

Groton Daily Independent

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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.

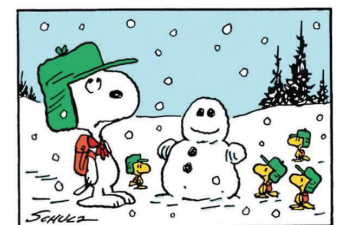
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School Christmas Program Practice, 9:30 a.m.

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.

Monday, Nov. 24

Senior Menu: Stir fry beef with rice, oriental blend vegetables, fruit cocktail.

School Breakfast: Egg bake.

School Lunch: Ham patty, baked beans.

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

Groton Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, potluck at noon.

4th grade GBB practice, 4 p.m.

Fall Sports Awards Night, 7 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.

'Holy Grail' of Shipwrecks

Colombian scientists recovered some of the first artifacts from a centuries-old Spanish shipwreck in the Caribbean, officials announced this week. The items—a cannon, three coins, and a porcelain cup—were retrieved from the San José galleon, whose exact location remains a state secret amid ongoing disputes over ownership of its vast trove, believed to be worth as much as \$20B.

The galleon sank in 1708 after a battle with an English fleet, taking gold, silver, and emeralds nearly 2,000 feet deep. The wreck lingered in the public imagination—appearing as a plot point in Colombian author Gabriel García Márquez's 1985 "Love in the Time of Cholera"—until Colombia located it in 2015. Since then, Colombia, Spain, a US-based company, and Bolivia's Qhara Qhara Indigenous group have laid competing claims to the treasure.

The deep-water expedition that recovered the newly announced object was authorized by Colombia last year. Officials say the mission is intended for research, not treasure seizure.

Venezuela to deem Nobel Peace Prize winner fugitive if she leaves to accept award.

Venezuela's attorney general said opposition leader María Corina Machado will be considered a fugitive if she leaves hiding to collect her Nobel Peace Prize at a ceremony in Oslo, Norway, next month. Machado, who was awarded the honor last month for her efforts to promote democracy in Venezuela, faces accusations from the Maduro regime of conspiracy, incitement of hatred, and terrorism.

Drugmaker Eli Lilly hits \$1T market value, first for a healthcare company.

The Indianapolis-based pharmaceutical company surpassed a \$1T valuation during Friday morning trading, becoming the first healthcare company to join an elite group dominated by tech firms. Lilly's market value is more than double that of its next closest industry rival, Johnson & Johnson. The drugmaker's growth has been driven largely by strong demand for its GLP-1 drugs, Mounjaro and Zepbound.

Saturn's rings to seemingly disappear in rare ring-plane crossing.

Less than 1% of Saturn's rings will be visible from Earth tonight, as the two planets align such that Saturn's rings face us edge-on. The rings will gradually appear wider in the coming months, reaching their greatest apparent width in late 2027. Tonight's illusion, observable with a backyard telescope, won't occur again until Oct. 15, 2038.

Ohio police officer acquitted in shooting death of pregnant Black mother.

A jury yesterday found Blendon Township officer Connor Grubb not guilty of murder and related charges in the 2023 shooting death of Ta'Kiya Young, a 21-year-old pregnant Black mother accused of shoplifting. Grubb faced a potential life sentence in prison if convicted. The attorney representing Young's family said he would continue pursuing a lawsuit against the township and its police chief.

US Rep. Eric Swalwell (D, CA-14) enters crowded California governor race.

The 45-year-old Democrat, who served as House manager for President Donald Trump's second impeachment trial, launched his gubernatorial campaign Thursday night on "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" Swalwell joins over half a dozen candidates seeking to succeed term-limited Gov. Gavin Newsom (D), including billionaire businessman Tom Steyer (D), who joined the race Wednesday. The election is set for Nov. 3, 2026.

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Miss Mexico is crowned Miss Universe weeks after spurring walkout.

Mexico's Fátima Bosch Fernández was crowned the 74th Miss Universe yesterday. The 25-year-old walked offstage during a sashing ceremony earlier this month after she stood up to a pageant organizer who criticized her for not joining promotional activities. Several contestants left the stage in solidarity. Separately, two judges resigned earlier this week, with one alleging a rigged competition.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader David C. in Beaverton, Oregon.

"Our daughter was taking her cat to an early morning vet appointment and went off the road around a sharp corner, landing in some berry bushes. Never having been in an accident before, she was scared and crying and didn't know what to do. A kind passerby stopped to help her get out of the car, talked to me on the phone, and stayed with her until the police arrived.

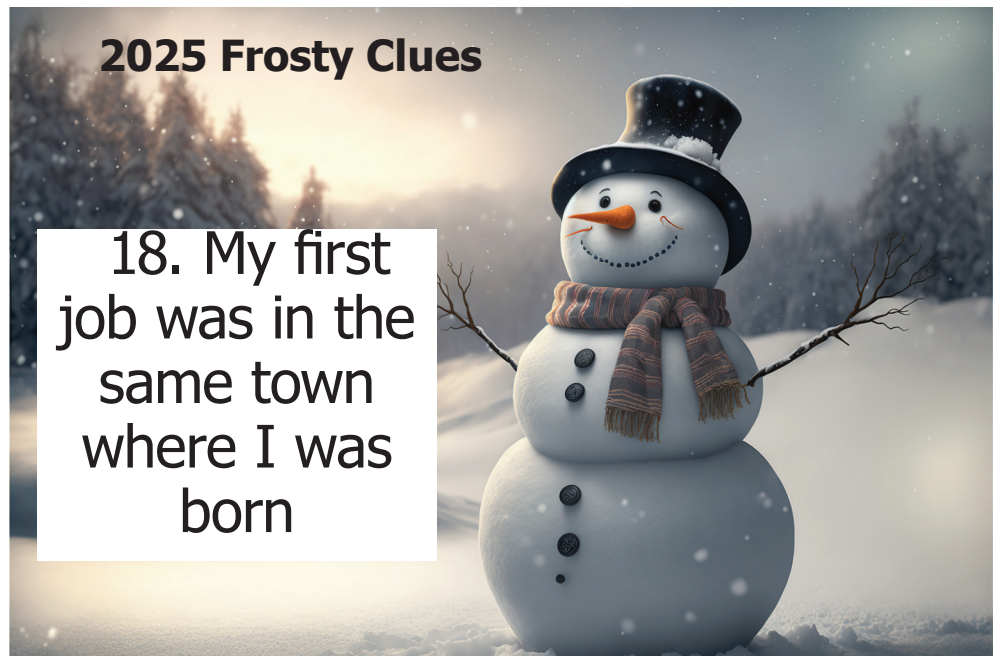
"We have AAA so I figured it wouldn't cost to get the car pulled back up onto the road but to clear the area as quickly as possible, they had to call the first available tow truck—which did not work with AAA. Our daughter didn't have the cash to pay for it and was worried the car would get impounded but one of the officers on the scene took care of it for us. I'm so grateful for multiple unknown people who helped our daughter when we couldn't be there."

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

18. My first job was in the same town where I was born



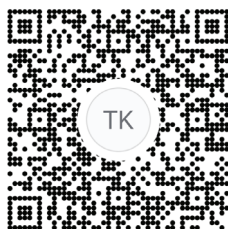
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Be an angel this holiday season by bringing joy to those in need!

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



Frank Daly

Hello. I am Liby Althoff and I have the pleasure to tell you about Frank Daly's military experience.

Frank Daly enlisted into the United States Air Force on December 14, 1955, to avoid being drafted into the Army. Frank believed that the Air Force was the safest branch of service so he prepared for a difficult boot camp and to serve his country.

From 1955 to 1976, the Air Force took Frank to London England, California, Washington, D.C., Thailand, Hawaii, and South Dakota. During those years, Frank felt like he belonged to a special group of people who wanted to serve their country. While in the Air Force, he remembers that supplies and food were aplenty. Frank wrote letters to his mom and brothers to stay in touch with them. Frank recalled a humorous time when a young man was being expelled and he had a foul language departure!

While serving his country, Frank met and then later married Eileen Slaney and they had three children Gary, Kathy, and Susie. Frank learned to respect his fellow soldiers and to listen to his superiors during service. Frank is a member of the Columbia American Legion, Post 58.

After Frank was honorably discharged, he went to work in various businesses but ended up working for the State of South Dakota in the Motor Carrier Division for 10 years. Frank's advice to young people thinking about entering the military today is to follow your dream and to research opportunities that being in the military can provide for you down the road.

Frank Daly, we are grateful for your service, and we appreciate your service to our country.

Frank is not present today but he was given his quilt of valor on November 7 at Nano Nagle.



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Gary Seiber

Good afternoon! My name is Kira Clocksene and I have the honor to tell you about Gary Sieber's military experience.

Gary Sieber was drafted into the U.S. Army on November 16, 1961. Gary left for the Army with Groton native and friend, Rusty Tullis. He was assigned to the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry and United States Army Reserve Seventh(USARSEVEN). He reported for a physical in Sioux Fall, South Dakota, and then off to Fort Carson, Colorado for 8 weeks of boot camp. Gary was then sent to Arkansas for additional 8-weeks of training in heavy weapons infantry.

Gary served in Schweinfurt, Germany, where he was in the heavy weapon infantry, and later transferred to the ammunition depot, hauling ammunition. His stipend/pay was \$63/month while serving.

While in the military, he travelled by train to London, England and saw the changing of the guard. Gary also went to Barcelona, Spain and saw many memorable monuments and bull fights. On his way back to his army station in Germany, he stopped in Geneva, Switzerland and saw many beautiful monuments and countryside. Gary said that while serving they played basketball and softball to keep themselves occupied. Gary talked with his family mostly through letters and the occasional phone call.

Gary left the Army with an honorable discharge and he was awarded the Expert Rifle M1 medal.

He left Bremerhaven, Germany in 1963 aboard the USNS Gordon and arrived at Fort Hamilton, New York, with a duffel bag and a canvas hand bag as that was all he was authorized to travel with. He received his pay and was released. He purchased a plane ticket to Jamestown, ND and stayed in a motel that evening. The next day he took a bus to Aberdeen, South Dakota, where welcomed home by his parents.

Gary was transferred to the 716th Transportation Company in Aberdeen, South Dakota for two years. After his service, Gary farmed and raced cars with his dad and brother for many years.

Gary married Karen Hart in August of 1964, and had two children, Gayleen Sieber Voss and Garrett Sieber. He also has three grandchildren: Lacy Voss, Jordan Voss-Severson, and Gavin Voss, as well as two great-grandchildren: Mavrik and Elleit Severson with another great-grandchild on the way.

Gary has a life time membership in the American Legion, Post 58, Columbia. He was commander in Columbia when they built the new Legion building.

Because of his time in the Army, Gary said he learned how to respect others and take orders. Overall, Gary said that being in the military was a good experience and he believes that everyone should serve their country in some way.

Gary, on behalf of the community and nation, with our deepest appreciation, we honor your service with this quilt of valor.



Ken Sieber

Hello! My name is Gavin Kroll and I would like to tell you about Kenny, "Red" Sieber's military experience.

On June 13, 1964, Kenny Sieber was drafted into the U.S. Army, 661st Ordnance Company, and Ammunitions Division. He went to basic training in Fort Leonard, Missouri and then attended ammo schooling at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Maryland. This school taught Kenny all about ammo; how it's made, what's in it, and how it worked. Kenny and the 661st Ordnance Company stayed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma for seven and a half months before being transferred to their new permanent base at An Kag, (Kae) Vietnam.

Kenny had several jobs while in the service. One job was a company clerk where he wrote up the morning report of Article 15s. If a soldier had a minor infraction against the rules, the company commander was allowed to address the infraction by writing up an Article 15. Another important job Kenny did was to supply ammunitions to the Ordnance Company as well as the 1st Calvary Division. Kenny was also part of the EOD which stands for Explosive Ordnance Disposal. His team destroyed unspent ammo and if a helicopter or plane crashed, they would pick up what was left of the wreckage including the ammo.

While at war, Ken stayed in touch with his family by writing letters sent through the mail. He made close friendships while away, said has stayed in touch with them afterwards.

A favorite memory Kenny has is having the opportunity to see Bob Hope's USO show at Christmas on their base in Vietnam. This show really lifted Kenny and fellow soldiers' spirits! That show was the only R & R he received in his Vietnam deployment.

For his time in the military, he was awarded a Vietnam Medal, a Good Conduct Medal, and a Sharpshooter Badge. Kenny Sieber was honorably discharged from the U. S. Army on June 13, 1966. Through his military experience, Kenny said that he learned the value of life. After returning home, Kenny slept and smiled a lot more and began farming with his Dad and brother, Gary. When he wasn't farming or raising registered Angus cattle, he would do bodywork on vehicles.

He married Patti Kopetsky, and they have three children: Paul, Kimberly, and William. From those children, he now has eight grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. His son William, is presently serving in the Army Reserves in Kuwait.

Kenny is now part of veterans' organizations including: the American Legion, the DAV, and the VFW.

Kenny, on behalf of the community and nation, with our deepest appreciation, we honor your service with this quilt of valor.



Dennis Mitchell



Good afternoon! My name is Teagan Hanten, and I am here to tell you about a Columbia area veteran, Dennis Mitchell. Dennis Mitchell was drafted into the US Army during the Vietnam War in 1967. He attended basic training and Advanced Individual Training at Ft. Lewis in the state of Washington. After that, he was sent to Vietnam and assigned to Delta Company, 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry, 25th Division. The headquarters were out of Dau Tieng; after two months, Dennis was moved to Tay Ninh, which is about 45 miles northeast of Saigon.

When asked about his most memorable experiences during his service, Dennis said that on April 13, 1968, his battalion was over-run in what they called the Battle of Good Friday. An entire unit was eliminated from their Battalion.

A fun fact shared by Dennis is that Oliver Stone, the creator of the movie "Platoon" was in the Bravo Unit, of the same infantry and division that Dennis was going to. Stone was injured and just sent home before Dennis arrived. Stone used his war experience in Vietnam to create and direct the movie "Platoon."

After about five months in country, Dennis was given the opportunity to be the Information Officer for the Stars and Stripes newspaper where he would report news and take photographs of the Vietnam War. He turned down the position so that a fellow soldier who was an exceptional photographer could have the position.

When he was granted a rest and recreation leave after a year's tour of duty in Vietnam, Dennis went to Sidney, Australia and to Singapore. Dennis was given c-rations or canned meals in the

morning and at noon, but he says that they always tried to fly in a hot meal at night when they resupplied the unit. Canned meals included a mail entree, bread, dessert and an accessory packet containing coffee, gum, sugar, toilet paper, cigarettes and matches.

Dennis said that during his service time, he stayed in touch with his family by writing home each week. After Vietnam, he was sent to Ft. Riley, Kansas. Dennis Mitchell was awarded numerous honors for his service, including the National Defense Service Medal, an expert rifle marksmanship badge, a Vietnam Gallantry Cross, a Vietnam Service Medal, an Army Commendation Medal with V (Valor), a Bronze Star Medal, and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal. He left the service as a Sergeant, Grade E-5.

Right after his service ended, Dennis helped his dad on the farm. The next year, a neighbor rented Dennis his farm, and he began farming on his own. Dennis got married to Loretta Andrews and had 4 daughters: Trish, Tara, Tammy, and Lara. He has attended eight military reunions, and has kept in touch with his Company Commander Captain White, his platoon leader 1st Lieutenant Lawson, and Sergeant Herb Burdett. Dennis is a part of the American Legion, Post 58 in Columbia and the VFW in Aberdeen.

Dennis said the military instilled certain values, including the need to depend on each other to do their jobs to live, and he thinks that holds true today-- that people must depend on each other in their jobs and in their communities. To any young adults contemplating entering the military, Dennis says that you will learn leadership and service to your community.

Dennis Mitchell, on behalf of the community and nation, with our deepest appreciation, we honor your service with this quilt of valor.

Don Peckham

Good afternoon. My name is Ashlynn Warrington and I am here to tell you about a Columbia area veteran named Don Peckham. Don was inducted into the Army on January 4, 1955. He was part of Company B, 702nd Ordnance Battalion, 2nd Infantry Division. Don picked the Army because his uncles who were World War II veterans influenced him to do so. At first, he was very apprehensive because he was worried that some "big city guy" would beat him up, but he learned to hold his own.

When Don went to boot camp, it was the farthest he had ever been away from home. Being a Day County country boy, the farthest he had previously traveled was 4-H Camp. His first four months of training were spent in automotive school in Aberdeen, Massachusetts. In automotive school, Don learned electrical and fuel system repair. After basic training, he was attached to 2nd Infantry, Fort Lewis Washington. For the rest of his deployment, Don repaired anything from Jeeps to the largest tanks there were. Don felt extremely proud to be in the U.S. military.

Everything to Don was a memorable experience. He learned a new way of life and lived in a different world. His first half of service was spent hanging out with the "guys," pulling pranks, and engaging in friendly banter. During his second half of service, he got married to Bette Graves. Throughout his service, he traveled to Fort Bliss, Texas; Fort Carson, Colorado; Aberdeen, Massachusetts; Fort Lewis, Washington; and Eilson Air Force Base, Alaska. There was always plenty of food and everything wherever he went.

When asked how he stayed connected with his family, Don replied that it was mostly done through letters and a once in awhile phone call, but he needed to make sure he brought plenty of quarters to feed the pay phone!

Don Peckham was discharged on November 1, 1957. Don received the marksmanship award. First thing he did when he got home was go pheasant hunting. Then he found a job and a place to live which aligned with the start of college. He formed a few close friendships. One was another couple from Washington State who stayed in Alaska after being discharged. They stayed close with each visit and watched each other's families grow. Don and Bette had four children: Vicki, Vance, Cheryl, and Kristi. He attended Northern State for a year and after that, he took a competitive exam to fill the vacant rural mail route in Bath, South Dakota. Don said he would not have scored high enough on the exam if it had not been for the military.

Today, Don has been part of the Columbia American Legion for 50 years. When asked what values he learned from his military experience, he answered with, "I valued the ability to be around and live with all colors and creed." He also said that serving in the military affects everything in his life. Don wants to tell the young adults who are contemplating entering the military, "It provides many wonderful choices for all walks of life, you will be well taken care of, and you will have a lifetime of benefits." Don wanted to add that he is pushing ninety years of age and is still benefitting from having served in the military.

Don Peckham, we are very grateful for your service, and we appreciate your service to our country very much.

Don was presented with his quilt of valor on November 7th at Nano Nagal.



Fire at Reptile Gardens - Rapid City Post

Terry Philip the General Curator gave a heartfelt message on facebook.

"The love and life our staff poured into the care of these magnificent animals know no bounds. We are absolutely crushed."

An off exhibit animal holding building was lost that held African spur sized tortoises, red footed tortoises, alligators. All of these animals of were lost. The giant tortoises were not lost. Those included Orville, Tank, Sampson, Kenny, Peabody, and Hugo, who were all housed in a separate building.

RAPID CITY, S.D. – Volunteer fire units responded to structure fire at Reptile Gardens early Friday morning, where a building housing some of the facility's reptiles was affected according to the Rockerville Fire Department. Reptile Gardens reports that the fire effected an off exhibit area.

The Rockerville Volunteer Fire Department was paged to the structure fire at 12:41 a.m. Resources from multiple agencies were still on the scene as of early morning but were expected to be released shortly.

The structure involved in the incident housed some of the reptiles at the popular Rapid City attraction, which sits just south of Rapid City.

The unified response involved several local and county agencies including Rockville Volunteer Fire Department, Rapid City Fire, Battle Creek Fire, Whispering Pines Fire, Hill City Fire, Pennington County Fire Admin, Pennington County Sheriff's Office, Pennington County 911, MDU, Black Hills Electric Coop, and the South Dakota State Fire Marshal's Office.

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NSU Men's Basketball

Northern State falls to (RV) Northern Michigan

Wisconsin Dells, Wis. – The Northern State University men's basketball team fell to (RV) Northern Michigan in non-conference action on Friday. The Wolves and Wildcats played a tightly contested first half with three tie scores and seven lead changes, however NMU broke things open in the second.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 61, NMU 80

Records: NSU 0-3, NMU 2-1

Attendance: 168

HOW IT HAPPENED

The Wolves tallied 26 points in the first and 35 in the second, shooting 46.8% from the floor, 38.9% from the 3-point line, and 71.4% from the foul line

The Wildcats recorded 31 points in the first and 49 in the second, shooting 46.4% from the floor, 25.9% from the 3-point line, and 90.0% from the foul line

Northern tallied 30 rebounds to Northern Michigan's 36 and added seven made 3-pointers, six assists, three steals, and two blocks

NSU suffered 21 turnovers in the contest, resulting in 32 NMU points, the largest difference maker in the game

The Wolves scored 22 points in the paint, eight points off the bench, five fast break points, four second chance points, and three points off turnovers, while the Wildcats notched 44 points in the paint, 13 points off the bench, eight fast break points, ten second chance points, and 32 points off turnovers

Cameron Mercadel led four in double figured with 15 points, going a perfect 4-for-4 from the foul line

Tobi Obiora and Joshua Book followed with 12 points apiece, while Obiora notched his first double-double of the season with 11 rebounds

Ty Rogers rounded out the double figure scorers with ten points and led NSU with two steals

Benjamin Bowen and Book dished out a pair of assists to lead the team, while Book finished the evening second on the team with nine rebounds

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Cameron Mercadel: 15 points, 1 assist

Tobi Obiora: 12 points, 66.7 field goal%, 11 rebounds, 2 blocks

Joshua Book: 12 points, 55.6 field goal%, 9 rebounds, 2 assists

Ty Rogers: 10 points, 4 rebounds, 2 steals

UP NEXT

The Wolves are back in action today against Northwest Missouri State at 2 p.m. from the Just A Game Fieldhouse. The Wolves will then open the 2025-26 home season on Tuesday, November 25, hosting Jamestown in the NSIC opener.

