

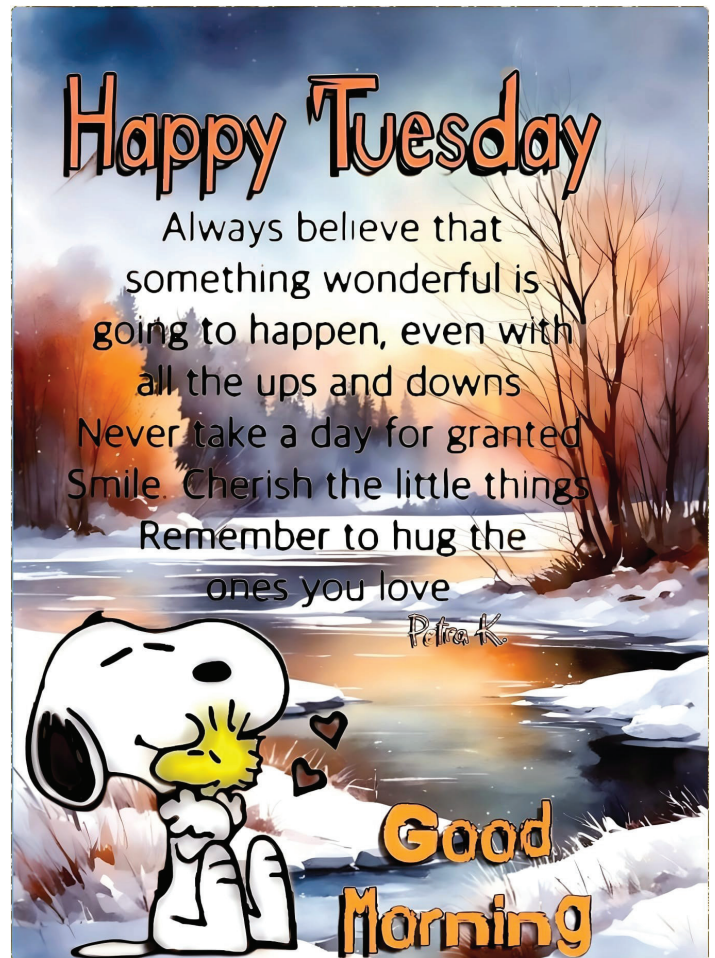
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Tues. Dec. 9

Senior Menu: Turkey and Swiss sandwich, baked beans, potato chips, tomato spoon salad, fruit.
School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.
School Lunch: Chicken breast sandwich, tiny whole potatoes.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Church Council, 6 p.m.
United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
Pierre Middle School Wrestling Invite (boys and girls), 4 p.m.
5th Grade Girls Basketball, 4:15 p.m.
GBB at Northwestern: MS at 5 p.m.; JV at 6 p.m.; Varsity to follow
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.



Wed., Dec. 10

Senior Menu: Ham with pineapple, sweet potatoes, cheesy green beans, fruit, dinner roll.
School Breakfast: Omelets.
School Lunch: Cheese Quesadilla, refried beans.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; DFC Supper, 6 p.m.; Advent Service, 7 p.m.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.
6th Grade GBB Practice, 6 p.m.
5th Grade BBB, 6 p.m.
6th Grade Boys Basketball, 7:30 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent
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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.

SCOTUS Considers Firings

The US Supreme Court heard oral arguments yesterday in *Trump v. Slaughter*—a case that could expand presidential authority over independent agencies.

The case centers on President Donald Trump's decision to fire Federal Trade Commission member Rebecca Kelly Slaughter without cause. That decision defied a 1914 law—and a subsequent 1935 Supreme Court ruling—that says FTC members can be removed only for "inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance." The court yesterday appeared poised to overturn or limit its 1935 ruling, which Chief Justice John Roberts characterized as a "dried husk." Roberts cited the FTC's expanded executive functions in the past 90 years, which could place it under the executive branch's purview.

Trump has fired members of various agencies, citing unitary executive theory. While yesterday's legal challenge could have implications for those cases, the Supreme Court suggests Trump's firing of Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook is different because that agency is structured uniquely as a quasi-private entity.

Paramount's Power Play

Paramount Skydance yesterday presented Warner Bros. Discovery shareholders with a \$108.4B offer for the entire company, including its production studios, HBO Max streaming platform, and cable networks such as CNN.

The hostile takeover bypasses Warner's board, which decided last week to sell Warner's studio and streaming arms to Netflix for \$82.7B while spinning the cable networks into a new publicly traded company. Paramount, whose bid offers shareholders \$2.25 more per share, accuses Warner's board of unfairly favoring Netflix in a weekslong bidding process. Netflix counters that the value of the new standalone cable company will exceed the difference between the offers. Paramount has also raised antitrust concerns regarding Netflix's streaming industry market share.

