHSA, said almost all of SAMHSA's substance misuse funding flows to state and local health departments, nonprofits and behavioral health providers on the front lines of the fight against addiction. She noted that the agency has worked with state and local partners to make sure naloxone, the overdose-reversal medication, is "in

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the hands of every person who needs it.”

“I’m not sure that a very reduced SAMHSA is going to really be able to continue that focus,” said Olsen, now an adviser to the consulting firm Manatt.

But Andrew Nixon, communications director for the Health and Human Services Department, said the Trump administration is “committed to tackling addiction with compassion and accountability, ensuring taxpayer dollars fund programs that lead to real recovery.”

“SAMHSA is prioritizing treatment, prevention and long-term recovery while ensuring all federally funded programs comply with the law,” Nixon said in an email.

In March, the administration announced that as part of a major restructuring of the Department of Health and Human Services, it planned to fold SAMHSA and four other agencies into a new Administration for a Healthy America. HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., said the reorganization would reduce “bureaucratic sprawl.”

“We are realigning the organization with its core mission and our new priorities in reversing the chronic disease epidemic,” Kennedy said in a statement.

In July, a federal judge in Rhode Island issued a preliminary injunction temporarily blocking the planned reorganization.

The cuts come at a time of steady progress in the fight against opioid addiction.

Overdose deaths have fallen consistently since 2023. As of April, the latest figures available, there were 76,500 deaths over the previous 12 months — the lowest year-over-year tally since March 2020. The pandemic drove the number as high as nearly 113,000 in the summer of 2023, according to federal statistics.

A more timely indicator of overdoses — nonfatal suspected overdose patients in hospital emergency departments — was down 7% this year through August compared with 2024, according to a recent Stateline analysis of statistics from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Only a few states and the District of Columbia saw a rise in nonfatal overdoses for the year. The largest increases were 17% in the district, 16% in Rhode Island, 15% in Delaware, 11% in Connecticut and 10% in New Mexico, with smaller increases in Colorado, Pennsylvania, Wyoming, South Dakota, Utah, New Jersey and Minnesota.

Sara Goldsby, director of the South Carolina Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, said the SAMHSA cuts come at a time when her state is making “good progress, like other states are, to get a handle on the drug crisis.” But Goldsby cautioned that “constant surveillance of the trends” is essential.

In New York, the staff cuts at SAMHSA have created uncertainty, according to Jihoon Kim, president and CEO of the Albany-based InUnity Alliance, which advocates for mental health and substance use organizations across the state. Federal grants account for about half of his members’ funding, he said.

“As the Trump administration has been dismantling SAMHSA and other agencies, the points of contact for a lot of my members have just vanished,” Kim said in an interview.

“We have a lot of providers who have no information — they just do not know what’s happening with their contract renewals. They continue to deliver services, and at some point they will be delivering services without the resources to do so from the federal government.”

## COVID-era grants

Some of the SAMHSA grants the administration terminated earlier this year were COVID-era expenditures scheduled to expire in September. Since the pandemic is over, HHS argued, there was no need for money to continue to flow.

Some state health officials Stateline contacted, including in California, Idaho, Maryland, Missouri and West Virginia, said the early cutoff hadn’t had much of an impact, either because they had already spent the money they were promised or resisted spending it on ongoing services.

But health officials and providers in other states told a different story.

Texas was counting on SAMHSA to provide about 77% of the agency’s annual budget for substance use

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programs, Thomas Vazquez, assistant press officer at the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, wrote in an email. The early cancellation of the COVID-era money deprived the state of more than \$24.7 million it planned to use to combat substance misuse.

In South Carolina, Wendy Hughes, president and CEO of the Lexington/Richland Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council, said her organization didn't have enough money before the pandemic. So the loss of the extra money, combined with inflation, "feels like a major cut."

"The cuts had a very significant impact on my organization in particular, as well as the others throughout the state," Hughes said. "What it meant was a fairly significant cut to a lot of our outpatient services. We also got a cut to our inpatient services, or detox. And for us, what that meant was we ended up eliminating some of our positions."

Hughes said her organization secured some additional state funding to mitigate some of the losses and has tried to preserve what it views as the most essential services, such as drug treatment for pregnant women and new mothers.

## Uncertain future

Some public health officials and providers of addiction services worry this year's SAMHSA grant cuts are only the beginning.

The Biden administration strongly supported efforts to make drug use less dangerous, such as increasing the availability of naloxone kits and training on how to use them. But President Donald Trump in July signed an executive order stating that SAMHSA grants will no longer "fund programs that fail to achieve adequate outcomes, including so-called 'harm reduction' or 'safe consumption' efforts that only facilitate drug use and its attendant harm."

In addition to making naloxone more widely available, harm reduction measures include needle exchanges, overdose prevention sites, fentanyl tests and wound care. Olsen, the former director of the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment at SAMHSA, said Trump's order has created widespread confusion.

"States have now become very anxious and nervous about the use of any federal funds for any part of their harm reduction organization, including staff that may have been involved in handing out naloxone," Olsen said. "Because of the wording of some of the messages and some of the guidance from SAMHSA, it's just very unclear as to what it is that they're really allowed to do versus not allowed to do, with respect to harm reduction."

Meanwhile, the Medicaid changes included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act that Trump signed in July, including new work requirements and more than \$900 billion in spending cuts over the next decade, will result in many people with substance use disorder losing their health care coverage and, potentially, their access to treatment.

The Medicaid changes in the law will decrease the number of people with health insurance by about 7.5 million people by 2034, according to the Congressional Budget Office. Medicaid, which is funded jointly by the federal government and the states, pays for a significant portion of mental health and substance use care in the United States.

"States were already struggling to meet the demand for treatment," said Hanna Sharif-Kazemi, a policy manager at the nonprofit Drug Policy Alliance, which advocates for health care instead of punishment for drug users.

"While the Trump administration says that they are trying to do these federal funding cuts as a way to get rid of duplicate funding streams, what they're actually doing is removing ... tools in our tool belt. And this is not the time for us to be getting rid of tools. We actually needed more tools and more funding in our tool belt to begin with. So it is really disappointing."

*Stateline reporter Shalina Chatlani can be reached at [schatlani@stateline.org](mailto:schatlani@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.*

*Shalina Chatlani covers health care and environmental justice for Stateline.*

## The Trump administration wants everyone to reapply for food stamps. What does that mean?

BY: JACOB FISCHLER

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins' call for a close reexamination of the 42 million people who receive federal food aid has befuddled advocates and lawmakers, coming mere days after recipients began to see benefits that had been stalled during the government shutdown.

Details remain scant a week after Rollins during an interview on the right-wing Newsmax network first publicly broached the startling idea that every beneficiary would have to reapply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, often called food stamps.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, asked for an explanation, referenced existing requirements and suggested more changes in SNAP rules could be in store.

"Secretary Rollins wants to ensure the fraud, waste, and incessant abuse of SNAP ends," a USDA spokesperson wrote Wednesday. "Rates of fraud were only previously assumed, and President Trump is doing something about it. Using standard recertification processes for households is a part of that work. As well as ongoing analysis of state data, further regulatory work, and improved collaboration with states."

The 2008 law governing SNAP leaves states responsible for administration. Part of that role includes periodically making sure that the low-income people in the program meet the qualifications for inclusion, but the law allows states to determine how often that occurs.

"It's not clear what she would be proposing that is different from what is already happening," said Katie Bergh, a senior policy analyst for food assistance at the left-leaning think tank Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

One interpretation of Rollins' comments is that she would remove all 42 million individuals from SNAP's rolls and ask them to resubmit applications. Bergh said that would lead to people losing money they need for groceries. About 40% of those enrolled in SNAP are children.

"If she's suggesting that they're going to somehow redo that process for more than 40 million people who already demonstrated their eligibility and who already have to periodically recertify their eligibility, that would be pretty duplicative and would likely create pretty significant paperwork backlogs that would cause people who are eligible to lose the food assistance that they need," Bergh said.

Administration critics have suggested that, while the comments are unlikely to lead to policy changes, they introduce even more confusion for a program that was used as a political token during the record government shutdown that ended this month.

Making people reapply would underscore the Trump administration's opposition to the nearly \$100 billion program, which accounts for 70% of federal nutrition assistance. USDA says the average SNAP household in fiscal 2023 received a monthly benefit of \$332, or \$177 a person based on the average SNAP household size of 1.9 people.

"Secretary Rollins and the Trump administration have cut food assistance for 42 million Americans multiple times this year," U.S. House Agriculture ranking member Angie Craig said in a Wednesday statement to States Newsroom. "Now, they've once again shown that they do not understand the program."

### What did Rollins say?

In the Nov. 13 interview on Newsmax, Rollins said SNAP was beset by widespread fraud, citing data that 29 mostly Republican-run states submitted to the department. Acquiring data from the 21 other states would give the department a way to wholly remake the program, she said.

"Can you imagine when we get our hands on the blue state data, what we're going to find?" she said. "It's going to give us a platform and a trajectory to fundamentally rebuild this program, have everyone reapply for their benefit, make sure that everyone that's taking a taxpayer-funded benefit through SNAP or food stamps that they literally are vulnerable, and they can't survive without it. And that's the next step here."

In an interview Monday on Fox News, host Maria Bartiromo asked Rollins about the move to have recipients "reapply."

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"Business as usual is over," Rollins answered in part. "The status quo is no more. We know that the SNAP program is rife with fraud."

She added that guarding against fraud would help those the program is meant to serve.

The comments touched off widespread confusion about what specifically Rollins meant.

Asked about the initiative during a Thursday press conference, Craig, a Minnesota Democrat, said she was unclear about how it would work and predicted that Rollins would take credit in the future for the existing low rate of fraud.

"We're hearing off the record that, you know, maybe people don't know what the hell they're talking about," she said. "In fact, I think they're trying to take credit for the already very strict standards and the actual low fraud rate in the SNAP program ... So we can find no real plan there. Not even sure there's concepts of a plan there."

In response to a States Newsroom request this week for details about the initiative, USDA provided the statement that did not answer how the department would proceed or under what authority, but said Rollins was seeking to reduce fraud in the program.

Spokespeople did not respond to follow-up questions, or a request to respond to Craig's remarks Thursday.

## Low fraud rate

Program experts say fraud is not a widespread problem for SNAP.

An April report from the nonpartisan Congressional Research Service found that retailers illegally trafficked about 1.6% of SNAP benefits from fiscal 2015 to 2017.

Fraud by households applying for SNAP, which appear to be the main target of Rollins' proposal, is even lower.

According to a USDA report, about 26,000 applications were referred for an administrative review or prosecution on suspicion of fraud. That number accounts for about 0.1% of the 22.7 million households enrolled in the program, according to the Pew Research Center.

"Long-standing data sources indicate that intentional fraud by participants is rare," Bergh said.

At Thursday's press conference, Craig called Rollins' comments "bullsh\*t" and "propaganda."

"Secretary Rollins goes on TV and talks about all the fraud," she said. "This most effective anti-hunger program in our history has a fraud rate of 1.6%. It's actually one of the most effective, well-run programs in the country ... The bullsh\*t this administration is peddling is egregious."

## More targeted reforms

Even experts who advocate for reforms to SNAP say eligibility fraud is not a major issue.

Romina Boccia, director of budget and entitlement policy at the libertarian Cato Institute, said high-net-worth individuals can receive SNAP benefits, but aren't committing fraud by doing so.

"Some of the issues with SNAP ... aren't because of fraud or abuse, but they are because of bad program rules," said Boccia.

Boccia also cited an "incentive misalignment" inherent in the state-federal program. States have little incentive to control payments because the federal government funds the program, she said.

Forcing all beneficiaries to reapply would likely reduce the cost of the program by reducing the number of its beneficiaries, including by forcing out higher earners who may not consider the benefits they don't actually need to be worth the onerous reapplication process, Boccia said.

But it would also result in a percentage of low earners dropping off the program, as well as many who would be affected by the administrative backlog that would come with processing tens of millions of new applications, she said.

## Shutdown, the big beautiful bill, and confusion

Bergh said Rollins' comments "add insult to injury" because they come after congressional Republicans and President Donald Trump signed a major tax cuts and spending law that is expected to shrink federal

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SNAP spending by \$187 billion over 10 years. The law added work requirements for many SNAP recipients and shifted some costs to states.

That was followed by the six-week shutdown that saw a dizzying back-and-forth over whether November SNAP benefits would be paid.

"There has been huge amounts of chaos and confusion and disruption for both states and participants in recent weeks, largely due to the shutdown, but also because simultaneously, the administration has required states to implement many of the reconciliation bill's SNAP cuts," Bergh said.

Craig, in her statement, also said Rollins' comments would hurt the people who need the program.

"I am astounded by the secretary's careless disregard for the hungry seniors and children who can afford to eat because of this program," she said.

Sara Naomi Bleich, a public health policy professor at Harvard University, said in a phone interview the confusion from Rollins' comments compounded hardships produced by the Republican reconciliation law, known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.

"Big picture with the One Big Beautiful Bill Act is that there's basically this tidal wave coming to families that have low income," Bleich, who worked at USDA during the Obama and Biden administrations, said. "They're going to lose Medicaid. They're going to lose SNAP. There could be collateral impacts on the school meals. This is going to be a really hard time for families to navigate."

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

## Trump accuses 6 Democratic lawmakers of 'seditious behavior, punishable by death'

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump accused six Democratic lawmakers of sedition on social media Thursday and threatened them with punishment as severe as death, after they appeared in a video message encouraging U.S. armed forces to refuse "illegal orders."

Trump also shared another social media post that said the Democrats should be hanged.

The video's distribution online by Democrats comes as the Trump administration is mired in multiple legal cases objecting to the president's deployment of National Guard troops to cities across the country, including a challenge to Guard troops in Chicago which is now before the U.S. Supreme Court.

In several morning posts on his own social media platform Truth Social, Trump wrote, "This is really bad, and Dangerous to our Country. Their words cannot be allowed to stand. SEDITIOUS BEHAVIOR FROM TRAITORS!!! LOCK THEM UP??? President DJT"

"SEDITIONOUS BEHAVIOR, punishable by DEATH!," he added a couple of hours later.

Prior to writing and publishing his own, the president reposted several messages from users on Truth Social, including one by a user with the handle @P78 who wrote, "HANG THEM GEORGE WASHINGTON WOULD !!"

Trump and his social media supporters were referring to the video, which featured Democratic U.S. lawmakers who served in the military telling current members of the military and the intelligence community to "refuse illegal orders."

Each line in the video is alternately delivered by Sens. Elissa Slotkin of Michigan and Mark Kelly of Arizona, and Reps. Chris Deluzio and Chrissy Houlahan of Pennsylvania, Maggie Goodlander of New Hampshire and Jason Crow of Colorado.

"We know you are under enormous stress and pressure right now. Americans trust their military, but that trust is at risk. This administration is pitting our uniformed military and intelligence community professionals against American citizens. Like us, you all swore an oath to protect and defend this Constitution.

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Right now, the threats to our Constitution aren't just coming from abroad but from right here at home. Our laws are clear: You can refuse illegal orders," the lawmakers said.

The video was titled "Don't give up the ship."

## Does Trump want to 'execute' Democrats?

When asked by a CBS News reporter during the daily press briefing Thursday whether the president wants to "execute" members of Congress, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt answered, "No."

Leavitt said Trump was reacting to sitting members of Congress who "conspired" on the video message to encourage active duty service members and national security officials to "defy the president's lawful orders."

Leavitt singled out the participation of Slotkin and Kelly, who respectively served as a CIA intelligence officer and a Navy captain. Leavitt also highlighted Goodlander's marriage to former National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, who served under President Joe Biden.

"They were leaning into their credentials as former members of our military, as veterans, as former members of the national security apparatus, to signal to people serving under this commander-in-chief, Donald Trump, that you can defy him, and you can betray your oath of office. That is a very, very dangerous message, and it perhaps is punishable by law," Leavitt said.

During the ongoing exchange, CBS's Nancy Cordes pressed back, saying the lawmakers specifically say "illegal order" in the video.

"They're suggesting, Nancy, that the president has given illegal orders, which he has not. Every single order that is given to this United States military by this commander in chief and through this chain of command, through the secretary of War, is lawful," Leavitt responded.

## Democrats decry political violence

Democratic lawmakers sounded the alarm Thursday over Trump's social media posts, accusing him of encouraging political violence.

"Let's be crystal clear: the president of the United States is calling for the execution of elected officials. This is an outright threat, and it's deadly serious. We have already seen what happens when Donald Trump tells his followers that his political opponents are enemies of the state," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said on the Senate floor Thursday.

"Every time Donald Trump posts things like this, he makes political violence more likely. None of us should tolerate this kind of behavior," Schumer said, highlighting political violence in recent years, including the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol, and political assassinations just this past year.

House Committee on the Judiciary Chair Jamie Raskin, D-Md., called on Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., to "immediately denounce these reckless statements."

The six Democratic lawmakers featured in the video issued a joint statement, saying they "love this country and swore an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

"That oath lasts a lifetime, and we intend to keep it. No threat, intimidation, or call for violence will deter us from that sacred obligation. What's most telling is that the President considers it punishable by death for us to restate the law," the lawmakers said.

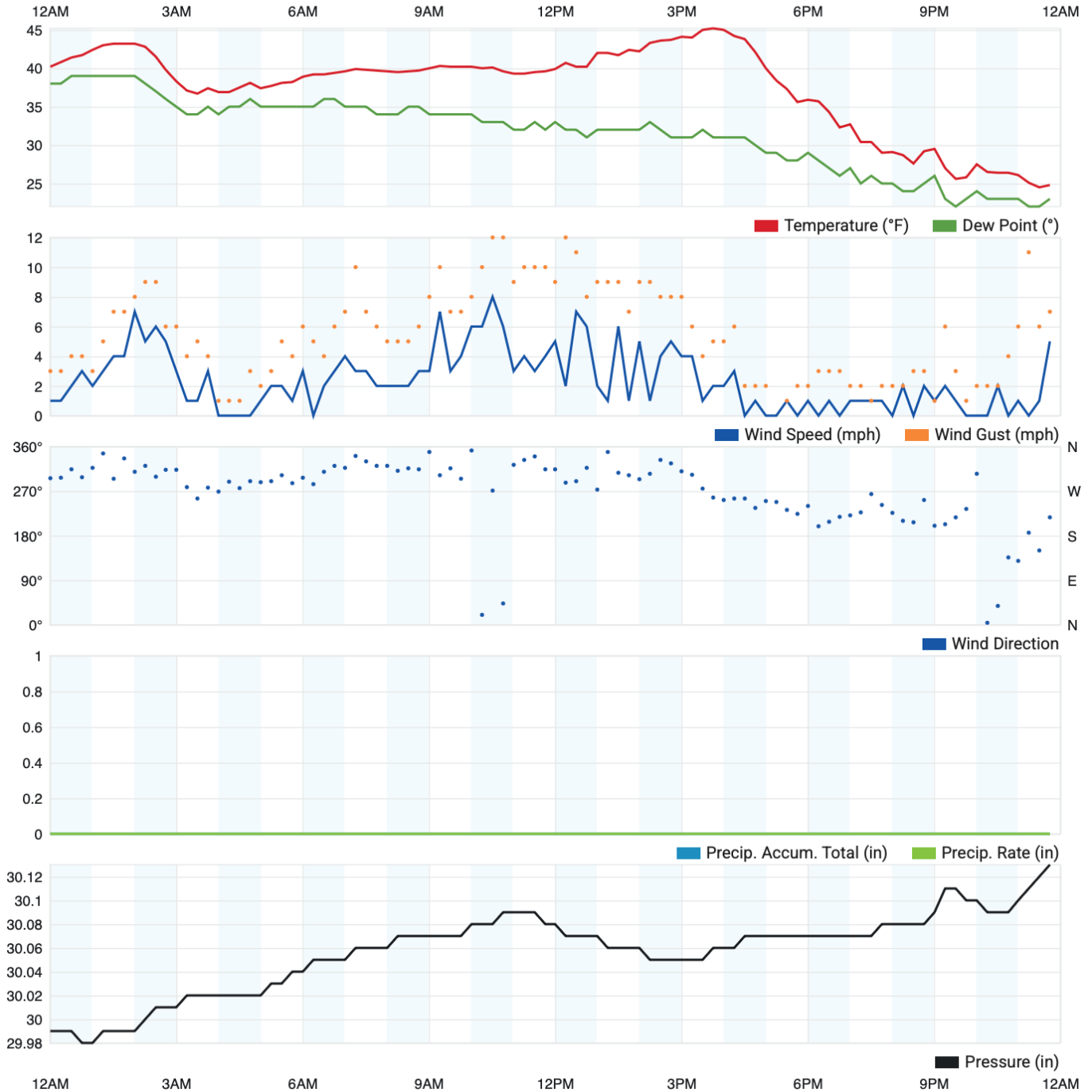
*Ashley Murray covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include domestic policy and appropriations.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

November 20, 2025



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Today



High: 48 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 30 °F

Partly Cloudy

Saturday



High: 53 °F

Mostly Sunny

Saturday Night



Low: 26 °F

Mostly Clear

Sunday



High: 54 °F

Sunny

## Weekend Forecast



NWS Aberdeen, SD  
Thu Nov 20, 2025 2:43 PM



**Tonight**

Pockets of Fog Possible

Lows: 22-29°



**Friday**

Mainly sunny skies

Highs: 46-54°



**Saturday**

Partly cloudy

Highs: 49-56°



**Sunday**

Sunny skies, warm

Highs: 51-58°

Warm conditions continue through this weekend. Skies are expected to be partly cloudy through Sunday, with the possible exception of overnight tonight when fog could develop, particularly over central South Dakota.