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NSU Women's Basketball

Wolves tally 56-54 victory over Yellow Jackets

SIoux FALLS, S.D. — A fourth-quarter scoring surge propelled the Wolves to earn their second win of the season against Black Hills State, 56-54. Northern State finished the game with 56 points, 40 rebounds, eight assists, two blocks and two steals while shooting 41.7% from the field, 10% from 3 and 62.5% from the line.

QUICK DETAILS

Final score: NSU 56, BHSU 54

Records: NSU 2-1, BHSU 1-3

HOW IT HAPPENED

After starting the fourth quarter trailing 43-37, the Wolves dropped 18 in the final 10 minutes, their highest-scoring quarter of the game

For Northern, Megan Counts led the charge, boasting 16 points, five rebounds and two blocks

Counts led the team in shots and field-goal percentage, going 8-for-12 (75%) from the floor

The Wolves had two other athletes drop double digits in Izzy Moore (14) and Morgan Fielder (10)

Moore tallied her third consecutive game over 10 points, going 5-for-11 from the field and 0-for-2 from deep, while recording five boards and three assists

For Fiedler, all 10 of her points came from inside the 3-point line (5-for-10) while also getting three assists and six rebounds (tied for the team high with Lily Klein)

Five Northern State athletes shot 50% or higher in the game: Counts (75%), Fiedler (50%), Klein (50%), Taylor Tool (50%) and Mackenzie Carrier (50%)

For the Yellow Jackets, Addison Branscum led the team in points with 14 on the day, while Alli Glasscock recorded 12

Glasscock also led the team in rebounds (nine) and blocks (two)

NORTHERN STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Megan Counts: 16 points, 5 rebounds, 2 blocks

Izzy Moore: 14 points, 5 rebounds, 3 assists

Morgan Fielder: 10 points, 6 rebounds, 3 assists

Lily Klein: 4 points, 6 rebounds

Taylor Tool : 9 points, 1 rebound

UP NEXT

Northern State will close out the weekend today in Sioux Falls, S.D., against South Dakota Mines. Tipoff is slated for 1 p.m.

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Junior Snow Queen Candidates

The 80th Groton Area Snow Queen Contest will be held on Sunday, November 30th in the GHS Old Gymnasium at 4:00pm. The contest will feature eight high school freshmen vying for the Junior Snow Queen Title (there are no Senior Snow Queen Contestants this year), the crowning of a kindergarten prince and princess, local talent, ice cream refreshments, and the unveiling of the mystery frosty (\$100 Chamber Bucks for the correct guess – must be present to win)! The Groton Area Snow Queen Committee welcomes all to come and enjoy the show!



Novalea Warrington
Daughter of Neil and Amy Warrington



Brooklyn Spanier
Daughter of Roger and Darci Spanier



Adeline Kotzer
Daughter of Nikki Kotzer and Kevin and Becky Kotzer



Tevan Hanson
Daughter of Justin and Chelsea Hanson



Abby Fjeldheim
Daughter of Ryan and Susan Fjeldheim



Arianna Dinger
Daughter of Weston Dinger and Elizabeth Bahr



Aspen Beto
Daughter of Lance and Cassandra Haskell



Neely Althoff
Daughter of Scott and Dana Althoff

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Thanksgiving food delivered

Enrich Groton has been busy working alongside fellow volunteers, City staff, and Full Circle Ag employees to pack and sort food from Feeding SD and deliver it to residents in Groton, making sure families have what they need during this season of gratitude.

Enrich Groton is truly grateful for the dedication, compassion, and teamwork everyone brings to this effort and hope the families who received food feel supported and cared for during the holiday season. Thanks to all the volunteers who give their time, energy, and heart to support the Groton SD Community. Wishing everyone a warm, joyful, and very Happy Thanksgiving!



Pictured are Diane Warrington, Ruby Larson, Lori Giedt and Nancy Larsen.

(Courtesy Photo)



Michael Grace, Clayton Rozell, Dale Fliels and Ryan Kutter were helping to unload the Feeding South Dakota Truck. Those doing the deliveries were Stacy Mayou, Justin Cleveland, Todd Gay, Paul Kosel. (Courtesy Photo)

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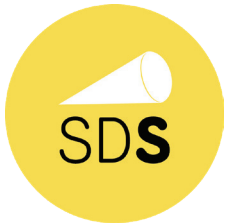
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Pictured are Rita Kampa, April Abeln, Jackie Krueger, Lori Giedt, Ruby Larson and Diane Warrington. (Courtesy Photo)



Rita Kampa, Kristie Gibbs and Jackie Krueger were busy bagging up the Thanksgiving packages. (Courtesy Photo)



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Amid water pollution debate, report shows results of \$3 million river buffer program

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

As a public debate begins about agriculture and water pollution in South Dakota, a new report shows the effects of a \$3 million effort to mitigate the problem.

South Dakota's top state Senate Republican and the governor sparred this week over whether the state should tighten agricultural regulations to address water pollution. Senate President Pro Tempore Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, told a legislative committee that with most monitored rivers and streams in the state too polluted to support at least some uses, such as swimming, fishing or boating, the state can no longer "dance around" the idea of more regulations on agriculture.

Gov. Larry Rhoden, a rancher, blasted those comments as "misinformation" made "out of ignorance" and said Karr would be "set straight."

Meanwhile, a final report quietly emerged about an effort to keep cattle waste out of lakes and streams and reduce chemical and sediment runoff from farms. Karr was the prime sponsor of the bill that created the 2021 initiative. The state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources managed it. It paid \$3 million to help landowners contain livestock waste or plant grass and other vegetation along streambanks in the Big Sioux River watershed.

Jay Gilbertson, manager of the East Dakota Water Development District, said the enrolled vegetated strips, called buffers, filter pollution and stabilize stream banks. Livestock are required to be kept out of the areas for part of the year, except during limited times and circumstances when grazing and haying are allowed.

According to the report, 67 projects created 83 linear miles of buffers, protecting 1,219 acres. The project contracts last for 10 years. They prevent an estimated 1,484 pounds of phosphorus, 6,415 pounds of nitrogen and 953 tons of sediment from entering the Big Sioux River watershed each year.

Payments increased after low interest

The program started slowly. Nobody had signed up for it by January 2023, two years after it was approved. "The feedback that we got back was that we're not paying enough to really move the needle," Hunter Roberts, secretary of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, told lawmakers at the time. So, the department began paying more.

DANR materials say that under the original cash-incentive program, a 50-foot, half-mile buffer under a minimum 10-year contract would have yielded a total payment of about \$5,000 for cropland and \$1,300 for pastureland over 10 years. Under a new formula Roberts outlined, the rates for the same examples increased to about \$13,000 for cropland and \$3,400 for pastureland.

Additionally, the department allowed the funds to be spent on livestock waste containment systems. Two of those were installed, involving 690 cattle. The department also allowed landowners to "stack" their program payments on top of payments from the federal government's Conservation Reserve Program, which pays landowners to take marginal land out of agricultural production. That meant landowners could receive both federal and state payments for eligible acres, plus another incentive if those stacked acres are enrolled in a Game, Fish and Parks program that pays landowners to allow public access for hunters.

"Everybody seems to like free money or at least additional money," Gilbertson said. "And these activities

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got the ball rolling, and it turned out to be pretty popular.”

Gilbertson credited lawmakers, including Karr, for launching the initiative.

“It was a great example of the Legislature stepping forward, stepping up and saying we need to invest in our natural resources here in South Dakota,” he said.

Benefits and worries beyond 10 years

Sushant Mehan is an assistant professor and water resource engineer at South Dakota State University. He and a team are quantifying how the buffer initiative changes vegetation and downstream water quality.

He said buffers are often on flood-prone, low-yield acres, and the research already shows enrolled acres are more productive during the times when grazing and haying are allowed than they would be under year-round grazing.

“So, if people go that route, ultimately, it’s a win-win situation for them,” Mehan said.

Mehan frames the benefits of buffers as both direct for landowners and indirect for everyone paying a water bill. He said filtering out contaminants is a costly business for water systems, and those costs are passed along to customers.

Mehan said the next step is figuring out where buffers will do the most good. The team’s ongoing work is about mapping which enrolled acres are “truly critical” to maximize water-quality gains.

Gilbertson worries that maintaining the buffers after the 10-year contracts expire could be difficult if landowners expect a similar payment.

Paul Lorenzen administers the state’s watershed protection program for the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. He said the program included cost-sharing for fencing and alternative water sources. He said once those investments are in place, landowners may choose to keep the buffers even after the checks stop.

Lorenzen said other programs with similar 10-year commitments have seen producers stick with the practices once they experience the benefits, and he hopes buffers will follow the same pattern.

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

AI vs. AI: Patients deploy bots to battle health insurers that deny care

New AI-powered programs offer help to patients stymied by insurance denials

BY: ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS

As states strive to curb health insurers’ use of artificial intelligence, patients and doctors are arming themselves with AI tools to fight claims denials, prior authorizations and soaring medical bills.

Several businesses and nonprofits have launched AI-powered tools to help patients get their insurance claims paid and navigate byzantine medical bills, creating a robotic tug-of-war over who gets care and who foots the bill for it.

Sheer Health, a three-year-old company that helps patients and providers navigate health insurance and billing, now has an app that allows consumers to connect their health insurance account, upload medical bills and claims, and ask questions about deductibles, copays and covered benefits.

“You would think there would be some sort of technology that could explain in real English why I’m getting a bill for \$1,500,” said cofounder Jeff Witten. The program uses both AI and humans to provide the answers for free, he said. Patients who want extra support in challenging a denied claim or dealing with out-of-network reimbursements can pay Sheer Health to handle those for them.

In North Carolina, the nonprofit Counterforce Health designed an AI assistant to help patients appeal

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their denied health insurance claims and fight large medical bills. The free service uses AI models to analyze a patient's denial letter, then look through the patient's policy and outside medical research to draft a customized appeal letter.

Other consumer-focused services use AI to catch billing errors or parse medical jargon. Some patients are even turning to AI chatbots like Grok for help.

A quarter of adults under age 30 said they used an AI chatbot at least once a month for health information or advice, according to a poll the health care research nonprofit KFF published in August 2024. But most adults said they were not confident that the health information is accurate.

State legislators on both sides of the aisle, meanwhile, are scrambling to keep pace, passing new regulations that govern how insurers, physicians and others use AI in health care. Already this year, more than a dozen states have passed laws regulating AI in health care, according to Manatt, a consulting firm.

"It doesn't feel like a satisfying outcome to just have two robots argue back and forth over whether a patient should access a particular type of care," said Carmel Shachar, assistant clinical professor of law and the faculty director of the Health Law and Policy Clinic at Harvard Law School.

"We don't want to get on an AI-enabled treadmill that just speeds up."

A black box

Health care can feel like a black box. If your doctor says you need surgery, for example, the cost depends on a dizzying number of factors, including your health insurance provider, your specific health plan, its copayment requirements, your deductible, where you live, the facility where the surgery will be performed, whether that facility and your doctor are in-network and your specific diagnosis.

Some insurers may require prior authorization before a surgery is approved. That can entail extensive medical documentation. After a surgery, the resulting bill can be difficult to parse.

Witten, of Sheer Health, said his company has seen thousands of instances of patients whose doctors recommend a certain procedure, like surgery, and then a few days before the surgery the patient learns insurance didn't approve it.

In recent years, as more health insurance companies have turned to AI to automate claims processing and prior authorizations, the share of denied claims has risen. This year, 41% of physicians and other providers said their claims are denied more than 10% of the time, up from 30% of providers who said that three years ago, according to a September report from credit reporting company Experian.

Insurers on Affordable Care Act marketplaces denied nearly 1 in 5 in-network claims in 2023, up from 17% in 2021, and more than a third of out-of-network claims, according to the most recently available data from KFF.

Insurance giant UnitedHealth Group has come under fire in the media and from federal lawmakers for using algorithms to systematically deny care to seniors, while Humana and other insurers face lawsuits and regulatory investigations that allege they've used sophisticated algorithms to block or deny coverage for medical procedures.

Insurers say AI tools can improve efficiency and reduce costs by automating tasks that can involve analyzing vast amounts of data. And companies say they're monitoring their AI to identify potential problems. A UnitedHealth representative pointed Stateline to the company's AI Review Board, a team of clinicians, scientists and other experts that reviews its AI models for accuracy and fairness.

"Health plans are committed to responsibly using artificial intelligence to create a more seamless, real-time customer experience and to make claims management faster and more effective for patients and providers," a spokesperson for America's Health Insurance Plans, the national trade group representing health insurers, told Stateline.

But states are stepping up oversight.

Arizona, Maryland, Nebraska and Texas, for example, have banned insurance companies from using AI as the sole decisionmaker in prior authorization or medical necessity denials.

Dr. Arvind Venkat is an emergency room physician in the Pittsburgh area. He's also a Democratic Pennsyl-

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vania state representative and the lead sponsor of a bipartisan bill to regulate the use of AI in health care.

He's seen new technologies reshape health care during his 25 years in medicine, but AI feels wholly different, he said. It's an "active player" in people's care in a way that other technologies haven't been.

"If we're able to harness this technology to improve the delivery and efficiency of clinical care, that is a huge win," said Venkat. But he's worried about AI use without guardrails.

His legislation would force insurers and health care providers in Pennsylvania to be more transparent about how they use AI; require a human to make the final decision any time AI is used; and mandate that they show evidence of minimizing bias in their use of AI.

"In health care, where it's so personal and the stakes are so high, we need to make sure we're mandating in every patient's case that we're applying artificial intelligence in a way that looks at the individual patient," Venkat said.

Patient supervision

Historically, consumers rarely challenge denied claims: A KFF analysis found fewer than 1% of health coverage denials are appealed. And even when they are, patients lose more than half of those appeals.

New consumer-focused AI tools could shift that dynamic by making appeals easier to file and the process easier to understand. But there are limits; without human oversight, experts say, the AI is vulnerable to mistakes.

"It can be difficult for a layperson to understand when AI is doing good work and when it is hallucinating or giving something that isn't quite accurate," said Shachar, of Harvard Law School.

For example, an AI tool might draft an appeals letter that a patient thinks looks impressive. But because most patients aren't medical experts, they may not recognize if the AI misstates medical information, derailing an appeal, she said.

"The challenge is, if the patient is the one driving the process, are they going to be able to properly supervise the AI?" she said.

Earlier this year, Mathew Evins learned just 48 hours before his scheduled back surgery that his insurer wouldn't cover it. Evins, a 68-year-old public relations executive who lives in Florida, worked with his physician to appeal, but got nowhere. He used an AI chatbot to draft a letter to his insurer, but that failed, too.

On his son's recommendation, Evins turned to Sheer Health. He said Sheer identified a coding error in his medical records and handled communications with his insurer. The surgery was approved about three weeks later.

"It's unfortunate that the public health system is so broken that it needs a third party to intervene on the patient's behalf," Evins told Stateline. But he's grateful the technology made it possible to get life-changing surgery.

"AI in and of itself isn't an answer," he said. "AI, when used by a professional that understands the issues and ramifications of a particular problem, that's a different story. Then you've got an effective tool."

Most experts and lawmakers agree a human is needed to keep the robots in check.

AI has made it possible for insurance companies to rapidly assess cases and make decisions about whether to authorize surgeries or cover certain medical care. But that ability to make lightning-fast determinations should be tempered with a human, Venkat said.

"It's why we need government regulation and why we need to make sure we mandate an individualized assessment with a human decisionmaker."

Witten said there are situations in which AI works well, such as when it sifts through an insurance policy — which is essentially a contract between the company and the consumer — and connects the dots between the policy's coverage and a corresponding insurance claim.

But, he said, "there are complicated cases out there AI just can't resolve." That's when a human is needed to review.

"I think there's a huge opportunity for AI to improve the patient experience and overall provider experience," Witten said. "Where I worry is when you have insurance companies or other players using AI to

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completely replace customer support and human interaction.”

Furthermore, a growing body of research has found AI can reinforce bias that’s found elsewhere in medicine, discriminating against women, ethnic and racial minorities, and those with public insurance.

“The conclusions from artificial intelligence can reinforce discriminatory patterns and violate privacy in ways that we have already legislated against,” Venkat said.

Stateline reporter Anna Claire Vollers can be reached at avollers@stateline.org.

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Anna Claire Vollers covers health care for Stateline. She is based in Huntsville, Alabama.

Trump praises NYC Mayor-elect Mamdani in warm White House meeting

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump and New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani turned around their heated criticism in remarks to the press after an Oval Office meeting Friday.

After months of attacking each other, Trump and Mamdani pledged to address the high cost of living for New Yorkers. The White House has tried to steer messaging toward affordability in recent weeks as Trump’s approval ratings on the economy have sunk.

“Some of his ideas really are the same ideas I have,” Trump said. “You know the new word is affordability. Another word is just groceries. It’s sort of an old-fashioned word, but it’s very accurate. They’re coming down.”

Food prices have risen considerably in recent years. Groceries overall cost 3.1% more than they did a year ago, according to the government’s latest Consumer Price Index.

Mamdani campaigned on lowering the cost of living, including property tax reform, making buses free and floating the idea of city-run grocery stores.

The mayor-elect described the meeting as “a productive meeting focused on a place of shared admiration and love, which is New York City, and the need to deliver affordability to New Yorkers.”

“We spoke about rent, we spoke about groceries, we spoke about utilities, we spoke about the different ways in which people are being pushed out, and I appreciated the time with the president,” Mamdani said.

The pair fielded questions on housing costs, crime, whether either of them would retract their recent barbs and whether Trump would backtrack his threats to cut federal money to New York City.

“Well, I think if we didn’t get along, whether it’s cut off or just make it a little bit difficult, or not give as much, we want to see,” Trump said.

“We had a meeting today that actually surprised me. He wants to see no crime. He wants to see housing being built. He wants to see rents coming down. All things that I agree with. Now, we may disagree how we get there,” Trump added.

In response to a question about GOP Rep. Elise Stefanik, a Trump ally, calling Mamdani a “jihadist” as she eyes the New York gubernatorial seat, Trump said “she’s out there campaigning, and you say things sometimes in a campaign.”

“I met with a man who is a very rational person. I met with a man who wants to see, really wants to see, New York be great again,” Trump continued, adding “I’ll be cheering for him.”

Mamdani will be the city’s first Muslim mayor, as well as the youngest ever elected.

Mamdani sought meeting

Mamdani said he sought the meeting with Trump.

“My team reached out to the White House to set up this meeting because I will work with anyone to make life more affordable for the 8 and a half million people who call this city home,” Mamdani said in a

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press conference Thursday.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters Thursday the meeting “speaks to the fact that President Trump is willing to meet with anyone.”

“It speaks volumes that tomorrow we have a communist coming to the White House.”

Trump and congressional Republicans have repeatedly referred to the 34-year-old Mamdani as a “communist.” Mamdani, who ran on the Democratic ticket, identifies as a Democratic Socialist, an organization that claims roughly 85,000 members nationally. The ideology as a movement received a boost after the 2016 presidential run of U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent who represents Vermont and caucuses with Democrats.

Mamdani beat out former New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo this month by a 50.4% to 41% margin, according to the New York Times election coverage. Republican candidate Curtis Sliwa took just over 7% of the vote. Cuomo, who ran as an independent, resigned from office in 2021 after multiple women accused him of sexual harassment.

Trump endorsed Cuomo, seemingly reluctantly, on the eve of the election, in a post on his social media platform Truth Social.

“Whether you personally like Andrew Cuomo or not, you really have no choice,” he wrote. “You must vote for him, and hope he does a fantastic job. He is capable of it, Mamdani is not!”

Threat to pull funding

As Mamdani’s campaign gained momentum, Trump threatened to cut off billions in federal funding to New York City, Trump’s own home city.

Trump repeated the threat on election eve, writing on Truth Social that if Mamdani won, New York City would be a “total economic and social disaster” and that NYC should not expect any federal dollars “other than the very minimum as required.”

In Mamdani’s victory speech, he referred to Trump as a “despot.”

In July, Trump threatened to arrest Mamdani if the incoming mayor does not comply with the administration’s mass deportation campaign, including sending an influx of Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers to New York City.

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

New federal student debt rule seen as tool to enforce Trump agenda

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — A new U.S. Department of Education regulation to narrow eligibility for a key student debt relief program for public service workers has drawn strong opposition from advocates who argue the regulation is an attempt to target organizations whose missions do not align with President Donald Trump’s agenda.

Under a final rule slated to take effect in July, employers that participate in “unlawful activities such that they have a substantial illegal purpose” would be excluded from the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, which is meant to encourage college graduates to pursue careers in public service.

The language of the final rule, which focuses on issues such as gender-affirming care and illegal immigration, has also raised concerns it meant to enforce the Trump administration’s priorities.

At least three lawsuits from Democratic attorneys general, cities, labor unions and nonprofit advocacy groups argue that the regulation is overly vague and exceeds the department’s authority.

The rule would hurt not only the institutions that benefit from the program, but the public service workers themselves, Winston Berkman-Breen, legal director at the advocacy group Protect Borrowers, told States Newsroom.

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"It's not just about the macro effect of whether these organizations, including governments, will be able to do the work they do," he said. "It's also the individual financial health and security of borrowers and their households that will be really, really detrimentally affected by this rule, and we're already sort of seeing that happen."

The organization is representing a coalition of cities, nonprofit advocacy groups and labor unions in one of the lawsuits over the regulation.

Here's a closer look at the policy and what it would mean for borrowers and employers:

What is Public Service Loan Forgiveness?

Congress created the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, or PSLF, in 2007 via the College Cost Reduction and Access Act to incentivize people to take on public service careers.

PSLF forgives the remaining student debt for borrowers after they make 120 qualifying monthly payments while working for an eligible employer.

How will the regulation work?

The department's final rule — which stems from a March executive order — is only forward-looking, meaning workers would not lose any credit earned prior to the July 1, 2026, effective date.

Under the policy, the Education secretary can determine "by a preponderance of the evidence" that an employer has taken part in "illegal activities such that the organization has a substantial illegal purpose."

Affected employers can either reapply to serve as a qualifying employer after 10 years or try to regain eligibility in a quicker timeframe if they enter into a "corrective action plan" that needs the secretary's approval.

The activities that could disqualify employers, according to the department, include:

"Aiding and abetting" illegal immigration or "illegal discrimination"

Providing gender-affirming care

Supporting terrorism or "engaging in violence for the purpose of obstructing or influencing" federal government policy

Trafficking children across states "for purposes of emancipation from their lawful parents"

Violating state laws

What's the debate about?

Though the administration has framed the rule as an effort to punish "criminal activity," advocates and Democratic officials see it as a way to target organizations that are not aligned with the administration's goals.

"The bases for the disqualification that are in the final rule for the secretary of Education are pretty clearly just proxies for being engaged in activities that this administration doesn't agree with or that don't align with its agenda," Berkman-Breen said.

He pointed to supporting immigrant communities, gender-affirming care, transgender rights, diverse hiring, teaching an accurate portrayal of racial history in this country and the right to peaceful protest as examples.

Berkman-Breen said these activities are "very clearly things that this administration in other parts of the government has already attacked in civil society and in the states and local communities, but they're now bringing that sort of attack into the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program."

In response to a request for comment, the department shared a statement from Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent, who said "it is unconscionable that the plaintiffs are standing up for" what he describes as "criminal activity."

"This is a commonsense reform that will stop taxpayer dollars from subsidizing organizations involved in terrorism, child trafficking, and transgender procedures that are doing irreversible harm to children," he said. "The final rule is crystal clear: the Department will enforce it neutrally, without consideration of the employer's mission, ideology, or the population they serve."

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How will employers be affected?

Michele Zampini, associate vice president for federal policy and advocacy at the Institute for College Access & Success, said the final rule will divert nonprofits' ability to focus on their mission and impede their ability to keep staff on and attract new workers.

The final rule "will have the effect of putting a lot of nonprofits doing a lot of really important work in their communities in a defensive position, whether they're being preemptively defensive to try and avoid running afoul of the administration, or whether they're already kind of in a position where the administration has identified them as a target," she said.

Zampini, whose group aims to advance affordability, accountability and equity in higher education, added that the program was crucial in attracting talent to service-oriented work.

"PSLF is a big part of what ... enables people to take on what may be lower-paying jobs in exchange for being able to manage their debt over time," she said. "If people don't have that option, or even if they feel like they don't have that option or are afraid they won't have that option, it becomes a lot harder to kind of attract people to those roles."

What legal challenges have come out against the policy?

The administration is already facing a handful of lawsuits over the final rule, with critics urging federal courts to vacate the policy and deem it "unlawful."

The challengers include a slew of cities, labor unions and nonprofit advocacy groups who filed suit in a Massachusetts federal court Nov. 3.

Another lawsuit was brought the same day in the same federal court from Democratic attorneys general in Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington state and Wisconsin.

Four nonprofit advocacy groups also filed a suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on Nov. 4 against the administration over the rule.

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

COMMENTARY

What goes around comes around for South Dakota's top election official

by Dana Hess

Whether or not she's a baseball fan, South Dakota Secretary of State Monae Johnson finds herself living one of Yogi Berra's famous sayings: "It's deja vu all over again."

The New York Yankees' catcher didn't have Johnson in mind when he said it, but her future bears a remarkable resemblance to her past.

In the summer, Johnson will find herself fighting for her job at the state Republican Party convention where some nominees for statewide office are chosen. She's being challenged by state Rep. Heather Baxter, a Republican from Rapid City.

In a South Dakota Public Broadcasting story about her candidacy, Baxter said she would align herself with President Donald Trump's platform on election reform. Trump's platform isn't about fair play at the ballot box so much as it's about poor sportsmanship. That can be seen in his reaction to the recent passage of Proposition 50 in California. Without evidence, Trump has decried that election as rigged. Now it will be up to various "election integrity" groups to offer conspiracy theories about shadowy forces behind the scenes that are as nefarious as they are unidentifiable.

Four years ago, it was Johnson who did the challenging at the convention, calling out incumbent Secretary of State Steve Barnett for not caring enough about the integrity of South Dakota elections. Johnson was successful and has to hope that history doesn't repeat itself at the next GOP convention.

Johnson got some of her support at the 2022 convention from election integrity enthusiasts who took their cue from Trump's assertions that the 2020 election was somehow rigged against him. By their tortured logic, even elections in states like South Dakota that voted heavily for Trump need to be cleaned up.

After Johnson's election, the integrity crowd expected her to act like a fox in the henhouse, exposing all the corruption that was surely hiding behind every voting machine. Instead she started acting like, well, a secretary of state. So far on Johnson's watch, what South Dakota's elections have lacked in drama they have made up for in professionalism.

This has caused Johnson to run afoul of groups like the Luddites in the South Dakota Canvassing Group. They want to go back to the good old days when men were men and paper ballots were counted by hand.

Unfortunately for her, Johnson has other problems beyond the fight for her job. She was recently subpoenaed to appear before the Legislature's Government Operations and Audit Committee.

Usually elected officials will just show up when asked to testify to legislators. The committee issued the subpoena because it said Johnson had failed to show up to testify in the past.

Johnson said she had informed the committee she was conducting county auditor training on the day the committee wanted her to show up. Committee members wanted Johnson to answer questions about the methods used for purchasing new election technology and whether the purchase was subject to the bidding process.

Johnson should probably avoid making legislators — who control her budget — as surly as the election integrity buffs. Lucky for her, the South Dakota Canvassing Group doesn't have subpoena power.

It wouldn't be out of character for Johnson to avoid public scrutiny. One of the first official actions she took as secretary of state was forming a 15-member group to discuss election audits and draft legislation. The topic was so important that Johnson announced the meetings would be held behind closed doors.

Fresh off a campaign in which she pledged to bring greater transparency to elections, the irony-impaired Johnson held her committee meetings in secret to discuss election integrity.

As Johnson deals with irritated legislators and an attempt to kick her out of her job at the next GOP convention, she might start quoting another saying from Yogi Berra: "The future ain't what it used to be."

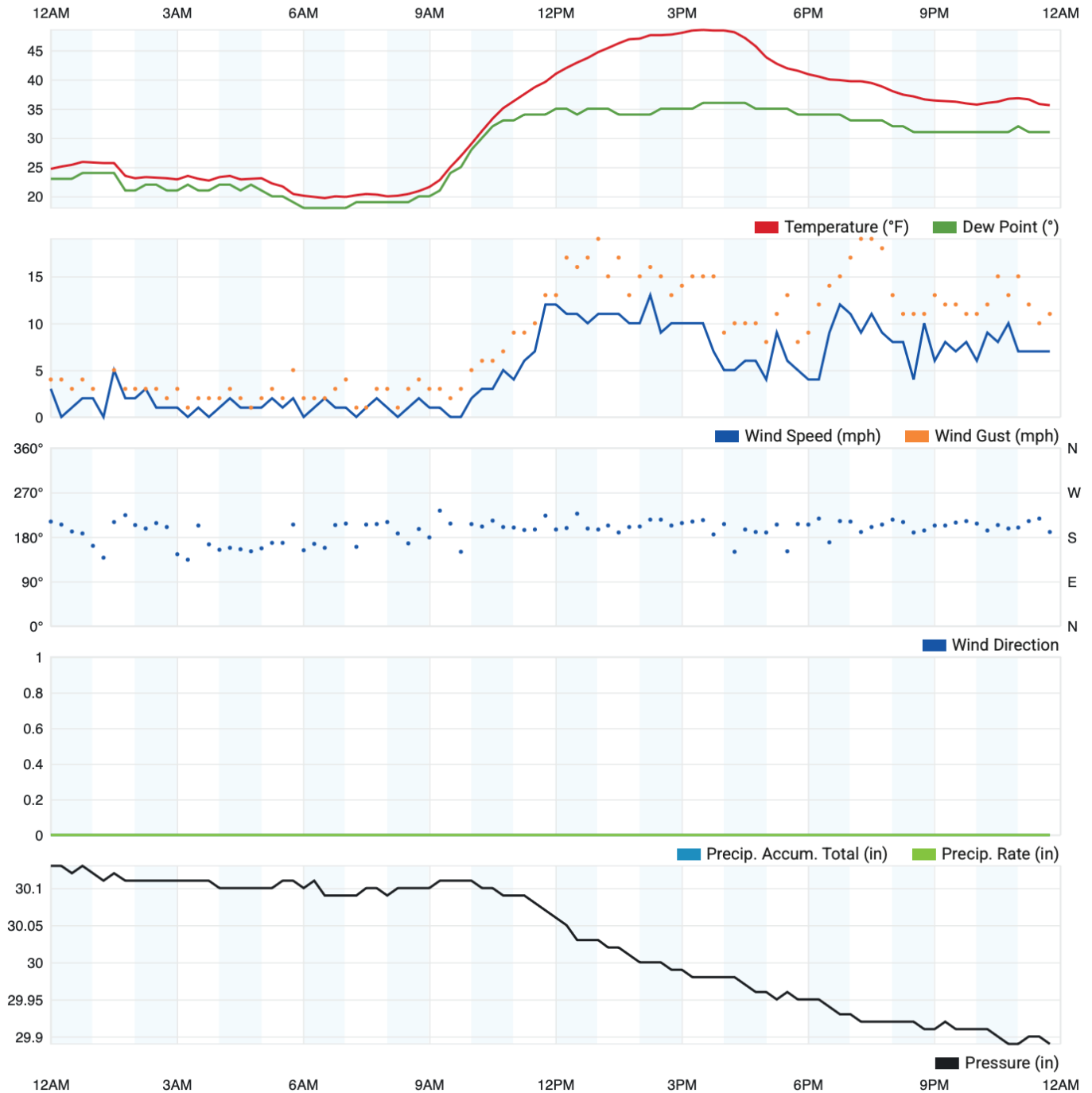
Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

November 21, 2025



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Today



High: 53 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 27 °F

Partly Cloudy

Sunday



High: 53 °F

Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 30 °F

Partly Cloudy

Monday



High: 47 °F

Chance Rain



Incoming Cold Temperatures for the Holidays

November 22, 2025
4:25 AM

Key Messages

- Temperatures will start dropping Monday night through the holiday on Thursday.
- Highs will go from the 50s and low 60s to the 20s and 30s (left graph)
- Lows will go from the 20s and 30s down into the teens (right graph)

	Maximum Temperature Forecast (°F)						Minimum Temperature Forecast (°F)					
	11/22 Sat	11/23 Sun	11/24 Mon	11/25 Tue	11/26 Wed	11/27 Thu	11/22 Sat	11/23 Sun	11/24 Mon	11/25 Tue	11/26 Wed	11/27 Thu
Aberdeen	53	54	48	37	30	27	30	26	29	25	18	12
Britton	52	54	48	37	28	25	29	29	34	24	18	11
Chamberlain	56	64	53	39	36	33	36	30	41	28	22	17
Clark	48	50	47	38	26	24	30	30	38	25	19	12
Eagle Butte	50	53	49	33	30	27	31	31	32	23	19	14
Eureka	50	53	48	33	27	24	29	29	31	23	16	9
Gettysburg	50	54	48	33	29	25	29	29	33	23	18	12
McIntosh	49	54	48	32	27	26	31	31	33	22	17	13
Milbank	55	57	50	39	30	26	29	29	37	27	21	13
Miller	52	58	50	37	32	28	36	31	39	25	20	14
Mobridge	50	54	48	34	30	29	32	29	33	24	19	13
Murdo	52	60	50	38	33	32	35	30	37	26	19	15
Pierre	52	60	50	37	33	32	33	29	35	27	22	17
Redfield	53	56	49	37	31	27	27	27	35	25	18	12
Sisseton	54	58	50	39	30	26	31	31	36	26	21	13
Watertown	51	53	49	37	28	25	32	28	37	26	20	12
Webster	51	53	48	36	26	24	29	29	36	25	19	12
Wheaton	53	57	49	39	29	26	27	27	31	25	20	12



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Warmer than normal temperatures will continue through the weekend before starting to drop Monday night to be 5-10 degrees colder than normal by the holiday on Thursday. High temperatures will be in the 20s to 30s and lows in the teens during that time. Make sure to bundle up to stay warm if you are going outside or traveling.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 49 °F at 3:23 PM

Low Temp: 20 °F at 6:27 AM

Wind: 20 mph at 7:14 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 66 in 1904

Record Low: -14 in 1895

Average High: 39

Average Low: 17

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.58

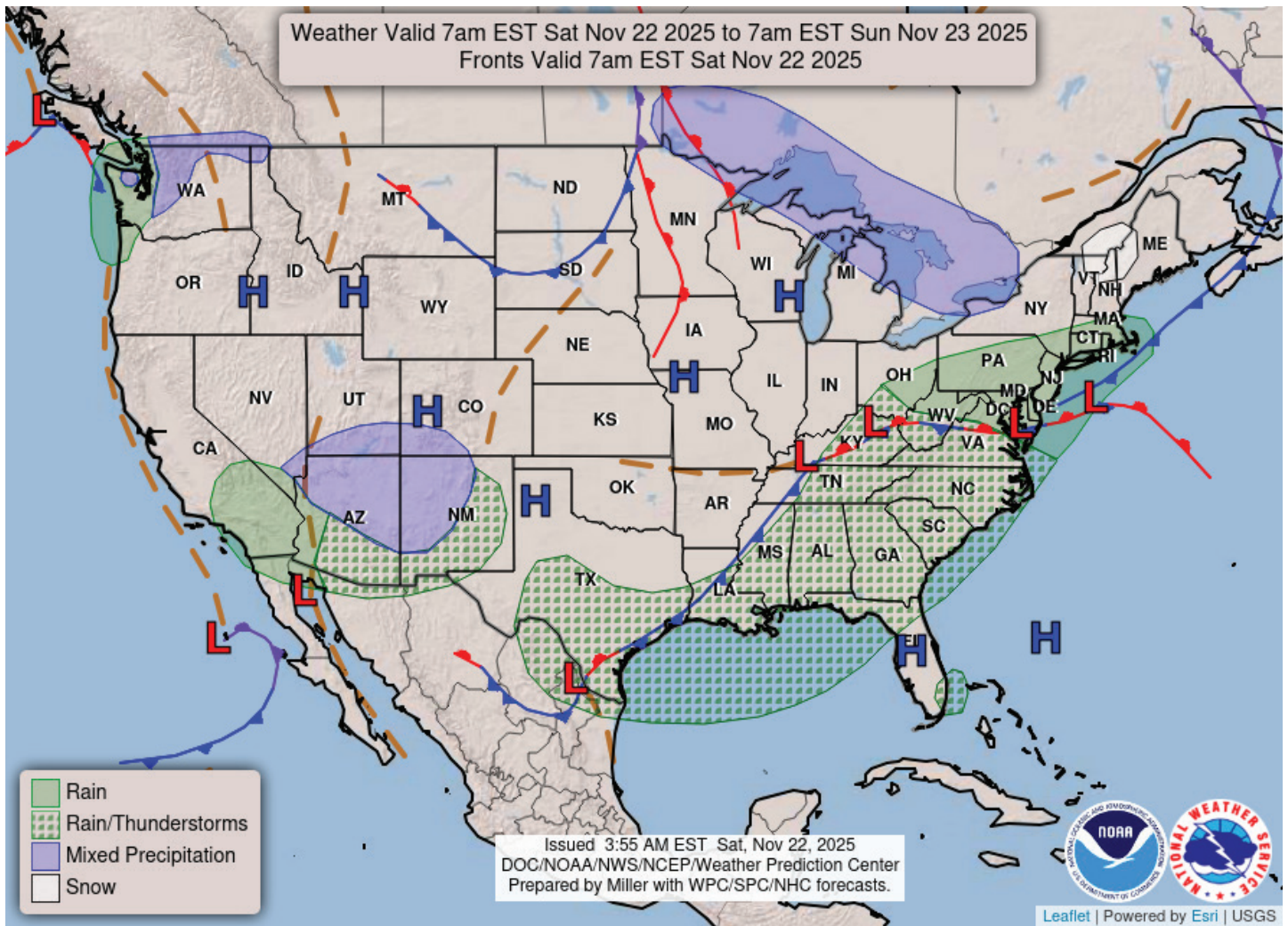
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.05

Precip Year to Date: 23.51

Sunset Tonight: 4:56 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:42 am



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Today in Weather History

November 22, 1979: Snow began falling during the morning hours on the 21st and continued until the evening hours on the 22nd. Snowfall totals were in the 6 to 13-inch range with thirteen inches at Sioux Falls being the largest amount reported. Moderate winds of 20 to 35 mph made travel tough. Approximately 50 percent of the corn remained in the fields. The snow did not harm the corn, so most of it was still harvested.

November 22, 1985: Extreme cold temperatures occurred over South Dakota from November 22nd through the 28th, with low temperatures dropping well below zero. Record low temperatures were set in most areas, and Aberdeen set a record low for five of the seven days. Three of those five record lows still stand today: -17 on the 23rd, -18 on the 27th, and -21 on the 28th. The other records set at the time (-16 on both the 24th and 26th), were both broken in November 1996.

November 22, 2003: Heavy snow of 6 to 10 inches fell across Big Stone and Traverse counties in Minnesota, as well as northeastern South Dakota, from the evening of the 22nd to the afternoon of the 23rd. Dumont received 6 inches of snow, with 10 inches reported in Ortonville. Six inches of snow was also reported in Wilmot, White Rock, Estelline, and near Stone Bridge; 7 inches was reported Toronto; 8 inches in Big Stone City; and 9 inches at Clear Lake. Heavy snow of 6 to 9 inches also fell in Corson and Lyman counties in South Dakota. Some other snowfall amounts included 8 inches northwest of Presho, Kennebec, and near Iona; and 9 inches southwest of Keldron.

1641 - An observer at Boston, MA, recorded a great tempest of wind and rain from the southeast all night, as fierce as a hurricane, and thereupon followed the highest tide which we have seen since our arrival here . (David Ludlum)

1957 - Extremely destructive Santa Ana winds blew from Oxnard to San Diego and inland parts of southern California. The high winds produced a 28,000 acre brush fire on a 40-mile front west of Crystal Lake. People were ordered off streets in some areas due to flying debris. (21st-22nd) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Eight cities in the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Elkins, WV, reported a low of 5 degrees above zero. Gale force winds continued along the Northern Atlantic Coast. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Wet and windy weather prevailed across the western U.S., with heavy snow in some of the higher elevations. Winds gusted to 62 mph at Vedauwoo WY, and reached 75 mph at Tillamook OR. Shelter Cove CA was drenched with 4.37 inches of rain in 24 hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Strong northerly winds produced squalls along the shore of Lake Michigan, with heavy snow in extreme southeastern Wisconsin. Milwaukee WI received nine inches of snow, and in Racine County there were more than one hundred automobile accidents. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1992: 45 tornadoes touched down in the Tennessee and Ohio Valleys. Georgia was hard hit with two F4, one F3 and three F2 tornadoes that killed six people and injured 144. Indiana had a total of 15 tornadoes on this day to set a record for an outbreak in November and for the month of November. One, an F4 multiple-vortex type, cut a 22-mile path through extreme southeastern Indiana and northern Kentucky. This tornado debunked the myth that twisters don't cross rivers, as this devastating tornado crossed the Ohio River twice. Indiana had a total of 15 tornadoes on this day to set two state records, the largest November tornado outbreak, and the most tornadoes in November. This tornado outbreak made a significant contribution to what was to become the biggest November ever for the U.S. concerning the number of tornadoes.

2010: A rare November ice storm prompts Fairbanks officials to advised residents to stay off the roads. Ice storm advisories are hoisted across a 950 mile stretch of the state that extends from Anchorage to Nome. The 0.39 inches of rain which fall at Fairbanks rates as that city's greatest November rainfall since November 1936.

2010: A strong cold front sweeping through the Midwest brought severe storms, including tornadoes to northern Illinois and southwest Wisconsin. Caledonia, Illinois was hit hard by an EF2 tornado.



New Birth: God's Part

We are all born with a sin nature, but God offers us the opportunity to be born again.

John 3:9-13: 9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? 11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? 13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.[a]

Ever since the first sin (Genesis 3:6), all human beings have been born with a sin nature, separating us from a holy God. In order to commune with Him, we must be born again. This is how we receive a new nature, a new spirit, and a new eternal destiny.

Spiritual rebirth is a miraculous work of the Holy Spirit—He doesn't simply freshen up our old nature but instead brings about a transformation. As 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature" (emphasis added). As a result, believers can worship, praise, and serve the living God out of genuine love and devotion to Him.

This rebirth process involves forgiveness of our sins, and to accomplish that, God sent His only begotten Son to die on the cross. Our Savior's substitutionary atonement is the means by which a holy and righteous God permanently removes our sin and makes us holy like Himself. Our cleansing doesn't come from being religious, or even from confession of sin and repentance. Rather, it comes from the blood that Jesus shed on the cross at Calvary. By believing that He died to pay the penalty we owed and then accepting His sacrifice on our behalf, we are forgiven of our sins—God wipes them away! (Ephesians 1:7; Psalm 103:12). Praise Him for the blessing of His remarkable saving love.