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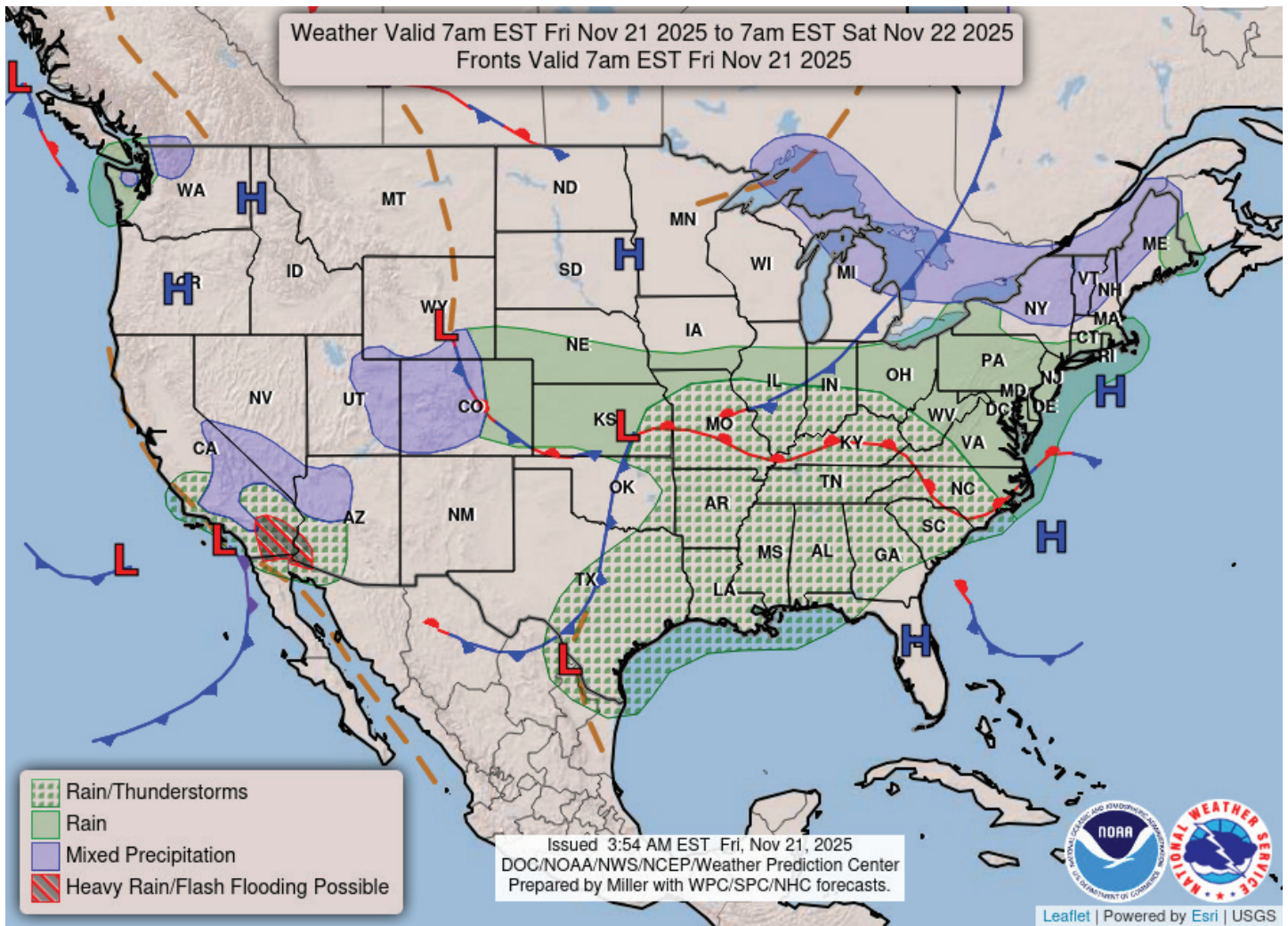
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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 46 °F at 3:52 PM**  
**Low Temp: 24 °F at 11:26 PM**  
**Wind: 13 mph at 12:31 PM**  
**Precip: : 0.00**

## Today's Info

Record High: 65 in 1960  
Record Low: -18 in 1964  
Average High: 40  
Average Low: 17  
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.56  
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00  
Average Precip to date: 21.03  
Precip Year to Date: 23.51  
Sunset Tonight: 4:57 pm  
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:41 am



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## Today in Weather History

November 21, 1985: Winds gusting to over 40 mph caused blizzard conditions over the western and central parts of South Dakota on the 21st and 22nd. In addition to the existing snow cover, 1-2 inches of new snow fell and when blown by the wind, reduced visibilities to zero at times. Many roads were drifted shut by the blowing and drifting snow in the western part of the state.

November 21, 2003: Heavy snow of 6 to 10 inches fell from the late afternoon to the late evening hours of the 21st and into the early morning hours on the 22nd. Some snowfall amounts included 4 inches in Browns Valley, 2S Ashton, and Britton; 5 inches at Timber Lake, Blunt, 6 SE McIntosh, and Pollock; 6 inches at Clark, McLaughlin, 14 NNE Isabel, 17 WSW Fort Pierre and Miller; 7 inches at Castlewood, 1 W Highmore, and 4 NW Onida; and 8 inches north of Goodwin, at Ree Heights, at Eagle Butte, and near Troy. Thirteen inches of snow fell in Watertown.

1798 - A four day storm was in progress in the northeastern U.S. The storm dropped a foot of snow on New York City and New Haven, and as much as three feet in Maine and New Hampshire. The snowstorm ushered in a long and severe winter, in some places the ground remained covered with snow until the following May. (David Ludlum)

1967 - Excessive rains in southern California caused the most severe flooding and the most damaging mud slides in 33 years. Downtown Los Angeles received eight inches of rain, and 14 inches fell in the mountains. (David Ludlum)

1985 - Hurricane Kate made landfall during the evening hours near Mexico Beach, FL. Wind gusts to 100 mph were reported at Cape San Blas FL. It was the latest known hurricane to hit the U.S. so far north. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Squalls in the Lower Great Lakes Region and the Upper Ohio Valley produced 14 inches of snow at Snowshoe WV, and nearly eight inches at Syracuse NY. Eleven cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Record lows included 21 degrees at Pinson AL, 9 degrees at Syracuse NY, and 8 degrees at Binghamton NY. Gale force winds lash the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast, and the strong northwesterly winds produced wind chill readings as cold as 30 degrees below zero. Winds gusting to 60 mph at Trumansburg NY toppled a chimney onto a nearby truck. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - High winds accompanied rain and snow in the northeastern U.S. Caribou ME received eight inches of snow in six hours, and Fort Kent ME was blanketed with a total of fourteen inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - The storm which produced thunderstorms and high winds in the northeastern U.S. the previous day, produced snow and high winds in New England, with blizzard conditions reported in Maine. Winds gusted to 55 mph at Boston MA, and reached 58 mph at Augusta ME, and hurricane force winds were reported off the coast of Maine. Snowfall totals ranged up to 18 inches at Vanceboro ME, with 17 inches at South Lincoln VT. There were thirty-five storm-related injuries in Maine. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992: The November 21st – 23rd tornado outbreak was the 3rd largest outbreak in recorded history and one of the longest continuous outbreaks ever recorded. There was no break in tornado activity from 1:30 pm on the 21st when the tornadoes started in Texas until 7:30 am on the 23rd when the last tornadoes lifted in North Carolina. On this date, severe thunderstorms spawned six tornadoes within 70 minutes in the Houston metro area in Texas. At one time, there were three on the ground in Harris County. The strongest, an F4, tracked 20 miles through the eastern suburbs of Houston destroying 200 homes and damaging 1,000 more. In total, 23 tornadoes struck Mississippi and Alabama. An F4 tornado killed 12 people on a 128-mile track through 7 Mississippi counties. The deadliest tornado of 1992, an F4 tornado killed 12 people on a 128-mile path through 7 counties in Mississippi, one of the bodies was blown a quarter mile into a tree.

## New Birth: Why?

**There's only one way to a right relationship with God—through faith in Jesus Christ.**

### John 3:1-8: Jesus Teaches Nicodemus

3 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.[a]"

4 "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit[b] gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You[c] must be born again.' 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."[d]

In today's passage, we read about Jesus meeting with a Pharisee named Nicodemus. This man was a teacher and a member of the Sanhedrin—the ruling council that tried to discern false teaching and make sure God's law was upheld.

Realizing the signs Jesus performed were beyond the ability of a mere man, Nicodemus came at night to ask Him questions. The Lord explained that "unless one is born again" he could not see the kingdom of God (3:3). This must have come as a surprise to the Pharisee, who had been confident of his own religion and morality.

Are you like Nicodemus? Do you believe good deeds and religious behavior can earn you a place in heaven? No matter how much we may wish this to be true, the Bible teaches otherwise: We all have sinned, and our sin has separated us from God. There's only one way to salvation—through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

Later in His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus said, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Jesus did not come to condemn the world but to save it—one person at a time, through faith in Him (John 3:17).

*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: 17 Hrs 16 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.19.25

12 31 39 40 42 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$7,510,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 31 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

11.20.25

5 8 37 39 40 16

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 46 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.19.25

4 20 23 24 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$92,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 46 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.19.25

17 19 47 53 61 8

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 15 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.19.25

10 31 49 51 68 19

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$629,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 15 Mins 0 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### PREP VOLLEYBALL=

SDHSAA Playoffs=

Class A=

Quarterfinal=

Dakota Valley def. Wagner, 25-8, 25-11, 25-18

Dell Rapids def. Rapid City Christian, 25-20, 25-19, 26-24

Hamlin def. Clark-Willow Lake, 23-25, 25-19, 25-12, 25-21

Sioux Falls Christian def. St Thomas More, 25-12, 25-10, 25-18

Class AA=

Quarterfinal=

Brandon Valley def. Sioux Falls Washington, 25-20, 25-15, 25-17

Harrisburg def. Mitchell, 25-8, 25-9, 25-18

Sioux Falls O'Gorman def. Sioux Falls Jefferson, 25-15, 33-31, 25-16

Watertown def. Sioux Falls Lincoln, 25-21, 25-21, 12-25, 25-27, 14-12

Class B=

Quarterfinal=

Bennett County def. Parkston, 25-18, 22-25, 25-20, 25-21

Chester def. Herreid-Selby, 25-12, 25-18, 25-13

Northwestern def. Gayville-Volin High School, 22-25, 25-12, 25-22, 18-25, 15-10

Warner def. Harding County, 25-16, 23-13, 25-13

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

## **Tribal leaders say Trump administration failed to consult with them on Education Department changes**

By GRAHAM LEE BREWER Associated Press

Tribal leaders and education advocates said the Education Department failed to meet a statutory requirement by not consulting with tribes before announcing the transfer of dozens of Native American education programs to other federal agencies.

This week, the Education Department said it would break off several of its main offices and hand over their responsibilities to agencies like the Department of Labor and the Department of the Interior. Under the plan, those two agencies will run several programs that fund and oversee the education of Native American children and college students. Tribal leaders and Native education organizations said the move will add to budgetary confusion and a possible breakdown in services.

"This transfer brings no additional support to our schools, and merely shifts us from one inadequate system to another," said Steve Sitting Bear, chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. "This instability is unacceptable when the well-being and success of our students is at risk."

The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe operates a K-12 school on the reservation that receives federal funding. Sitting Bear said he strongly objects to the plan, and the tribe was not consulted, as legally required, before the transfer of duties was announced. He said the change only adds to uncertainty and creates unnecessary layers of federal bureaucracy.

Ahniwake Rose, president of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium, said there are several unanswered questions about how funding for Tribal Colleges and Universities, or TCUs, that previously went through one department will now go through several different ones.

"When my TCUs have a question, they're going to be three agencies they might possibly have to go to

for solutions. So we're going to need really clear-cut roles, delineations for who does what, when, and where," she said. "To be able to be part of the conversation as it's being drafted would have been incredibly helpful."

In a statement to The Associated Press, Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Billy Kirkland said the department plans to "engage closely" with tribes and education partners.

"We value the input we receive from tribes and stakeholders, and we remain dedicated to building a future where Native students have the tools, support, and opportunities they need to thrive for generations to come," Kirkland said.

The Education Department has not yet initiated the transfers, and it does plan to conduct tribal consultation, said Madison Biedermann, a spokesperson for the Education Department. "As we take steps to implement the interagency agreement, we will engage with key stakeholders, including tribal leaders."

The Labor Department did not respond to a request for comment.

Many in Indian Country said that consultation should have happened first.

"Tribes should be involved at every step in the process," said Julia Wakeford, a policy director at the National Indian Education Association.

The education funding and resources the federal government provides to Native Americans are part of the country's trust responsibilities, which are the legal promises that were made through treaties and acts of Congress in exchange for the land it took from tribal nations. Tribal leaders have said that the administration of those legal obligations have been uncertain and precarious ever since the Trump administration began slashing federal spending and reducing the federal workforce.

Wakeford said the federal government should have begun consultation before the decision was made, and they're asking the Trump administration to detail Education Department staff to the Bureau of Indian Education, a department within the Interior.

"Without them, there's no way that the Bureau of Indian Education could have the necessary capacity," she said.

## Mexico's bullied pageant contestant gets payback by capturing Miss Universe crown

By TIAN MACLEOD Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Fátima Bosch Fernández of Mexico was crowned Miss Universe 2025 on Friday, a dramatic victory for a 25-year-old at the center of the turbulent 74th staging of the popular beauty pageant in Bangkok who stood up to public bullying from one of the hosts.

The first runner-up was 29-year-old Praveenar Singh of Thailand and 25-year-old Stephany Adriana Abasali Nasser of Venezuela placed third.

Rounding up the finishers were Ahtisa Manalo, 28, of the Philippines, and 27-year-old Olivia Yacé of Ivory Coast who came fifth.

When Bosch was announced as the winner, cheers and screams erupted from the audience, with Mexican flags waved by elated supporters.

Speaking to the media after her victory, Bosch said that she would like to be remembered as "a person that changed a little bit the prototype of what is a Miss Universe and a real person that gives the heart."

She also paid tribute to the pageant, describing it as "a platform that is strong because they have the space that women are searching to have a voice."

The bad vibes at this year's event sprang from a sharp-tongued scolding of the Mexican contestant, Bosch, which sparked a controversy marked by a walkout, feminist solidarity and a teary melodramatic apology from the local organizer who set it all off.

At the livestreamed sashing ceremony for the more than 100 contestants on Nov. 4, Thai national director Nawat Itsaragrisil hectored Bosch for allegedly not following his guidelines for taking part in local promotional activities. He called security when she spoke up to defend herself.

Bosch walked out of the room, joined by several others in a show of solidarity, including Miss Universe

2024, Victoria Kjær Theilvig of Denmark.

"What your director did is not respectful: he called me dumb," an unbowed Bosch told Thai reporters. "If it takes away your dignity, you need to go."

Nawat asserted to the media that he did not call her "dumb."

The Miss Universe Organization president, Mexican businessman Raúl Rocha Cantú, released a statement condemning Nawat's conduct as "public aggression" and "serious abuse."

Even Mexico's first woman president, Claudia Sheinbaum, piled on, saying at a news conference in her country's capital that she wanted to give "recognition" to Miss Mexico for voicing her disagreement in a "dignified" way.

"It seems to me that it is an example of how women should raise our voices," Sheinbaum said.

Sheinbaum recalled being told in the past that "women look more beautiful when they keep quiet."

"We women look more beautiful when we raise our voice and participate, because that has to do with the recognition of our rights," she said.

Nawat later made apologies for his actions, appearing both tearful and defiant at the same time .

"If anyone (was) affected and not comfortable it happened, I am so sorry," he said in front of the contestants. He then turned to them and said "It's passed. OK? Are you happy?"

Bosch's official Miss Universe biography says she studied fashion in Mexico and Italy and has focused on creating sustainable designs and working with discarded materials. It says she has volunteered with sick children, promoted environmental awareness, and engaged in supported migrants and mental health issues.

This year's competition also saw a report that two judges had quit, with one of them suggesting that there was an element of rigging to the contest. The allegation was denied. Separately, Thai police investigated the alleged illegal promotion of online casinos as part of the event's publicity, a turn of events that may have been connected with the organizers' feud.

Mishaps and controversies are not rare for the pageant. The 2021 event attracted criticism because it was held in Israel, to the dismay of supporters of the Palestinian cause.

An example of a minor misstep — literally — occurred Wednesday when Miss Universe Jamaica, Gabrielle Henry, fell off the stage during the evening gown competition. She was not badly hurt.

## **Ukraine's president is under growing pressure. Here are 5 things to know**

By ISOBEL KOSHIW Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The president of Ukraine is facing a confluence of crises testing his ability to lead an increasingly weary nation nearly four years into a devastating full-scale invasion by Russia.

For more than a week, Volodymyr Zelenskyy has struggled to contain the fallout from a \$100 million corruption scandal implicating top officials and other associates. The pressure on Zelenskyy has ratcheted up as the United States pushes a proposal it drew up with Russia that would require major concessions from Ukraine — and seemingly few from Russia — to bring an end to the war.

All this is playing out as Russia makes slow but steady advances across parts of the 1,000-kilometer (620-mile) front line and relentlessly bombs Ukraine's power plants, causing severe electricity shortages as colder weather sets in.

Here are five things to know about the growing pressures confronting Zelenskyy:

Facing a rebellion

Zelenskyy has been facing a rebellion from lawmakers in his own party since the country's corruption watchdogs revealed that \$100 million had been embezzled from the energy sector through kickbacks paid by contractors.

After investigators publicized their findings, Zelenskyy dismissed two top officials and imposed sanctions on close associates. One Zelenskyy associate implicated in the scheme, Tymur Mindich, has reportedly fled the country. Mindich is a partner in a media production company that Zelenskyy was a co-owner of before he became president.

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Some Ukrainian lawmakers and activists are calling on the president to fire his powerful chief of staff, Andrii Yermak.

Neither Zelenskyy nor Yermak have been accused of wrongdoing by investigators. But because Yermak is widely believed to decide key government appointments and to have sway in top political affairs, lawmakers believe he should take responsibility as a way to help restore the public's trust.

The Servant of the People party that Zelenskyy leads won over two-thirds of parliamentary seats in 2019. But some politicians warn that a split in the party or a series of defections could lead Zelenskyy to lose his parliamentary majority, if he doesn't part ways with Yermak.

Many of Zelenskyy's political allies feel something has to change, even if they have not gone public with their concerns, said Mykola Davidiuk, an independent political expert. One of the chief criticisms of Zelenskyy's government is that too much power is concentrated in the hands of Yermak and his advisers, Davidiuk said.

"The management style of Zelenskyy is not working," he said.

How decisively Zelenskyy responds to the corruption scandal could determine whether the fallout damages Ukraine's standing with allies, said Davidiuk.

Zelenskyy's hold on power is not imminently at risk

Russia's invasion triggered martial law in Ukraine, indefinitely postponing presidential and parliamentary elections.

So even if Zelenskyy's grip on parliament weakens and his popularity plummets, he is highly unlikely to be unseated while the war is still going on — unless he voluntarily resigns.

Ukraine's presidential term is normally five years and, before the war, the next elections had been scheduled for spring of 2024.

The growing political headwinds Zelenskyy faces could challenge his ability to push through parliament any potential peace deal being negotiated with Russia. And if he were to seek reelection after the war, his chances could be hurt if Yermak is still in the picture, political analysts say.

A former general is seen as a rival, but denies political aspirations

No elected Ukrainian opposition figures pose a viable threat to Zelenskyy. Former Ukrainian president and current opposition lawmaker, Petro Poroshenko, has failed to expand his support beyond his small core loyalist base. His attempts to call a vote of no confidence in Ukraine's government also fell short. He collected fewer than half of the 150 votes needed.

One potential challenger could be Ukraine's former army chief, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, who oversaw several successful counteroffensives in the first year of the war and was fired by the Ukrainian president in late 2023.

Zaluzhnyi now serves as Ukraine's ambassador to the U.K.

Zaluzhnyi denies any intention to enter politics, but polls in Ukraine show him as theoretically competitive with Zelenskyy, keeping speculation alive that he could be convinced to run in the next election.

US and Russia design a plan to end the war in Ukraine

The U.S. and Russia have drawn up a plan aimed at ending the war in Ukraine that calls for major concessions from Kyiv, according to a draft obtained by The Associated Press, including granting some demands the Kremlin has made repeatedly since it invaded early in 2022.

The plan calls for Ukraine to cede territory to Russia and for Kyiv to limit the size of its military.

Russia, as part of the proposal, would be given effective control of the entire eastern Donbas region — an area Moscow has long sought — even though Ukraine is still in control of part of it.

Zelenskyy has previously rejected the same conditions, describing them as unconstitutional and unjust. His office said Thursday he had officially received the plan but did not comment on its content.

Reports about the plan came out just as Zelenskyy was facing increased unrest over the corruption scandal. "The timing is very damaging for Ukraine," said Orysia Lutsevych, a Ukraine expert at Chatham House.

"Zelenskyy is vulnerable. Both the U.S. and Russia (saw) the domestic scandal and decided to put more pressure on him to concede to a Russian plan," Lutsevych said. But the effort may not work out as envisioned, she said, noting that European allies are coming to Ukraine's defense and speaking out against

the plan.

Pressure on the front and across the country

Against this backdrop, Russia's better equipped army has scaled up attacks along the front line and against energy facilities in the rear, putting further strain on Ukraine.

The Russian army continues to steadily advance in multiple areas. In the northeastern Kharkiv region, Russian forces are pushing on the cities of Kupiansk and Lyman, which Ukraine wrested back from Russia in the first year of the war. But the fiercest battles are around the besieged Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk, a key logistics hub in the eastern Donetsk region.

Russian attacks on Ukraine's power plants in November have resulted in some of the worst electricity shortages since the war began.

## **\$54.7M sale of Frida Kahlo self-portrait breaks auction record for female artists**

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

A haunting 1940 self-portrait by famed Mexican artist Frida Kahlo sold Thursday for \$54.7 million and became the top-selling work by any female artist at an auction.

The painting of Kahlo asleep in a bed — titled "El sueño (La cama)" or in English, "The Dream (The Bed)" — surpassed the record held by Georgia O'Keeffe's "Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1," which sold for \$44.4 million in 2014.

The sale at Sotheby's in New York also topped Kahlo's own auction record for a work by a Latin American artist. The 1949 painting "Diego and I," depicting the artist and her husband, muralist Diego Rivera, went for \$34.9 million in 2021. Her paintings are reported to have sold privately for even more.

The self-portrait is among the few Kahlo pieces that have remained in private hands outside Mexico, where her body of work has been declared an artistic monument. Her works in both public and private collections within the country cannot be sold abroad or destroyed.

The painting comes from a private collection, whose owner has not been disclosed, and is legally eligible for international sale. Some art historians have scrutinized the sale for cultural reasons, while others have raised concern that the painting — last exhibited publicly in the late 1990s — could again disappear from public view after the auction. It has already been requested for upcoming exhibitions in cities including New York, London and Brussels.

The buyer's identity was not disclosed.

The piece depicts Kahlo asleep in a wooden, colonial-style bed that floats in the clouds. She is draped in a golden blanket and entangled in crawling vines and leaves. Above the bed lies a skeleton figure wrapped in dynamite.

Kahlo vibrantly and unsparingly depicted herself and events from her life, which was upended by a bus accident at 18. She started to paint while bedridden, underwent a series of painful surgeries on her damaged spine and pelvis, then wore casts until her death in 1954 at age 47.

During the years Kahlo was confined to her bed, she came to view it as a bridge between worlds as she explored her mortality.

Before the auction, her great-niece, Mara Romeo Kahlo, celebrated the significance of the upcoming sale during a recent interview with The Associated Press in Mexico City.