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: 11.21.25

3 4 19 31 63 9

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$70,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[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: 13 Hrs 2 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.21.25

19 29 39 41 48 18

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 17 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.19.25

4 20 23 24 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$92,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 17 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS: 11.19.25

17 19 47 53 61 8

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 46 Mins 13 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: 13 Hrs 46 Mins 13 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL

Chester def. Bennett County, 25-18, 25-15, 25-16
Clark-Willow Lake def. Wagner, 25-23, 28-26, 25-16
Dakota Valley def. Hamlin, 25-20, 25-16, 25-9
Harrisburg def. Watertown, 25-18, 25-12, 25-11
Parkston def. Herreid-Selby, 25-22, 25-13, 25-21
St Thomas More def. Rapid City Christian, 19-25, 25-18, 25-18, 25-21

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

Matthew Mors scores 18 as South Dakota State routs Georgia State 105-58

By The Associated Press undefined

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Matthew Mors' 18 points helped South Dakota State defeat Georgia State 105-58 on Friday night.

Mors went 7 of 11 from the field (2 for 5 from 3-point range) for the Jackrabbits (4-2). Damon Wilkinson scored 17 points and added seven rebounds. Joe Sayler shot 6 for 10, including 3 for 6 from beyond the arc to finish with 15 points.

The Panthers (1-5) were led by Jelani Hamilton, who posted 21 points. Malachi Brown added 15 points.

Brazil's ex-president Bolsonaro arrested over alleged plot to avoid 27-year prison term

By MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro was under arrest on Saturday over suspicion he was plotting to avoid starting a 27-year prison sentence for leading a coup attempt.

Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes, who oversaw the case on Bolsonaro's attempt to keep the presidency after his defeat to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in 2022, ordered the preemptive arrest after saying the far-right leader's ankle monitor was violated at 0:08 a.m. on Saturday.

Bolsonaro, 70, who had been under house arrest, was ordered to wear the device after being deemed a flight risk.

The former president, who is an ally of U.S. President Donald Trump, was taken to the headquarters of the country's federal police in the capital, Brasilia, from his home.

Bolsonaro's aide Andriely Cirino confirmed to The Associated Press that the arrest took place around 6 a.m. on Saturday.

The Supreme Court panel hearing Bolsonaro's case will vote on de Moraes' order in an extraordinary session Monday. The same panel convicted him to jail by 4 votes to 1 in September.

The preemptive arrest is a dramatic and unexpected twist in the final stage of a long and divisive criminal trial. De Moraes claimed the embattled leader could escape, as some of his allies did, just days before he was set to begin his prison term. The judge cited a video posted by Bolsonaro's son urging supporters to protest on Saturday outside the property where his father had been staying.

"(The) information shows the intent of the convict to break the ankle monitoring to assure his escape is successful, which would be made easier by the confusion that would be caused by a demonstration organized by his son," de Moraes said.

The judge said there was a chance of Bolsonaro fleeing to the United States embassy in Brasilia. The

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Supreme Court justice also mentioned other defendants in the coup case and political allies of the former president leaving Brazil to avoid jail.

"He is located about 13 kilometers (8 miles) away from where the United States of America embassy lies, in a distance that can be covered in a 15-minute drive," said de Moraes, who has been sanctioned by the Trump administration.

Brazil's federal police found in August messages that linked Bolsonaro to a political asylum request to Argentina, where an ally of his, Javier Milei, is president.

'Pathetic illegal initiatives'

Local media reported that Bolsonaro, who was Brazil's president from 2019 to 2022 and remains a key political player, was expected to begin serving his sentence sometime next week after all appeals of his conviction are exhausted.

De Moraes said Bolsonaro's arrest "should be made with all respect to the dignity of former President Jair Messias Bolsonaro, without the use of handcuffs and without any media exposition."

The former president was taken from his house in a gated community in the upscale Jardim Botânico neighborhood to the federal police headquarters, Cirino said.

De Moraes mentioned in his ruling a video by Sen. Flávio Bolsonaro, one of the former president's sons, in which he encouraged supporters to take to the streets. A vigil outside Bolsonaro's residence was scheduled for later on Saturday.

No protesters were outside the federal police headquarters in Brasília as of Saturday morning. Detractors of the former president were celebrating online and scheduling parties later on the day in major Brazilian cities, though.

"The video shot by Flávio Bolsonaro stimulates the disrespect to the constitutional text, to the judicial decision and to (democratic) institutions, showing there's no limits for the criminal organization in its attempt to create chaos and conflict in this country, in a total disrespect to democracy," de Moraes wrote in his ruling.

"Brazil's democracy has reached sufficient maturity to steer away and prosecute pathetic illegal initiatives to defend the criminal organization that is responsible for a coup d'état attempt in Brazil," he added.

Bolsonaro and several of his allies were convicted by a panel of Supreme Court justices for attempting to overthrow Brazil's democracy following his 2022 election defeat. Prosecutors said the coup plot included plans to kill Lula, Vice President Geraldo Alckmin and de Moraes.

Bolsonaro was also found guilty on charges of leading an armed criminal organization and attempting the violent abolition of the democratic rule of law. He denies any wrongdoing.

Bolsonaro's allies vow to defend him

Fabio Wajngarten, Bolsonaro's former press adviser and lawyer, said the arrest of the former president was "a terrible stain on the institutions."

Speaking in a video posted on X, Wajngarten added: "It's a shame. I hope this is reviewed soon." He claimed Bolsonaro's ankle monitoring device was working perfectly as of Saturday morning.

"How could something that was broken, violated, be functioning normally nine hours later?" he wrote. "The president had dinner — a soup — yesterday with four brothers and brothers-in-law, took medication for hiccups, felt drowsy and laid down around 10 p.m. None of his sons were at the house."

Sóstenes Cavalcante, Bolsonaro's party whip in the lower house, accused de Moraes of showing "psychopathy at the highest level."

"We will always stand by your side. Stay strong," he said in a video shared with the AP. "We will respond appropriately."

In an Instagram post, Michelle Bolsonaro, the former first lady, vowed Bolsonaro's supporters "will not give up on our nation," adding: "I believe in God's justice. Human justice, as we have seen, can't hold anymore." She was outside Brasília when her husband was arrested at home.

'Martyr and impactful popular leader'

Bolsonaro was placed under house arrest in early August, weeks before he was convicted. His lawyers were pleading with Brazil's Supreme Court to keep him at home to serve his sentence, citing his poor

health, but Brazilian law requires that all convicts start their sentences in prison.

Creomar de Souza, a political analyst with Dharma Political Risk and Strategy, a political consultancy firm based in Brasilia, said the move by de Moraes will have impact on next year's presidential election, with Lula seeking reelection and Bolsonaro already barred from running.

"They had the idea of turning the 2026 election into a referendum on Bolsonaro. And for that to happen they needed actions, they needed to build an optics of Bolsonaro as a martyr and an impactful popular leader," de Souza told the AP. "At the end of the day, this shows the Bolsonaro family they will need to build their own alternative for the 2026 elections."

Republicans hyped the Epstein files for years. Now Trump is under pressure to deliver

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — What began as a campaign-trail promise to release the Jeffrey Epstein files has become one of the most fraught tests of President Donald Trump's second term — opening a rift in his political coalition and raising the stakes for an administration now under intense pressure to produce documents that may fall far short of public expectations.

The issue came to a head this week. After months of efforts by the Trump administration to quash it, both chambers of Congress passed a measure forcing the release of the Epstein files with near-unanimous support. Trump, who changed course days before the vote to bless the effort, signed the legislation Wednesday, starting a 30-day window for the Justice Department to deliver the records.

Expectations are sky-high, fueled by years of conspiracy theories promoted by many now in Trump's orbit. Yet with some claims — such as a rumored "client list" of prominent men linked to Epstein — already deemed nonexistent by federal officials, the antiestablishment coalition Trump built in part by elevating those theories is showing cracks that may widen with the anticipated release.

"Watching this actually turn into a fight has ripped MAGA apart," Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga., said this week, flanked by Epstein survivors ahead of the House vote.

"The only thing that will speak to the powerful, courageous women behind me is when action is actually taken to release these files," said Greene, who announced late Friday that she will resign from Congress in January. "And the American people won't tolerate any other bulls—."

How Epstein files entered the political mainstream

Epstein's abuse and 2019 death in a New York jail cell have generated conspiracy theories for years, especially on the political right.

On the campaign trail, Trump expressed openness to releasing the investigative documents, nodding to anti-establishment demands to open up the government's files on other high-profile cases such as the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

But once Trump was back in office, divulging records from the federal investigations, as well as satisfying the appetites of conspiracy theorists, became less appealing. Attorney General Pam Bondi raised expectations of a full release, only to reverse course over the summer. Her attempt to close the book on the Epstein saga outraged many on the right.

It was the first sign of a rift in Trump's coalition, and Democrats took notice.

In Congress, they began looking for ways to force Republicans to take votes on releasing the Epstein files. Eventually, they found traction with two tracks: initiating an investigation in the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee and putting full support behind a rarely successful petition that maneuvers around the House speaker's control of which bills see the floor.

The Democratic effort, joined by a few key Republicans, including Greene, culminated last week in passage of the bill with overwhelming support from both chambers of Congress. It was a sign that the Epstein files had risen from the realm of obscure conspiracy theorists to a political force that neither political party could deny.

Still, it's not clear whether the complete files will be released — or that the public interest in them will

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ever be satisfied.

The release and the limits of what may be in the files

At a Tuesday press conference ahead of the House vote, the bill's sponsors — Reps. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., and Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., joined Greene and several Epstein survivors in warning the administration not to hold anything back.

"The real test will be whether the Department of Justice releases the files, or whether it all remains tied up in investigations," Greene said, adding that whether a list of names is released "will be the real test."

While Bondi in February said on Fox News that an Epstein "client list" was "sitting on my desk right now to review," her department has since reversed course, saying such a list doesn't exist. In a letter this July, the Justice Department said its review uncovered no incriminating "client list."

It's one example of how the Trump administration helped build hype for the release of files — and a reminder of the political danger in being unable to deliver the material his coalition has long believed is hidden.

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.

Lawmakers believe there are reams more of documents, but they have received little indication that the Department of Justice is ready to put out that information despite a subpoena from the House Oversight Committee that was issued in August.

Khanna said he still has concerns about how fully the administration will comply, but he believes passage of the bill, and the possibility of contempt of Congress, gives lawmakers leverage. He declined to speculate about who might appear in the files but said he expects whistleblowers to emerge if anything is withheld.

"The president has realized, as Marjorie Taylor Greene said, that this is splitting his MAGA base," Khanna said.

"It would be foolish for him to have a drip, drip, drip fight. I mean, if he wants to fight over Epstein the remainder of his presidency, I suppose we can. But that's not really smart."

'Forgotten America against the Epstein class'

Khanna, a Silicon Valley progressive with aspirations for higher office, hopes the Epstein fight will evolve into a broader movement, describing it as a modern version of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "forgotten class against the economic royalists."

"This is a forgotten America against the Epstein class," Khanna said in an interview.

"There's a real anger at an elite that people think are out of touch and taking away control over the lives," he added.

As Democrats look for ways to reconnect with working-class voters, Khanna thinks the party should pursue causes like the Epstein files. He has already begun discussions with Massie, Greene and others about teaming up again.

"This crack," Khanna said of the Epstein vote, is the "answer to taking on Trump."

Potential presidential candidates are less coy about 2028 plans: 'Of course I'm thinking about it'

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — There was a time when presidential hopefuls played coy about their ambitions, crisscrossing the country under the guise of helping other candidates and deflecting when pushed on their obvious plans.

Not so for some Democrats considering running in 2028. With no clear party leader and Democratic voters raring for a fight, some could-be candidates are being far more transparent about their intentions, doing away with pretensions as they try to gain maximum visibility at a time when authenticity is in high demand.

"Of course I'm thinking about it. I haven't ruled it out," New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker recently told Fox

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News during a trip to early-voting New Hampshire, even as he stressed that his focus is on 2026, when he will be up for reelection.

"I'd be lying otherwise. I'd just be lying and I can't do that," California Gov. Gavin Newsom told CBS when pressed on whether he will consider a run after the midterms next year.

To be sure, many Democrats remain circumspect.

Of the dozen potential 2028 candidates The Associated Press requested interviews with to discuss the changing dynamic, none was immediately available. Some Democrats deflect questions and say their attention is elsewhere even as they campaign for others in early-voting states.

On the Republican side, an entirely different dynamic is brewing under the surface. Potential candidates are keeping low profiles amid expectations that President Donald Trump will play kingmaker in choosing his would-be successor.

Presidential campaign strategists say the Democrats' less guarded approach makes sense given the wide-open 2028 field and sheer number of candidates competing for attention. Among the others who have said they are considering a run: Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who also was a White House chief of staff, and Hawaii Gov. Josh Green.

"Old rules just don't apply to anything anymore," said Jess O'Connell, a Democratic strategist who advised Pete Buttigieg's 2020 presidential campaign. She said the change was a good thing for the party.

"You've got to be out there every single day fighting and sharing your vision," she said. "And I think the more runway they have to talk to people in this moment and to communicate about meeting the needs of the future," then the better.

New dynamics at play

Alex Conant, a veteran of the presidential campaigns of Republicans Marco Rubio, a former Florida senator who is now Trump's secretary of state, and Tim Pawlenty, a former Minnesota governor, said the dynamics of the emerging Democratic primary, with no clear front-runner, have changed the calculus for candidates.

"I think the Democratic primary is going to be the longest primary of our life. It's hard to recall a field that is this wide open. And the Democratic base is so hungry for someone to take on Trump and win back the White House," he said. "The more crowded it is, the more important it is to start early."

Candidates, he noted, are also "immediately more relevant if you might be the next president," adding to the incentive to say the quiet part out loud.

Voters these days are also turned off by the kind of politician-speak that was once the norm.

"One of the takeaways from Trump is that people want authenticity," Conant said. "Voters are rejecting candidates who sound like politicians, so the rhetorical tricks that politicians have used for decades to avoid answering questions now just irritates voters."

Some are elusive

Not everyone has embraced the approach.

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker played coy on stage during a recent interview with journalist Kara Swisher, repeatedly dodging her questions about his expected timeline.

"Blah, blah," she responded as he tried to pivot to talking about the strength of the Democratic bench.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro has been equally circumspect, refusing to acknowledge any White House ambitions or even commit to running again for governor, even as the shadow of 2028 follows him everywhere he goes. But during an appearance on "The Breakfast Club" podcast last month, as he reflected on the arson attack on his official residence, he sounded like someone who is eager to remain in the arena.

"I love public service," he said. "You can't walk away now, with everything that's on the line. ... This is not a time to quit."

His perceived national ambitions have become a frequent attack line for his potential GOP rival for governor, state Treasurer Stacy Garrity.

"We need somebody that is more interested in Pennsylvania and not on Pennsylvania Avenue," Garrity said recently on a conservative radio show in Philadelphia.

There are risks for candidates

That is one of the risks for candidates, said Mike DuHaime, a longtime GOP strategist who advised the presidential campaigns of Chris Christie, John McCain, Rudy Giuliani and George W. Bush.

In 2013, he noted, Christie's opponent in the New Jersey governor's race often tried to use his national buzz as a campaign issue against him.

Candidates, DuHaime said, also need to strike a balance and make that they are not distracting from midterm races by funneling money or attention away from candidates who need them.

"I think it makes sense not to be so coy because people kind of get it, but they still should be careful about putting themselves in front of the country cause it could backfire," he said. They "have to be careful that they still look a little bit like team players."

In other cases, candidates have genuinely not made up their minds, and may be lured by party leaders in early-voting states eager to draw rising stars to their events, DuHaime said.

"It's very intriguing and exciting for candidates and would-be candidates to be asked," he said, with some deciding, "Let's go experience it, the national circus. Let's be part of that."

Along with potential legal considerations, O'Connell, the Democratic strategist, also noted that many of those expected to run have day jobs they need to balance. While picking fights with Trump certainly puts them in the spotlight, it could have ramifications for constituents if the Republican president retaliates, meaning that candidates will need to choose their moments wisely.

"You have to fulfill your obligations to the states that you're in," she said. "It's not so much that you're playing a game, it's that I think that there are some practical considerations."

"I think we're going to see people struggling with that," she added.

She also urged candidates to embrace what she called a "Beyonce-Taylor Swift strategy," referring to the pop stars' boosting the economies of the cities where they performed on tour.

"What I would advise anyone who wants to be president in 2028," she said, "is to roll up your sleeves and help."

Babies who drank ByHeart formula got sick months before botulism outbreak, parents say

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

As health officials investigate more than 30 cases of infant botulism linked to ByHeart baby formula since August, parents who say their children were sickened with the same illness months before the current outbreak are demanding answers, too.

California public health officials confirmed late Friday that six babies in that state who consumed ByHeart formula were treated for botulism between November 2024 and June 2025, up to nine months before the outbreak that has sickened at least 31 babies in 15 states.

At the time, there was "not enough evidence to immediately suspect a common source," the California Department of Public Health said in a statement.

Even now, "we cannot connect any pre-August 1 cases to the current outbreak," officials said.

Parents of at least five babies said that their infants were treated for the rare and potentially deadly disease after drinking ByHeart formula in late 2024 and early 2025, according to reports shared with The Associated Press by Bill Marler, a Seattle food safety lawyer representing the families.

Amy Mazziotti, 43, of Burbank, California, said her then-5-month-old son, Hank, fell ill and was treated for botulism in March, weeks after he began drinking bottles filled with ByHeart formula.

Katie Connolly, 37, of Lafayette, California, said her daughter, M.C., then 8 months old, was hospitalized in April and treated for botulism after being fed ByHeart formula in hopes of helping the baby sleep.

For months, neither mother had any idea where the infections could have originated. Such illnesses in babies typically are caused by spores spread in the environment or by contaminated honey.

Then ByHeart recalled all of its products nationwide on Nov. 11 in connection with growing cases of infant botulism.

As soon as she heard it was ByHeart, Mazziotti said she thought: "This cannot be a coincidence."

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ByHeart officials this week confirmed that laboratory tests of previously unopened formula found that some samples were contaminated with the type of bacteria that leads to infant botulism.

Marler said at least three other cases that predate the outbreak involved babies who drank ByHeart and were treated for botulism, according to their families. One consumed ByHeart formula in December 2024. The other two were sickened later in the spring, he said.

An official with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said federal investigators were aware of reports of earlier illnesses but that efforts are focused now on understanding the unusual surge of dozens of infections documented since Aug. 1.

"That doesn't mean that they're not necessarily part of this," said Dr. Jennifer Cope, a CDC scientist leading the probe. "It's just that right now, we're focusing on this large increase."

Because so much time has passed and because parents of babies who got sick earlier may not have recorded lot numbers of product or kept empty cans of formula, "it will make it harder to definitively link them" to the outbreak, Cope said.

Connolly said it feels like her daughter has been forgotten.

"What I want to know is why did the cases beginning in August flag an investigation, but the cases that began in March did not?" Connolly said.

Cope and other health officials said the strong signal connecting ByHeart to infant botulism cases only became apparent in recent weeks.

Before this outbreak, no powdered infant formula in the U.S. had tested positive for the type of bacteria that leads to botulism, California health officials said. The number of cases also were within an expected range. A test of a can of open formula fed to a sick baby in the spring did not detect the bacterium.

Then, beginning in August and through October, more cases were identified on the East Coast involving a type of toxin rarely detected in the region, officials said. More cases were seen in very young infants and more cases involved ByHeart formula, which accounts for less than 1 percent of infant formula sold in the U.S.

Earlier this month, after a sample from a can of ByHeart formula fed to a sick infant tested positive for the germ that leads to illness, officials notified the CDC, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the public.

Less than 200 cases of infant botulism are reported in the U.S. each year. The disease is caused when babies ingest spores that germinate in the gut and produce a toxin. The bacterium that leads to illness is ubiquitous in the environment, including soil and water, so the source is often unknown.

Officials at the California Infant Botulism Treatment and Prevention Program track reports of botulism and the distribution of the only treatment for the illness, an IV medication called BabyBIG.

Outside food safety experts said the CDC should count earlier cases as part of the outbreak if babies consumed ByHeart formula and were treated for botulism.

"Absolutely, yes, they should be included," said Frank Yiannas, former deputy commissioner for food policy and response at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. "Why wouldn't they be included?"

Sandra Eskin, chief executive of STOP Foodborne Illness, an advocacy group, agreed.

"This outbreak is traumatic for parents," she said. "They may have fed their newborns and infants a product they assumed was safe. And now they're dealing with hospitalization and serious illness of their babies."

Connolly and Mazziotti said their babies are improving, though they still have some lingering effects. Botulism causes symptoms that include constipation, poor feeding, head and limb weakness and other problems.

After months of uncertainty about the potential cause of the infection, Connolly said she "became completely obsessed" with the link to ByHeart formula. Now, she just wants answers.

"We deserve to know the data that can help us understand how our babies got sick," she said.

Number of children abducted in Nigerian school attack raised to more than 300

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — A total of 303 schoolchildren and 12 teachers were abducted by gunmen during an attack on St. Mary's School, a Catholic institution in north-central Nigeria's Niger state, the Christian Association of Nigeria said Saturday, updating an earlier tally of 215 schoolchildren.

The tally was changed "after a verification exercise and a final census was carried out," according to a statement issued by the Most. Rev. Bulus Dauwa Yohanna, chairman of the Niger state chapter of CAN, who visited the school on Friday.

He said 88 other students "were also captured after they tried to escape" during the attack. The students were both male and female and ranged in age from 10 to 18.

The school kidnapping in Niger state's remote Papiri community happened four days after 25 schoolchildren were seized in similar circumstances in neighboring Kebbi state's Maga town, which is 170 kilometers (106 miles) away.

No group has yet claimed responsibility for the abductions and authorities have said tactical squads have been deployed alongside local hunters to rescue the children.

Yohanna described as false a claim from the state government that the school had reopened for studies despite an earlier directive for schools in that part of Niger state to close temporarily due to security threats.

"We did not receive any circular. It must be an afterthought and a way to shift blame," he said, calling on families "to remain calm and prayerful."

School kidnappings have come to define insecurity in Africa's most populous nation, and armed gangs often see schools as "strategic" targets to draw more attention.

UNICEF said last year that only 37% of schools across 10 of the conflict-hit states have early warning systems to detect threats.

Niger state has now shut down all schools as a measure to forestall other kidnappings. The decision was in a bid to protect lives and property, Niger Gov. Umar Bago told reporters Saturday after meeting with security officials in Minna.

"It is the decision of stakeholders today to close all schools in Niger state. All schools are closed till further notice. So we have declared Christmas holiday for all schools in Niger state," Bago said.

The kidnappings are happening amid U.S. President Donald Trump's claims of targeted killings against Christians in the West African country. Attacks in Nigeria affect both Christians and Muslims. The school attack earlier this week in Kebbi state was in a Muslim-majority town.

The attack also took place as Nigerian National Security Adviser Nuhu Ribadu was visiting the U.S. where he met Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Friday.

RFK Jr. says he's following 'gold standard' science. Here's what to know

By DEVI SHASTRI AP Health Writer

The message is hammered over and over, in news conferences, hearings and executive orders: President Donald Trump and his health secretary, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., say they want the government to follow "gold standard" science.

Scientists say the problem is that they are often doing just the opposite by relying on preliminary studies, fringe science or just hunches to make claims, cast doubt on proven treatments or even set policy.

This week, the nation's top public health agency changed its website to contradict the scientific conclusion that vaccines do not cause autism. The move shocked health experts nationwide.

Dr. Daniel Jernigan, who resigned from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in August, told reporters Wednesday that Kennedy seems to be "going from evidence-based decision making to decision-based evidence making."

It was the latest example of the Trump administration's challenge to established science.

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In September, the Republican president gave out medical advice based on weak or no evidence. Speaking directly to pregnant women and to parents, he told them not to take acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol. He repeatedly made the fraudulent and long-disproven link between autism and vaccines, saying his assessment was based on a hunch.

"I have always had very strong feelings about autism and how it happened and where it came from," he said.

At a two-day meeting this fall, Kennedy's handpicked vaccine advisers to the CDC raised questions about vaccinating babies against hepatitis B, an inoculation long shown to reduce disease and death drastically.

"The discussion that has been brought up regarding safety is not based on evidence other than case reports and anecdotes," said Dr. Flor Munoz, a pediatric infectious disease expert at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital.

During the country's worst year for measles in more than three decades, Kennedy cast doubt on the measles vaccine while championing unproven treatments and alleging that the unvaccinated children who died were "already sick."

Scientists say the process of getting medicines and vaccines to market and recommended in the United States has, until now, typically relied on gold standard science. The process is so rigorous and transparent that much of the rest of the world follows the lead of American regulators, giving the OK to treatments only after U.S. approval.

Gold standard science

The gold standard can differ because science and medicine is complicated and everything cannot be tested the same way. That term simply refers to the best possible evidence that can be gathered.

"It completely depends on what question you're trying to answer," said Dr. Jake Scott, an infectious disease physician and Stanford University researcher.

What produces the best possible evidence?

There are many different types of studies. The most rigorous is the randomized clinical trial.

It randomly creates two groups of subjects that are identical in every way except for the drug, treatment or other question being tested. Many are "blinded studies," meaning neither the subjects nor the researchers know who is in which group. This helps eliminate bias.

It is not always possible or ethical to conduct these tests. This is sometimes the case with vaccine trials, "because we have so much data showing how safe and effective they are, it would be unethical to withhold vaccines from a particular group," said Jessica Steier, a public health scientist and founder of the Unbiased Science podcast.

Studying the long-term effect of a behavior can be impossible. For example, scientists could not possibly study the long-term benefit of exercise by having one group not exercise for years.

Instead, researchers must conduct observational studies, where they follow participants and track their health and behavior without manipulating any variables. Such studies helped scientists discover that fluoride reduces cavities, and later lab studies showed how fluoride strengthens tooth enamel.

But the studies have limitations because they can often only prove correlation, not causation. For example, some observational studies have raised the possibility of a link between autism risk and using acetaminophen during pregnancy, but more have not found a connection. The big problem is that those kinds of studies cannot determine if the painkiller really made any difference or if it was the fever or other health problem that prompted the need for the pill.

Real world evidence can be especially powerful

Scientists can learn even more when they see how something affects a large number of people in their daily lives.

That real-world evidence can be valuable to prove how well something works — and when there are rare side effects that could never be detected in trials.

Such evidence on vaccines has proved useful in both ways. Scientists now know there can be rare side effects with some vaccines and can alert doctors to be on the lookout. The data has proved that vaccines

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provide extraordinary protection from disease. For example, measles was eliminated in the U.S. but it still pops up among unvaccinated groups.

That same data proves vaccines are safe.

"If vaccines caused a wave of chronic disease, our safety systems — which can detect 1-in-a-million events — would have seen it. They haven't," Scott told a U.S. Senate subcommittee in September.

The best science is open and transparent

Simply publishing a paper online is not enough to call it open and transparent. Specific things to look for include:

- Researchers set their hypothesis before they start the study and do not change it.
- The authors disclose their conflicts of interest and their funding sources.
- The research has gone through peer review by subject-matter experts who have nothing to do with that particular study.
- The authors show their work, publishing and explaining the data underlying their analyses.
- They cite reliable sources.

This transparency allows science to check itself. Dr. Steven Woloshin, a Dartmouth College professor, has spent much of his career challenging scientific conclusions underlying health policy.

"I'm only able to do that because they're transparent about what they did, what the underlying source resources were, so that you can come to your own conclusion," he said. "That's how science works."

Know the limits of anecdotes and single studies

Anecdotes may be powerful. They are not data.

Case studies might even be published in top journals, to help doctors or other professionals learn from a particular situation. But they are not used to making decisions about how to treat large numbers of patients because every situation is unique.

Even single studies should be considered in the context of previous research. A new one-off blockbuster study that seems to answer every question definitively or reaches a conclusion that runs counter to other well-conducted studies needs a very careful look.

Uncertainty is baked into science.

"Science isn't about reaching certainty," Woloshin said. "It's about trying to reduce uncertainty to the point where you can say, 'I have good confidence that if we do X, we'll see result Y.' But there's no guarantee."

Doing your own research? Questions to ask

If you come across a research paper online, in a news story or cited by officials to change your mind about something, here are some questions to ask:

- Who did the research? What is their expertise? Do they disclose conflicts of interest?
- Who paid for this research? Who might benefit from it?
- Is it published in a reputable journal? Did it go through peer review?
- What question are the researchers asking? Who or what are they studying? Are they making even comparisons between groups?
- Is there a "limitations" section where the authors point out what their research cannot prove, other factors that could influence their results, or other potential blind spots? What does it say?
- Does it make bold, definitive claims? Does it fit into the scientific consensus or challenge it? Is it too good or bad to be true?

IPO market's red-hot year has been cooled by the shutdown and more caution among investors

By DAMIAN J. TROISE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A strong year for initial public offerings on Wall Street has fizzled out due to the government shutdown and a cautious turn by investors.

Many IPOs targeted for the end of this year will likely be pushed into next year as the Securities and Exchange Commission works to clear a backlog of hundreds of registration statements. Meanwhile, shares

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of companies that did make their market debuts haven't fared well lately amid concerns that stocks have gotten too expensive after another double-digit gain for the market this year.

"A backlogged SEC, the approaching holiday slowdown, and pressure on AI and other tech stocks are all weighing on hopes for a near-term rebound," wrote Bill Smith, CEO of Renaissance Capital, in a note to investors.

Despite the backlog, Wall Street is still anticipating several IPOs in November and December that were already in the later stages of the regulatory process.

Central Bancompany was one of the bigger companies going public following the end of the government shutdown. The bank holding company for The Central Trust Bank raised \$373 million from its IPO on Thursday. Still, November is on track to be among the slowest months for IPOs in 2025, according to Renaissance Capital.

Wall Street anticipates that medical supplies company Medline could go public in December, potentially raising up to \$5 billion, while cryptocurrency technology company BitGo remains another potential IPO for next month.

The more cautious turn for the market has also checked the gains of some more recent IPOs, sending some falling sharply since their debuts.

Web design software company Figma has essentially lost all its gains since going public in July. It more than tripled on its first day of trading after pricing at \$33 per share. It is now trading slightly above the IPO price.

Klarna, the Swedish buy now, pay later company priced its IPO at \$40 per share in September and is currently trading close to \$29 per share. Cloud computing company CoreWeave also priced its IPO at \$40 per share, in March. It surged in the months following its IPO, but has pulled back significantly to about \$72 per share.

Software company Navan went public at \$25 per share in the midst of the government shutdown but failed to gain much ground and is now trading at about \$15.

The benchmark S&P 500 is having a bleak November. It's down 3.5% for the month, with much of that decline being led by the tech sector, which had been driven higher by enthusiasm over developments in artificial intelligence. Wall Street has grown more concerned about whether the gains have been justified.

The S&P 500 is still up more than 12% for the year and the tech-heavy Nasdaq is up more than 15%.

Renaissance Capital's IPO Index is down about nearly 0.8% so far this year as of Friday and has been falling against the S&P 500 since mid-October.

"What that shows is that investors very quickly monetized, they didn't want to take the long-term risk," said Samuel Kerr, head of global equity capital markets at Mergermarket.

Still, overall demand for IPOs remains strong. Even with the recent pullback, the broader market remains expensive, especially within the influential technology sector. IPOs have traditionally been another way for investors to get into the market at a less expensive entry point.

"Increasingly, as a money manager, you have to find other places to make money and typically, IPOs are that place," said, David Kaufman, partner and co-chair of the corporate & securities practice at Thompson Coburn LLP. "You continue to have all these large mutual funds and money managers with excess cash and no place to put this cash."

The broader market's direction in the new year will determine the costs and types of IPOs. Some of the more anticipated big tech names that could go public in 2026 include AI-focused software company Databricks and graphic design app Canva. Wall Street also considers financial technology Plaid as another possible 2026 IPO.

Any visible lull in IPO activity through the rest of the year is partially masking a flurry of activity beneath the surface as companies go through the regulatory process.

"It's a busy time for lawyers and bankers trying to tee things up for the first and second quarter of next year," Kaufman said.

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Ukraine's allies push back on a U.S. peace plan favoring Moscow

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukraine's Western allies rallied around the war-torn country Saturday as they pushed to revise a U.S. peace plan seen as favoring Moscow despite its all-out invasion of its neighbor. A top Ukrainian delegation prepared for direct talks with Washington and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy vowed Ukrainians "will always defend" their home.

The 28-point blueprint to end the nearly four-year war sparked alarm in Kyiv and European capitals, with Zelenskyy saying his country could face a stark choice between standing up for its sovereign rights and preserving the American support it needs.

The U.S. plan foresees Ukraine handing over territory to Russia, something Kyiv has repeatedly ruled out, while reducing the size of its army and blocking its coveted path to NATO membership. It contains many of Moscow's long-standing demands, while offering limited security guarantees to Kyiv.

On Saturday, leaders of the European Union, Canada and Japan issued a joint statement welcoming U.S. peace efforts, but pushed back against key tenets of the plan.

"We are ready to engage in order to ensure that a future peace is sustainable. We are clear on the principle that borders must not be changed by force. We are also concerned by the proposed limitations on Ukraine's armed forces, which would leave Ukraine vulnerable to future attack," the statement said. It added that any decisions regarding NATO and the EU would require the consent of member states.

Ukrainian envoys will meet a U.S. delegation in Switzerland to discuss the proposal, Zelenskyy announced Saturday, after U.S. President Donald Trump said he wants Kyiv to respond by next week.

European leaders have long warned against rushing a peace deal, seeing their own future at stake in Ukraine's fight to beat back Russia, and insist on being consulted in peace efforts.

On Saturday, the French, German and U.K. prime ministers met on the sidelines of a Group of 20 summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, to discuss ways to support Kyiv, according to a person with knowledge of the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

High-ranking Ukrainian officials to lead talks

Zelenskyy, in a video address published Saturday, said Ukrainian representatives at the talks in Switzerland "know how to protect Ukrainian national interests and exactly what is needed to prevent Russia from carrying out" another invasion. "Real peace is always based on security and justice," he added.

Nine officials are to take part in the talks, including Zelenskyy's chief of staff Andrii Yermak and top envoy Rustem Umerov, according to a statement posted on the Ukrainian presidency's website, which also stated that the negotiators are empowered to deal directly with Russia.

Kyiv's allies insist on 'just and lasting' peace

Kyiv's key allies in Europe reiterated their reservations about the Kremlin's readiness to end the war.

"Time and again, Russia pretends to be serious about peace, but their actions never live up to their words," U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer told reporters ahead of the G20 summit, days after a Russian strike on western Ukraine killed over two dozen civilians.

European leaders have long accused Russia of stalling diplomatic efforts in the hope of overwhelming Ukraine's much smaller forces on the battlefield. Kyiv has repeatedly accepted U.S. ceasefire proposals this year, while Moscow has held out for more favorable terms.

EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said that a key principle for Kyiv's European allies was "nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine."

French President Emmanuel Macron echoed that sentiment in a speech at the G20 summit on Saturday, saying "there can be no peace in Ukraine without respect for Ukraine's sovereignty." He did not mention the U.S. peace plan.

Zelenskyy defiant as Ukraine remembers Soviet-era famine

Zelenskyy struck a defiant note as Ukraine on Saturday commemorated the "great famine" that Soviet leader Josef Stalin imposed in the early 1930s, which led to millions of deaths.

"We all know how and why millions of our people died, starved to death, and millions were never born. And we are once again defending ourselves against Russia, which has not changed and is once again

bringing death," Zelenskyy said in a post on Telegram marking Holodomor Memorial Day.

"We defended, defend, and will always defend Ukraine. Because only here is our home. And in our home, Russia will definitely not be the master," Zelenskyy added.

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Key elements in Trump’s 28-point peace proposal and why much of it is unacceptable for Ukraine

By ISOBEL KOSHIW Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — An American proposal to end the war in Ukraine puts the country in a delicate diplomatic position — caught between placating its most important ally, the United States, and not capitulating to Russia, its much larger neighbor that launched a full-scale invasion nearly four years ago.

The 28-point peace plan was crafted by U.S. President Donald Trump’s administration and the Kremlin, without Ukraine’s involvement. It acquiesces to many Russian demands that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has categorically rejected on dozens of occasions, including giving up large pieces of territory.

Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed the proposal late Friday, saying it “could form the basis of a final peace settlement” if the U.S. can get Ukraine and its European allies to agree.

Striking a diplomatic tone Thursday in his nightly address to the nation, Zelenskyy said his country needs a peace that ensures Russia does not invade again. He said he would work with the European Union and the Americans.

Here’s a look at key elements of the proposal and the context surrounding them.

Territorial concessions

THE PROPOSAL: The plan says it will confirm Ukrainian sovereignty while also stating that Crimea and the Luhansk and Donetsk regions will be recognized as de facto Russian land, including by the United States. According to the proposal, the borders of the other two regions Russia has partially occupied and claimed as its own — Kherson and Zaporizhzhia — will be frozen along the front line.

Because Russia does not control all of Luhansk and Donetsk, the plan would, in effect, see Ukraine withdraw from areas Russia has not been able to claim in the fighting. This withdrawal zone would be considered a neutral demilitarized buffer zone, internationally recognized as belonging to Russia.

The proposal also says Russia would relinquish other territories it controls outside the five regions, which could include the northeast Sumy region, where Russian forces have crossed the border, and areas around the eastern Kharkiv region that border Russia, although the details are unclear.

THE CONTEXT: Zelenskyy has repeatedly stated that Ukraine will never recognize the occupied territories as part of Russia.

For Ukrainians, the main issue with the plan lies in its contradictions, said Oleksandr Merezhko, head of Ukraine’s foreign affairs parliamentary committee. It starts by guaranteeing Ukraine’s sovereignty but then lists several points that would inhibit or violate that sovereignty, he said.

The plan “is definitely a nonstarter, but I don’t rule out that it might be part of Trump’s game,” Merezhko said. “He starts with something absolutely absurd, ludicrous, which causes shock, and then he becomes more reasonable.”

Security guarantees

THE PROPOSAL: The plan says Ukraine must enshrine in its constitution a commitment not to join NATO and that NATO must adopt a provision that Ukraine will not be admitted in the future. The size of the Ukrainian army would be limited to 600,000 soldiers, and NATO forces would be prohibited from being stationed in Ukraine, a measure that would curtail Kyiv’s right to choose who it cooperates with militarily.

The plan addresses Ukraine’s hopes for membership in the European Union by saying Kyiv should receive

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short-term preferential access to the European market while it seeks to implement reforms to reach the standards needed for EU membership, including dealing with corruption.

The plan also alludes to security guarantees from Ukraine's Western allies but without going into detail. It is unclear how the U.S. would ensure Russia does not invade again.

THE CONTEXT: Zelenskyy has continually made the case that NATO membership would be the cheapest way to guarantee Ukraine's future security. Since he took office, Trump has made it clear that NATO membership is now off the table.

NATO's 32 member countries said last year that Ukraine is on an "irreversible" path to membership. But some NATO members, led by the U.S., have balked at moving forward with Ukraine while the war rages and before the country's borders are clearly demarcated.

NATO expansion

THE PROPOSAL: The plan states that Russia will not invade neighboring countries, and that NATO, the world's biggest military alliance, will not expand further.

THE CONTEXT: NATO's decisions are made by consensus, and there is no majority voting. The United States is by far NATO's biggest and most influential member. Washington has traditionally driven the agenda but has stepped back under Trump. The alliance is the one international forum where the U.S. agrees to put its military might up for negotiation and can be persuaded to act differently by its allies.

Accountability for Russian actions

THE PROPOSAL: The plan asks Ukraine to relinquish any claims to hold Russia accountable for its actions in Ukraine.

THE CONTEXT: This would deny thousands of Ukrainians any chance to seek reparations or legal vindication of their suffering. U.N.-backed human rights experts have said Russia's torture of Ukrainian civilians and prisoners of war is a crime against humanity.

Ukrainian political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko said signing the plan would be "catastrophic" for Zelenskyy. "But the problem is, we can't say no to Trump because there will be fierce pressure from the White House," he said.

He also said some parts of the plan, such as Ukraine declaring itself a neutral country or giving the Russian language an official status, would require changes to Ukraine's constitution. Those steps could only be taken through parliament and not by Zelenskyy.

"Ukraine could offer to hold a referendum on these issues — that's a compromise," Fesenko said.

Russia's frozen assets

THE PROPOSAL: The plan calls for Moscow to agree that \$100 billion of its frozen assets would be invested in rebuilding Ukraine.

THE CONTEXT: Russian officials have bristled at the idea of using frozen assets to help Ukraine. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said last month that "if someone wants to steal our property, our assets, misappropriate them, and take advantage of the dividends from these assets, then, of course, those involved in this in one way or another will be prosecuted. They will all be held accountable."

Washington state resident believed to be the first to die from a rare strain of bird flu

GRAYS HARBOR COUNTY, Wash. (AP) — A Washington state resident is believed to be the first person to die from a rare strain of bird flu, but state health officials said Friday the risk to the public is low.

The person, an older adult with underlying health conditions, was being treated for a bird flu called H5N5 after becoming seemingly the first known human infected by the strain, according to a statement from the Washington State Department of Health.

The person from Grays Harbor County, about 78 miles (125 kilometers) southwest of Seattle, had a backyard flock of domestic poultry that had been exposed to wild birds, health officials said.

"The risk to the public remains low," the statement from state health officials said. "No other people involved have tested positive for avian influenza."

Health officials said they will monitor anyone who came in close contact with the person, but "there is no evidence of transmission of this virus between people."

Earlier this month, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a statement about the infection that said no information would suggest "the risk to public health has increased as a result of this case."

H5N5 is not believed to be a greater threat to human health than the H5N1 virus behind a wave of 70 reported human infections in the U.S. in 2024 and 2025. Most of those have been mild illnesses in workers on dairy and poultry farms.

The distinction between H5N5 and H5N1 lies in a protein involved in releasing the virus from an infected cell and promoting spread to surrounding cells.

Trump paints Zelenskyy into a corner with his new plan to end Russia's war on Ukraine

By AAMER MADHANI and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With his new 28-point plan to end Russia's war in Ukraine, President Donald Trump is resurfacing his argument that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy doesn't "have the cards" to continue on the battlefield and must come to a settlement that heavily tilts in Moscow's favor.

Trump, who has demonstrated low regard for Zelenskyy dating back to his first term, said Friday he expects the Ukrainian leader to respond to his administration's new plan to end the war by next Thursday.

"We think we have a way of getting peace," Trump told reporters in an Oval Office appearance. "He's going to have to approve it."

Buffeted by a corruption scandal in his government, battlefield setbacks and another difficult winter looming as Russia continues to bombard Ukraine's energy grid, Zelenskyy says Ukraine is now facing perhaps the most difficult choice in its history.

Trump and Zelenskyy have had a tortured relationship

Zelenskyy has not spoken with Trump since the plan became public this week, but has said he expects to talk to the Republican president in coming days. It's likely to be another in a series of tough conversations the two leaders have had over the years.

The first time they spoke, in 2019, Trump tried to pressure the then newly minted Ukrainian leader to dig up dirt on Joe Biden ahead of the 2020 election. That phone call sparked Trump's first impeachment.

Trump made Biden's support for Ukraine a central issue in his successful 2024 campaign, saying the conflict had cost U.S. taxpayers too much money and vowing he would quickly bring the war to an end.