"I'm very proud that she's one of the most valued women, because really, what woman doesn't identify with Frida, or what person doesn't?" she said. "I think everyone carries a little piece of my aunt in their heart."

The painting was the star of a sale of more than 100 surrealist works by artists including Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, Max Ernst and Dorothea Tanning.

Kahlo resisted being labeled a surrealist, a style of art that's dreamlike and centers on a fascination with the unconscious mind.

"I never painted dreams," she once said. "I painted my own reality."

In its catalog note, Sotheby's said the painting "offers a spectral meditation on the porous boundary between sleep and death."

"The suspended skeleton is often interpreted as a visualization of her anxiety about dying in her sleep, a fear all too plausible for an artist whose daily existence was shaped by chronic pain and past trauma," the catalog notes.

Earlier this week, a Gustav Klimt painting that helped save the life of its Jewish subject during the Holocaust sold at Sotheby's for \$236.4 million. Klimt's "Portrait of Elisabeth Lederer" became one of the most expensive pieces of artwork ever sold at auction, second only to Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi" at \$450 million — the record-holder over all and among male artists.

## Coast Guard reverses course on policy to call swastikas and nooses 'potentially divisive'

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN, LISA MASCARO and SUSAN HAIGH Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Coast Guard has released a new, firmer policy addressing the display of hate symbols like swastikas and nooses just hours after it was publicly revealed that it made plans to describe them as "potentially divisive" — a term that prompted outcry from lawmakers and advocates.

"Divisive or hate symbols and flags are prohibited," the latest Coast Guard policy, released late Thursday, declared before adding that this category included "a noose, a swastika, and any symbols or flags co-opted or adopted by hate-based groups."

"This is not an updated policy but a new policy to combat any misinformation and double down that the U.S. Coast Guard forbids these symbols," an accompanying Coast Guard press release said.

The late-night change came on the same day that media outlets, led by The Washington Post, discovered that the Coast Guard had written a policy earlier this month that called those same symbols "potentially divisive." The term was a shift from a years-long policy, first rolled out in 2019, that said symbols like swastikas and nooses were "widely identified with oppression or hatred" and called their display "a potential hate incident."

The latest policy that was rolled out Thursday night also unequivocally banned the display of any divisive or hate symbols from all Coast Guard locations. The earlier version stopped short of banning the symbols, instead saying that commanders could take steps to remove them from public view and that the rule did not apply to private spaces outside of public view, such as family housing.

Both policies maintained a long-standing prohibition on publicly displaying the Confederate flag outside of a handful of situations, such as educational or historical settings.

The latest Coast Guard policy appears to take effect immediately.

After the initial policy change became public, Democratic Sen. Jacky Rosen of Nevada said the change "rolls back important protections against bigotry and could allow for horrifically hateful symbols like swastikas and nooses to be inexplicably permitted to be displayed."

"At a time when antisemitism is rising in the United States and around the world, relaxing policies aimed at fighting hate crimes not only sends the wrong message to the men and women of our Coast Guard, but it puts their safety at risk," she added.

Admiral Kevin Lunday, acting commandant of the Coast Guard, said the policy did not roll back any prohibitions, calling it "categorically false" to claim otherwise in a statement released earlier Thursday.

"These symbols have been and remain prohibited in the Coast Guard per policy," Lunday said in a statement, adding that "any display, use or promotion of such symbols, as always, will be thoroughly investigated and severely punished."

Lunday's predecessor, Admiral Linda Fagan, was fired on President Donald Trump's first day in office. Trump officials later said she was fired in part for putting an "excessive focus" on diversity and inclusion efforts that diverted "resources and attention from operational imperatives."

The older policy that was rolled out earlier in November also explicitly said that "the terminology 'hate

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incident' is no longer present in policy" and conduct that would have previously been handled as a potential hate incident will now be treated as "a report of harassment in cases with an identified aggrieved individual."

Commanders, in consultation with lawyers, may order or direct the removal of "potentially divisive" symbols or flags if they are found to be affecting the unit's morale or discipline, according to the policy.

The newest policy is silent on whether Coast Guard personnel will be able to claim they were victims of hate incidents.

The Coast Guard is under the Department of Homeland Security, but it is still considered a part of America's armed forces and the new policy was updated in part to be consistent with similar Pentagon directives, according to a Coast Guard message announcing the changes.

It also has historically modeled many of its human resources policies on other military services.

The policy change comes less than two months after Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth ordered a review of all the hazing, bullying and harassment definitions across the military, arguing that the policies were "overly broad" and they were "jeopardizing combat readiness, mission accomplishment, and trust in the organization."

The Pentagon could not offer any details about what the review was specifically looking at, if it could lead to similar changes as seen in the Coast Guard policy or when the review would be complete.

Menachem Rosensaft, a law professor at Cornell University and a Jewish community leader, said in a statement that "the swastika is the ultimate symbol of virulent hate and bigotry, and even a consideration by the Coast Guard to no longer classify it as such would be equivalent to dismissing the Ku Klux Klan's burning crosses and hoods as merely 'potentially divisive.'"

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer called the move "disgusting, and it's more encouragement from the Republicans of extremism."

## Federal judges uphold several North Carolina US House districts drawn by Republicans

By GARY D. ROBERTSON Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Federal judges on Thursday upheld several U.S. House districts that North Carolina Republicans drew in 2023 that helped the GOP gain additional seats the following year. They rejected accusations the lines unlawfully fractured and packed Black voters to weaken their voting power.

The order by three judges — all of whom were nominated to the bench by GOP presidents — didn't rule on changes made last month to the 1st Congressional District that are designed to unseat Democratic Rep. Don Davis in 2026.

That alteration, completed at the urging of President Donald Trump as part of an ongoing national mid-decade redistricting fray, is still being considered by the panel. The judges heard arguments on Wednesday in Winston-Salem but didn't immediately rule on whether they would block now the use of the 1st District and the adjoining 3rd District for next year's election while more legal arguments are made. Candidate filing for the 2026 elections is set to begin Dec. 1.

Many allegations made by the state NAACP, Common Cause and voters cover both 2023 and 2025 changes, in particular claims of voter dilution and racial discrimination violating the U.S. Constitution and Voting Rights Act.

The 2023 map helped turn a 7-7 North Carolina delegation into one in which Republicans won 10 of the 14 seats in 2024. Three Democrats chose not to seek reelection, saying it was essentially impossible to get reelected under the recast lines.

Thursday's ruling by 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals Judge Allison Rushing and District Judges Thomas Schroeder and Richard Myers rejected claims that GOP legislators drew lines in 2023 so skewed for Republicans that many Black voters could not elect their preferred candidates.

"We conclude that the General Assembly did not violate the Constitution or the VRA in its 2023 redistricting," they wrote in a 181-page order.

The judges convened a trial several months ago hearing testimony for a pair of lawsuits that challenged

portions of maps redrawn in 2023. Thursday's decision focused on five congressional districts: three in the Greensboro region and two in and around Charlotte, as well as three state Senate districts. The judges also upheld the Senate districts.

The plaintiffs argued Republicans split and weakened the Greensboro region's concentrated Black voting population within multiple U.S. House districts. Then-Rep. Kathy Manning, a Greensboro Democrat, decided not to run again last year because her district shifted to the right. They also cited what they called packing Black voting-age residents into a Charlotte-area congressional district that in turn helped Republican Tim Moore win an adjoining district.

Attorneys for Republican leaders argued that lawfully partisan — and not racial — considerations helped inform decision-making on the 2023 map. They pointed out that no information on the racial makeup of regions were used in drawing the lines. A 2019 U.S. Supreme Court decision essentially neutered federal legal claims of illegal partisan gerrymandering going forward.

The judges' order favoring the GOP lawmakers said "the circumstances surrounding the plans' enactment and the resulting district configurations and composition are consistent with the General Assembly's non-racial motivations, which included traditional districting criteria, North Carolina law, and partisan performance."

The ruling can be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. Spokespeople for Republican legislative leaders didn't immediately respond late Thursday to emailed requests for comment. A lawyers group representing the state NAACP and others said it was disappointed with the ruling.

Still at issue are the changes made to the 1st and 3rd Districts that GOP legislators said are designed to create an 11-3 seat majority in 2026. Davis continues a line of Black representatives elected from the 1st District going back more than 30 years. But he won his second term by less than 2 percentage points.

North Carolina is among several states where Trump has pushed for mid-decade map changes ahead of the 2026 elections. This week, a federal court blocked Texas from using a GOP-engineered map.

## **Trump's wind-down of the Education Department leaves schools fearing disruption**

By COLLIN BINKLEY AP Education Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration says its plan to dismantle the Education Department offers a fix for the nation's lagging academics — a solution that could free schools from the strictures of federal influence.

Yet to some school and state officials, the plan appears to add more bureaucracy, with no clear benefit for students who struggle with math or reading.

Instead of being housed in a single agency, much of the Education Department's work now will be spread across four other federal departments. For President Donald Trump, it's a step toward fully closing the department and giving states more power over schooling. Yet many states say it will complicate their role as intermediaries between local schools and the federal government.

The plan increases bureaucracy fivefold, Washington state's education chief said, "undoubtedly creating confusion and duplicity" for educators and families. His counterpart in California said the plan is "clearly less efficient" and invites disruption. Maryland's superintendent raised concerns about "the challenges of coordinating efforts with multiple federal agencies."

"States were not engaged in this process, and this is not what we have asked for — or what our students need," said Jill Underly, Wisconsin's state superintendent. Underly urged the Trump administration to give states greater flexibility and cut down on standardized testing requirements.

Education Secretary Linda McMahon said schools will continue receiving federal money without disruption. Ultimately, schools will have more money and flexibility to serve students without the existence of the Education Department, she said.

Yet the department is not gone — only Congress has the power to abolish it. In the meantime, McMahon's plan leaves the agency in a version of federal limbo. The Labor Department will take over most funding

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and support for the country's schools, but the Education Department will retain some duties, including policy guidance and broad supervision of Labor's education work.

Similar deals will offload programs to the Department of Health and Human Services, the State Department and the Interior Department. The agreements were signed days before the government shutdown and announced Tuesday.

Inking agreements to share work with other departments isn't new: The Education Department already had dozens of such agreements before Trump took office. And local school officials routinely work with other agencies, including the U.S. Agriculture Department, which oversees school meals. What's different this time is the scale of the programs offloaded — the majority of the Education Department's funding for schools, for instance.

Yet Virginia schools chief Emily Anne Gullickson, for one, said schools are accustomed to working with multiple federal agencies, and she welcomed the administration's efforts to give states more control.

Where some see risk of upheaval, others see a win over bureaucracy

Response to the plan has mostly been drawn along political lines, with Democrats saying the shakeup will hurt America's most vulnerable students. Republicans in Congress called it a victory over bureaucracy.

Yet some conservatives pushed back against the dismantling. U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski, an Alaska Republican, said on social media that moving programs to agencies without policy expertise could hurt young people. And Margaret Spellings, a former education secretary to Republican President George W. Bush, called it a distraction to a national education crisis.

"Moving programs from one department to another does not actually eliminate the federal bureaucracy, and it may make the system harder for students, teachers and families to navigate and get the support they need," Spellings said in a statement.

There's little debate about the need for change in America's schooling. Its math and reading scores have plummeted in the wake of COVID-19. Before that, reading scores had been stagnant for decades, and math scores weren't much better.

McMahon said that's evidence the Education Department has failed and isn't needed. At a White House briefing Thursday, she called her plan a "hard reset" that does not halt federal support but ends "federal micromanagement."

Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers union and one of McMahon's sharpest opponents, questioned the logic in her plan.

"Why would you put a new infrastructure together, a new bureaucracy that nobody knows anything about, and take the old bureaucracy and destroy it, instead of making the old bureaucracy more efficient?" Weingarten said at a Wednesday event.

Schools fear the impact of lost expertise on education laws

The full impact of the shakeup may not be clear for months, but already it's stoking anxiety among states and school districts that have come to rely on the Education Department for its policy expertise. One of the agency's roles is to serve as a hotline for questions about complicated funding formulas, special education laws and more.

The department has not said whether officials who serve that role will keep their jobs in the transition. Without that help, schools would have few options to clarify what can and can't be paid for with federal money, said David Law, superintendent of Minnetonka Public Schools in Minnesota.

"What could happen is services are not provided because you don't have an answer," said Law, who is also president of AASA, a national association of school superintendents.

Some question whether other federal departments have the capacity to take on an influx of new work. The Labor Department will take over Title I, an \$18 billion grant program that serves 26 million students in low-income areas. It's going to a Labor office that now handles grants serving only 130,000 people a year, said Angela Hanks, who led the Labor office under former President Joe Biden.

At best, Hanks said, it will "unleash chaos on school districts, and ultimately, on our kids."

In Salem, Massachusetts, the 4,000-student school system receives about \$6 million in federal funding

that helps support services for students who are low-income, homeless or still mastering English, Superintendent Stephen Zrike said. He fears moving those programs to the Labor Department could bring new "rules of engagement."

"We don't know what other stipulations will be attached to the funding," he said. "The level of uncertainty is enormous."

Other critics have noted the Education Department was created to consolidate education programs that were spread across multiple agencies.

Rep. Bobby Scott, D-Va., the ranking member on the House Education and Workforce Committee, urged McMahon to rethink her plan. He cited the 1979 law establishing the department, which said dispersion had resulted in "fragmented, duplicative, and often inconsistent Federal policies relating to education."

## **FAA gives \$10K bonuses only to controllers and technicians with perfect attendance during shutdown**

By JOSH FUNK AP Transportation Writer

Only 776 air traffic controllers and technicians who had perfect attendance during the government shutdown will receive \$10,000 bonuses while nearly 20,000 other workers will be left out, the Federal Aviation Administration announced Thursday.

A number of controllers started calling out of work as the shutdown dragged on longer than a month and they dealt with the financial pressure of working without a paycheck. Some of them got side jobs, but others simply couldn't afford the child care or gas they needed to work. Their absences forced delays at airports across the country and led the government to order airlines to cut some of their flights at 40 busy airports.

President Donald Trump suggested the bonuses for those who have stayed on the job in a social media post, but he also suggested that controllers who missed work should have their pay docked. FAA officials haven't publicly announced plans to penalize controllers.

Thousands of FAA technicians also had to work during the shutdown to maintain the equipment that air traffic controllers rely on. At least 6,600 technicians were expected to work throughout the shutdown but more than 3,000 others were subject to be recalled to work.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said the bonuses acknowledged the dedication of these few workers who never missed a shift during the 43-day shutdown. In a post on X he described it as "Santa's coming to town a little early."

"These patriotic men and women never missed a beat and kept the flying public safe throughout the shutdown," Duffy said in his formal announcement.

The National Air Traffic Controllers Association union said only 311 of its more than 10,000 members will receive the bonuses. The union said these workers with perfect attendance deserve recognition but so do the others.

"We are concerned that thousands of air traffic controllers who consistently reported for duty during the shutdown, ensuring the safe transport of passengers and cargo across the nation, while working without pay and uncertain of when they would receive compensation, were excluded from this recognition. More than 311 of these dedicated professionals were instrumental in keeping America moving," the union said in a statement.

The Professional Aviation Safety Specialists union said the thousands of technicians it represents worked hard to keep the aging computer and radar systems controllers use operating during the shutdown, and they should all be recognized — not just the 423 getting bonuses.

"It took many hands to ensure that not one delay during the historic 43-day shutdown was attributed to equipment or system failures," the union said in a statement.

Democratic Rep. Rick Larsen questioned why all the controllers and others who worked to keep flights moving during the shutdown won't get bonuses.

"For the Trump administration to not give a bonus to every single one of these hardworking women and

men is wrong; they all deserve a bonus and back pay," said Larsen, who is the ranking member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure committee.

The controllers union said they hope to work with Duffy to find a way to recognize all the other air traffic controllers who worked during the shutdown.

Last week, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem announced that any TSA officers who went "above and beyond" while working without pay would get \$10,000 bonuses, but she never specified how many will qualify beyond the handful of checks she handed out to officers at a news conference.

The FAA was already critically short on air traffic controllers before the shutdown. Duffy had been working to boost controller hiring and streamline the years of training required in the hope of eliminating the shortage over the next several years.

Duffy has said that some students and controllers quit and more experienced controllers retired during the shutdown. Many controllers already work 10-hour shifts six days a week because the FAA is so short on staffing.

As more controllers missed work, the FAA ordered airlines to cut flights to relieve pressure on the system. Duffy said repeatedly that FAA safety experts became worried as the absences grew because of reports from pilots concerned about controllers' responses and a number of runway incursions.

Since the shutdown ended, controller staffing has improved significantly and airlines were allowed to resume normal operations this week.

## **Ukraine would cede territory to Russia in draft of Trump peace plan obtained by AP**

By ILLIA NOVIKOV, AAMER MADHANI and CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's plan for ending the war in Ukraine would cede land to Russia and limit the size of Kyiv's military, according to a draft obtained Thursday by The Associated Press.

The proposal, originating from negotiations between Washington and Moscow, appeared decidedly favorable to Russia, which started the war nearly four years ago by invading its neighbor. If past is prologue, it would seem untenable for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has opposed Trump's previous calls for territorial concessions.

A side agreement aims to satisfy Ukrainian security concerns by saying a future "significant, deliberate and sustained armed attack" by Russia would be viewed as "threatening the peace and security of the transatlantic community." The agreement, which was detailed by a senior U.S. official who was not authorized to publicly discuss the matter, does not obligate the United States or European allies to intervene on Ukraine's behalf, although it says they would "determine the measures necessary to restore security."

Trump's push to end the war could drive a wedge between himself and European leaders, who are likely to oppose any agreement that could be seen as rewarding Russian President Vladimir Putin for his aggression, leaving him emboldened rather than defeated.

For example, the proposal would not only bar Ukraine from joining NATO but would also prevent the alliance's future expansion. Such a step would be a significant victory for Moscow, which views NATO as a threat.

Putin would also gain ground he has been unable to win on the battlefield. Under the draft, Moscow would hold all the eastern Donbas region, even though approximately 14% still remains in Ukrainian hands. Ukraine's military, currently at roughly 880,000 troops, would be reduced to 600,000.

The proposal opens the door to lifting sanctions on Russia and returning it to what was formerly known as the Group of Eight, which includes many of the world's biggest economies. Russia was suspended from the annual gathering in 2014 following its annexation of Crimea, a strategically important peninsula on the northern coast of the Black Sea that is internationally recognized as part of Ukraine.

Proposal increases pressure on Zelenskyy

The U.S. team began drawing up the plan soon after U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff held talks with

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Rustem Umerov, a top adviser to Zelenskyy, according to a senior administration official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity. The official added that Umerov agreed to the majority of the plan, after making several modifications, and then presented it to Zelenskyy.

U.S. Army Secretary Dan Driscoll was also in Kyiv on Thursday and discussed the latest draft with Zelenskyy, according to a senior administration official. Zelenskyy offered a measured statement on social media about it but did not directly speak to the substance of the proposal.

"Our teams — of Ukraine and the United States — will work on the provisions of the plan to end the war. We are ready for constructive, honest and swift work," he wrote.

Meanwhile, Trump's special envoy to Ukraine, Keith Kellogg, has informed the White House he'll leave his post in January, according to two senior administration officials.

Kellogg was initially named special envoy for Ukraine and Russia during Trump's presidential transition. But his role shrunk as Witkoff, a real estate developer turned diplomat, emerged as the president's chief interlocutor with Putin and his advisers.

Trump would oversee compliance with truce

Under the proposal, Russia would commit to making no future attacks, something the White House views as a concession. In addition, \$100 billion in frozen Russian assets would be dedicated to rebuilding Ukraine.

However, handing over territory to Russia would be deeply unpopular in Ukraine. It also would be illegal under Ukraine's constitution. Zelenskyy has repeatedly ruled out such a possibility.

Russia would also be allowed to keep half of the power generated by Europe's largest nuclear power plant, Zaporizhzhia, which it captured from Ukraine early during the war.

The draft calls for a "Peace Council" that Trump will oversee. The council is an idea that Trump snatched from his lengthy peace plan aimed at bringing about a permanent end to war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

If either Ukraine or Russia violated the truce once enacted, it would face sanctions.

U.S. Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., an Air Force veteran, rejected the emerging plan. "Unacceptable," he posted on social media. "It is a 1938 Munich," referring to a diplomatic agreement aimed at securing peace with Nazi Germany but widely viewed as paving the way for World War II.

European diplomats urge wider consultations

Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Witkoff have been quietly working on the peace plan for a month, receiving input from both Ukrainians and Russians on terms that are acceptable to each side, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Thursday. Witkoff and Kirill Dmitriev, a close adviser to Putin, have been key to drafting the proposal.

As reports about the draft emerged, blindsided European diplomats insisted they and Ukraine must be consulted.

European leaders have already been alarmed this year by indications that Trump's administration might be sidelining them and Zelenskyy in its push to stop the fighting. Trump's at-times conciliatory approach to Putin has fueled those concerns, but Trump adopted a tougher line last month when he announced heavy sanctions on Russia's vital oil sector that come into force Friday.

"For any plan to work, it needs Ukrainians and Europeans on board," European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said at the start of a meeting in Brussels of the 27-nation bloc's foreign ministers. She also suggested that the draft would be too favorable toward Moscow.

"We haven't heard of any concessions on the Russian side," Kallas said.

German Foreign Minister Johannes Wadepuhl said he talked by phone Thursday with Witkoff and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan to discuss "our various current efforts to end Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and thus finally put an end to the immeasurable human suffering."

Ukraine's deputy U.N. Ambassador Khrystyna Hayovyshyn told the U.N. Security Council that Kyiv has officially received Trump's draft peace plan and is ready "to work constructively," but she stressed Ukraine's "red lines."

"There will never be any recognition, formal or otherwise, of Ukrainian territory temporarily occupied by the Russian Federation as Russian," she said. "Our land is not for sale."

"Ukraine will not accept any limits on its right to self-defense or on the size and capabilities of our armed forces, nor will we tolerate any infringement on our sovereignty, including our sovereign right to choose the alliances we want to join," Hayovyshyn added.

Trump has long pushed for end to war

It was not clear whether European foreign ministers had seen the peace plan, which was first reported by Axios.

Although they appeared caught by surprise, some elements of the plan were not new. Trump said last month that the Donbas region should be "cut up," leaving most of it in Russian hands.

However, the administration's previous diplomatic efforts this year to stop the fighting have so far come to nothing. A summit between Trump and Putin in Alaska did not result in a breakthrough over the summer, and plans for them to meet again in Budapest, Hungary, did not come to fruition.

Trump frequently complained that the negotiations involving Ukraine were taking longer than other conflicts where he helped mediate.