Then early this year in a disastrous Oval Office meeting, Trump and Vice President JD Vance tore into Zelenskyy for what they said was insufficient gratitude for the more than \$180 billion the U.S. had appropriated for military aid and other assistance to Kyiv since the start of the war. That episode led to a temporary suspension of U.S. assistance to Ukraine.

And now with the new proposal, Trump is pressing Zelenskyy to agree to concessions of land to Moscow, a massive reduction in the size of Ukraine's army, and agreement from Europe to assert that Ukraine will never be admitted into the NATO military alliance.

"Now Ukraine may find itself facing a very difficult choice: either loss of dignity, or the risk of losing a key partner," Zelenskyy said in a video address Friday.

At the center of Trump's plan is the call on Ukraine to concede the entirety of its eastern Donbas region, even though a vast swath of that land remains in Ukrainian control. Analysts at the independent Institute for the Study of War have estimated it would take several years for the Russian military to completely seize the territory, based on its current rate of advances.

Trump, nevertheless, insists that the loss of the region — which includes cities that are vital defense, industrial and logistics hubs for Ukrainian forces — is a fait accompli.

"They will lose in a short period of time. You know so," Trump said Friday when asked during a Fox News Radio interview about his push on Ukraine to give up the territory. "They're losing land. They're losing land."

Trump's patience remains a question

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The Trump proposal was formally presented to Zelenskyy in Kyiv on Thursday by Dan Driscoll, the U.S. Army secretary. The plan itself was a surprise to Driscoll's staffers, who were not aware as late as Wednesday that their boss would be going to Ukraine as part of a team to present the plan to the Ukrainians.

Army officials walked away from that meeting with the impression that the Ukrainians were viewing the proposal as a starting point that would evolve as negotiations progressed, according to a U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive talks.

It's unclear how much patience Trump has for further negotiation. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Thursday that Trump's new plan reflects "the realities of the situation" and offers the "best win-win scenario, where both parties gain more than they must give."

Asked about Zelenskyy's initial hesitant response to the proposal, Trump recalled the February Oval Office blow-up with Zelenskyy: "You remember, right in the Oval Office, not so long ago, I said, 'You don't have the cards.'"

Zelenskyy is now in a vulnerable spot

The mounting pressure from Trump comes as Zelenskyy is dealing with fallout over \$100 million in kick-backs for contracts with the state-owned nuclear energy company. The scandal led to resignations of top Cabinet ministers and implicated other Zelenskyy associates.

Konstantin Sonin, a political economist and Russia expert at the University of Chicago, said "what Donald Trump is certainly extremely good at is spotting weak spots of people."

One of the 28 elements of Trump's proposal calls for elections to be held within 100 days of enactment of the agreement.

"I think it's a rationalistic assessment that there is more leverage over Zelenskyy than over Putin," Sonin said. He added, "Zelenskyy's back is against the wall" and "his government could collapse if he agrees" to the U.S. proposal.

All the while, Ukraine is increasingly showing signs of strain on the battlefield after years of war against a vastly larger and better equipped Russian military. Ukraine is desperately trying to fend off relentless Russian aerial attacks that have brought rolling blackouts across the country on the brink of winter.

Kyiv is also grappling with doubts about the way ahead. A European plan to finance next year's budget for Ukraine through loans linked to frozen Russian funds is now in question.

The Trump proposal in its current form also includes several elements that would cut deeply into Ukrainian pride, said David Silbey, a military historian at Cornell University.

One provision calls on Russia and Ukraine to abolish "all discriminatory measures and guarantee the rights of Ukrainian and Russian media and education," and "all Nazi ideology and activities must be rejected and prohibited." That element could be seen by the Ukrainian side as giving credence to Putin's airing of distorted historical narratives to legitimize the 2022 invasion.

Putin has said the war is in part an effort to "denazify" Ukraine and complained of the country's "neo-Nazi regime" as a justification for Russia's invasion. In fact, in Ukraine's last parliamentary election in 2019, support for far-right candidates was 2%, significantly lower than in many other European countries.

The plan's provision is "very clearly an attempt to build up Putin's claim to Russian cultural identity within Ukraine," Silbey said. He added, "From territory loss to the substantial reduction of the Ukrainian military to cultural concessions that have been demanded, I just don't think Zelenskyy could do this deal and look his public in the eye again."

Epstein's accusers grapple with complex emotions about promised release of Justice Department files

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

For Marina Lacerda, the upcoming publication of U.S. government files on Jeffrey Epstein represent more than an opportunity for justice: Lacerda says she was just 14 when Epstein started sexually abusing her at his New York mansion, but she struggles to recall much of what happened because it is such a dark period in her life.

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Now, she's hoping that the files will reveal more about the trauma that distorted so much of her adolescence.

"I feel that the government and the FBI knows more than I do, and that scares me, because it's my life, it's my past," she told The Associated Press.

President Donald Trump signed legislation Wednesday that will force the Justice Department to release documents from its voluminous files on Epstein.

"We have waited long enough. We've fought long enough," Lacerda said.

It isn't clear yet how much new information will be in the files, gathered over two decades of investigations into Epstein's alleged sexual abuse of many girls and women.

Some of his accusers expect the files to provide a level of transparency they had hardly allowed themselves to believe would materialize, but the release of the documents will be a more complicated moment for others.

Two federal investigations cut short

The FBI and police in Palm Beach, Florida, began investigating Epstein in the mid-2000s after several underage girls said he had paid them for sex acts. He pleaded guilty in 2008 to charges including procuring a minor for prostitution, but a secret deal with the U.S. attorney in Florida allowed him to avoid a federal prosecution. He served little more than a year in custody.

Jena-Lisa Jones says she was abused by Epstein in Palm Beach, in 2002, when she was 14. She did not report the abuse to the police at the time, but she later became one of many accusers to sue the multi-millionaire.

The Miami Herald published a series of articles about Epstein in 2018 that exposed new details about how the federal prosecution was shelved. A year later, federal prosecutors in New York, where Epstein owned a mansion, revived the case and charged him with sex-trafficking

Jones said she was interviewed during that federal investigation and was prepared to testify in court.

"It was very important for me to have my moment, for him to see my face and hear my words, and me have that control and power back," Jones said.

But that day never came.

Epstein killed himself in a federal jail cell in New York City in August 2019.

In lieu of her day in court, Jones and others are hoping for a public reckoning with the publication of the government files on Epstein.

While the government only ever charged two people — Epstein and his longtime confidante Ghislaine Maxwell — in connection with the alleged abuse, at least one of Epstein's accusers has claimed she was instructed to have sex with other rich and powerful men.

Jones didn't make similar claims but said she believes the documents could map out a "broad scheme" involving others.

"I'm hoping they're shaking a little bit and that they have what's coming for them," Jones said.

Filling in the gaps

Lacerda, now 37, is also hoping the files will clarify her own personal experience, which is muddled by the pain she said she endured at that time in her life.

"I was just a child and it's just trauma. That's what trauma does to your brain," Lacerda said.

An immigrant from Brazil, Lacerda said she was working three jobs to support herself and her family the summer before 9th grade when a friend said she could make \$300 if she gave Epstein massages.

The first time she massaged Epstein, he told her to remove her shirt, she said.

Lacerda said she was soon spending so much time working for Epstein that she dropped out of school. The sexual abuse persisted until she turned 17, when Epstein informed her that she was "too old," she said.

Lacerda wondered whether the files might include videos and photographs of her and other victims at Epstein's properties.

"I need to know — for my healing process and for the adult in me — what I did as a child," Lacerda said. "It will be re-traumatizing, but it's transparency — and I need it," she said.

What's the catch?

For Lacerda, the elation around the upcoming release of the files gave way to familiar feelings for many women who survive abuse: fear and paranoia.

"In the heat of the moment, we were like, 'wow, this is like, everything that we've been fighting for.' And then we had to take a moment and be like, 'Wait a minute. Why is he releasing the files all of a sudden?'" Lacerda said.

The abrupt change in the political momentum made her uneasy. She wondered if the documents would be doctored or redacted to protect people connected to Epstein.

Others echoed her concerns, and wondered if the government would sufficiently protect victims who have remained anonymous, who fear scrutiny and harassment if their names were to become public.

"For the rest of my life, I will never truly trust the government because of what they've done to us," Jones said.

Haley Robson, who says she was abused by Epstein when she was 16, has the same concerns.

Robson was a leading voice in advocating for the Florida legislation signed in 2024 that unsealed the grand jury transcripts from the 2006 state case against Epstein.

She said the political maneuvering in recent months about the files led to non-stop anxiety — reminiscent of how she felt when she was abused as a teenager.

"I guess it really comes from the trauma I've endured, because this is kind of what Jeffrey Epstein did to us. You know, he wasn't transparent. He played these manipulation tactics," she said. "It's triggering for anybody who's been in that situation."

Still, Robson said she is trying to enjoy the victory while she can.

"This is the first time since 2006 where I don't feel like the underdog," she said.

Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, former Trump loyalist, says she is resigning from Congress

By MICHELLE L. PRICE, LISA MASCARO and JEFF AMY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, a loyal supporter-turned-critic of President Donald Trump who faced his political retribution if she sought reelection, said Friday she is resigning from Congress in January.

Greene, in a more than 10-minute video posted online, explained her decision and said she didn't want her congressional district "to have to endure a hurtful and hateful primary against me by the president we all fought for," she said.

Greene's resignation followed a public falling-out with Trump in recent months, as the congresswoman criticized him for his stance on files related to Jeffrey Epstein, along with foreign policy and health care.

Trump branded her a "traitor" and "wacky" and said he would endorse a challenger against her when she ran for reelection next year.

She said her last day would be Jan. 5, 2026.

The White House did not immediately respond to a message seeking comment Friday night.

In a brief phone call Friday night, Trump told ABC News that Greene's resignation is "great news for the country." He said had no plans to speak with Greene but wishes her well.

Greene was one of the most vocal and visible supporters of Trump's Make America Great Again politics, and she embraced some of his unapologetic political style.

Her break with him was a notable fissure in his grip over conservatives, particularly his most ardent base. But her decision to step down in the face of his opposition put her on the same track as many of the more moderate establishment Republicans before her who went crosswise with Trump.

The congresswoman, who recorded the video announcing her resignation while sitting in her living room wearing a cross necklace and with a Christmas tree and a peace lily plant behind her, said, "My life is filled with happiness, and my true convictions remain unchanged, because my self-worth is not defined by a man, but instead by God."

A crack in the MAGA movement

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Greene had been closely tied to the Republican president since she launched her political career five years ago.

In her video Friday, she underscored her longtime loyalty to Trump except on a few issues, and said it was "unfair and wrong" that he attacked her for disagreeing.

"Loyalty should be a two-way street and we should be able to vote our conscience and represent our district's interest, because our job title is literally 'representative,'" she said.

Greene swept to office at the forefront of Trump's MAGA movement and quickly became a lightning rod on Capitol Hill for her often beyond-mainstream views. In her video Friday, Greene said she had "always been despised in Washington, D.C., and just never fit in."

As she embraced the QAnon conspiracy theory and appeared with white supremacists, Greene was initially opposed by party leaders but welcomed by Trump. He called her "a real WINNER!"

Yet over time she proved a deft legislator, having aligned herself with then-GOP leader Kevin McCarthy, who would go on to become House speaker. She was a trusted voice on the right flank, until McCarthy was ousted in 2023.

While there has been an onslaught of lawmakers from both parties heading for the exits ahead of next fall's midterm elections, as the House struggles through an often chaotic session, Greene's announced retirement will ripple throughout the ranks — and raise questions about her next moves.

Greene was first elected to the House in 2020. She initially planned to run in a competitive district in northern Atlanta's suburbs, but relocated to the much more conservative 14th District in Georgia's north-west corner.

The opening in her district means Republican Gov. Brian Kemp will have to set a special election date within 10 days of Greene's resignation. Such a special election would fill out the remainder of Greene's term through January 2027. Those elections could take place before the party primaries in May for the next two-year term.

Conspiracy-minded

Even before her election, Greene showed a penchant for harsh rhetoric and conspiracy theories, suggesting a 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas was a coordinated attack to spur support for new gun restrictions. In 2018, she endorsed the idea that the U.S. government perpetrated the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, and mused that a "so-called" plane had hit the Pentagon.

Greene argued in 2019 that Reps. Ilhan Omar, D-Minn., and Rashida Tlaib, D-Mich., both Muslim women, weren't "official" members of Congress because they used Qurans rather than Bibles in their swearing-in ceremonies.

She was once a sympathizer with QAnon, an online network that believes a global cabal of Satan-worshipping cannibals, including U.S. government leaders, operates a child sex trafficking ring. She eventually distanced herself, saying she got "sucked into some of the things I had seen on the internet."

During the pandemic, she drew backlash and apologized for comparing the wearing of safety masks to the horrors of the Holocaust.

She also drew ridicule and condemnation after a conspiracy she speculated about on Facebook in 2018, in which she suggested a California wildfire may have been caused by "lasers or blue beams of light" controlled by a left-wing cabal tied to a prominent Jewish family.

When Trump was out of power between his first and second terms, Greene was often a surrogate for his views and brash style in Washington.

While then-President Joe Biden delivered his State of the Union address in 2022, Greene stood up and began chanting "Build the wall," referring to the U.S.-Mexico border wall that Trump began in his first term.

Last year, when Biden gave his last State of the Union address, Greene again drew attention as she confronted him over border security and the killing of a nursing student from Georgia, Laken Riley, by an immigrant in the country illegally.

Greene, wearing a red MAGA hat and a T-shirt about Riley, handed the president a button that said "Say Her Name." The congresswoman then shouted that at the president midway through his speech.

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Frustration with the GOP

But this year, her first serving with Trump in the White House, cracks began to appear slowly in her steadfast support — before it broke wide open.

Greene's discontent dates back at least to May, when she announced she wouldn't run for the Senate against Democratic incumbent Jon Ossoff, while attacking GOP donors and consultants who feared she couldn't win.

Greene's restlessness only intensified in July, when she announced she wouldn't run for Georgia governor, either.

She was also frustrated with the Republican leadership on Capitol Hill, which worked in lockstep with the president.

Greene said in her video that "the legislature has been mostly sidelined" since Republicans took unified control of Washington in January and her bills "just sit collecting dust."

"That's how it is for most members of Congress' bills," she said. "The speaker never brings them to the floor for a vote."

Messages left with House Speaker Mike Johnson's office were not immediately returned.

Republicans will likely lose the midterms elections next year, Greene said, and then she'd "be expected to defend the president against impeachment after he hatefully dumped tens of millions of dollars against me and tried to destroy me."

"It's all so absurd and completely unserious," she said. "I refuse to be a battered wife hoping it all goes away and gets better."

Torrential rains return to Southern California, prompting flash flood warnings before moving east

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The third storm in just over a week drenched Southern California on Friday and prompted some local flooding but caused no major widespread damage before heading east into the mountains and south toward Mexico's Baja California Peninsula.

The series of storms put Southern California on track for near-record November rainfall, the National Weather Service said. The region has received copious amounts of rain since Nov. 13, more than four times the normal amount that typically falls during the month in downtown Los Angeles, according to weather service reports.

Residents were warned before dawn Friday of flash flooding of streets, creeks and streams and possible mudslides in parts of Los Angeles and Orange counties. Some vehicles were stuck in floodwaters near Culver City before dawn, the weather service reported.

In coastal Huntington Beach, rainwater rushed through streets like a stream, and one neighborhood flooded after a local pond overflowed, spilling water into the streets and trapping parked cars.

By midday Friday, there was a mix of clouds and sun along the coast as the storm moved east over the mountains, dropping about 3 inches (7.6 centimeters) of snow in the resort community of Big Bear with the potential for more into Saturday, said Sebastian Westerink, a meteorologist for the National Weather Service in San Diego.

"It is certainly possible we're going to see a few inches overnight," Westerink said.

No major damage was reported from the latest storm, Westerink said.

The rain was welcomed in a state prone to periods of drought and that relies on precipitation each winter for water as the weather warms into the spring. Since October, California has received much more rainfall than usual, pushing major reservoir levels higher, state water officials said.

In a normal November, downtown Los Angeles typically gets 0.78 of an inch (2 centimeters) of rain, but has already seen about 3.5 inches (8.9 centimeters) this month.

Santa Barbara County also has been a magnet for the moisture. Parts of the Santa Ynez Mountains have seen more than 15 inches (38 centimeters) of rain this month, the weather service said.

A potent atmospheric river is blamed for causing at least a half-dozen deaths earlier this month as it

rolled across much of the state. Heavy rains also bring the threat of mudslides in areas that were recently ravaged by wildfire.

Atmospheric rivers are long and relatively narrow bands of water vapor that form over an ocean and flow through the sky, transporting much of the moisture from the tropics to northern latitudes.

Trump and Mamdani go from adversaries to allies after White House meeting

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday met the man who had proudly proclaimed himself “Donald Trump’s worst nightmare,” but he seemed to find the opposite.

The Republican president and New York City’s Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani were warm and friendly, speaking repeatedly of their shared goals to help Trump’s hometown rather than their combustible differences.

Trump, who had in the past called Mamdani a “100% Communist Lunatic” and a “total nut job,” spoke openly of how impressed he was with the man who had called his administration “authoritarian.”

“I think he is going to surprise some conservative people, actually,” Trump said of the democratic socialist as Mamdani stood next to him in the Oval Office.

The meeting offered political opportunities for both men. For Mamdani, a sit-down offered the state lawmaker — who until recently was relatively unknown — the chance to go head-to-head with the most powerful person in the world.

For Trump, it was a high-profile chance to talk about affordability at a time when he’s under increasing political pressure to show he’s addressing voter concerns about the cost of living.

Until now, the men have been political foils who galvanized their supporters by taking on each other, and it’s unclear how those backers will react to their genial get-together and complimentary words.

“We’re going to be helping him, to make everybody’s dream come true, having a strong and very safe New York,” the president said.

“What I really appreciate about the president is that the meeting that we had focused not on places of disagreement, which there are many, and also focused on the shared purpose that we have in serving New Yorkers,” Mamdani said.

‘I’ll stick up for you’

Mamdani and Trump said they discussed housing affordability and the cost of groceries and utilities, as Mamdani successfully used frustration over inflation to get elected, just as the president did in the 2024 election.

“Some of his ideas are really the same ideas that I have,” the president said of Mamdani about inflationary issues.

The president brushed aside Mamdani’s criticisms of him over his administration’s deportation raids and claims that Trump was behaving like a despot. Instead, Trump said the responsibility of holding an executive position in the government causes a person to change, saying that had been the case for him.

He seemed at times even protective of Mamdani, jumping in on his behalf at several points. For example, when reporters asked Mamdani to clarify his past statements indicating that he thought the president was acting like a fascist, Trump said, “I’ve been called much worse than a despot.”

When a reporter asked if Mamdani stood by his comments that Trump is a fascist, Trump interjected before the mayor-elect could fully answer the question.

“That’s OK. You can just say yes. OK?” Trump said. “It’s easier. It’s easier than explaining it. I don’t mind.”

Trump stepped in again when a reporter asked Mamdani why he flew to Washington instead of taking transportation that used less fossil fuels.

‘I’ll stick up for you,’ Trump said.

All about affordability

Mamdani, who takes office in January, said he sought the meeting with Trump to talk about ways to

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make New York City more affordable. Trump has said he may want to help him out — although he has also falsely labeled Mamdani as a “communist” and threatened to yank federal funds from the city.

But Trump on Friday didn’t sling that at the mayor. He acknowledged that he had said he had been prepared to cut off funding or make it harder for New York City to access federal resources if the two had failed to “get along,” only to pull back from those threats during the meeting.

“We don’t want that to happen,” Trump said. “I don’t think that’s going to happen.”

Afterward, Mamdani’s former campaign manager and incoming chief of staff Elle Bisgaard-Church told NY1 that the pair clearly disagreed on some issues but were able to find common ground on things like reducing crime.

“We discussed that we share a mutual goal of having a safe city where everyone can move around in comfort and ease,” she said, before later adding, “We know that there have been labels thrown all around that are just simply not fair and we kept it, again, at where we could find agreement on making the city affordable.”

Trump loomed large over the mayoral race this year, and on the eve of the election, he endorsed independent candidate and former Democratic Gov. Andrew Cuomo, predicting the city has “ZERO chance of success, or even survival” if Mamdani won. He also questioned the citizenship of Mamdani, who was born in Uganda and became a naturalized American citizen after graduating from college, and said he’d have him arrested if he followed through on threats not to cooperate with immigration agents in the city.

Mamdani beat back a challenge from Cuomo, painting him as a “puppet” for the president, and promised to be “a mayor who can stand up to Donald Trump and actually deliver.” He declared during one primary debate, “I am Donald Trump’s worst nightmare, as a progressive Muslim immigrant who actually fights for the things that I believe in.”

The president, who has long used political opponents to fire up his backers, predicted Mamdani “will prove to be one of the best things to ever happen to our great Republican Party.” As Mamdani upended the Democratic establishment by defeating Cuomo and his far-left progressive policies provoked infighting, Trump repeatedly has cast Mamdani as the face of Democratic Party.

Some had expected fireworks in the Oval Office meeting

The president has had some dramatic public Oval Office faceoffs this year, including an infamously heated exchange with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in February. In May, Trump dimmed the lights while meeting with South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and played a four-minute video making widely rejected claims that South Africa is violently persecuting the country’s white Afrikaner minority farmers.

A senior Trump administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe internal discussions said Trump had not put a lot of thought into planning the meeting with the incoming mayor — but said Trump’s threats to block federal dollars from flowing to New York remained on the table.

Mamdani said Thursday that he was not concerned about the president potentially trying to use the meeting to publicly embarrass him and said he saw it as a chance to make his case, even while acknowledging “many disagreements with the president.”

Instead, both men avoided a public confrontation in a remarkably calm and cordial series of comments in front of news reporters.

Mamdani, who lives in Queens — where Trump was raised — has shown a cutthroat streak just as Trump has as a candidate. During his campaign, he appeared to borrow from Trump’s playbook when he noted during a televised debate with Cuomo that one of the women who had accused the former governor of sexual harassment was in the audience. Cuomo has denied wrongdoing.

But the tensions were subdued Friday as Trump seemed sympathetic to Mamdani’s policies to want to build more housing.

“People would be shocked, but I want to see the same thing,” the president said.

Zelenskyy says Ukraine faces a stark choice and risks losing American support over US peace plan

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and BARRY HATTON Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told his country in an address Friday that it could face a pivotal choice between standing up for its sovereign rights and preserving the American support it needs, as leaders discuss a U.S. peace proposal seen as favoring Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, meanwhile, cautiously welcomed the U.S. plan to end Moscow's nearly four-year war in Ukraine, which contains many of the Kremlin's longstanding demands while offering limited security guarantees to Ukraine. Putin said it "could form the basis of a final peace settlement," while accusing Ukraine of opposing the plan and being unrealistic.

The plan foresees Ukraine handing over territory to Russia — something Kyiv has repeatedly ruled out — while reducing the size of its army and blocking its coveted path to NATO membership.

Zelenskyy, in his address hours earlier, did not reject the plan outright, but insisted on fair treatment while pledging to "work calmly" with Washington and other partners in what he called "truly one of the most difficult moments in our history." He said he spoke for almost an hour Friday with U.S. Vice President JD Vance and Army Secretary Dan Driscoll about the peace proposal.

"Currently, the pressure on Ukraine is one of the hardest," Zelenskyy said in the recorded speech. "Ukraine may now face a very difficult choice, either losing its dignity or the risk of losing a key partner."

Speaking at a meeting of Russia's National Security Council, Putin called the plan "a new version" and "a modernized plan" of what was discussed with the U.S. ahead of his Alaska summit with President Donald Trump in August, and said Moscow has received it. "I believe that it, too, could form the basis for a final peace settlement," he said.

But he said the "text has not been discussed with us in any substantive way, and I can guess why," adding that Washington has so far been unable to gain Ukraine's consent. "Ukraine is against it. Apparently, Ukraine and its European allies are still under illusions and dream of inflicting a strategic defeat on Russia on the battlefield," Putin said.

Trump says he wants Ukraine to respond within a week

Trump said Zelenskyy is going to have to come to terms with the U.S. proposal, and if he doesn't, "they should just keep fighting, I guess."

Asked by reporters about Zelenskyy saying his country faces a difficult choice, Trump alluded to their tense meeting in February that led to a brief rupture in the U.S.-Ukraine relationship: "You remember right in the Oval Office not so long ago? I said you don't have the cards."

Trump in a radio interview earlier Friday said he wants an answer from Zelenskyy on his 28-point plan by Thursday, but said an extension is possible to finalize terms.

"I've had a lot of deadlines, but if things are working well, you tend to extend the deadlines," Trump said in an interview on "The Brian Kilmeade Show" on Fox News Radio. "But Thursday is it — we think an appropriate time."

While Zelenskyy has offered to negotiate with the U.S. and Russia, he signaled Ukraine has to confront the possibility of losing American support if it makes a stand.

He urged Ukrainians to "stop fighting" each other, in a possible reference to a major corruption scandal that has brought fierce criticism of the government, and said peace talks next week "will be very difficult."

Europe says it will keep supporting Ukraine

Zelenskyy spoke earlier by phone with the leaders of Germany, France and the United Kingdom, who assured him of their continued support, as European officials scrambled to respond to the U.S. proposals that apparently caught them unawares.

Wary of antagonizing Trump, the European and Ukrainian leaders cautiously worded their responses and pointedly commended American peace efforts.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer assured Zelenskyy of "their unchanged and full support on the way to a lasting and just peace"

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in Ukraine, Merz's office said.

The four leaders welcomed U.S. efforts to end the war. "In particular, they welcomed the commitment to the sovereignty of Ukraine and the readiness to grant Ukraine solid security guarantees," the statement added.

The line of contact must be the departure point for an agreement, they said, and "the Ukrainian armed forces must remain in a position to defend the sovereignty of Ukraine effectively."

Starmer said the right of Ukraine to "determine its future under its sovereignty is a fundamental principle."

Existential threat to Europe

European countries see their own futures at stake in Ukraine's fight against the Russian invasion and have insisted on being consulted in peace efforts.

"Russia's war against Ukraine is an existential threat to Europe. We all want this war to end. But how it ends matters," EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said in Brussels. "Russia has no legal right whatsoever to any concessions from the country it invaded. Ultimately, the terms of any agreement are for Ukraine to decide."

Trump in his radio interview pushed back against the notion that the settlement, which offers plentiful concessions to Russia, would embolden Putin to carry out further malign action on his European neighbors.

"He's not thinking of more war," Trump said of Putin. "He's thinking punishment. Say what you want. I mean, this was supposed to be a one-day war that has been four years now."

A European government official said the U.S. plans weren't officially presented to Ukraine's European backers.

Many of the proposals are "quite concerning," the official said, adding that a bad deal for Ukraine would also be a threat to broader European security.

The official was not authorized to discuss the plan publicly and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

European Council President Antonio Costa, in Johannesburg, said of the U.S. proposals, "The European Union has not been communicated any plans in (an) official manner."

Proposal meets with skepticism in the US Senate

"This so-called 'peace plan' has real problems, and I am highly skeptical it will achieve peace," said Sen. Roger Wicker, the Republican chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee. "Ukraine should not be forced to give up its lands to one of the world's most flagrant war criminals in Vladimir Putin."

Wicker added that Ukraine should be allowed to determine the size of its military and Putin should not be rewarded with assurances from the U.S.

Democratic Sen. Chris Coons, who serves on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said there's "general concern and alarm that this is a Russian wish list proposal."

Ukraine examines the proposals

Ukrainian officials said they were weighing the U.S. proposals, and Zelenskyy said he expected to talk to Trump about it in coming days.

A U.S. team began drawing up the plan soon after U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff held talks with Rustem Umerov, a top adviser to Zelenskyy, according to a senior Trump administration official who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The official added that Umerov agreed to most of the plan, after making several modifications, and then presented it to Zelenskyy.

However, Umerov on Friday denied that version of events. He said he only organized meetings and prepared the talks.

He said technical talks between the U.S. and Ukraine were continuing in Kyiv.

"We are thoughtfully processing the partners' proposals within the framework of Ukraine's unchanging principles — sovereignty, people's security, and a just peace," he said.

Supreme Court blocks order that found Texas congressional map is likely racially biased

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court on Friday temporarily blocked a lower court ruling that found Texas' 2026 congressional redistricting plan pushed by President Donald Trump likely discriminates on the basis of race.

The order signed by Justice Samuel Alito will remain in place at least for the next few days while the court considers whether to allow the new map favorable to Republicans to be used in the midterm elections.

The court's conservative majority has blocked similar lower court rulings because they have come too close to elections.

The order came about an hour after the state called on the high court to intervene to avoid confusion as congressional primary elections approach in March. The justices have blocked past lower-court rulings in congressional redistricting cases, most recently in Alabama and Louisiana, that came several months before elections.

The order was signed by Alito because he is the justice who handles emergency appeals from Texas.

Texas redrew its congressional map in the summer as part of Trump's efforts to preserve a slim Republican majority in the House in next year's elections, touching off a nationwide redistricting battle. The new redistricting map was engineered to give Republicans five additional House seats, but a panel of federal judges in El Paso ruled 2-1 Tuesday that the civil rights groups that challenged the map on behalf of Black and Hispanic voters were likely to win their case.

If that ruling eventually holds, Texas could be forced to hold elections next year using the map drawn by the GOP-controlled Legislature in 2021 based on the 2020 census.

Texas was the first state to meet Trump's demands in what has become an expanding national battle over redistricting. Republicans drew the state's new map to give the GOP five additional seats, and Missouri and North Carolina followed with new maps adding an additional Republican seat each. To counter those moves, California voters approved a ballot initiative to give Democrats an additional five seats there.

The redrawn maps are facing court challenges in California, Missouri and North Carolina.

The Supreme Court is separately considering a case from Louisiana which could further limit race-based districts under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. It's not entirely clear how the current round of redistricting would be affected by the outcome in the Louisiana case.

Fátima Bosch's Miss Universe 2025 win echoes in Mexico where women fight for equality

By FABIOLA SÁNCHEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Fátima Bosch Fernández's Miss Universe victory resounded across Mexico on Friday, framed as the vindication of a disrespected contestant from a country where women have pushed their way into positions of power and are increasingly calling out traditional chauvinism.

The 25-year-old from the Gulf coast state of Tabasco was scolded by the competition's Thai director, Nawat Itsaragrisil, during a livestreamed sashing ceremony for the more than 100 contestants on Nov. 4. She allegedly did not follow his guidelines for taking part in local promotional activities. He called security when she spoke up to defend herself, and she responded by walking out with a number of other contestants following in solidarity.

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

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

The fireworks in Thailand earlier in the competition had already drawn Mexico's attention, leading even President Claudia Sheinbaum to hail Bosch.

So on Friday, Sheinbaum did not try to hide her pleasure that Mexico's contestant ended up winning the

crown.

"I like that she spoke up when she felt that was an injustice and that is an example," Mexico's first woman president said during her daily news briefing. "That thing they said about being prettier when you're quiet has been left behind. Women are prettier when we speak and we participate."

Patricia Bustamente, a 72-year-old retiree in Mexico City, shared the president's enthusiasm.

"How good that she didn't let it slide and how good that she fought to stay there," Bustamente said, noting that Mexican women used to be "submissive." She called Bosch "very brave."

Briana González, a 40-year-old nurse, said in general she doesn't like beauty pageants because "beauty goes beyond the physical," but she saw Bosch standing up for herself as a positive example. "For some time now, Mexican women have come out to defend ourselves and fight inequality."

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

Her home state of Tabasco, where thousands watched the competition from a local baseball stadium in southeast Mexico, partied into the night.

In Villahermosa, Tabasco's capital, Gabriel Arcos, who sells eyeglasses, said Bosch had represented the state well.

"For us Tabasqueños, we're proud that she has gone so far despite the setbacks Miss Bosch had," said the 37-year-old.

Gunmen abduct more than 200 schoolchildren and 12 teachers in attack on Nigerian Catholic school

By DYEPKAZAH SHIBAYAN and MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Gunmen attacked a Catholic boarding school in a western region of Nigeria and abducted more than 200 schoolchildren Friday, the Christian Association of Nigeria said, in the latest in a spate of abductions in Africa's most populous country.

The attack and abductions took place at St. Mary's School, a Catholic institution in the Agwara local government's Papiri community. Attackers seized 215 pupils and students as well as 12 teachers, said Daniel Atori, a spokesperson for the Niger state chapter of CAN.

"I just got back to the village tonight after I visited the school where I also met with parents," Atori said in a statement, quoting the Most Rev. Bulus Dauwa, the CAN chairman in Niger. The statement added that the association is working "to ensure our children's safe return."

The Niger State Police Command said the abductions took place in the early hours, and that military and security forces have since been deployed to the community. It described St. Mary's as a secondary school, which in Nigeria would serve children between the ages of 12 and 17.

A satellite image shows that the school compound is attached to an adjoining primary school, with more than 50 classroom and dormitory buildings. It's located near a major road linking the towns of Yelwa and Mokwa.

Dauda Chekula, 62, said that four of his grandchildren, ranging in age from 7 to 10, were among the schoolchildren abducted.

"We don't know what is happening now, because we have not heard anything since this morning," Chekula said. "The children who were able to escape have scattered, some of them ran back to their houses and the only information we are getting is that the attackers are still moving with the remaining children into the bush."

The statement by the secretary to the Niger state government said that the abduction occurred, despite prior intelligence warning of heightened threats.

"Regrettably, St. Mary's School proceeded to reopen and resume academic activities without notifying or seeking clearance from the State Government, thereby exposing pupils and the staff to avoidable risk," it read.

Umar Yunus, a Papiri resident, said there were only local security arrangements and no official police or

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government forces securing the school at the time of the attack on Friday.

The Catholic Diocese of Kontagora said in a statement that a security staffer was “badly shot” during the attack.

Authorities, meanwhile, closed 47 of the country’s federal unity colleges that are mostly in conflict-battered northern states. The unity colleges — a group of elite government schools with attendance drawn from across the country — are to be closed immediately, according to a circular issued by Nigeria’s Federal Ministry of Education.

Spate of abductions

The abductions took place days after gunmen on Monday attacked a high school and abducted 25 schoolgirls in the neighboring Kebbi state, in Maga, around 170 kilometers (105 miles) from Papiri. One of the girls later escaped and is safe, the school’s principal said.

In a separate attack on Monday in Kwara state, which borders Niger state, gunmen attacked a church, killing two people. During the attack, 38 worshippers were also abducted, Femi Agbabiaka, secretary of the Christ Apostolic Church, told The Associated Press on Friday. He said that the kidnappers are demanding a ransom of 100 million naira (\$69,000) for each person taken.

Nigerian President Bola Tinubu canceled his trip to this weekend’s Group of 20 summit in South Africa over the recent events. Vice President Kashim Shettima will represent the president at the summit, the presidency said on X on Friday.

“We will use every instrument of the state to bring these girls home and to ensure that the perpetrators of this wickedness face the full weight of justice,” Shettima said during a visit to Kebbi state on Wednesday.

No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks in Niger and Kebbi state, but analysts and locals say gangs often target schools, travelers and remote villagers in kidnappings for ransom. Authorities say the gunmen are mostly former herders who have taken up arms against farming communities after clashes between them over strained resources.

Abductions have come to define the insecurity prevailing in Africa’s most populous nation.

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

Nigeria was recently thrust into the spotlight after U.S. President Donald Trump singled the country out, stating that Christians are being persecuted — an allegation that the government rejected.

While Christians are among those targeted, analysts say that the majority of victims of armed groups are Muslims in Nigeria’s Muslim-majority north, where most attacks occur.

Community upset

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

Eze Gloria Chidinma, 27, a Lagos-based influencer, also known as “Riaz Kitchen,” told The Associated Press her sister was able to escape the school during the attacks by jumping a fence.

Chidinma said it’s not the first time her family has been affected by the rampant kidnappings in the country.

“My mother and my older brother were kidnapped last year. We called security, we called the police, and they just said there is nothing they can do,” she said, noting the family had to pay “a huge amount of money” to rescue them.

“My message to the authorities right now is to think about the people. Your job is to protect lives and properties. People’s lives should matter to you,” Chidinma added.

Yohanna Buru, a pastor and head of the Peace Revival And Reconciliation Foundation, an organization focused on interfaith dialogue, called on authorities to increase security around schools in areas affected by the security crisis.

“If the government was doing enough, then rampant kidnappings all over the country would not have happened,” he said. “It’s as if they don’t care about the future of our children.”

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More swings hit Wall Street, but this time stocks finish higher

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — More swings hit Wall Street on Friday, except the U.S. stock market finished higher this time.

After bobbing up and down through the morning, the S&P 500 took off and rallied nearly 2% before finishing with a gain of 1%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 493 points, or 1.1%, and the Nasdaq composite rose 0.9%.

It was a fitting finish for a week that left the S&P 500 just 4.2% below its record but also forced investors to stomach the sharpest hour-to-hour swings since a sell-off in April. The jarring moves are testing investors following a monthslong and remarkably smooth surge for stocks, and they come down to two basic questions, neither of which has been answered yet.

Have prices for Nvidia, bitcoin and other stars of Wall Street shot too high? And is the Federal Reserve done with its cuts to interest rates, which would boost the economy and prices for investments?

On the second question, financial markets found some assurance from a speech by the president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Markets perked up immediately after John Williams told a conference in Chile that he sees "room for a further adjustment" to interest rates.

That could signal he'll vote for another cut to rates in December. What the Fed does is critical for Wall Street because stock prices ran to records through last month in part because of expectations for a series of reductions.

Other Fed officials, though, have argued against a December cut given how high inflation remains. The uncertainty created by such sharp disagreement has triggered dramatic moves back and forth for markets.

The swings hit a crescendo on Thursday, when U.S. stocks initially surged after Nvidia seemed to tamp down worries about a potential bubble in artificial-intelligence technology. But the market quickly dropped to a sharp loss in its biggest one-day reversal since April, when President Donald Trump shocked markets with his "Liberation Day" tariffs.

Despite the strong profit report from Nvidia, whose chips are powering the move into AI, worries are still hanging around about the longer term. Will all those AI chips that Amazon, Meta Platforms and other companies are gobbling up actually yield profits and productivity as big as proponents are envisioning? If not, some investors fear, all the investment won't be worth it.

AI-linked stocks continued to swing on Friday, helping to drag the rest of the market behind them. Nvidia went from an initial gain to a drop of 4.3% and then swung back and forth before finishing with a loss of 1%, for example. Amazon went from an early loss to a gain of 1.6%.

Bitcoin, meanwhile, briefly plunged below \$81,000 before pulling back toward \$85,000. That's down from nearly \$125,000 last month and brought it back to where it was in April, when markets were shaking because of Trump's tariffs.

The vast majority of stocks on Wall Street rose despite such swings, with nearly 90% of stocks in the S&P 500 climbing. Their movements often get drowned out by Nvidia and other Big Tech stocks, whose movements have much more effect on the S&P 500 because of their immense sizes.

"When the largest companies drive most of the losses, the market can look weaker than it really is," said Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management.

Several retailers led the way. Gap jumped 8.2% after reporting a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. CEO Richard Dickson said it saw strong sales trends at each of its Old Navy, Gap and Banana Republic brands.

Ross Stores rallied 8.4% after it likewise delivered a better profit than expected. CEO Jim Conroy said it saw broad-based growth during the quarter and raised the company's forecast for an important measure of sales during the holiday season.

Homebuilders were also strong on hopes that lower interest rates could make mortgages cheaper and give a kick to the housing market. D.R. Horton jumped 6.8%, Lennar rose 5.9% and PulteGroup gained 5.2%.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 64.23 points to 6,602.99. The Dow Jones Industrial Average gained 493.15 to

46,245.41, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 195.03 to 22,273.08.

In the bond market, Treasury yields eased on hopes for cuts from the Fed. Traders are now betting on a nearly 72% probability of a December cut, up sharply from 39% a day before, according to data from CME Group. That helped send the yield on the 10-year Treasury to 4.06% from 4.10% late Thursday.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed in Europe after tumbling in Asia following Wall Street's stunning reversal on Thursday.

Japan's Nikkei 225 fell 2.4%, and South Korea's Kospi dropped 3.8% for two of the larger losses.

Officer acquitted in death of Ta'Kiya Young, a pregnant Black mother accused of shoplifting

By PATRICK AFTOORA-ORSAGOS and JULIE CARR SMYTH Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — The Ohio police officer who shot and killed Ta'Kiya Young, a pregnant Black mother who had been accused of shoplifting, was acquitted on all counts Friday, including murder.

Blendon Township police officer Connor Grubb had faced up to life in prison if convicted. Young's grandmother collapsed into sobs at the decision, shouting "It's not right! This is not right!" The judge then told Grubb he was free to go.

Sean Walton, an attorney for the Young family, called it "an American tragedy," the outcome of a dual system of justice in the U.S. He vowed to keep pursuing a lawsuit against the township and police chief, while Ta'Kiya's grandmother Nadine Young raises her great-grandsons, now 8 and 5.

"It's also heartbreaking because what it does is it normalizes the behavior like that Connor Grubb exhibited that day, and that is not normal," Walton said. "If you look at these recent police killings in Columbus, you have officers who have an irrational fear with no weapons involved or folks doing very minimal behavior that they escalate into a murder."

Defense attorney Mark Collins said Grubb and his family are relieved, but that it's wrong to suggest the officer was untouched by the death of Young and her unborn daughter.

"For the rest of his life, he has to deal with this," he said. "Trust me, you didn't get to hear from him because the government put his statement out, but he took a life on duty and realized another's life after the fact, and to walk around with that is a difficult situation."

At the same time, Collins called it "unconscionable" that a law enforcement officer would be indicted for felony murder in such a case. He said legislators should fix Ohio's grand jury system.

Grubb had pleaded not guilty to murder, involuntary manslaughter and felonious assault in the death of Young, 21, on Aug. 24, 2023. Bodycam recordings showed Young refusing to exit her parked car outside a Kroger in suburban Columbus, and then turning her steering wheel to the right before the vehicle began slowly rolling forward toward Grubb, who fired one shot into her chest through the windshield.

Franklin County Common Pleas Judge David Young, no relation to Ta'Kiya, dropped four of 10 counts relating to the death of Young's baby, agreeing with defense attorneys that prosecutors failed to present proof that Grubb knew Young was seven months' pregnant when he shot her.

Jurors were shown the bodycam video and heard testimony from a use-of-force expert, an accident reconstructionist, a police policy expert and Sgt. Erick Moynihan, the officer who with Grubb had ordered Young out of her car.

They never heard from Grubb, whose side of the story was contained in a written statement read into the record by a special agent for the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation. He attended the trial, but prosecutors were unable to question him directly.

Grubb and Moynihan had approached Young's parked car about a report that she was suspected of stealing alcohol from a Kroger store in the Columbus suburb. She partially lowered her window and protested as both officers cursed at her and yelled at her to get out. Bodycam video showed Grubb had his left hand on the car's hood while pointing his gun at her with his right. Young could be heard asking them, "Are you going to shoot me?"

Then, she put on a turn signal and her car rolled slowly forward toward Grubb, who fired a single bullet

into her chest, the recording showed.

In the statement, Grubb said he positioned himself in front of Young's vehicle to provide backup and to protect other people. He said he drew his gun after he heard Young fail to comply with Moynihan's commands. When her car moved toward him, he said, he felt the vehicle hit his legs and shins and begin to lift his body off the ground as he shot.