"I thought that was going to be my easy one because I have a good relationship with President Putin," he said this week. "But I'm a little disappointed in President Putin right now."

## **Trump administration announces plan for new oil drilling off the coasts of California and Florida**

By MATTHEW DALY and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration announced on Thursday new oil drilling off the California and Florida coasts for the first time in decades, advancing a project that critics say could harm coastal communities and ecosystems, as President Donald Trump seeks to expand U.S. oil production.

The oil industry has been seeking access to new offshore areas, including Southern California and off the coast of Florida, as a way to boost U.S. energy security and jobs. The federal government has not allowed drilling in federal waters in the eastern Gulf of Mexico, which includes offshore Florida and part of offshore Alabama, since 1995, because of concerns about oil spills. California has some offshore oil rigs, but there has been no new leasing in federal waters since the mid-1980s.

Since taking office for a second time in January, Trump has systematically reversed former President Joe Biden's focus on slowing climate change to pursue what the Republican calls U.S. "energy dominance" in the global market. Trump, who recently called climate change "the greatest con job ever perpetrated on the world," created a National Energy Dominance Council and directed it to move quickly to drive up already record-high U.S. energy production, particularly fossil fuels such as oil, coal and natural gas.

Meanwhile, Trump's administration has blocked renewable energy sources such as offshore wind and canceled billions of dollars in grants that supported hundreds of clean energy projects across the country.

The drilling proposal drew bipartisan pushback in Florida, where a spokesperson for Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis said the Trump administration should reconsider and Republican Sen. Rick Scott said the state's coasts "must remain off the table for oil drilling." California Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom, a frequent Trump critic, called the administration's plan "idiotic."

Tourism and access to clean beaches are key parts of the economy in both states.

Plans to allow drilling off California, Alaska and Florida's coast

The administration's plan proposes six offshore lease sales between 2027 and 2030 in areas along the California coast.

It also calls for new drilling off the Florida coast in the Gulf of Mexico at least 100 miles from shore. Drilling leases would be sold in the newly designated South-Central Gulf region, adjacent to the central Gulf's thousands of wells and hundreds of drilling platforms.

The new designation distinguishes the targeted area from the Eastern Gulf where drilling is prohibited under a moratorium Trump signed in his first term. Industry representatives said the change was aimed at addressing concerns from Florida officials who oppose drilling near their tourism-friendly coasts.

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The five-year plan also would compel more than 20 lease sales off the coast of Alaska, including a newly designated area known as the High Arctic, more than 200 miles offshore in the Arctic Ocean.

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said in announcing the sales that it would take years for the oil from new leases to get to market.

"By moving forward with the development of a robust, forward-thinking leasing plan, we are ensuring that America's offshore industry stays strong, our workers stay employed, and our nation remains energy dominant for decades to come," Burgum said in a statement.

The American Petroleum Institute called the new plan a "historic step" toward unleashing more offshore resources. Industry groups point to California's history as an oil-producing state and say it already has infrastructure to support more production.

Opposition from California and Florida

Scott, a Trump ally, helped persuade officials in Trump's first term to drop a similar offshore plan in 2018 when Scott was governor. Scott and Florida Republican Sen. Ashley Moody introduced legislation this month to maintain the drilling moratorium from Trump's first term.

Newsom, who often touts the state's status as a global climate leader, said in response to Thursday's announcement that California would "use every tool at our disposal to protect our coastline."

California has been a leader in restricting offshore drilling since an infamous 1969 Santa Barbara spill helped spark the modern environmental movement. While no new federal leases have been offered since the mid-1980s, drilling from existing platforms continues.

Newsom expressed support for greater offshore controls after a 2021 spill off Huntington Beach and has backed a congressional effort to ban new offshore drilling on the West Coast.

A Texas-based company, with support from the Trump administration, is seeking to restart production in waters off Santa Barbara damaged by a 2015 oil spill. The administration has hailed the plan by Houston-based Sable Offshore Corp. as the kind of project Trump wants to increase U.S. energy production.

Trump signed an executive order on the first day of his second term to reverse Biden's ban on future offshore oil drilling on the East and West coasts. A federal court later struck down Biden's order to withdraw 625 million acres of federal waters from oil development.

Environmental and economic concerns over oil spills

Lawmakers from California and Florida warned new offshore drilling would hurt coastal economies, jeopardize national security, ravage coastal ecosystems, and put the health and safety of millions of people at risk.

"This is not just a little bit offshore drilling. This is the entire California coast, every inch of Alaska, even the eastern Gulf of Mexico," said California Rep. Jared Huffman. "Basically, everywhere Big Oil has been salivating to drill for decades."

Rep. Jimmy Patronis of Florida led a group of Republican lawmakers who asked Trump in a Thursday letter to withdraw some parcels off the Florida coast from leasing. They warned that oil exploration could interfere with a training area for nearby military airbases. Allowing the parcels to go forward "would have a chilling effect on the military's ability to test new munitions, including hypersonic and counter drone weaponry," they wrote.

The state is also still recovering from the environmental and economic havoc caused by the 2010 Deepwater Horizon spill, which fouled coasts across the Gulf, said Florida Democratic Rep. Kathy Castor.

A Santa Barbara group, the Environmental Defense Center, formed in response to the 1969 California spill, said the plan puts at risk the Santa Barbara Channel off Southern California, an important feeding ground for endangered blue, humpback, and fin whales.

"There is no way to drill for oil without causing devastating impacts," said Maggie Hall, deputy chief counsel at the advocacy group. "The risk is unacceptable."

## Wax Diana in 'revenge dress' is unveiled in Paris decades after her death in the city

By THOMAS ADAMSON and OLEG CETINIC Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Princess Diana returned to Paris in wax Thursday as one of Europe's oldest wax museums unveiled a new figure of the British royal in the so-called "revenge dress," decades after her tragic death in the city.

The statue was ordered in Paris after the director of the Grevin Museum visited London and came away underwhelmed by the Diana likeness at Madame Tussauds, prompting him to commission his own version, museum officials said.

Grevin's life-size — and very convincing — figure of the late Princess of Wales is dressed in a replica of the black, off-the-shoulder, figure-hugging cocktail dress Diana wore to a Serpentine Gallery event in London in 1994. It was the same night that King Charles III — at the time Prince Charles — acknowledged on television that he had been unfaithful with Camilla Parker Bowles, now Queen Camilla.

For Paris, the tribute carried extra weight: Diana — "Lady Di" to the French, who still use the nickname affectionately even though she spent most of her public life as a princess — died after a car crash in a tunnel by the Seine in 1997, a death that helped immortalize her in the Parisian imagination, where she still remains present in the flowers and handwritten notes left at informal memorials.

Museum officials noted that the unveiling came on the 30th anniversary of an explosive interview that Diana gave to BBC "Panorama," which observers say dented the standing of the monarchy and the Queen.

Some observers noted wryly how the museum's newest royal guest was positioned far from wax likenesses of her famous ex-husband and mother-in-law.

High heels, a pearl choker at her neck and a small handbag clasped in both hands completed the sculpture. Tabloids later dubbed the outfit the "revenge dress," and the museum leaned into that symbolism.

French novelist Christine Orban, who wrote "Mademoiselle Spencer," a novel imagined from Diana's point of view, said the figure was overdue.

She called the black dress a turning point in Diana's story.

"The dress is very significant of her liberation because in the royal family, black is only worn for funerals, and then such a sexy dress for a Princess of Wales, well, that's not common either," she said. "So she decides to wear her high heels and Louboutins. And to go to the Serpentine Gallery to make an impression, to get photographed."

Grevin, founded in the 19th century, has long packed its ornate halls with political leaders, artists, pop-culture figures — and, yes, British royals. Diana is the latest in a steady stream of star wattage additions the museum uses to refresh the collection and boost visitors at the site that has attracted some 700,000 annual visitors in recent years.

News of the unveiling filtered through Paris, even before most people had a chance to visit.

"It brought back that night in the tunnel, even though I was a kid then," said Julien Martin, 38. "Paris never completely let go of Diana, so it made sense that a big wax museum finally did this."

"I wasn't even alive but for my generation, she seems like the first modern princess — glamorous, but also vulnerable," said 24-year-old student Lina Ben Amar. "If tourists come to see celebrities in wax, she is one of the first they will look for."

Diana will be in good company. Curators set her beside another prominent royal who died in Paris — albeit centuries earlier: Marie Antoinette.

## Charlotte immigration crackdown goes on, Homeland Security says, despite sheriff saying it ended

By GARY D. ROBERTSON and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — A federal immigration crackdown centered around North Carolina's largest city of Charlotte appeared to be tapering off Thursday, local law enforcement leaders said, but a Homeland

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Security official insisted the arrests would not let up.

The North Carolina operation that began last weekend was the most recent phase of Republican President Donald Trump's aggressive mass deportation efforts that have sent the military and immigration agents into Democratic-run cities — from Chicago to Los Angeles.

"The operation is not over and it is not ending anytime soon," said Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin.

Both the local sheriff and police department said earlier in the day that the crackdown, which has resulted in hundreds of arrests, appeared to be over less than a week after it began. Federal officials have offered few details about those arrested, or when and where agents will show up next.

But even as confusion swirled over whether Operation Charlotte's Web was on or off in North Carolina, immigration enforcement actions are taking place nationwide, often with far less media attention than the Border Patrol surges. In one example, the Department of Homeland Security said Thursday that Immigration and Customs Enforcement had arrested roughly 3,500 people over a six-week span in Houston.

Mecklenburg County Sheriff Garry McFadden said in a statement that federal officials confirmed that the U.S. Customs and Border Protection operation known as "Operation Charlotte's Web" had ended, but that agents would continue operating as they have in the past.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police posted on social media Thursday that it received "reliable information" that Border Patrol personnel involved with the operation had departed that morning.

Another statement attributed to an unnamed Homeland Security spokesperson said that federal agencies "continue to target some of the most dangerous criminal illegal aliens as Operation Charlotte's Web progresses," and that about 370 people have been arrested over the past five days.

Federal agents are expected to descend next on New Orleans for operation "Swamp Sweep," a monthslong crackdown in southeast Louisiana. As many as 250 federal troops could arrive as soon as Friday for the operation expected to kick off at the beginning of December.

In North Carolina, agents — some heavily armed in tactical gear and unmarked vehicles — have carried out arrests in the Charlotte area and near the capital city of Raleigh.

Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles, a Democrat, said Thursday she was hopeful the enforcement operation was winding down.

"I'm relieved for our community and the residents, businesses, and all those who were targeted and impacted by this intrusion," Lyles wrote on X. "As we move forward, it is essential that we come together—not as separate groups divided by recent events, but as one Charlotte community."

North Carolina Republican Party spokesperson Matt Mercer called the crackdown a success.

Homeland Security leaders have said they brought the large operation to North Carolina because of so-called sanctuary policies that limit cooperation between local authorities and immigration agents.

The crackdown in Charlotte was met with some resistance and protests. About 100 people gathered outside a Home Depot store in Charlotte on Wednesday, where federal agents were spotted multiple times during the surge.

Arrests in Charlotte and the Raleigh area created a chilling effect in immigrant neighborhoods — school attendance dropped, and small shops and restaurants closed to avoid confrontations between customers and federal agents.

Customers at a laundromat in Charlotte left behind their clothes in washers and dryers and ran out the doors after agents showed up over the weekend at nearby stores, said the laundromat's owner.

Immigration officials have blanketed the country since January, pushing detention counts to all-time highs above 60,000. Big cities and small towns across the country are targeted daily amid higher-profile pushes in places such as Portland, Oregon, where more than 560 immigration arrests were made in October. Smaller bursts of enforcement have popped up elsewhere.

## Investigators say UPS plane that crashed in Kentucky, killing 14, had cracks in engine mount

By JOSH FUNK and ED WHITE Associated Press

Federal investigators released dramatic photos Thursday of an engine flying off a doomed UPS cargo plane that crashed two weeks ago in Kentucky, killing 14 people, and said there was evidence of cracks in the left wing's engine mount.

A series of six photos showed the rear of the engine starting to detach before it flew up and over the wing as flames erupted. The next image shows the wing engulfed by fire as the burning engine flies above it. The last image shows the plane starting to get airborne.

But the MD-11 plane only got 30 feet (9.1 meters) off the ground, the National Transportation Safety Board said, citing the flight data recorder in its first formal but preliminary report about the Nov. 4 disaster in Louisville, Kentucky.

Three pilots on the plane were killed along with 11 more people on the ground near Muhammad Ali International Airport.

The NTSB said the plane was not due yet for a detailed inspection of key engine mount parts that had fractures. It still needed to complete nearly 7,000 more takeoffs and landings. It was last examined in October 2021.

"It appears UPS was conducting this maintenance within the required time frame, but I'm sure the FAA is now going to ponder whether that time frame is adequate," former federal crash investigator Jeff Guzzetti told The Associated Press after reading the report.

All MD-11s grounded for now

It's not clear when the cracks started to develop on the 34-year-old plane and whether they could have been missed in that earlier inspection. Another aviation expert, John Cox, described fatigue cracks as "normal wear and tear on an aircraft."

He said a metal part, like the engine mount that vibrates every time the plane flies, will eventually develop cracks. Cox noted it's just a question of how often those parts need to be inspected and what maintenance is required.

The NTSB report revealed the first new details since board member Todd Inman briefed reporters on Nov. 7. He said the cockpit voice recorder captured an alarm bell going off about 37 seconds after the UPS crew called for takeoff thrust.

"It's one thing to be involved in a natural disaster and another thing to be involved in a man-made, human error tragedy, and that's what we believe this is," said Sean Garber, who looked at the report and whose auto salvage yard near the airport took a direct hit.

All MD-11s used by UPS, FedEx and Western Global — along with a few related DC-10s — were grounded after the crash until they can be inspected and repaired, but the Federal Aviation Administration hasn't said what will be required.

Cox said those air carriers "are going to have to make some hard decisions" because they were already planning to retire the planes in the next few years.

"If you have to pull the engines off and do some sort of visual inspection or replacement, that's going to run into a significant cost," he said.

MD-11 aircraft make up about 9% of the UPS fleet and 4% of the FedEx fleet, the companies have said.

UPS will wait for crash conclusions

Earlier this week, Bill Moore, president of UPS Airlines, an arm of UPS, said the company is working with investigators to determine the key cause of the crash.

"Once we determine that, then they'll be able to develop an inspection plan," Moore said at a news conference in Louisville. "Can we inspect it? If so, how do we repair it? How do we put it back together? And then eventually return the fleet to service. But that's not going to happen quickly."

The NTSB report said there was a similar event in Chicago in 1979 when an American Airlines DC-10 crash killed 273 people. The DC-10 was the predecessor of the MD-11.

"The left engine and pylon assembly and about 3 ft of the leading edge of the left wing separated from the airplane and fell to the runway," the report said.

Former federal crash investigator Alan Diehl said he hopes the Federal Aviation Administration reevaluates plane maintenance schedules and considers high-tech methods to examine metal, not just visual inspections.

"It is clear that engine pylon attachment failures are these aircraft's Achilles' heels," Diehl said.

The MD-11 and the DC-10 have some of the highest accident rates of any commercial planes, according to statistics published annually by Boeing.

Meanwhile, mourning continued in Louisville, more than two weeks after the tragedy. The Louisville Orchestra was presenting a free concert Thursday evening.

"Music brings comfort," Music Director Teddy Abrams said.

## **Justice Department is examining handling of mortgage fraud investigation into Sen. Adam Schiff**

By BRIAN SLODYSKO, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department is examining the handling of the mortgage fraud investigation into Sen. Adam Schiff, including the potential involvement of people who claimed to be acting at the behest or direction of two Trump administration officials who have been pushing the probe of the California Democrat, according to a document reviewed by The Associated Press.

Federal authorities involved in the Schiff investigation in Maryland interviewed a Republican congressional candidate on Thursday who has promoted the mortgage fraud allegations against the lawmaker and quizzed her about any communications she may have had with Justice Department official Ed Martin and Federal Housing Finance Agency Director Bill Pulte. The interview came after the woman received a subpoena seeking information about communications she may have had with people claiming to be working at the direction of Pulte and Martin.

Christine Bish, a real estate agent who is running for a congressional seat in California, told the AP that she was prepared to speak to investigators about her own yearslong effort to draw attention to mortgages held by Schiff, who has homes in California and Maryland. But authorities instead were focused on potential interactions she has had with Pulte and Martin, Bish said.

"I expected to be asked questions, a lot of questions, about, 'How did you come about investigating Adam Schiff and what were your findings?'" Bish said. "What they wanted to know was if I was in communication with Ed Martin or Director Pulte — and I was not."

Bish said she kept trying to return to the Schiff allegations, but that the officials "are trying to, in my opinion, investigate the investigators."

Trump allies attack his political foes

The revelation that authorities are turning their attention to the handling of the Schiff investigation is likely to bring fresh scrutiny to the already criticized push by Pulte and Martin to investigate Trump political foes for mortgage fraud.

Their effort has been plagued by missteps, including overhyped allegations that were easily refuted, as well as the revelation that ethics officials at the agency Pulte leads were investigating whether he and his allies had improperly accessed mortgage data for those he has accused of fraud.

In recent months, Bish had been contacted by multiple times by Robert Bowes, who worked in the first Trump administration and purported to work for Pulte, according to a person familiar with the conversations who spoke on the condition of anonymity due to concern about retribution.

Bowes, who is listed on the subpoena, asked Bish to investigate the mortgages of multiple people, the person said. On one occasion, Bowes asked Bish to serve as a source to a national news outlet he claimed was working on a negative story about mortgages held by Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche, the person said.

Bowes did not respond to a request for comment Thursday.

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Pulte did not respond to a message seeking comment. A message seeking comment was also left with a spokesperson for Martin. The Justice Department declined to comment.

In August, the department named Martin as a special prosecutor to help conduct investigations into Schiff and New York Attorney General Letitia James. Prosecutors have separately issued subpoenas as part of a mortgage fraud investigation into Lisa Cook, the Federal Reserve governor whom Trump has sought to fire. Last week, Pulte also referred Rep Eric. Swalwell, a California Democrat, to the Justice Department for investigation.

All four deny the allegations.

The investigation into Schiff is being conducted by prosecutors in Maryland, though the status of the inquiry is unclear. The investigation into James resulted in criminal charges last month in Virginia. She has pleaded not guilty and, in a filing this week, her lawyers decried what they said was "outrageous government conduct" that resulted in her indictment.

Bish told the AP that she previously submitted her work on Schiff to congressional ethics officials, but that nothing came of it. After Pulte put out a call for mortgage fraud tips, she resubmitted her research to the agency he leads as well as the FBI. Pulte called her and left a message asking for more information, she said, but Bish said she has never had a conversation with him.

The subpoena Bish received seeks any communications she may have had with Pulte or any persons claiming to be working at his "behest," including anyone claiming to be Pulte's chief of staff. It also seeks information about communications with anyone "claiming to be working for or at the direction of" the Justice Department or "anyone claiming to be acting at the direction or request of" Martin.

Martin, who also serves as director of the Justice Department's "Weaponization Working Group," was tapped to help with the mortgage fraud investigations after his nomination to become Washington, D.C.'s top federal prosecutor was pulled over bipartisan concerns about his modest legal experience, divisive politics and support for Jan. 6 rioters.

Spotlight on Bill Pulte

Since his arrival in Trump's Washington, Pulte has drawn a spotlight to the normally staid Federal Housing Finance Agency he oversees. The 37-year-old scion of a home construction fortune has sought to ingratiate himself with Trump by publicly attacking some of the president's longtime political antagonists.

But in recent weeks, he's had a series of high-profile blunders.

Earlier this month, he persuaded Trump about the allure of a 50-year mortgage as a way to increase home buying and building, a proposal that was widely criticized because it would drastically increase the overall price of a loan.

Pulte, who appointed himself chairman of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, has also rattled the housing industry by purging ethics officials and top leaders of the two government-sponsored lending giants, which hold trillions of dollars in assets.

Some of those who have been fired were investigating whether Pulte and his allies used non-public mortgage data as the basis for his criminal referrals against Schiff and others. Other top executives at Fannie Mae were forced out last month after they voiced alarm that a Pulte confidant, acting on his behalf, had shared confidential pricing data with Freddie Mac, a top competitor.

In a letter to Attorney General Pam Bondi this week, Abbe Lowell, an attorney for James and Cook, suggested Pulte was perhaps the one who should be investigated.

"These improprieties by Director Pulte may be grounds for your agency or others in the government to review his conduct," Lowell wrote. "I am pointing them out because they undercut his criminal referrals."

## Justice Department insists Comey indictment was properly approved as it tries to keep case afloat

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A day after the Justice Department acknowledged to a federal judge that the full grand jury had not reviewed the final indictment of former FBI Director James Comey, the Trump-appointed

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U.S. attorney overseeing the case abruptly reversed herself, insisting Thursday that the panel properly approved the charges as she tried to contain the fallout from earlier statements that risked imperiling the prosecution.

The latest statements from Lindsey Halligan, the hastily named interim U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, represent an attempt to backtrack on earlier comments the prosecution team made under persistent questioning from a judge about the seemingly jumbled process leading to the return of the two-count indictment.

The new court filing, supplemented by a transcript from the September evening the indictment was returned, is meant to undo any public perception that the grand jury presentation was botched and that the case may be jeopardized as a result. It was not clear why some of the points in Thursday's filing were not raised during Wednesday's hearing, when prosecutors made clear that the full grand jury did not see the indictment filed in the case.

Either way, the dueling accounts underscore the irregular nature of the prosecution against one of President Donald Trump's political opponents and lay bare the consequences of the Justice Department's decision to entrust such a consequential case to a lawyer who had no prior experience as a prosecutor and was appointed to the job days before the indictment. Halligan replaced an experienced prosecutor who resigned amid Trump administration pressure to indict Comey and another Trump foe, New York Attorney General Letitia James, who has also since been charged by Halligan.

The issue stems from the fact that the Justice Department initially sought a three-count indictment of Comey. The grand jury rejected one of the counts but approved two others accusing Comey of making a false statement and obstructing Congress. Prosecutors then placed the two remaining charges in a revised indictment but said in court Wednesday that the full grand jury did not see the final charging document.

"Let me be clear that the second indictment, the operative indictment in this case that Mr. Comey faces, is a document that was never shown to the entire grand jury or presented in the grand jury room; is that correct?" U.S. District Judge Michael Nachmanoff asked at one point.

"Standing here in front of you, Your Honor, yes, that is my understanding," replied Tyler Lemons, a prosecutor on the case. "I was not there, but that is my understanding, yes, Your Honor."

Halligan, who was summoned to the lectern, told Nachmanoff in court Wednesday that only the grand jury foreperson and another grand juror were present for the second indictment. In a court filing later that evening, the Justice Department said the grand jury coordinator had returned to the grand jury room and presented the corrected indictment to the grand jury foreperson and the deputy foreperson.

On Thursday, in a five-page court filing titled "Government's Notice Correcting the Record," Halligan sought to downplay any problem with the presentation, describing the situation as a "clerical inconsistency" and insisting it was not the case that the full grand jury never voted on the second indictment.

The filing included a transcript of a conversation involving Halligan, the grand jury foreperson and the magistrate judge who was overseeing the return of the indictment.

"So you voted on the one that has the two counts?" the judge asked at one point, according to the transcript.

"Yes," replied the foreperson.

## What to know about the Justice Department's Jeffrey Epstein files

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The clock is ticking for the U.S. government to open up its files on Jeffrey Epstein.

After months of rancor and recriminations, Congress has passed and President Donald Trump has signed legislation compelling the Justice Department to give the public everything it has on Epstein — and it has to be done before Christmas.

But even that might not be enough for the curious and the conspiracy-minded.

While there's sure to be never-before-seen material in the thousands of pages likely to be released, a lot of Epstein-related records have already been made public, including by Congress and through litigation.

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And don't expect a "client list" of famous men who cavorted with Epstein. Though such a list has long been rumored, the Justice Department said in July that it doesn't exist.

Here's a look at what's expected to be made public, what isn't, and a refresher on how we got to this point:

Who is Jeffrey Epstein?

Epstein was a millionaire money manager known for socializing with celebrities, politicians, billionaires and the academic elite who was accused of sexually abusing underage girls.

His relationships with powerful men, including Trump, former President Bill Clinton and the former British prince Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, have been the subject of endless fascination and speculation. Neither Trump nor Clinton has been accused of wrongdoing. Andrew has denied abusing anyone.

Police in Palm Beach, Florida, began investigating Epstein in 2005 after he was accused of paying a 14-year-old girl for sex. The FBI then joined the investigation, but Epstein made a secret deal with the U.S. attorney in Florida to avoid federal charges, enabling him to plead guilty in 2008 to a relatively minor state-level prostitution charge. He served 13 months in a jail work-release program.

In 2019, during Trump's first term, Manhattan federal prosecutors revived the case and charged Epstein with sex trafficking, alleging he sexually abused dozens of girls. He killed himself in jail a month after his arrest.

In 2021, a federal jury in Manhattan convicted Epstein's longtime confidante and former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell of sex trafficking for helping recruit some of his underage victims. She is serving a 20-year prison sentence.

What's in the Justice Department's Epstein files?

Records related to the aborted Florida investigation, the Manhattan investigations, and anything else the Justice Department did to examine Epstein's dealings in the time in between.

They could include notes and reports written by FBI agents; transcripts of witness interviews, photographs, videos and other evidence; Epstein's autopsy report; and some material that may already be public, such as flight logs and travel records.

The law, dubbed the Epstein Files Transparency Act, mandates the Justice Department to release all unclassified documents and investigative materials, including files relating to immunity deals and internal communications about whom to charge or investigate.

What isn't authorized for release under the law?

Anything containing a victim's personally identifiable information.

The law allows the Justice Department to withhold or redact records that, if made public, would constitute "a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." It also bars the release of any materials depicting the sexual abuse of children, or images of death, physical abuse, or injury.

That means that if videos or photos exist of Epstein or anyone else sexually abusing underage girls, they can't be made public.

However, the law also makes clear that no records shall be withheld or redacted — meaning certain parts are blacked out — solely because their release would cause embarrassment or reputational harm to any public figure, government official or foreign dignitary.

When will the files be available to the public?

The legislation requires the Justice Department to make the documents public in a searchable and downloadable format within 30 days of Trump signing it into law. That means no later than Dec. 19.

However, the law also allows the Justice Department to withhold files that it says could jeopardize an active federal investigation. That's also longstanding Justice Department policy. Files can also be withheld if they're found to be classified or if they pertain to national defense or foreign policy.

While investigations into Epstein and Maxwell are long over, Attorney General Pam Bondi last week ordered a top federal prosecutor to lead an investigation into people who knew Epstein and some of Trump's political foes, including Clinton.

That investigation, taken up at Trump's urging despite the Justice Department previously finding no

evidence to support such a probe, could give the government grounds to temporarily withhold at least some of the material.

What about the so-called client list?

Epstein's so-called "client list" — a purported collection of his famous associates — has been the white whale of Epstein sleuths, skeptics and conspiracy theorists alike.

Even Bondi got in on the act, telling Fox News in February that the "client list" was "sitting on my desk right now to review."

The only problem: the Justice Department concluded it doesn't exist, issuing a letter in July saying that its review of Epstein-related records had revealed no incriminating "client list." Nor was there credible evidence that Epstein had "blackmailed prominent individuals as part of his actions," the unsigned memo said.

Why are these records being released now?

Congress is forcing the government to act after Trump reneged on a campaign promise last year to throw open the files. The Justice Department did release some records earlier this year — almost all of them already public — but suddenly hit the brakes in July after promising a "truckload" more.

That prompted a small, bipartisan group of House lawmakers to launch what was initially seen as a longshot effort to compel their release through legislation. In the meantime, lawmakers started disclosing documents they'd received from Epstein's estate, culminating in a 23,000-page release last week.

As public and political pressure mounted, including from some Trump allies, Congress swiftly passed the Epstein Files Transparency Act on Tuesday and Trump signed it into law on Wednesday.

Haven't some Epstein files already been made public?

Yes. Before Congress got involved, tens of thousands of pages of records were released over the years through civil lawsuits, Epstein and Maxwell's public criminal case dockets, public disclosures and Freedom of Information Act requests.

Many documents — including police reports written in Florida, state grand jury records, depositions of Epstein's employees, his flight records, his address book — are available already. In July, the Justice Department released surveillance video from the jail on the night Epstein died.

Even the FBI has previously released some Epstein-related files, posting more than 1,400 pages to its website, though much of the material was redacted and some hidden because it was under seal.

## What to know about the Justice Department's Jeffrey Epstein files

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The clock is ticking for the U.S. government to open up its files on Jeffrey Epstein.

After months of rancor and recriminations, Congress has passed and President Donald Trump has signed legislation compelling the Justice Department to give the public everything it has on Epstein — and it has to be done before Christmas.

But even that might not be enough for the curious and the conspiracy-minded.

While there's sure to be never-before-seen material in the thousands of pages likely to be released, a lot of Epstein-related records have already been made public, including by Congress and through litigation.

And don't expect a "client list" of famous men who cavorted with Epstein. Though such a list has long been rumored, the Justice Department said in July that it doesn't exist.

Here's a look at what's expected to be made public, what isn't, and a refresher on how we got to this point:

Who is Jeffrey Epstein?

Epstein was a millionaire money manager known for socializing with celebrities, politicians, billionaires and the academic elite who was accused of sexually abusing underage girls.

His relationships with powerful men, including Trump, former President Bill Clinton and the former British prince Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, have been the subject of endless fascination and speculation. Neither Trump nor Clinton has been accused of wrongdoing. Andrew has denied abusing anyone.

Police in Palm Beach, Florida, began investigating Epstein in 2005 after he was accused of paying a

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14-year-old girl for sex. The FBI then joined the investigation, but Epstein made a secret deal with the U.S. attorney in Florida to avoid federal charges, enabling him to plead guilty in 2008 to a relatively minor state-level prostitution charge. He served 13 months in a jail work-release program.

In 2019, during Trump's first term, Manhattan federal prosecutors revived the case and charged Epstein with sex trafficking, alleging he sexually abused dozens of girls. He killed himself in jail a month after his arrest.

In 2021, a federal jury in Manhattan convicted Epstein's longtime confidante and former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell of sex trafficking for helping recruit some of his underage victims. She is serving a 20-year prison sentence.

What's in the Justice Department's Epstein files?

Records related to the aborted Florida investigation, the Manhattan investigations, and anything else the Justice Department did to examine Epstein's dealings in the time in between.

They could include notes and reports written by FBI agents; transcripts of witness interviews, photographs, videos and other evidence; Epstein's autopsy report; and some material that may already be public, such as flight logs and travel records.

The law, dubbed the Epstein Files Transparency Act, mandates the Justice Department to release all unclassified documents and investigative materials, including files relating to immunity deals and internal communications about whom to charge or investigate.

What isn't authorized for release under the law?

Anything containing a victim's personally identifiable information.

The law allows the Justice Department to withhold or redact records that, if made public, would constitute "a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy." It also bars the release of any materials depicting the sexual abuse of children, or images of death, physical abuse, or injury.

That means that if videos or photos exist of Epstein or anyone else sexually abusing underage girls, they can't be made public.

However, the law also makes clear that no records shall be withheld or redacted — meaning certain parts are blacked out — solely because their release would cause embarrassment or reputational harm to any public figure, government official or foreign dignitary.

When will the files be available to the public?

The legislation requires the Justice Department to make the documents public in a searchable and downloadable format within 30 days of Trump signing it into law. That means no later than Dec. 19.

However, the law also allows the Justice Department to withhold files that it says could jeopardize an active federal investigation. That's also longstanding Justice Department policy. Files can also be withheld if they're found to be classified or if they pertain to national defense or foreign policy.

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## **Fugees rapper Pras Michel sentenced to 14 years in prison over illegal donations to Obama campaign**

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Grammy-winning rapper Prakazrel “Pras” Michel of the Fugees was sentenced on Thursday to 14 years in prison for a case in which he was convicted of illegally funneling millions of dollars in foreign contributions to former President Barack Obama’s 2012 reelection campaign.

Michel, 52, declined to address the court before U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly sentenced him.

In April 2023, a federal jury convicted Michel of 10 counts, including conspiracy and acting as an unregistered agent of a foreign government. The trial in Washington, D.C., included testimony from actor Leonardo DiCaprio and former Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

Justice Department prosecutors said federal sentencing guidelines recommended a life sentence for Michel, whom they said “betrayed his country for money” and “lied unapologetically and unrelentingly to carry out his schemes.”

“His sentence should reflect the breadth and depth of his crimes, his indifference to the risks to his country, and the magnitude of his greed,” they wrote.

Defense attorney Peter Zeidenberg said his client’s 14-year sentence is “completely disproportionate to the offense.” Michel will appeal his conviction and sentence, according to his lawyer.

Zeidenberg had recommended a three-year prison sentence. A life sentence would be an “absurdly high” punishment for Michel given that it is typically reserved for deadly terrorists and drug cartel leaders, Michel’s attorneys said in a court filing.

“The Government’s position is one that would cause Inspector Javert to recoil and, if anything, simply illustrates just how easily the Guidelines can be manipulated to produce absurd results, and how poorly equipped they are, at least on this occasion, to determine a fair and just sentence,” they wrote.

Michel, a Brooklyn native whose parents immigrated to the U.S. from Haiti, was a founding member of the Fugees along with childhood friends Lauryn Hill and Wyclef Jean. Their hip-hop band won two Grammy Awards and sold tens of millions of albums.

Michel obtained over \$120 million from Malaysian billionaire Low Taek Jho — also known as Jho Low — and steered some of that money through straw donors to Obama’s campaign.

Michel also tried to end a Justice Department investigation of Low, tampered with two witnesses and perjured himself at trial, prosecutors said.

Low, who has lived in China, was one of the primary financiers of “The Wolf of Wall Street,” a movie starring DiCaprio. Low is a fugitive but has maintained his innocence.

"Low's motivation for giving Mr. Michel money to donate was not so that he could achieve some policy objective. Instead, Low simply wanted to obtain a photograph with himself and then-President Obama," Michel's attorneys wrote.

In August 2024, the judge rejected Michel's request for a new trial based in part on his defense attorney's use of a generative AI program during his closing of the trial's arguments. The judges said that and other trial errors didn't amount to a serious miscarriage of justice.

## Judge to rule on whether to release Kilmar Abrego Garcia from immigration custody

By BRIAN WITTE Associated Press

GREENBELT, Md. (AP) — A federal judge in Maryland promised on Thursday to rule as soon as possible on whether to order the release of Kilmar Abrego Garcia from immigration custody.

Abrego Garcia's mistaken deportation to El Salvador in March, in violation of an earlier court settlement, has galvanized both sides of the debate over President Donald Trump's immigration policies. Since his return to the United States in June, the government has been seeking to deport him to a series of African countries. His attorneys claim the government is illegally using the immigration system to punish Abrego Garcia for the embarrassment of having to admit that his earlier deportation was in error.

U.S. District Judge Paula Xinis of Maryland earlier issued an injunction that prevents his immediate removal. The government has asked her to lift the injunction. In court on Thursday, John Cantu, of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, testified in support of Homeland Security's latest proposal to send Abrego Garcia to Liberia.

Abrego Garcia has an American wife and child and has lived in Maryland for years, but he immigrated to the U.S. illegally from El Salvador as a teenager. In 2019, an immigration judge granted him protection from being deported back to his home country, finding he faced danger there. Since he cannot be deported to El Salvador, the government wants to deport him to a third country.

He has said he is willing to be deported to Costa Rica, which earlier had given the U.S. government a guarantee that he would be allowed to live freely there. However, the government has made no obvious effort to deport him to the Spanish-speaking Central American country, instead notifying of their intent to send him to Uganda, Eswatini, Ghana and now Liberia.

In court on Thursday, Cantu told the judge that removal to Costa Rica is "not an option at the moment" but was short on details as to why.

Abrego Garcia's attorneys argued that the government cannot simply hold him in immigration detention indefinitely. They also pointed out that there is no final order of removal for Abrego Garcia in the immigration record.

Xinis seemed to agree that without a removal order, he probably should not be in custody.

"You can't fake it 'till you make it," she said of the order. "You've got to have it."

Xinis said she would rule on whether he can be released as quickly as she could, but noted, "These are weighty issues."

Even if Abrego Garcia is released from immigration custody, the government will likely continue seeking to deport him. He has petitioned to reopen his immigration case to seek asylum in the U.S., but there is no guarantee that he will be successful.

After the hearing, Abrego Garcia's attorney Simon Sandoval-Moshenberg told reporters that the government's failure to state a reason why Costa Rica cannot accept him adds to the impression that the immigration system is being used for retaliation.

"I can't think of any reason why we're still fighting out this case, and why he's still behind bars in a detention center in Pennsylvania, when the government could have sent him to Costa Rica months ago," he said.

## Takeaways from AP report on how Border Patrol monitors US drivers for 'suspicious' travel

By BYRON TAU and GARANCE BURKE Associated Press

The U.S. Border Patrol is monitoring millions of American drivers nationwide in a secretive program to identify and detain people whose travel patterns it deems suspicious, The Associated Press has found.

Here are Takeaways from the AP's investigation:

What did the AP investigation find?

The Border Patrol's predictive intelligence program has resulted in people being stopped, searched and in some cases arrested. A network of cameras scans and records vehicle license plate information, and an algorithm flags vehicles deemed suspicious based on where they came from, where they were going and which route they took. Federal agents in turn may then flag local law enforcement.

Suddenly, drivers find themselves pulled over — often for reasons cited such as speeding, no turn signals or even a dangling air freshener blocking the view. They are then aggressively questioned and searched, with no inkling that the roads they drove put them on law enforcement's radar.

The AP's investigation, the first to reveal details of how the program on America's roads, is based on interviews with eight former government officials with direct knowledge of the program who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to the media, as well as dozens of federal, state and local officials, attorneys and privacy experts. The AP also reviewed thousands of pages of court and government documents, state grant and law enforcement data, and arrest reports.

What does the government say?

Border Patrol's parent agency, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, said they use license plate readers to help identify threats and disrupt criminal networks and are "governed by a stringent, multi-layered policy framework, as well as federal law and constitutional protections, to ensure the technology is applied responsibly and for clearly defined security purposes."

"For national security reasons, we do not detail the specific operational applications," the agency said. While the U.S. Border Patrol primarily operates within 100 miles (161 kilometers) of the border, it is legally allowed "to operate anywhere in the United States," the agency added.

What is the history of the program?

Once limited to policing the nation's boundaries, the Border Patrol's surveillance system stretches into the country's interior and monitors ordinary Americans' daily actions and connections for anomalies instead of simply targeting wanted suspects. Started about a decade ago to fight illegal border-related activities and the trafficking of both drugs and people, it has expanded over the past five years.

Border Patrol has for years hidden details of its license plate reader program, trying to keep any mention of the program out of court documents and police reports, according to two people familiar with the program. Readers are often disguised along highways in traffic safety equipment like drums and barrels.

The Border Patrol has defined its own criteria for which drivers' behavior should be deemed suspicious or tied to drug or human trafficking, stopping people for anything from driving on backcountry roads, being in a rental car or making short trips to the border region. The agency's network of cameras now extends along the southern border in Texas, Arizona and California, and also monitors drivers traveling near the U.S.-Canada border.

The Border Patrol has recently grown even more powerful through collaborations with other agencies, drawing information from license plate readers nationwide run by the Drug Enforcement Administration, private companies and, increasingly, local law enforcement programs funded through federal grants. Texas law enforcement agencies have asked Border Patrol to use facial recognition to identify drivers, documents show.

This active role beyond the borders is part of the quiet transformation of its parent agency, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, into something more akin to a domestic intelligence operation. Under the Trump administration's heightened immigration enforcement efforts, CBP is now poised to get more than \$2.7 billion to build out border surveillance systems such as the license plate reader program by layering in

artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.

What do critics say?

While collecting license plates from cars on public roads has generally been upheld by courts, some legal scholars see the growth of large digital surveillance networks such as Border Patrol's as raising constitutional questions.

Courts have started to recognize that "large-scale surveillance technology that's capturing everyone and everywhere at every time" might be unconstitutional under the Fourth Amendment, said Andrew Ferguson, a law professor at George Washington University.

Nicole Ozer, the executive director of the Center for Constitutional Democracy at UC Law San Francisco, expressed alarm when told of AP's findings.

"They are collecting mass amounts of information about who people are, where they go, what they do, and who they know," she said. "These surveillance systems do not make communities safer."

## Big swings keep rocking Wall Street as US stocks drop sharply after erasing a morning surge

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Jarring swings keep rocking Wall Street, and U.S. stocks erased a big morning gain to drop on Thursday as the market remains skittish following weeks of doubts and erratic moves.

After initially soaring toward what seemed like its best day since May, with an early surge of 1.9%, the S&P 500 erased all of it and fell 1.6%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 386 points, or 0.8%, and the Nasdaq composite sank 2.2%.

The sharpest losses again hit what used to be the market's biggest winners. Nvidia, cryptocurrencies and other areas that had soared with nearly relentless momentum, as traders feared missing out on more gains, forced the market lower. Bitcoin dropped below \$87,000, down from nearly \$125,000 last month.

The market had been shaky coming into Thursday, largely because of twin worries: Nvidia and other superstar stocks caught up in the frenzy around artificial-intelligence technology may have simply shot too high, and the Federal Reserve may be done delivering the invigorating cuts to interest rates that Wall Street loves.

Nvidia initially appeared to tamp down the worries about a bubble for AI stocks after reporting a big profit for the summer, along with a forecast for coming revenue that easily cleared analysts' expectations. By delivering strong profits and indicating more are coming, Nvidia can justify its stock's price gains and make it look less expensive.

Given Nvidia's forecasts, "it is very hard to see how this stock does not keep moving higher from here," according to analysts at UBS led by Timothy Arcuri. They also said "the AI infrastructure tide is still rising so fast that all boats will be lifted."

Nvidia jumped to an early gain of 5% but then dropped to a loss of 3.2%. Because it's the biggest company in the U.S. market by value, Nvidia's stock has more pull on the S&P 500 than any other company's.

Despite Nvidia's big numbers, worries about a potential AI bubble aren't gone. The concern among investors is that all the dollars pouring into AI chips and data centers may not ultimately produce the big profits and productivity for the economy that proponents have been promising.

Yes, Nvidia expects to sell another \$65 billion of chips in the coming three months, which is more than analysts expected. But will all those chips actually create much bigger profits for Amazon and other companies using them? That question — whether all the investment in AI will prove to be worth it in the end — is still unanswered.

The most recent survey of global fund managers by Bank of America showed a record percentage of investors saying companies are "overinvesting."

Amazon went from an early gain of 2.1% Thursday to a loss of 2.5%. Palantir Technologies swung from a jump of 5.5% to a loss of 5.8%.

The last time the overall stock market had swings in one day as wild as Thursday's was in April, when

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President Donald Trump shocked the world with his stiff "Liberation Day" tariffs.

For the second worry that's been dogging Wall Street, interest rates, Thursday's jobs report from the U.S. government came in mixed and offered some relief. Financial markets initially seemed to pick the data apart for encouraging signals, according to Seema Shah, chief global strategist at Principal Asset Management.

The report showed hiring by U.S. employers was stronger in September than economists expected, which may suggest the economy remains solid. But it also said the unemployment rate worsened slightly, which could give the Fed reason to cut its main interest rate at its next meeting in December.

Traders still see a December rate cut as relatively unlikely, giving it a roughly 40% probability, according to data from CME Group. But that's better than the 30% chance they saw a day earlier.

What the Fed does is critical for the stock market because prices ran to records in part because of expectations for continued cuts to rates. The Fed has already cut rates twice this year to shore up the slowing job market. But lower rates can worsen inflation, which has stubbornly remained above the Fed's 2% target.

On the winning side of Wall Street was Walmart, which rallied 6.5% after the retailer delivered another standout quarter. It reported strong sales and profits that blew past Wall Street expectations as it continues to lure cash-strapped Americans nervous about the economy and prices.

That wasn't enough to drown out the losses for Nvidia and tech. Companies enmeshed in the crypto industry also tumbled, as bitcoin dropped to its lowest price since April. Robinhood Markets fell 10.1%, and Coinbase Global sank 7.4%.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 103.40 points to 6,538.76. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 386.51 to 45,752.26, and the Nasdaq composite sank 486.18 to 22,078.05.

In the bond market, the yield on the 10-year Treasury eased to 4.09% from 4.13% late Wednesday.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose across much of Europe and Asia.

Japan's Nikkei 225 jumped 2.6%, and South Korea's Kospi rose 1.9% for two of the bigger gains.

## **Border Patrol is monitoring US drivers and detaining those with 'suspicious' travel patterns**

By BYRON TAU and GARANCE BURKE Associated Press

The U.S. Border Patrol is monitoring millions of American drivers nationwide in a secretive program to identify and detain people whose travel patterns it deems suspicious, The Associated Press has found.

The predictive intelligence program has resulted in people being stopped, searched and in some cases arrested. A network of cameras scans and records vehicle license plate information, and an algorithm flags vehicles deemed suspicious based on where they came from, where they were going and which route they took. Federal agents in turn may then flag local law enforcement.