Moments later, after the car came to a stop against the building, they broke the driver's side window. Police said they tried to save her life, but she was mortally wounded. Young and her child were pronounced dead at a hospital.

Khashoggi's widow and Democrats demand release of call transcript with Trump and Saudi crown prince

By STEPHEN GROVES and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The widow of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi called Friday for the release of the transcript of a 2019 phone call that President Donald Trump had with Mohammed bin Salman, joining Democratic lawmakers who are raising questions about whether Trump personally benefitted from his embrace of the Saudi crown prince.

Hanan Elatr Khashoggi appeared on Capitol Hill on Friday morning on the heels of Trump's dismissal of U.S. intelligence findings that Prince Mohammed most likely had culpability in the October 2018 slaying of her husband. Trump also lavished the Saudi ruler this week with some of Washington's highest honors for a foreign dignitary, deepening the business and military relationship between the two nations.

Saudi intelligence officials and a forensic doctor killed and dismembered Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul in 2018.

"There is no justification to kidnap him, torture him, to kill him and to cut him to pieces," Hanan Elatr Khashoggi said Friday during an emotional news conference. "This is a terrorist act."

The demand in Congress for the Trump administration to release the call transcripts is being led Rep. Eugene Vindman, a freshman Democrat from Virginia who was deputy legal adviser to the National Security Council during Trump's first term.

Vindman, who has reviewed the transcript of the phone call with Prince Mohammed, declined to go into specifics of the classified document Friday, but said it used "the terminology of quid pro quo, the ensuing benefits that the president reaped."

The Democratic lawmakers also pointed out that Trump's family has extensive business dealings in Saudi Arabia that at times have benefitted from the prince's direct involvement.

The situation carries echoes of Trump's first impeachment over his July 2019 call with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in which he asked the new Ukraine president to do him a "favor" in investigating his presidential rival, Joe Biden. At the time, Trump ended up releasing a transcript of the call with Zelenskyy in which he also said he would withhold \$400 million in military aid.

Vindman, then at the security council, also reviewed that call. He said that out of all the calls he reviewed in his job, the calls with Zelenskyy and Prince Mohammed stood out as the most concerning. He called the transcript of the call with the Saudi ruler "shocking."

"The Khashoggi family and the American people deserve to know what was said on that call," he added.

During Prince Mohammed's state visit this week, Hanan Elatr Khashoggi has tried to serve as a reminder of her late husband's brutal killing. Originally from Egypt, Khashoggi received political asylum in the U.S. in 2023 and currently lives in Virginia. She cast the demand for the transcript as a continuation of his work standing up for human rights and criticizing Saudi rulers.

"I need to know what is the truth in this conversation," she said.

When asked if the White House would release the transcript, White House communications director Steven Cheung in a statement called Vindman "a bitter back-bencher who nobody takes seriously. He is a serial liar and was part of the hoax relating to the perfect Ukraine call, in which the Ukrainian president said so himself."

Vindman's twin brother, then-Army officer, Lt. Col. Alex Vindman, also worked at the National Security Council at the time, and had a prominent role in Trump's 2019 impeachment.

Eugene Vindman was not as public a figure in that impeachment trial as his brother was. But after the Senate voted to acquit Trump of the House impeachment charges, the White House reassigned Alex Vindman from the council and pushed Eugene Vindman out, too.

Eugene Vindman ran for office representing northern Virginia last year.

It is unlikely that the Trump administration would voluntarily release the 2019 call transcript with Prince Mohammed. Democratic lawmakers, who are in the minority, also have little power to force its release. They also stayed away from speculating whether Trump's relationship with Prince Mohammed would be grounds for another impeachment inquiry if they retake the House next year.

Still, they said the interaction was emblematic of the direction that Trump is leading the country.

"We are being drawn in the direction of authoritarian monarchy, in tyranny right now," said Rep. Jamie Raskin, a Maryland Democrat.

Netanyahu convenes cabinet on settler violence in the West Bank that continues unabated

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israel's prime minister met with top security officials to discuss a rising tide of Israeli settler violence in the West Bank, an Israeli official said Friday, as fresh allegations surfaced of Israeli settlers hurling rocks at passing Palestinian vehicles in the West Bank village of Huwara.

Huwara Mayor Jihad Ouda said the stone throwing was quickly followed by a huge fire at a nearby scrapyard. Flames lit up the evening sky and sent massive columns of smoke into the air, images and video on social media showed. The military said it had reports that Israelis set the fire and that police were investigating.

The U.N. humanitarian office documented 29 attacks by settlers in the West Bank from Nov. 11-17, U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters Friday. The attacks caused 11 injuries and damage to 10 homes, two mosques and nearly two dozen vehicles, as well as damage to crops, livestock, and roughly 1,000 trees and saplings, he said.

Israeli forces have killed more than 200 Palestinians in the West Bank so far this year, including 50 children, Dujarric said.

In the latest deaths, the Palestinian Health Ministry said two Palestinian youths aged 18 and 16 were killed by Israeli gunfire overnight. The circumstances of the shootings were not immediately clear. Israeli police did not immediately respond when asked to comment.

At the meeting, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and officials from the military, the country's Shin Bet domestic security service and the police discussed the recent spike in violence and proposals on curbing it, according to an Israeli official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not permitted to talk about a closed-door gathering. The official said proposals floated at the meeting included getting violent settlers to attend educational programs.

The Prime Minister's Office did not immediately respond to request for comment about what was discussed. The Israeli official said there would be a follow-up meeting.

Settler attacks ramped up during the Palestinian olive harvest season in October and early November and have continued since. Netanyahu has called the perpetrators "a handful of extremists" and urged law enforcement to pursue them for "the attempt to take the law into their own hands." But rights groups and Palestinians say the problem is far greater than a few bad apples, and attacks have become a daily phenomenon across the territory.

Stones hurled at Palestinian cars, scrapyard torched

Mohammad Dalal, the owner of the torched Huwara scrapyard, claimed that witnesses told him Israeli settlers were seen throwing rocks Thursday from an overpass at passing Palestinian vehicles below. He

said the massive fire began soon after.

He said the Israeli army arrived later to force the perpetrators away.

"If the army had not removed them, they would have done even more," Dalal said. "These settlers are causing destruction everywhere here. ... Where can we go? We want to remain steadfast on our land, no matter what."

An Israeli investigation unit of soldiers and border police officers on Friday collected evidence at the scorched scrapyard, according to an Associated Press crew who was asked to leave by the investigators.

Asked about the incident, the Israeli military said it dispatched soldiers to the area after receiving reports that settlers were throwing rocks at Palestinian cars. It also said other reports indicated that "several" Israeli civilians had set fires and damaged property in the area. It said soldiers searched the area but didn't find any suspects and that the police were now handling the case.

Huwara has been the target of numerous attacks over recent years. In February 2023, scores of Israeli settlers went on a violent rampage there, setting dozens of cars and homes on fire after two settlers were killed by a Palestinian gunman. Palestinian medics said one man was killed and four others were badly wounded.

Settler violence surges

U.N. humanitarian office figures show 2,920 Israeli settler attacks took place between January and October this year.

Israel's government is dominated by far-right proponents of the settler movement including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who formulates settlement policy, and Cabinet minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who oversees the nation's police force.

The security cabinet meeting came shortly after Israeli settlers celebrated the creation of a new, unauthorized settlement near Bethlehem.

Israel's Civil Administration also recently announced plans to expropriate large swaths of Sebastia, a major archaeological site in the West Bank. Peace Now, an anti-settlement watchdog group, said the site is around 1,800 dunams (450 acres) — Israel's largest seizure of archaeologically important land.

Singapore slaps sanctions on Israeli settlers

Singapore said Friday it will impose targeted financial sanctions and entry bans on four Israeli individuals for what it said was their involvement in violence against Palestinians in the West Bank. Singapore's Foreign Ministry named the individuals as Meir Ettinger, Elisha Yered, Ben-Zion Gopstein and Baruch Marzel. Some are currently under international sanction by the European Union, the U.K. and other countries.

In a statement, Singapore's Foreign Ministry said the settlers have been involved in "egregious acts of extremist violence against Palestinians in the West Bank" and urged the Israeli government to stop the violence and hold the perpetrators accountable.

Judge's blistering opinion details use of force in Chicago-area immigration crackdown

By CHRISTINE FERNANDO Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A judge's blistering 223-page opinion has offered a cache of striking new details from body camera footage about agents' use of force during a federal immigration crackdown in the Chicago area dubbed "Operation Midway Blitz."

U.S. District Judge Sara Ellis' opinion issued Thursday recounts many high-profile clashes between federal agents and protesters, repeatedly using body camera footage to refute the federal government's narratives from court, use-of-force reports, filmed depositions and press releases. It describes scenes of agents launching tear gas without warning, aiming rubber rounds at reporters, tackling protesters and laughing as blood oozed from a demonstrator's ear — incidents Ellis says were flatly at odds with the government's own narratives.

Ellis expressed surprise about federal officials pointing her to specific videos, which she later found

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showed agents violating her orders restricting the use of force.

The opinion outlines Ellis' findings in issuing a preliminary injunction earlier this month in response to a lawsuit filed by news outlets and protesters who claimed federal officers used excessive force during an immigration crackdown that has netted more than 3,000 arrests since September across the nation's third-largest city and its many suburbs. Among other things, Ellis' order restricted agents from using physical force and chemical agents like tear gas and pepper balls, unless necessary or to prevent an "an immediate threat." She said the current practices violated the constitutional rights of journalists and protesters.

A federal appeals court on Wednesday temporarily halted the order, calling it "overbroad" and "too prescriptive." But the 7th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals also cautioned against "overreading" its stay and said a quick appeal process could lead to a "more tailored and appropriate" order.

Tricia McLaughlin, a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security, called the 7th Circuit's ruling "a win for the rule of law and for the safety of every law enforcement officer."

"Judge Ellis' thoughts on 20th century poetry and Chief Bovino's conduct in the order are noted," McLaughlin said in a statement to The Associated Press. "They don't change the reality of the situation on the ground and at the appeals level."

Judge says footage shows excessive force

The opinion delineates the results of Ellis' review of extensive body-worn camera footage and testimony that she says reflected indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force as agents repeatedly used tear gas, rubber bullets, pepper balls and flashbangs without warnings or justification. It also described tense moments when Ellis says agents shot flash-bang grenades at the backs of protesters as they fled, kicked protesters on the ground, caused a car accident during a Halloween celebration, threatened to shoot residents while pointing guns at them, shot pepper balls at the heads of journalists and praying clergy members, and tackled protesters to the ground.

The opinion accuses federal agents of not following Ellis' previous orders by using tear gas and other weapons on peaceful protesters, failing to give two explicit warnings before deploying munitions and not wearing clear identification.

It also described agents' apparent delight as they lobbed tear gas canisters at protesters. One agent declared that "We're definitely gassing them when we leave. Just start throwing (expletive)" and another said "We can (expletive) 'em up," according to body camera footage described in the opinion.

Ellis also accused agents of "actively attempting to rile up the protesters," making "dismissive remarks" and "laughing" while firing munitions at protesters. She described agents who "laughed and made jokes about tear gassing protesters" and were "pushing people to the ground and then laughing about it, even as blood oozed from the ears of someone they pushed." In another instance, she described an agent saying "No one can hear you" after tackling and arresting a reporter as he yelled that he was a journalist and sought out his colleague.

Judge criticizes Border Patrol leader

The judge also accused Greg Bovino, the senior U.S. Border Patrol official leading the immigration crackdown in the Chicago area, of being "evasive" and "outright lying" during his testimony, including by lying about being hit in the head with a rock during a protest in the predominantly Mexican American Chicago neighborhood of Little Village. Bovino repeatedly went back-and-forth between claiming he was hit with a rock before or after he fired tear gas at the crowd, according to the opinion.

In one instance after another, Ellis used footage to dispute claims by agents, including that Bovino saw Latin Kings gang members take weapons out of their car in Little Village and that a protester threw a bicycle at an agent. Body-worn camera footage also revealed that an agent used the AI tool ChatGPT to write the narrative for a report based off just a "brief sentence about an encounter and several images," according to the opinion.

Taken together, Ellis said the documentation showed the federal government's narrative was "simply not credible," saying her review of the body camera footage supported plaintiffs' allegations by "undermining all of Defendants' claims."

Pride in Chicago

Steeped in pride for Chicago, the judge's opinion painted an image of Chicago far different from the portrayal of federal attorneys, who characterized it as a place "ransacked by rioters." Instead, Ellis proudly described neighbors showing up for one another by "standing on the sidewalk to document law enforcement activities and protest against immigration enforcement activities they believe to be unjust, or simply praying the Rosary to provide comfort and bear witness to those detained at the Broadview detention facility who are facing fear and uncertainty."

"This description of rapid response network members, neighborhood moms and dads, Chicago Bears fans, people dressed in Halloween costumes, and the lawyer who lives on the block as professional agitators undermines the agents' credibility," she wrote.

Trump administration sues California over giving in-state tuition to immigrants in US illegally

By JULIE WATSON Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The Trump administration has sued California for providing in-state college tuition, scholarships, and state-funded financial aid to students who aren't legally in the United States.

The lawsuit, filed Thursday in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, alleges the practice harms U.S. citizens and encourages illegal immigration. Among the defendants are the state, top state officials, and the state's two public university systems, the University of California and California State.

President Donald Trump's administration has filed similar lawsuits against policies in other states, including Illinois, Oklahoma, Minnesota, Kentucky and Texas. Half the country now has similar laws to California's.

In June, after the administration sued, Texas ended its decades-old law. And Florida last year scrapped its law that allowed in-state tuition for high school graduates who weren't in the country legally.

Supporters of the state tuition breaks argue that they don't violate federal law if they provide the same rates to U.S. citizens in the same circumstances — meaning they are residents of the state and graduates of one of its high schools. The California Dream Act also allows such students to apply for state-funded financial aid.

Many of the students were brought to the U.S. by their parents when they were children, and supporters of the laws say they are as much a part of their communities as U.S. citizens.

It is the latest action by Trump's administration since he issued executive orders in February directing federal agencies to stop public benefits from going to immigrants living in the U.S. illegally and to challenge state and local policies seen as favoring those immigrants over some citizens. The lawsuit argues that the Republican president's orders enforce federal immigration laws.

"California is illegally discriminating against American students and families by offering exclusive tuition benefits for non-citizens," Attorney General Pamela Bondi said in a statement. "This marks our third lawsuit against California in one week — we will continue bringing litigation against California until the state ceases its flagrant disregard for federal law."

The Justice Department also recently sued to block new congressional district boundaries approved by California voters, and over California's new laws banning federal agents from wearing masks and requiring them to have identification while conducting operations in the state.

Gov. Gavin Newsom's office said in a statement: "The DOJ has now filed three meritless, politically motivated lawsuits against California in a single week. Good luck, Trump. We'll see you in court."

The University of California defended its decades-old in-state tuition policy.

"While we will, of course, comply with the law as determined by the courts, we believe our policies and practices are consistent with current legal standards," it said in a statement.

The lawsuit comes weeks after the California Supreme Court let stand a lower-court ruling that the University of California's policy barring students without legal status in the U.S. from campus jobs is discriminatory and must be reconsidered.

University system officials had warned that the decision would put them in a precarious position as they

negotiate with the Trump administration after the withdrawal of federal research funds.

The UC is dealing with federal grant suspensions and a White House demand that it pay a \$1 billion fine over allegations including antisemitism and the illegal consideration of race in admitting students to its Los Angeles campus.

The California State University system is the nation's largest and among its most diverse, with more than 460,000 students. More than a quarter of undergraduates are first-generation college students, according to the university system.

The University of California serves about 300,000 students.

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.

"Currently, the pressure on Ukraine is one of the hardest," Zelenskyy said in an address to the nation Friday.

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.

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

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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. On Friday, he said Ukraine may now face a very difficult choice, "either losing its dignity or the risk of losing a key partner," in the U.S.

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.

In his speech Friday, Zelenskyy urged Ukrainians to "stop the political games" and work in unity. "It will be much easier for me to achieve a decent peace for us ... knowing that the nation of Ukraine is behind me."

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.

Supreme Court meets to weigh Trump's birthright citizenship restrictions, blocked by lower courts

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is meeting in private Friday with a key issue on its agenda — President Donald Trump's birthright citizenship order declaring that children born to parents who are in the United States illegally or temporarily are not American citizens.

The justices could say as soon as Monday whether they will hear Trump's appeal of lower court rulings that have uniformly struck down the citizenship restrictions. They have not taken effect anywhere in the United States.

If the court steps in now, the case would be argued in the spring, with a definitive ruling expected by early summer.

The birthright citizenship order, which Trump signed on the first day of his second term in the White House, is part of his administration's broad immigration crackdown. Other actions include immigration enforcement surges in several cities and the first peacetime invocation of the 18th century Alien Enemies Act.

The administration is facing multiple court challenges, and the high court has sent mixed signals in emergency orders it has issued. The justices effectively stopped the use of the Alien Enemies Act to rapidly deport alleged Venezuelan gang members without court hearings, while they allowed the resumption of sweeping immigration stops in the Los Angeles area after a lower court blocked the practice of stopping people solely based on their race, language, job or location.

The justices also are weighing the administration's emergency appeal to be allowed to deploy National Guard troops in the Chicago area for immigration enforcement actions. A lower court has indefinitely prevented the deployment.

Birthright citizenship is the first Trump immigration-related policy to reach the court for a final ruling. Trump's order would upend more than 125 years of understanding that the Constitution's 14th Amendment confers citizenship on everyone born on American soil, with narrow exceptions for the children of foreign diplomats and those born to a foreign occupying force.

In a series of decisions, lower courts have struck down the executive order as unconstitutional, or likely so, even after a Supreme Court ruling in late June that limited judges' use of nationwide injunctions.

While the Supreme Court curbed the use of nationwide injunctions, it did not rule out other court orders that could have nationwide effects, including in class-action lawsuits and those brought by states. The justices did not decide at that time whether the underlying citizenship order is constitutional.

But every lower court that has looked at the issue has concluded that Trump's order violates or most likely violates the 14th Amendment, which was intended to ensure that Black people, including former slaves, had citizenship.

The administration is appealing two cases.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit in San Francisco ruled in July that a group of states that sued over the order needed a nationwide injunction to prevent the problems that would be caused by birthright citizenship being in effect in some states and not others.

Also in July, a federal judge in New Hampshire blocked the citizenship order in a class-action lawsuit including all children who would be affected.

The American Civil Liberties Union, leading the legal team in the New Hampshire case, urged the court to reject the appeal because the administration's "arguments are so flimsy," ACLU lawyer Cody Wofsy said. "But if the court decides to hear the case, we're more than ready to take Trump on and win."

Birthright citizenship automatically makes anyone born in the United States an American citizen, including children born to mothers who are in the country illegally, under long-standing rules. The right was enshrined soon after the Civil War in the first sentence of the 14th Amendment.

The administration has asserted that children of noncitizens are not "subject to the jurisdiction" of the United States and therefore not entitled to citizenship.

"The lower court's decisions invalidated a policy of prime importance to the president and his adminis-

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tration in a manner that undermines our border security," Solicitor General D. John Sauer wrote in urging the high court's review. "Those decisions confer, without lawful justification, the privilege of American citizenship on hundreds of thousands of unqualified people."

Today in History: November 22 **John F. Kennedy is assassinated in Dallas**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Nov. 22, the 326th day of 2025. There are 39 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Nov. 22, 1963, John F. Kennedy, the 35th president of the United States, was shot to death during a motorcade in Dallas; Texas Gov. John B. Connally, riding in the same car as Kennedy, was seriously wounded. Suspected gunman Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson was sworn in as president.

Also on this date:

In 1718, English pirate Edward Teach — better known as "Blackbeard" — was killed during a battle with British naval forces near Ocracoke Island in North Carolina.

In 1935, a flying boat, the China Clipper, took off from Alameda, California, carrying more than 100,000 pieces of mail on the first trans-Pacific airmail flight.

In 1986, 20-year-old Mike Tyson became the youngest heavyweight boxing champion in history, stopping WBC titleholder Trevor Berbick in the second round of their championship bout in Las Vegas.

In 1990, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, having failed to win reelection to the Conservative Party leadership on the first ballot, announced she would resign.

In 2005, Angela Merkel took office as Germany's first female chancellor.

In 2010, a panicked crush at a festival in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh left nearly 350 dead and hundreds injured in what the prime minister called the country's biggest tragedy since the 1970s reign of terror by the Khmer Rouge.

In 2017, Ratko Mladić, the Bosnian Serb general whose forces carried out the Srebrenica massacre of 1995 — the worst massacre in Europe since World War II — was convicted of genocide and other crimes by the United Nations' Yugoslav war crimes tribunal and sentenced to life behind bars.

In 2022, a Walmart manager pulled out a handgun before a routine employee meeting and began firing wildly in the break room of a company store in Chesapeake, Virginia, killing six people and wounding six others before fatally shooting himself.

Today's Birthdays: Actor-filmmaker Terry Gilliam is 85. Hockey Hall of Famer Jacques Laperrière is 84. Astronaut Guion Bluford is 83. Tennis Hall of Famer Billie Jean King is 82. Rock musician-actor Steven Van Zandt is 75. Rock musician Tina Weymouth (Talking Heads) is 75. Actor Richard Kind is 69. Actor Jamie Lee Curtis is 67. Actor Mads Mikkelsen is 60. Actor Mark Ruffalo is 57. Tennis Hall of Famer Boris Becker is 58. Actor Scarlett Johansson is 41. Actor Alden Ehrenreich is 36. Actor Dacre Montgomery is 31. Actor Auli'i Cravalho is 25.