Suddenly, drivers find themselves pulled over — often for reasons cited such as speeding, failure to signal, the wrong window tint or even a dangling air freshener blocking the view. They are then aggressively questioned and searched, with no inkling that the roads they drove put them on law enforcement's radar.

Once limited to policing the nation's boundaries, the Border Patrol has built a surveillance system stretching into the country's interior that can monitor ordinary Americans' daily actions and connections for anomalies instead of simply targeting wanted suspects. Started about a decade ago to fight illegal border-related activities and the trafficking of both drugs and people, it has expanded over the past five years.

The Border Patrol has recently grown even more powerful through collaborations with other agencies, drawing information from license plate readers nationwide run by the Drug Enforcement Administration, private companies and, increasingly, local law enforcement programs funded through federal grants. Texas law enforcement agencies have asked Border Patrol to use facial recognition to identify drivers, documents show.

This active role beyond the borders is part of the quiet transformation of its parent agency, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, into something more akin to a domestic intelligence operation. Under the Trump

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administration's heightened immigration enforcement efforts, CBP is now poised to get more than \$2.7 billion to build out border surveillance systems such as the license plate reader program by layering in artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.

The result is a mass surveillance network with a particularly American focus: cars.

This investigation, the first to reveal details of how the program works on America's roads, is based on interviews with eight former government officials with direct knowledge of the program who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to speak to the media, as well as dozens of federal, state and local officials, attorneys and privacy experts. The AP also reviewed thousands of pages of court and government documents, state grant and law enforcement data, and arrest reports.

The Border Patrol has for years hidden details of its license plate reader program, trying to keep any mention of the program out of court documents and police reports, former officials say, even going so far as to propose dropping charges rather than risk revealing any details about the placement and use of their covert license plate readers. Readers are often disguised along highways in traffic safety equipment like drums and barrels.

The Border Patrol has defined its own criteria for which drivers' behavior should be deemed suspicious or tied to drug or human trafficking, stopping people for anything from driving on backcountry roads, being in a rental car or making short trips to the border region. The agency's network of cameras now extends along the southern border in Texas, Arizona and California, and also monitors drivers traveling near the U.S.-Canada border.

And it reaches far into the interior, impacting residents of big metropolitan areas and people driving to and from large cities such as Chicago and Detroit, as well as from Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Houston to and from the Mexican border region. In one example, AP found the agency has placed at least four cameras in the greater Phoenix area over the years, one of which was more than 120 miles (193 kilometers) from the Mexican frontier, beyond the agency's usual jurisdiction of 100 miles (161 kilometers) from a land or sea border. The AP also identified several camera locations in metropolitan Detroit, as well as one placed near the Michigan-Indiana border to capture traffic headed towards Chicago or Gary, Indiana, or other nearby destinations.

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Today, predictive surveillance is embedded into America's roadways. Mass surveillance techniques are also used in a range of other countries, from authoritarian governments such as China to, increasingly, democracies in the U.K. and Europe in the name of national security and public safety.

"They are collecting mass amounts of information about who people are, where they go, what they do, and who they know ... engaging in dragnet surveillance of Americans on the streets, on the highways, in their cities, in their communities," Nicole Ozer, the executive director of the Center for Constitutional Democracy at UC Law San Francisco, said in response to the AP's findings. "These surveillance systems do not make communities safer."

'We did everything right and had nothing to hide'

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In February, Lorenzo Gutierrez Lugo, a driver for a small trucking company that specializes in transporting furniture, clothing and other belongings to families in Mexico, was driving south to the border city of Brownsville, Texas, carrying packages from immigrant communities in South Carolina's low country.

Gutierrez Lugo was pulled over by a local police officer in Kingsville, a small Texas city near Corpus Christi that lies about 100 miles from the Mexican border. The officer, Richard Beltran, cited the truck's speed of 50 mph (80 kph) in a 45 mph (72 kph) zone as the reason for the stop.

But speeding was a pretext: Border Patrol had requested the stop and said the black Dodge pickup with a white trailer could contain contraband, according to police and court records. U.S. Route 77 passes through Kingsville, a route that state and federal authorities scrutinize for trafficking of drugs, money and people.

Gutierrez Lugo, who through a lawyer declined to comment, was interrogated about the route he drove, based on license plate reader data, per the police report and court records. He consented to a search of his car by Beltran and Border Patrol agents, who eventually arrived to assist.

They unearthed no contraband. But Beltran arrested Gutierrez Lugo on suspicion of money laundering and engaging in organized criminal activity because he was carrying thousands of dollars in cash — money his supervisor said came directly from customers in local Latino communities, who are accustomed to paying in cash. No criminal charges were ultimately brought against Gutierrez Lugo and an effort by prosecutors to seize the cash, vehicle and trailer as contraband was eventually dropped.

Luis Barrios owns the trucking company, Paquetería El Guero, that employed the driver. He told AP he hires people with work authorization in the United States and was taken aback by the treatment of his employee and his trailer.

"We did everything right and had nothing to hide, and that was ultimately what they found," said Barrios, who estimates he spent \$20,000 in legal fees to clear his driver's name and get the trailer out of impound.

Border Patrol agents and local police have many names for these kinds of stops: "whisper," "intel" or "wall" stops. Those stops are meant to conceal — or wall off — that the true reason for the stop is a tip from federal agents sitting miles away, watching data feeds showing who's traveling on America's roads and predicting who is "suspicious," according to documents and people interviewed by the AP.

In 2022, a man from Houston had his car searched from top to bottom by Texas sheriff's deputies outside San Antonio after they got a similar tipoff from Border Patrol agents about the driver, Alek Schott.

Federal agents observed that Schott had made an overnight trip from Houston to Carrizo Springs, Texas, and back, court records show. They knew he stayed overnight in a hotel about 80 miles (129 kilometers) from the U.S.-Mexico border. They knew that in the morning Schott met a female colleague there before they drove together to a business meeting.

At Border Patrol's request, Schott was pulled over by Bexar County sheriff's deputies. The deputies held Schott by the side of the road for more than an hour, searched his car and found nothing.

"The beautiful thing about the Texas Traffic Code is there's thousands of things you can stop a vehicle for," said Joel Babb, the sheriff's deputy who stopped Schott's car, in a deposition in a lawsuit Schott filed alleging violations of his constitutional rights.

According to testimony and documents released as part of Schott's lawsuit, Babb was on a group chat with federal agents called Northwest Highway. Babb deleted the WhatsApp chat off his phone but Schott's lawyers were able to recover some of the text messages.

Through a public records act request, the AP also obtained more than 70 pages of the Northwest Highway group chats from June and July of this year from a Texas county that had at least one sheriff's deputy active in the chat. The AP was able to associate numerous phone numbers in both sets of documents with Border Patrol agents and Texas law enforcement officials.

The chat logs show Border Patrol agents and Texas sheriffs deputies trading tips about vehicles' travel patterns — based on suspicions about little more than someone taking a quick trip to the border region and back. The chats show how thoroughly Texas highways are surveilled by this federal-local partnership and how much detailed information is informally shared.

In one exchange a law enforcement official included a photo of someone's driver's license and told the group the person, who they identified using an abbreviation for someone in the country illegally, was

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headed westbound. "Need BP?," responded a group member whose number was labeled "bp Intel." "Yes sir," the official answered, and a Border Patrol agent was en route.

Border Patrol agents and local law enforcement shared information about U.S. citizens' social media profiles and home addresses with each other after stopping them on the road. Chats show Border Patrol was also able to determine whether vehicles were rentals and whether drivers worked for rideshare services.

In Schott's case, Babb testified that federal agents "actually watch travel patterns on the highway" through license plate scans and other surveillance technologies. He added: "I just know that they have a lot of toys over there on the federal side."

After finding nothing in Schott's car, Babb said "nine times out of 10, this is what happens," a phrase Schott's lawyers claimed in court filings shows the sheriff's department finds nothing suspicious in most of its searches. Babb did not respond to multiple requests for comment from AP.

The Bexar County sheriff's office declined to comment due to pending litigation and referred all questions about the Schott case to the county's district attorney. The district attorney did not respond to a request for comment.

The case is pending in federal court in Texas. Schott said in an interview with the AP: "I didn't know it was illegal to drive in Texas."

## 'Patterns of life' and license plates

Today, the deserts, forests and mountains of the nation's land borders are dotted with checkpoints and increasingly, surveillance towers, Predator drones, thermal cameras and license plate readers, both covert and overt.

Border Patrol's parent agency got authorization to run a domestic license plate reader program in 2017, according to a Department of Homeland Security policy document. At the time, the agency said that it might use hidden license plate readers "for a set period of time while CBP is conducting an investigation of an area of interest or smuggling route. Once the investigation is complete, or the illicit activity has stopped in that area, the covert cameras are removed," the document states.

But that's not how the program has operated in practice, according to interviews, police reports and court documents. License plate readers have become a major — and in some places permanent — fixture of the border region.

In a budget request to Congress in fiscal year 2024, CBP said that its Conveyance Monitoring and Predictive Recognition System, or CMPRS, "collects license plate images and matches the processed images against established hot lists to assist ... in identifying travel patterns indicative of illegal border related activities." Several new developer jobs have been posted seeking applicants to help modernize its license plate surveillance system in recent months. Numerous Border Patrol sectors now have special intelligence units that can analyze license plate reader data, and tie commercial license plate readers to its national network, according to documents and interviews.

Border Patrol worked with other law enforcement agencies in Southern California about a decade ago to develop pattern recognition, said a former CBP official who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. Over time, the agency learned to develop what it calls "patterns of life" of vehicle movements by sifting through the license plate data and determining "abnormal" routes, evaluating if drivers were purposely avoiding official checkpoints. Some cameras can take photos of a vehicle's plates as well as its driver's face, the official said.

Another former Border Patrol official compared it to a more technologically sophisticated version of what agents used to do in the field — develop hunches based on experience about which vehicles or routes smugglers might use, find a legal basis for the stop like speeding and pull drivers over for questioning.

The cameras take pictures of vehicle license plates. Then, the photos are "read" by the system, which automatically detects and distills the images into numbers and letters, tied to a geographic location, former CBP officials said. The AP could not determine how precisely the system's algorithm defines a quick turnaround or an odd route. Over time, the agency has amassed databases replete with images of license plates, and the system's algorithm can flag an unusual "pattern of life" for human inspection.

The Border Patrol also has access to a nationwide network of plate readers run by the Drug Enforce-

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ment Administration, documents show, and was authorized in 2020 to access license plate reader systems sold by private companies. In documents obtained by the AP, a Border Patrol official boasted about being able to see that a vehicle that had traveled to "Dallas, Little Rock, Arkansas and Atlanta" before ending up south of San Antonio.

Documents show that Border Patrol or CBP has in the past had access to data from at least three private sector vendors: Rekor, Vigilant Solutions and Flock Safety.

Through Flock alone, Border Patrol for a time had access to at least 1,600 license plate readers across 22 states, and some counties have reported looking up license plates on behalf of CBP even in states like California and Illinois that ban sharing data with federal immigration authorities, according to an AP analysis of police disclosures. A Flock spokesperson told AP the company "for now" had paused its pilot programs with CBP and a separate DHS agency, Homeland Security Investigations, and declined to discuss the type or volume of data shared with either federal agency, other than to say agencies could search for vehicles wanted in conjunction with a crime. No agencies currently list Border Patrol as receiving Flock data. Vigilant and Rekor did not respond to requests for comment.

Where Border Patrol places its cameras is a closely guarded secret. However, through public records requests, the AP obtained dozens of permits the agency filed with Arizona and Michigan for permission to place cameras on state-owned land. The permits show the agency frequently disguises its cameras by concealing them in traffic equipment like the yellow and orange barrels that dot American roadways, or by labeling them as jobsite equipment. An AP photographer in October visited the locations identified in more than two dozen permit applications in Arizona, finding that most of the Border Patrol's hidden equipment remains in place today. Spokespeople for the Arizona and Michigan departments of transportation said they approve permits based on whether they follow state and federal rules and are not privy to details on how license plate readers are used.

Texas, California, and other border states did not provide documents in response to the AP's public records requests.

CBP's attorneys and personnel instructed local cities and counties in both Arizona and Texas to withhold records from the AP that might have revealed details about the program's operations, even though they were requested under state open records laws, according to emails and legal briefs filed with state governments. For example, CBP claimed records requested by the AP in Texas "would permit private citizens to anticipate weaknesses in a police department, avoid detection, jeopardize officer safety, and generally undermine police efforts." Michigan redacted the exact locations of Border Patrol equipment, but the AP was able to determine general locations from the name of the county.

One page of the group chats obtained by the AP shows that a participant enabled WhatsApp's disappearing messages feature to ensure communications were deleted automatically.

## Transformation of CBP into intelligence agency

The Border Patrol's license plate reader program is just one part of a steady transformation of its parent agency, CBP, in the years since 9/11 into an intelligence operation whose reach extends far beyond borders, according to interviews with former officials.

CBP has quietly amassed access to far more information from ports of entry, airports and intelligence centers than other local, state and federal law enforcement agencies. And like a domestic spy agency, CBP has mostly hidden its role in the dissemination of intelligence on purely domestic travel through its use of whisper stops.

Border Patrol has also extended the reach of its license plate surveillance program by paying for local law enforcement to run plate readers on their behalf.

A federal grant program called Operation Stonegarden, which has existed in some form for nearly two decades, has handed out hundreds of millions of dollars to buy automated license plate readers, camera-equipped drones and other surveillance gear for local police and sheriffs agencies. Stonegarden grant funds also pay for local law enforcement overtime, which deputizes local officers to work on Border Patrol enforcement priorities. Under President Donald Trump, the Republican-led Congress this year allocated

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\$450 million for Stonegarden to be handed out over the next four fiscal years. In the previous four fiscal years, the program gave out \$342 million.

In Cochise County, Arizona, Sheriff Mark Dannels said Stonegarden grants, which have been used to buy plate readers and pay for overtime, have let his deputies merge their mission with Border Patrol's to prioritize border security.

"If we're sharing our authorities, we can put some consequences behind, or deterrence behind, 'Don't come here,'" he said.

In 2021, the Ward County, Texas, sheriff sought grant funding from DHS to buy a "covert, mobile, License Plate Reader" to pipe data to Border Patrol's Big Bend Sector Intelligence Unit. The sheriff's department did not respond to a request for comment.

Other documents AP obtained show that Border Patrol connects locally owned and operated license plate readers bought through Stonegarden grants to its computer systems, vastly increasing the federal agency's surveillance network.

How many people have been caught up in the Border Patrol's dragnet is unknown. One former Border Patrol agent who worked on the license plate reader pattern detection program in California said the program had an 85% success rate of discovering contraband once he learned to identify patterns that looked suspicious. But another former official in a different Border Patrol sector said he was unaware of successful interdictions based solely on license plate patterns.

In Trump's second term, Border Patrol has extended its reach and power as border crossings have slowed to historic lows and freed up agents for operations in the heartland. Border Patrol Sector Chief Gregory Bovino, for example, was tapped to direct hundreds of agents from multiple DHS agencies in the administration's immigration sweeps across Los Angeles, more than 150 miles (241 kilometers) from his office in El Centro, California. Bovino later was elevated to lead the aggressive immigration crackdown in Chicago. Numerous Border Patrol officials have also been tapped to replace ICE leadership.

The result has been more encounters between the agency and the general public than ever before.

"We took Alek's case because it was a clear-cut example of an unconstitutional traffic stop," said Christie Hebert, who works at the nonprofit public interest law firm Institute for Justice and represents Schott. "What we found was something much larger — a system of mass surveillance that threatens people's freedom of movement."

AP found numerous other examples similar to what Schott and the delivery driver experienced in reviewing court records in border communities and along known smuggling routes in Texas and California. Several police reports and court records the AP examined cite "suspicious" travel patterns or vague tipoffs from the Border Patrol or other unnamed law enforcement agencies. In another federal court document filed in California, a Border Patrol agent acknowledged "conducting targeted analysis on vehicles exhibiting suspicious travel patterns" as the reason he singled out a Nissan Altima traveling near San Diego.

In cases reviewed by the AP, local law enforcement sometimes tried to conceal the role the Border Patrol plays in passing along intelligence. Babb, the deputy who stopped Schott, testified he typically uses the phrase "subsequent to prior knowledge" when describing whisper stops in his police reports to acknowledge that the tip came from another law enforcement agency without revealing too much in written documents he writes memorializing motorist encounters.

Once they pull over a vehicle deemed suspicious, officers often aggressively question drivers about their travels, their belongings, their jobs, how they know the passengers in the car, and much more, police records and bodyworn camera footage obtained by the AP show. One Texas officer demanded details from a man about where he met his current sexual partner. Often drivers, such as the one working for the South Carolina moving company, were arrested on suspicion of money laundering merely for carrying a few thousand dollars worth of cash, with no apparent connection to illegal activity. Prosecutors filed lawsuits to try to seize money or vehicles on the suspicion they were linked to trafficking.

Schott warns that for every success story touted by Border Patrol, there are far more innocent people who don't realize they've become ensnared in a technology-driven enforcement operation.

"I assume for every one person like me, who's actually standing up, there's a thousand people who just don't have the means or the time or, you know, they just leave frustrated and angry. They don't have the ability to move forward and hold anyone accountable," Schott said. "I think there's thousands of people getting treated this way."

## Bubble fears ease but investors still waiting for AI to live up to its promise

By MICHAEL LIEDTKE AP Technology Writer

Fears about the artificial intelligence boom turning into an overblown bubble have diminished for now, thanks to a stellar earnings report from Nvidia that illustrated why its indispensable chips transformed it into the world's most valuable company.

But that doesn't mean the specter of an AI bubble won't return in the months and years ahead as Big Tech gears up to spend trillions of dollars more on a technology the industry's leaders believe will determine the winners and losers during the next wave of innovation.

For now, at least, Nvidia has eased worries that the AI craze propelling the stock market and much of the economy for the past year is on the verge of a massive collapse.

If anything, Nvidia's quarterly report indicated that AI spending is picking up even more momentum. The highlights, released late Wednesday, included quarterly revenue of \$57 billion, a 62% increase from the same time last year. That sales growth was an acceleration from the 56% increase in year-over-year revenue from the May-July quarter.

What's more, Nvidia forecast revenue of \$65 billion for the current quarter covering November-January, which would be a 65% year-over-year increase.

Given Nvidia's forecasts, "it is very hard to see how this stock does not keep moving higher from here," according to analysts at UBS led by Timothy Arcuri. The UBS analyst also said the "AI infrastructure tide is still rising so fast that all boats will be lifted."

Nvidia's numbers are viewed through a window that extends far beyond the Santa Clara, California, company's headquarters because its products are needed by a wide range of companies — including Big Tech peers like Microsoft, Amazon, Alphabet and Meta Platforms — to build data centers that are becoming known as AI factories.

"AI spending isn't just holding up, it's accelerating. That's exactly what the market needed to see," said Jake Behan, head of capital markets for investment firm Direxion.

The numbers initially lifted Nvidia's stock price by as much as 5% in Thursday's trading, while other tech stocks tied to the AI spending frenzy also got a boost. But Nvidia's shares and other tech stocks reversed course later in the session as investors found other issues besides AI, such as the government's latest jobs report and the future direction of interest rates.

Even with a 3% drop in its stock price amid the broader market decline, Nvidia remains valued at \$4.4 trillion, more than 10 times its valuation three years ago when OpenAI released its ChatGPT chatbot, triggering the biggest technological shift since Apple released the iPhone in 2007.

Nvidia's rapid rise has turned its CEO Jensen Huang into the chief evangelist for the AI revolution and he sought to use his bully pulpit during a late Wednesday conference call with industry analysts to make a case that the spending to make technology with humanlike intelligence is just beginning.

"There's been a lot of talk about an AI bubble. From our vantage point, we see something very different," Huang insisted while celebrating "depth and breadth" of Nvidia's growth.

Huang is hardly a lone voice in the wilderness. A recent report from Gartner Inc. estimates that worldwide spending on AI will rise to more than \$2 trillion next year, a 37% increase from the nearly \$1.5 trillion that the research firm expects to be spent this year.

But it remains to be seen if all that money pouring into AI will actually produce all the profits and productivity that proponents have been promising. That leaves the question unanswered if all the real spending that's happening will be worth it.

The most recent survey of global fund managers by Bank of America showed a record percentage of investors saying companies are "overinvesting."

Big Tech is already so profitable that many of the most successful finance their spending sprees with their ongoing stream of revenue and cash hoards in their bank accounts. But some companies, such as Meta Platforms and Oracle, are relying more heavily on debt to fund their AI ambitions — a strategy that has raised enough alarms among investors that their stock prices have plunged more dramatically than their peers in recent weeks.

Both Meta and Oracle have suffered more than 20% declines in their stock prices since late October.

But other Big Tech powerhouses leading the way in AI remain just behind Nvidia and iPhone maker Apple in the rankings of the most valuable companies. Alphabet, Microsoft and Amazon boast market values currently ranging from \$2.3 trillion to \$3.6 trillion.

"It is true that valuations are high and that there is some froth in the market, however, the spending on AI is real," said Chris Zaccarelli, chief investment officer for money manager Northlight Asset Management. "Whether or not the spending turns out to be overdone won't be known for many years."

## Death toll reaches 33 in some of the deadliest Israeli strikes in Gaza since the ceasefire's start

By WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza (AP) — Israeli strikes in Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis early Thursday killed five people, hospital officials said, bringing the death toll from airstrikes in the Palestinian territory over a roughly 12-hour period to 33, mostly women and children. The strikes have been some of the deadliest since Oct. 10 when a U.S.-brokered ceasefire took effect.

The renewed escalation came after Israel said that its soldiers had come under fire in Khan Younis on Wednesday. Israel said that no soldiers were killed and that the military responded with strikes.

Four Israeli airstrikes on tents sheltering displaced people in Khan Younis late Wednesday and early Thursday killed 17 people, including five women and five children, according to officials at Nasser Hospital.

In Gaza City, two airstrikes on a building killed 16 people, including seven children and three women, according to officials at the Al-Shifa hospital in the northern part of the city where the bodies were taken.

The Hamas militant group condemned the Israeli strikes as a "shocking massacre." In a statement, Hamas denied firing toward Israeli troops.

Palestinians mourn loved ones

At Nasser Hospital, scores of people gathered to offer funeral prayers for those who were killed in the Israeli strikes. Women wailed in mourning over the bodies of loved ones wrapped in white burial shrouds.

Abir Abu Moustapha lost her three children — aged 1, 11 and 12 — and her husband in a strike that hit their tent Wednesday. She squatted beside their bodies as they were prepared for burial.

"My children are gone. What can I say? And my husband, my most precious. May God have mercy on them," Abu Moustapha said. "What was my children's fault that they had to die? What was their fault that they died in front of my eyes?"

The Israeli military said their strikes were targeting two Hamas figures, one who was a commander in the group's naval unit and another in charge of tunnels in parts of Khan Younis.

Ceasefire again under pressure

Hospital officials said that the bodies came from both sides of a line established in last month's ceasefire. The boundary splits Gaza in two, with about 50% of the territory under military control.

The strikes came shortly after the U.N. Security Council gave its backing to U.S. President Donald Trump's blueprint to secure and govern Gaza. The plan empowers an international force to provide security in Gaza, approves a transitional authority and envisions a possible future path to an independent Palestinian state.

But there are still questions over how the plan will be implemented, especially after Hamas rejected it. The militant group said that the force's mandate, which includes disarmament, "strips it of its neutrality,

and turns it into a party to the conflict in favor of the occupation.”

Israeli strikes have decreased since the ceasefire agreement took effect, though they haven’t stopped entirely.

Gaza’s Health Ministry, which doesn’t distinguish between civilians and combatants, reported more than 300 deaths since the truce began. Each side has accused the other of violating its terms, which include increasing the flow of aid into Gaza and returning hostages — dead or alive — to Israel.

Israel’s campaign in Gaza has killed more than 69,000 Palestinians since it was launched more than two years ago for Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023 attack on southern Israel. In that attack, militants killed around 1,200 people and abducted 251 others. Gaza’s Health Ministry, part of the Hamas-run government and staffed by medical professionals, maintains detailed records seen as a reliable estimate by the U.N. and many independent experts.

Under the ceasefire that began on Oct. 10, Hamas released the last 20 living hostages in return for hundreds of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. Hamas has also returned the remains of 25 dead hostages, and still is return three more.

Israeli hostage says he was abused

An Israel hostage freed under the ceasefire deal said he was sexually abused in Hamas captivity.

Speaking to Israel’s Channel 12 News, Guy Gilboa-Dalal said that after he was allowed to shower, one of his captors took him into a room and threw him onto a chair while he was still undressed.

“He started touching my whole body. I froze. I told him: ‘You’re kidding aren’t you? This is forbidden by Islam,’” Gilboa-Dalal said in a clip released by the TV station. “He put a rifle to my head and a knife to my throat. He told me that if I told anyone about this, he would kill me.”

The full interview is to be broadcast on Saturday. Hamas officials did not immediately reply to requests for comment on the claims.

Another male hostage released the same day, Rom Braslavski, has also reported being sexually abused in captivity.

Released Palestinians who had been seized from Gaza during the war and held in Israeli prisons have reported being stripped down to their underwear, subjected to frequent beatings by guards, as well as sexual abuse, being bound for days, causing infections that led to amputations of limbs in some cases, and insufficient food or medical care.

## **Respect and remembrance for Cheney from Bush, Biden and past vice presidents as Trump is excluded**

By CALVIN WOODWARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — They gathered at the Washington National Cathedral on Thursday — former presidents, vice presidents, sworn political foes and newfound friends — in a show of respect and remembrance for Dick Cheney, the consequential and polarizing vice president who became an acidic scold of President Donald Trump.

Trump, who has been publicly silent about Cheney’s death Nov. 3, was not invited to the memorial service.

Two ex-presidents came: Republican George W. Bush, who eulogized the man who served him as vice president, and Democrat Joe Biden, who once called Cheney “the most dangerous vice president we’ve had probably in American history” but now honors his commitment to his family and to his values.

“Solid and rare and reliable,” Bush said at the service of his vice president, praising a man whose “talent and restraint” exceeded his ego. “Smart and polished, without airs.”

Bush and others noted the understated demeanor of a man who nevertheless wielded great influence in government. “Above all,” Bush said, “I wanted someone with the ability to step into the presidency without getting distracted by the ambition to seek it.”

Among the eulogists, Liz Cheney, the eldest daughter, only obliquely addressed what amounted to a father-daughter feud with the president — a man her dad had called a “coward” for trying to overturn his loss in the 2020 election.

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She spoke of her father's conviction that when confronted with a choice between defending the country and a political party, the country must come first. "Bonds of party must always yield to the single bond we share as Americans," she said.

Liz Cheney is a former high-ranking House member whose Republican political career was shredded by a MAGA movement angered by her investigation of the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the Capitol. Thursday, she chose not to speak directly of Trump.

She spoke of seeing clouds in the shape of angels just before her father died.

A Who's Who of Washington, minus you know who

Moments before the service began, figures of recent but now receded power mingled: Bush and Biden and their wives sitting in a row together, former Vice Presidents Kamala Harris and Mike Pence chatting side by side in their pew with Al Gore and Dan Quayle together behind them.

Biden greeted Republican Sen. Mitch McConnell, the former longtime Senate leader, and his wife, former labor and transportation secretary Elaine Chao. Behind them sat Democratic Rep. Nancy Pelosi, who spent time talking with another former House speaker, Republican John Boehner. All gathered among the soaring interior columns of the grand cathedral known as "a spiritual home for the nation."

Others delivering tributes at Thursday's funeral were Cheney's longtime cardiologist, Dr. Jonathan Reiner; former NBC News correspondent Pete Williams, who was Cheney's spokesman at the Pentagon; and several of the former vice president's grandchildren.

"I'm happy to report that I haven't given many eulogies," Reiner said in his remarks. "Nobody wants a doctor who is great at funerals."

Reiner recalled doctors telling Cheney decades ago, after the first of multiple heart attacks, that he should abandon his political ambitions then. Yet he kept winning elections as a Wyoming congressman for years after that.

Cheney, he said, was always the "calmest person in the room."

Cheney had lived with heart disease for decades and, after the Bush administration, with a heart transplant. He died at age 84 from complications of pneumonia and cardiac and vascular disease, his family said.

Trump's vice president, JD Vance, on stage at another event in the morning, was asked about Cheney and said: "Obviously there's some political disagreements there but he was a guy who served his country. We certainly wish his family all the best in this moment of grieving."

Vance was also not invited to the funeral, according to a person familiar with the details who was not authorized to speak publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

The White House lowered its flags to half-staff after Cheney's death, as it said the law calls for, but Trump did not issue the presidential proclamation that often accompanies the death of notable figures, nor has he commented publicly on his passing.

The deeply conservative Cheney's influence in the Bush administration was legendary and, to his critics, tragic.

He advocated for the U.S. invasion of Iraq on the basis of what proved to be faulty intelligence and consistently defended the extraordinary tools of surveillance, detention and inquisition employed in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Bush credited him with helping to keep the country safe and stable in a perilous time.

Bad blood between the Cheneys and Trump

After the 2020 election won by Biden, Liz Cheney served as vice chair of the Democratic-led special House committee that investigated the Jan. 6 Capitol riot. She accused Trump of summoning the violent mob and plunging the nation into "a moment of maximum danger."

For that, she was stripped of her Republican leadership position and ultimately defeated in a 2022 Republican primary in Wyoming. In a campaign TV ad made for his daughter, Dick Cheney branded Trump a "coward" who "tried to steal the last election using lies and violence to keep himself in power after the voters had rejected him."

Last year, it did not sit well with Trump when Cheney said he would vote for the Democrat, Harris, in the presidential election.

Trump told Arab and Muslim voters that Dick Cheney's support for Harris should give them pause, because he "killed more Arabs than any human being on Earth. He pushed Bush, and they went into the Middle East."

## **U.S. employers added surprisingly solid 119,000 jobs in September, government says in delayed report**

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. employers added a surprisingly solid 119,000 jobs in September, the government said, issuing a key economic report that had been delayed for seven weeks by the federal government shutdown.

The increase in payrolls was more than double the 50,000 economists had forecast.

Yet there were some troubling details in the delayed report.

Labor Department revisions showed that the economy lost 4,000 jobs in August instead of gaining 22,000 as originally reported. Altogether, revisions shaved 33,000 jobs off July and August payrolls. The economy had also shed jobs in June, the first time since the 2020 pandemic that the monthly jobs report has gone negative twice in one year.

And more than 87% of the September job gains were concentrated in two industries: healthcare and social assistance and leisure and hospitality.

"We've got these strong headline numbers, but when you look underneath that you'll see that a lot of that is driven by healthcare," said Cory Stahle, senior economist at the Indeed Hiring Lab. "At the end of the day, the question is: Can you support an economic expansion on the back of one industry? Anybody would have a hard time arguing everybody should become a nurse."

The unemployment rate rose to 4.4% in September, highest since October 2021 and up from 4.3% in August, the Labor Department said Thursday. The jobless rate rose partly because 470,000 people entered the labor market — either working or looking for work — in September and not all of them found jobs right away.

The data, though late, was welcomed by businesses, investors, policymakers and the Federal Reserve. During the 43-day shutdown, they'd been groping in the dark for clues about the health of the American job market because federal workers had been furloughed and couldn't collect the data.

The report comes at a time of considerable uncertainty about the economy. The job market has been strained by the lingering effects of high interest rates and uncertainty around Trump's erratic campaign to slap taxes on imports from almost every country on earth. But economic growth at midyear was resilient.

Healthcare and social assistance firms added more than 57,000 jobs in September, restaurants and bars 37,000, construction companies 19,000 and retailers almost 14,000. But factories shed 6,000 jobs — the fifth straight monthly drop. The federal government, targeted by Trump and billionaire Elon Musk's DOGE cost cutters, lost 3,000 jobs, the eighth straight monthly decline.

Average hourly wages rose just 0.2% from August and 3.8% from a year earlier, edging closer to the 3.5% year-over-year increase that the Federal Reserve's inflation fighters like to see.

The latest reading on jobs Thursday makes a rate cut by the Fed officials at their next meeting in December less likely. Many were already leaning against a cut next month, according to minutes of their October meeting released Wednesday. Steady hiring suggests the economy doesn't need lower interest rates to expand.

The September jobs report will be the last one the Fed will see before its Dec. 9-10 meeting. Officials are split between those who see stubbornly high inflation as the main challenge they need to address by keeping rates elevated, and those who are more concerned that hiring is sluggish and needs to be supported by rate reductions.

Hiring has been strained this year by the lingering effects of high interest rates engineered to fight a 2021-2022 spike in inflation and uncertainty around Trump's campaign to slap taxes on imports from almost every country on earth and on specific products — from copper to foreign films.

Labor Department revisions in September showed that the economy created 911,000 fewer jobs than originally reported in the year that ended in March. That meant that employers added an average of just 71,000 new jobs a month over that period, not the 147,000 first reported. Since March, job creation has fallen farther — to an average 59,000 a month.

With September numbers out, businesses, investors, policymakers and the Fed will have to wait awhile to get another good look at the numbers behind the American labor market.

The Labor Department said Wednesday that it won't release a full jobs report for October because it couldn't calculate the unemployment rate during the government shutdown.

Instead, it will release some of the October jobs data — including the number of jobs that employers created last month — along with the full November jobs report on Dec. 16, a couple of weeks late.

The 2025 job market has been marked by an awkward pairing: relatively weak hiring but few layoffs, meaning that Americans who have work mostly enjoy job security — but those who don't often struggle to find employment.

Megan Fridenmaker, 28, lost her job last month as a writer for a podcast network in Indianapolis. She's applied for at least 200 jobs and landed just one interview. "I am far from the only unemployed person in my friend group," she said. "Where the job market's at right now — people will apply for hundreds and hundreds (of jobs) before getting one interview."

"Out of everything I've applied for, I get a response from maybe a quarter of them," she said. "And the vast majority of the responses are the automated — 'Thank you so much, but we've gone with another candidate.' 'Thank you so much, but we've already filled the position.'"

"The whole job-hunting experience has felt so cold and so distant and so removed from who we are as humans."

## **South Africa deploys 3,500 extra police officers and braces for protests around the G20 summit**

By MICHELLE GUMEDE Associated Press

JOHANNESBURG (AP) — South African police and army units held a parade Wednesday involving helicopters, K-9 dog units and officers on motorcycles in a show of force ahead of expected protests around this weekend's Group of 20 world leaders summit in Johannesburg.

South Africa has deployed 3,500 extra police officers and put the army on standby under its National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure — a body that brings police, army and intelligence services together under one command to provide security for major events.

Deputy national commissioner for policing Lt. Gen. Tebello Mosikili told reporters Tuesday that authorities were expecting protests in Johannesburg and other major South African cities.

"We will allow that right (to protest) to be exercised," she said. "But within the proper directives and proper confines of the law."

South African police said they have designated specific areas for protesters to gather near the summit venue, an exhibition center next to the country's biggest soccer stadium. The head of Airports Company South Africa, which runs the main international airports, said it had set up "speakers' corners" in airports where protesters would be "kindly" taken by security if they stage demonstrations when world leaders arrive.

The two-day summit opens on Saturday and is expected to attract leaders and top diplomats from more than 40 countries as well as global institutions like the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization.

Protests planned

Demonstrations are expected from anti-capitalists, climate activists, women's rights campaigners, anti-migrant groups and others, some of which are raising South Africa's own problems with poverty and inequality.

A trade union representing members of South Africa's Afrikaner white minority has already stoked con-

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trovrsy by putting up billboards around Johannesburg that say: "Welcome to the most RACE-REGULATED country in the world." One of the boards was taken down by city authorities, prompting the Afrikaner trade union, Solidarity, to threaten legal action.

The billboards are in reference to South Africa's affirmative action laws that advance opportunities for Black people and have become part of a diplomatic fallout between South Africa and the United States.

U.S. President Donald Trump won't attend the G20 summit in a boycott over his claims that South Africa's Black-led government is pursuing racist, anti-white policies and violently persecuting its Afrikaner minority. Trump's claims have been widely rejected as baseless, but the U.S. government boycott threatens to undermine the first G20 summit in Africa.

Other groups hope to use the opportunity to draw attention to a myriad of issues.

The Women for Change advocacy group is calling for a national shutdown on Friday, the eve of the summit. It is asking women to boycott work on the day in protest at South Africa's extremely high rates of violence against women and femicide.

"Because until South Africa stops burying a woman every 2.5 hours, the G20 cannot speak of growth and progress," Women for Change said.

A South African anti-immigration group will protest against the joblessness and poverty in the country, its leader said, with South Africa's 31% unemployment rate one of the highest in the world.

A coalition of groups protesting against climate change and wealth inequality have organized an alternative summit in another part of Johannesburg starting on Thursday, saying the G20 gathering is "for the rich."

Cleanup efforts

Authorities in Johannesburg have also embarked on a major clear-up and repair operation ahead of the summit to tackle some of the broken-down infrastructure that plagues South Africa's biggest city.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa joined the effort last week, when he threw on a pair of green overalls and helped with some of the work in the township of Soweto just a few miles from where the summit will be held.

The multi-million-dollar operation for a two-day meeting of politicians has been viewed with cynicism by many in Johannesburg who have become accustomed to broken streetlights, cracked and potholed roads and deteriorating services that lead to water and electricity blackouts.

"Us hosting this G20, I don't really think it's going to be beneficial for South Africans, for the ordinary South Africans. It's just a way to waste money, if I can say," Johannesburg resident Lerato Lelusa said.

## **CDC website changed to contradict scientific conclusion that vaccines don't cause autism**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website has been changed to contradict the longtime scientific conclusion that vaccines do not cause autism, spurring outrage among a number of public health and autism experts.

The CDC "vaccine safety" webpage was updated Wednesday, saying "the statement 'Vaccines do not cause autism' is not an evidence-based claim."

The change is the latest move by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to revisit — and foster uncertainty about — long-held scientific consensus about the safety of vaccines and other pharmaceutical products.

It was immediately decried by scientists and advocates who have long been focused on finding the causes of autism.

"We are appalled to find that the content on the CDC webpage 'Autism and Vaccines' has been changed and distorted, and is now filled with anti-vaccine rhetoric and outright lies about vaccines and autism," the Autism Science Foundation said in a statement Thursday.

Widespread scientific consensus and decades of studies have firmly concluded there is no link between vaccines and autism. "The conclusion is clear and unambiguous," said Dr. Susan Kressly, president of the

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American Academy of Pediatrics, in a statement Thursday.

"We call on the CDC to stop wasting government resources to amplify false claims that sow doubt in one of the best tools we have to keep children healthy and thriving: routine immunizations," she said.

The CDC has, until now, echoed the absence of a link in promoting Food and Drug Administration-licensed vaccines.

But anti-vaccines activists — including Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who this year became secretary of Health and Human Services — have long claimed there is one.

It's unclear if anyone at CDC was actually involved in the change, or whether it was done by Kennedy's HHS, which oversees the CDC.

Many at CDC were surprised.

"I spoke with several scientists at CDC yesterday and none were aware of this change in content," said Dr. Debra Houry, who was part of a group of CDC top officials who resigned from the agency in August. "When scientists are cut out of scientific reviews, then inaccurate and ideologic information results."

The updated page does not cite any new research. It instead argues that past studies supporting a link have been ignored by health authorities.

"HHS has launched a comprehensive assessment of the causes of autism, including investigations on plausible biologic mechanisms and potential causal links. Additionally, we are updating the CDC's website to reflect gold standard, evidence-based science," said HHS spokesman Andrew Nixon, in an email Thursday.

A number of former CDC officials have said that what CDC posts about certain subjects — including vaccine safety — can no longer be trusted.

Dr. Daniel Jernigan, who also resigned from the agency in August, told reporters Wednesday that Kennedy seems to be "going from evidence-based decision making to decision-based evidence making."

U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy, a Louisiana Republican, earlier this year played a decisive role in approving Kennedy's nomination for HHS secretary. Cassidy initially voiced misgivings about Kennedy, but in February said Kennedy had pledged — among other things — not to remove language from the CDC website pointing out that vaccines do not cause autism.

The new site continues to have a headline that says "Vaccines do not cause autism," but HHS officials put an asterisk next to it. A note at the bottom of the page says the phrasing "has not been removed due to an agreement with the chair of the U.S. Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee that it would remain on the CDC website."

Cassidy's spokespersons did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

## **Americans like democracy, but don't believe it or US institutions are working well, poll finds**

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

About half of American adults believe democracy is functioning "very" or "moderately" poorly in the United States, while only about one-quarter think it's doing "very" or "moderately" well, according to a poll, marking a sharp decline from several decades ago when majorities thought democracy was generally working the way it should.

The Kettering Foundation-Gallup survey found that about two-thirds of Americans "strongly agree" or "agree" that democracy is the best form of government. Very few disagree, with about one-third saying they don't have an opinion. But alongside the widespread disappointment in how democracy is working, few believe the country's leaders are committed to democratic governance or think government decisions reflect the will of the people.

Few U.S. adults doubt their fellow Americans' commitment to strong democracy, according to the poll, but they're less certain about their political leadership. More than 4 in 10 Americans do not believe their leaders are committed to having a strong democracy, while about 3 in 10 say they're not sure.

Meanwhile, only about one-quarter believe government decisions reflect what a majority of people want done or attempt to serve citizens' best interests.

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The poll is part of a project initiated by Gallup and the Charles F. Kettering Foundation that studies how Americans experience democracy. The report released Thursday is based on a survey of more than 20,000 U.S. adults conducted in July and August. It comes at a tumultuous time in American politics, marked by extreme polarization, rapid social change and deep economic anxiety, and as the country prepares to commemorate next year's 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Dissatisfaction with democracy's performance across party lines

The sense that democracy is not working is more widespread among Democrats, whose party is out of power. That includes Doug Perry, a 55-year-old 3D modeler in Sarasota, Florida.

"I think it is falling apart," Perry said, blaming President Donald Trump and citing the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol to overturn Trump's loss in the 2020 election as evidence that many Americans no longer believe in democracy.

Only those who identify as "strong" Republicans are substantially more likely than Democrats and independents to say democracy is performing "very" or "moderately" well. Bobbi Black, a Republican who is a retired nurse in suburban Des Moines, Iowa, is not one of them.

She cited the recent government shutdown, the longest on record, and Congress' general inability to agree to bipartisan deals as bad signs for democracy. She also worries about how former President Joe Biden's age affected him while in office and how he could have been elected without people aware of that risk.

"Democracy let us down, because he should have never been promoted to that position," Black said.

Biden won the Democratic presidential primary in 2020, defeating a diverse field of rivals, and beat Trump in his reelection bid in both the popular vote and Electoral College.

Low confidence in Congress and the criminal justice system

A separate Gallup poll conducted in 2023 found that only about 3 in 10 U.S. adults were "satisfied" with the way democracy was working, compared to about 6 in 10 who expressed satisfaction with how it was functioning in 1984, when Gallup began to ask the question in its surveys.

Gallup's findings are in line with other surveys that have found concerns about democracy's functioning in both the United States and across the globe, even as a 2024 Pew survey found that people in other democratic countries prefer it to alternate forms of government.

The Gallup survey found that in the U.S., people who are struggling economically are especially likely to have a sour view of democracy's performance.

But the overall disappointment with democracy also extends to the country's institutions.

No more than one-third of Americans say that any of the country's systems, branches of government or democratic ideals are performing "very" or "moderately" well. Only about 2 in 10 believe that Congress, the criminal justice system, the division of power between federal, state and local governments, and the division of power among branches of government are doing well. A similar share say this about the idea that all people are treated equally under the law.

"Most institutions are holding on by a thread," said Antonio Gonzalez, 39, of Delray Beach, Florida, who works in marketing. "We have a quickly changing world, but most of these institutions are run by octogenarians."

The poll also found Americans feeling alienated from their elected officials.

Many Americans aren't confident that the decisions of the government reflect the will of the people or are sensitive to the interests of people like them. That's particularly true of older people, LGBT adults or those who are struggling to get by financially.

Mixed views about the ease of voting

One bright spot is that most Americans feel the way elections are administered is going at least "OK."

Only about 3 in 10 believe it is reasonable to assume that those who oversee elections have acted improperly when election outcomes are surprising, while about one-third neither agree nor disagree and about one-third don't think this is true.

Only about 1 in 10 think voting procedures and laws do not make it easy for people like them to vote. Black people, young adults and those struggling economically are less likely to say voting is easy for people like them.

Jesse Sutton, a 54-year-old who works in school finance in Detroit, said he finds voting easy in Michigan but worries about how some Republican-run states have tightened their rules on how to cast ballots. "It varies by state," the Democrat, who is Black, said of the ability to participate in democracy.

## **US filings for jobless benefits remained in historically healthy range during government shutdown**

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

New U.S. jobless claim applications fell last week, remaining within the healthy range of recent years, according to the government's first weekly layoffs data since before the government shut down on Oct. 1.

The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits for the week ending Nov. 15 fell by 8,000 from the previous week to 220,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday.

Data for the weeks covering the government shutdown also remained in the same range of recent years, falling between 200,000 and 250,000.

Also Thursday, the Labor Department said in a separate report that U.S. employers added a surprisingly solid 119,000 jobs in September. The unemployment rate rose to 4.4%, the highest since October 2021, however that's partly because 470,000 people entered the labor market.

The increase in September payrolls was more than double the 50,000 economists had forecast. But Labor Department revisions shaved 33,000 jobs off July and August payrolls.

The monthly jobs report — considered the most important market-moving data on the U.S. employment situation — had been delayed for seven weeks by the federal government shutdown.

During the 43-day shutdown, investors, businesses, policymakers and the Federal Reserve were without much of the figures they use to diagnose the health of the American job market because federal workers had been furloughed and couldn't collect the data.

Thursday's labor market reports come at a time of considerable uncertainty about the economy. The job market has been strained by the lingering effects of high interest rates and uncertainty around Trump's erratic tariff policies, though economic growth at midyear was resilient.

Fed policymakers are divided over whether to cut interest rates for the third time this year when they meet in December for the final time this year.

Some major companies have announced job cuts this year, including Procter & Gamble, Dow, CNN, Starbucks, Southwest Airlines, Microsoft, Google and Facebook parent company Meta. Intel and The Walt Disney Co. also recently announced staff reductions, as have Verizon, General Motors, American Airlines and Amazon.

Thursday's report on weekly layoffs showed that the four-week average of claims, which softens some of the week-to-week volatility, fell by 3,000 to 224,250.

The total number of Americans filing for jobless benefits for the week ending Nov. 8 jumped to 1.97 million, an increase of 28,000 from the previous week.

## **Starbucks union says 30 more US stores are joining week-old strike**

By DEE-ANN DURBIN AP Business Writer

Starbucks' union is expanding its week-old strike against the company.

Starbucks Workers United said baristas from 30 more stores in 25 U.S. cities planned to join the strike Thursday, including stores in Cleveland; Memphis, Tennessee; Springfield, Missouri, and Albany, New York. That brings the total number of stores with striking workers to 95 in 65 cities, the union said.

The strike began last Thursday on Starbucks' Red Cup Day, which is typically one of its busiest days of the year. Since 2018, Starbucks has given out free, reusable cups on that day to customers who buy a holiday drink.

Starbucks said the strike has caused minimal disruption to its operations, and noted that this year's

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Red Cup Day was the strongest in the company's history in terms of sales and store traffic. Placer.ai, a location data company, said Starbucks' foot traffic jumped 44.5% last Thursday compared to this year's daily average.

Starbucks said only 49 of the 65 stores that the union vowed to strike last week experienced any disruption, and 29 of those have reopened.

Around 550 of Starbucks' 10,000 company-owned U.S. stores are unionized. Starbucks also has 7,000 licensed locations in places like airports.

"As we've said, 99% of our 17,000 U.S. locations remain open and welcoming customers, including many the union publicly stated would strike but never closed or have since reopened," Starbucks spokeswoman Jaci Anderson said.

Striking workers are protesting a lack of progress in labor negotiations with the company. They say they are seeking better pay, improved staffing in stores and a resolution of hundreds of unfair labor practice charges filed against the company.

There is no date set for the strike to end, and more stores are prepared to join if Starbucks doesn't reach a contract agreement with the union, organizers said.

Starbucks said it is prepared to talk when the union is ready to return to the bargaining table. Negotiations between the two sides ended in April.

## K-pop fans' environmental activism comes to UN climate talks

By ANTON L. DELGADO Associated Press

BELEM, Brazil (AP) — Fans of K-pop have an intensity that's turned the music into a global phenomenon. Some are determined to channel that energy into action on climate change.

Their push has been on display at United Nations climate talks in the city of Belem on the edge of the Brazilian Amazon, including costumed protests against fossil fuel funding that featured characters from "KPop Demon Hunters" — currently the most-watched film on Netflix with more than 325 million views.

Meanwhile, panels attended by high-ranking South Korean officials during the talks, known as COP30, strategized on how to mobilize the K-pop fanbase.

"It's the first time K-pop fans have been introduced on a COP stage — not bands or artists — but fans," said Cheulhong Kim, director of the Korean Cultural Center in Brazil, a branch of South Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. "K-pop fans are the real protagonists behind this culture that has the power to shape social and political issues."

Korean pop genre's massive fandom has rallied to support the U.S. Black Lives Matter movement, stop a deal between Hyundai and an Indonesian coal plant, and led rallies calling for the impeachment of former President Yoon Suk Yeol with a declaration of martial law last year.

While attending a K-pop event at COP30, South Korea's Minister of Climate, Energy and Environment Kim Seong-hwan told The Associated Press that his ministry "will support K-pop fans and their artists so that K-pop can contribute to tackling the climate crisis."

K-pop on the climate front

Banners reading "Export K-pop, not fossil fuels" filled part of the main hall at COP30 on Monday, as activists demanded South Korea cut its funding for foreign fossil fuel development.

Seokhwan Jeong, who organized the protest with the Seoul-based advocacy group, Solutions for Our Climate, alluded to a storyline from the demon hunters movie with a character leading a double life, hiding a secret.

"South Korea must overcome its dual stance — championing coal phase-out on the global stage while supporting fossil-fuel finance behind the scenes," Jeong said. "It is time for the country to stop hiding and become a genuine climate champion."

When organized, the fan base is a force to be reckoned with because of its size and intense loyalty, said Gyu Tag Lee, a professor at George Mason University Korea who studies the cultural impact of K-pop.

He said fans' interest in social issues is partially due to direct actions from some bands. That includes

Blackpink, which filmed video messages in support of the climate negotiations at COP26 in 2021.

Dayeon Lee, a campaigner with KPOP4PLANET, believes "cultural power is driving real climate action." "Our love extends beyond artists," Lee said. "We care for each other across fandoms and borders. We are young people facing the same future, fluent in social media, keen to respond to injustice."

The K-pop activism aligns with the Brazilian Portuguese concept of "mutirão" — a spirit of collective effort — that the COP30 Presidency is using as a rallying cry on the problem of climate change, according to Vinicius Gurtler, general coordinator for international affairs in Brazil's Ministry of Culture.

More than 80 countries have voiced support for the "mutirão" call in what environmentalists have said "could be the turning point of COP30."

"One of the best ways for us to do this is through music and through the youth," Gurtler said. "I don't think that we will create a better planet if we cannot sing and if we cannot imagine a better world."

## UN atomic agency demands Iran provide full information about its nuclear stockpile

By STEPHANIE LIECHTENSTEIN Associated Press

VIENNA (AP) — The U.N. atomic watchdog on Thursday demanded that Iran fully cooperate with the agency and provide "precise information" about its stockpile of near weapons-grade uranium, as well as grant its inspectors access to Iranian nuclear sites.

The development sets the stage for a likely further escalation between the U.N. nuclear agency and Iran, which has reacted strongly to similar moves by the watchdog in the past.

Nineteen countries on the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-member board of governors voted for the resolution at the IAEA's headquarters in Vienna, according to diplomats who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the outcome of the closed-doors vote.

Russia, China and Niger opposed it, while 12 countries abstained and one did not vote.

The resolution — put forward by France, the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States — says Iran must provide the IAEA with the latest information on its nuclear stockpile, "without delay." A draft was seen by The Associated Press.

After the strikes in June

Since Israel and the United States struck Iran's nuclear sites during the 12-day war in June, Iran has not given IAEA inspectors access to nuclear sites that were affected by the strikes — even though Tehran is legally obliged to cooperate with the watchdog under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

The agency also has been unable to verify the status of the stockpile of near weapons-grade uranium since the June bombing, according to a confidential IAEA report seen by the AP last week.

According to the IAEA, Iran maintains a stockpile of 440.9 kilograms (972 pounds) of uranium enriched up to 60% purity — a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%.

That stockpile could allow Iran to build as many as 10 nuclear bombs, should it decide to weaponize its program, IAEA director general Rafael Grossi warned in a recent interview with the AP. He added that it doesn't mean that Iran has such a weapon.

Such highly enriched nuclear material should normally be verified every month, according to the IAEA's guidelines.

Iran slams the decision

Talking to reporters outside the IAEA boardroom, Iran's Ambassador to the IAEA Reza Najafi denounced Thursday's resolution and said that it was designed to "exert undue pressure on Iran" and propagate a "false and misleading narrative of the present situation."

He described the authors of the resolution as "deaf and visionless" and said that they maintain "an arrogant and self-assured posture" by presuming that Iran is "obliged to continue its routine cooperation with the agency even under bombardment."

Najafi said that Iran considers the current situation "far from normal," given that safeguarded facilities

in Iran that contain "dangerous nuclear material" have been attacked.

Najafi said that Iran is "fully prepared for meaningful and constructive engagement" but at present, "the authors of resolutions have chosen a different course, under the mistaken belief that the pressure and threat will yield results."

Responding to questions from journalist, Najafi said Iran will announce its response at a later stage.

Cutting ties

Iran suspended all cooperation with the IAEA after the war with Israel. Grossi then reached an agreement with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Cairo in early September to resume inspections.

But later that month, the U.N. reimposed crushing sanctions on Iran via the so-called snapback mechanism contained in the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, drawing an angry response from Tehran and leading it to halt implementation of the Cairo agreement.

The snapback mechanism reactivated six U.N. Security Council resolutions that address Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile program, reinstate economic sanctions against Iran and contain other restrictions, such as halting all uranium enrichment.

Thursday's resolution instructed Grossi to report on the implementation of the reinstated restrictions. It also requested that he ensure his reporting "includes information on the verification of Iran's uranium stockpile, including the locations, quantities, chemical forms, and enrichment levels, and the inventories of centrifuges and related equipment."

Iran has long insisted its program is peaceful, but the IAEA and Western nations say Tehran had an organized nuclear weapons program up until 2003.

Thursday's resolution demanded that Iran "acts strictly in accordance" with the so-called Additional Protocol that it signed in 2003 but never ratified.

That protocol grants more powers and oversight to the IAEA, especially when it comes to conducting snap inspections at undeclared nuclear sites.

Iran suspended its implementation of the Additional Protocol in 2021 in response to the United States' withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal that lifted economic sanctions in exchange for restrictions on Iran's nuclear program.

## Arrests now top 250 in immigration crackdown across North Carolina

By GARY D. ROBERTSON Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — Federal agents have now arrested more than 250 people during a North Carolina immigration crackdown centered around Charlotte, the state's largest city, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security said Wednesday.

The operation that began over the weekend is the latest phase of Republican President Donald Trump's aggressive mass deportation efforts that have sent the military and immigration agents into Democratic-run cities — from Chicago to Los Angeles.

Immigration officials have blanketed the country since January, pushing detention counts to all-time highs above 60,000. Big cities and small towns across the country are targeted daily amid higher-profile pushes in places such as Portland, Oregon, where more than 560 immigration arrests were made in October. Smaller bursts of enforcement have popped up elsewhere.

The push to carry out arrests in North Carolina expanded to areas around the state capital of Raleigh on Tuesday, spreading fear in at least one immigrant-heavy suburb.

Late Wednesday, Raleigh Mayor Janet Cowell said via the social platform X that "border patrol enforcement appears to have been suspended" in the city. DHS did not announce a change to its presence and did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The number of arrests around Charlotte and beyond during what the government has dubbed "Operation Charlotte's Web" was about double the total announced by DHS officials earlier this week. The department

said in a statement that agencies "continue to target some of the most dangerous criminal illegal aliens." Their targets include people living in the U.S. without legal permission and those who allegedly have criminal records.

Federal officials have offered few details about those arrested. They've also remained quiet about the scope of the enforcement operations across North Carolina and where agents will show up next, keeping communities on edge.

The crackdown in Charlotte has been met with pockets of resistance and protests.

About 100 people gathered outside a Home Depot store in Charlotte on Wednesday, where federal agents have been spotted multiple times since the surge started. Protest organizers briefly went inside the store with orange and white signs that read, "ICE out of Home Depot, Protect our communities."

Arrests in Charlotte and the Raleigh area have created a chilling effect in immigrant neighborhoods — school attendance dropped, and small shops and restaurants closed to avoid confrontations between customers and federal agents.

Customers at a laundromat left behind their clothes in washers and dryers and haven't returned after agents showed up at a Charlotte shopping center on Sunday, said David Reboloso, who owns the business.

Agents didn't target his laundromat, but it still impacted his bottom line and shut down the neighboring shops, said Reboloso, a Mexican American born in Brownsville, Texas.

"We're only open because I'm an American citizen, so it doesn't bother me," he said. "But of course, business is down. I have no customers."

Just days after beginning the crackdown in North Carolina, Border Patrol agents were expected to arrive in New Orleans by the end of the week to start preparing for their next big operation in southeast Louisiana, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press and three people familiar with the operation.

Around 250 federal border agents are set to descend on New Orleans in the coming weeks for a two-month immigration crackdown expected to begin in earnest on Dec. 1.

Gregory Bovino, the Border Patrol commander tapped to head the Louisiana sweep, has been on the ground in North Carolina this week, leading the operation there as well.

Louisiana Republicans voiced their support on Wednesday. The chair of the state party, Derek Babcock, said it shows a commitment from Trump and Republican Gov. Jeff Landry to "keeping our citizens safe."

The head of the state's American Civil Liberties Union chapter said they were compiling information to help people know their rights and coordinating with legal services and groups connected with the immigrant community.

"We urge those with privilege and the opportunity to risk it to stand up for their neighbors and friends," said Alanah Odoms with the ACLU of Louisiana.

## **As infant botulism cases climb to 31, recalled ByHeart baby formula is still on some store shelves**

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

As cases of potentially deadly botulism in babies who drank ByHeart infant formula continue to grow, state officials say they are still finding the recalled product on some store shelves.

Meanwhile the company reported late Wednesday that laboratory tests confirmed that some samples of formula were contaminated with the type of bacteria that has sickened more than 30 babies in the outbreak.

Tests by an independent food safety laboratory found *Clostridium botulinum*, a bacterium that produces toxins that can lead to potentially life threatening illness in babies younger than 1, the company said on its website. ByHeart officials said they notified the U.S. Food and Drug Administration of the findings but did not specify how many samples were tested or how many were positive.

"We are working to investigate the facts, conduct ongoing testing to identify the source, and ensure this does not happen to families again," ByHeart said on its website.

The FDA did not immediately respond to questions about the findings.

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The lab results come as investigators in at least three states found ByHeart formula still for sale even after the New York-based company recalled all products nationwide, officials told The Associated Press.

At least 31 babies in 15 states who drank ByHeart formula have been hospitalized and treated for infantile botulism since August, federal health officials said Wednesday. They range in age from about 2 weeks to about 6 months, with the most recent case reported on Nov. 13.

No deaths have been reported.

In Oregon, nine of more than 150 stores checked still had the formula on shelves this week, a state agriculture official said. In Minnesota, investigators conducted 119 checks between Nov. 13 and Nov. 17 and removed recalled products from sale at four sites, an agriculture department official said. An Arizona health official also said they found the product available.

Businesses and consumers should remain alert, Minnesota officials said in a statement. "No affected product should be sold or consumed," they wrote.

Investigators with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration conducted inspections at ByHeart manufacturing plants in Allerton, Iowa, and Portland, Oregon. No results from the inspections have been reported.

California officials previously confirmed the germ that can lead to illness in an open can of ByHeart formula fed to a baby who fell ill.

Infant botulism, which can cause paralysis and death, is caused by a type of bacteria that forms spores that germinate in a baby's gut and produce a toxin.

Symptoms can take up to 30 days to develop and include constipation, poor feeding, a weak cry, drooping eyelids or a flat facial expression. Babies can develop weakness in their limbs and head and may feel "floppy." They can have trouble swallowing or breathing.

ByHeart had been manufacturing about 200,000 cans of formula per month. It was sold online or at retail stores such as Target and Walmart. A Walmart spokesperson said the company swiftly issued a restriction that prevented sale of the formula, removed the product from stores and notified consumers who had bought it. Customers can visit any store for a refund of the formula, which sold for about \$42 per can.

Federal and state health officials are concerned that some parents and caregivers may still have ByHeart products in their homes. They are advising consumers to stop using the product — including formula in cans and any single-serve sticks. They also suggest marking it "DO NOT USE" and keeping it for at least a month in case a baby develops symptoms. In that case, the formula would need to be tested.

The California health department operates the Infant Botulism Treatment and Prevention Program, which tracks cases and distributes treatment for the disease. Officials there have launched a public hotline at 833-398-2022, which is staffed with health officials from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Pacific Standard Time.

The new hotline was created after calls from hundreds of parents and caregivers flooded a different, longstanding hotline for doctors to discuss suspected infant botulism cases, officials said.

## Lainey Wilson wins entertainer of the year at 2025 CMA Awards

By MARIA SHERMAN AP Music Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The top prize of entertainer of the year at the 2025 Country Music Association Awards went to none other than Lainey Wilson, who hosted, performed and barely left the stage Wednesday night.

"It takes a village," she said in her acceptance speech. "We about to party." She beat out Luke Combs, Cody Johnson, Chris Stapleton and Morgan Wallen, last year's winner in the category.

Earlier in the night, she won album of the year for "Whirlwind" — marking her second career win in the category — and earned the trophy for female vocalist of the year. It was her fourth time winning that title.

She celebrated other women in country music — and had a few choice words for those who don't.

"For the folks that are sitting at home, in your mama's basement, eating your Cheetos, trying to pit women against each other," she concluded her speech. "Y'all need to find something better to do."

In some ways, it echoed 2023's award show, where Wilson took home five trophies including entertainer of the year.

But it wasn't just Lainey celebrating at the 59th annual CMA Awards, which aired live from Nashville's

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Bridgestone Arena. It was also a big night for Ella Langley and Riley Green from the jump. The duo's retro radio hit, "You Look Like You Love Me," took home both single and song of the year on Wednesday night.

"This song is the gift that keeps on giving," Langley said.

"How cool is it that a song with talking verses wins song of the year," added Green.

The legendary Vince Gill was presented with the Willie Nelson Lifetime Achievement Award, serenaded with his classic "When I Call Your Name" by Brandi Carlile and Patty Loveless.

"His guitar playing is amazing. His songwriting is amazing. His singing is amazing," said George Strait. He handed the award to Gill, his friend, and said there was none more deserving. "He's just an immense talent. And oh, yeah, he plays with The Eagles."

Gill joked throughout his acceptance speech. First, about his high vocal tone, and later, that he might be the only person to win the award "that's never smoked any weed," a nod to its namesake and his friend Nelson.

Brooks & Dunn won vocal duo of the year, their 16th victory in the category. "I heard earlier tonight, 'Man, y'all ever get sick of this?'" Kix Brooks said in his acceptance speech. "Hell no!"

Male vocalist of the year went to Cody Johnson, his first win in the category.

Combs opened the show with a fiery rendition of his single "Back in the Saddle," setting the stage for Wilson to launch into a spirited medley. She was joined by a star-studded crew of surprise collaborators, Little Big Town and Keith Urban among them.

Performances arrived fast and fierce from there: Moroney, Stapleton, Kelsea Ballerini, The Red Clay Strays, Stephen Wilson, Jr. and Kenny Chesney shined, one after another. Old Dominion performed on a small stage in the middle of the audience, working their way through a medley of "Break Up with Him," "Memory Lane," "One Man Band," "Hotel Key" and "Snapback."

Shaboozey brought some much needed depth; Wilson's funky "Ring Finger" further proved she can do it all. Langley, Green, Tucker Wetmore and rapper BigXThaPlug held it down for a new generation of country music fans. The latter was especially noteworthy: Combs joined the Texas MC for their duet "Pray Hard," further confirmation of country and rap's crossover.

Zach Top, who performed his ode to six-strings, "Guitar," early in the show, took home the trophy for new artist of the year. "I can't remember if I was supposed to put my beer down first or not," he joked in his speech before taking a swig. It was his first CMA Award.

The CMA Awards are nominated and voted on by members of the Country Music Association, which includes music executives, artists, publicists, songwriters and other industry professionals.

The CMA Awards were broadcast live on ABC and will be available to stream Thursday on Hulu.

## Today in History: November 21, Las Vegas hotel fire claims 85 lives

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Nov. 21, the 325th day of 2025. There are 40 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Nov. 21, 1980, 85 people died, most from smoke inhalation, after a fire broke out at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Also on this date:

In 1920, on "Bloody Sunday," the Irish Republican Army killed 14 suspected British intelligence officers in the Dublin area; British forces responded by raiding a soccer match, killing 14 civilians.

In 1964, New York City's Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge, at the time the longest suspension bridge in the world, was opened to traffic.

In 1980, an estimated 83 million TV viewers tuned in to the CBS prime-time soap opera "Dallas" to find out "who shot J.R." (The shooter turned out to be J.R. Ewing's sister-in-law, Kristin Shepard.)

In 1985, U.S. Navy intelligence analyst Jonathan Jay Pollard was arrested and accused of spying for Israel. (Pollard later pleaded guilty to espionage and was sentenced to life in prison, but was released in 2015.)

In 1990, junk-bond financier Michael R. Milken, who had pleaded guilty to six felony counts related to

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violating U.S. securities laws by selling junk bonds, was sentenced by a federal judge in New York to 10 years in prison. (Milken served two.)

In 1995, Balkan leaders meeting in Dayton, Ohio, initialed a peace plan to end 3 1/2 years of ethnic fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In 2017, Zimbabwe's 93-year-old president, Robert Mugabe, resigned; he was facing impeachment proceedings and had been placed under house arrest by the military. His resignation ended a 37-year rule beginning with Zimbabwe's independence in 1980.

In 2021, an SUV sped through barricades and into marchers in a Christmas parade in the Milwaukee suburb of Waukesha, killing six people and injuring several others. A judge the following year sentenced Darrell Brooks Jr. to life in prison without parole for his conviction on first-degree intentional homicide and other counts.

In 2022, a powerful earthquake killed at least 162 people and injured hundreds on Indonesia's main island of Java, sending terrified residents into streets covered with debris.

Also in 2022, NASA's uncrewed Orion capsule reached the moon, whipping around the far side and buzzing the lunar surface on an orbit that broke the record for distance traveled by a spacecraft designed to carry humans. The mission marked the first time an American capsule visited the moon since NASA's Apollo program ended a half-century earlier.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Marlo Thomas is 88. Basketball Hall of Famer Earl Monroe is 81. Democratic Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois is 81. Actor Goldie Hawn is 80. Republican Sen. John Kennedy of Louisiana is 74. Journalist Tina Brown is 72. Actor Cherry Jones is 69. Gospel musician Steven Curtis Chapman is 63. Musician Björk is 60. Football Hall of Famer Troy Aikman is 59. Baseball Hall of Famer Ken Griffey Jr. is 56. Football Hall of Famer-TV host Michael Strahan (STRAY'-han) is 54. Actor Jena Malone is 41. Actor-comedian Ronny Chieng is 40. Pop singer Carly Rae Jepsen is 40.