Paramount's bid has financial backing from an investment firm run by President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner; Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Abu Dhabi's sovereign wealth firms; and Larry Ellison, the cofounder of Oracle and father of Paramount's CEO.

Farmers Aid Package

The US unveiled a \$12B package yesterday to support farmers affected by trade disruptions, particularly losses from reduced exports to China, which was the third-largest market for US agricultural products in 2024 at nearly \$25B annually.

Roughly \$11B is earmarked for a new USDA assistance program that will offer one-time payments to farmers who grow row crops (such as corn, soybeans, and sorghum), while \$1B will be reserved for specialty-crop growers. The funding will be distributed by the end of February and is expected to come from tariff revenue. As of October, the US had collected roughly \$195B in customs duties in fiscal year 2025—more than 250% of what it collected in fiscal year 2024.

Soybean and sorghum exports were hit hardest, as China, which historically bought more than half of

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US exports, paused purchases amid tariff disputes. Chinese purchases have lagged despite trade truce promises, leaving farmers with lower crop prices and rising input costs.

Separately, China's trade surplus has reached \$1T for the first time.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Louvre Museum workers vote to strike over working conditions, ticket price hikes, and poor security after \$102M heist; demonstration begins Dec. 15.

Armed thieves steal eight Matisse paintings from public library in São Paulo, Brazil.

"One Battle After Another" leads all films with nine nominations for 2026 Golden Globe Awards (Jan. 11); "The White Lotus" tops the TV side with six nods.

Jimmy Kimmel signs one-year extension of "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" with ABC.

Florida State tops Stanford 1-0 to win its third NCAA women's soccer national championship in the past five years.

Science & Technology

Google to launch its first AI-powered glasses next year: one audio-only model and another model with in-lens display.

Researchers develop wireless device that uses light to send information to the brain, bypassing natural sensory pathways; could help restore lost senses.

Global coalition of scientists seeking to understand dark matter completes most sensitive search yet, detecting neutrinos from the sun's core for the first time.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close down (S&P 500 -0.4%, Dow -0.5%, Nasdaq -0.1%) as investors await decision from Federal Reserve's final two-day policy meeting of the year, which begins today.

President Donald Trump approves Nvidia's H200 artificial intelligence chips for sale to China; in exchange, the US will receive 25% of the sale revenue.

Candy giant Mars to close \$36B acquisition of Kellanova, maker of Cheez-Its and Pringles, this week after receiving EU regulatory approval.

Magnum IceCream reaches \$9B market cap after trading debut in Amsterdam.

Politics & World Affairs

Alina Habba resigns as US attorney in New Jersey, takes role as senior adviser for US attorneys to Attorney General Pam Bondi; comes after a court ruled Habba had been serving in the role unlawfully since her tenure was slated to end in July.

Thai military launches airstrikes on Cambodia, accuses Cambodia of wounding two Thai soldiers at the border; clashes threaten US-mediated peace deal.

Magnitude 7.5 earthquake strikes off Japan's northeast coast, triggering a tsunami of up to 28 inches and injuring at least 23 people.

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**ELDA STANGE'S
102nd BIRTHDAY**
is on **Sunday, Dec. 14, 2025.**
Please join us in helping her celebrate her
special day by sending her a card at:

**PO Box 305
405 N. 3rd Street
Groton, SD 57445**



Christmas Holiday Show!



**Featuring:
The Shaun Johnson Big
Band Experience:
The Holiday Show**

**Sunday, December 14, 2025
4pm at the NSU Johnson Fine
Arts Center**

Tickets are on sale now!

- \$35/Adult & \$25/Student for non-members on-line or at IDC.
- \$25 for ACCA members (contact a board member or purchase at IDC Box Office for discount pricing.)

www.AberdeenCommunityConcerts.org



DACOTA BANK

HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE

**Cookies &
Calendars**

FRIDAY, DEC. 12

9:00 - 4:00 PM

7 East Hwy 12, Groton

*Stop in lobby for
cookies, coffee and a
2026 calendar!*

MEMBER FDIC

NSU Winter Commencement Set for Dec. 13

ABERDEEN, S.D. – Northern State University will celebrate the accomplishments of its graduates at Winter Commencement, set for 10 a.m. Saturday, Dec. 13, in the Johnson Fine Arts Center.

The ceremony is open to the public, and no tickets are required. Doors will open at least one hour before the event. The ceremony is expected to last about 90 minutes. Guests are encouraged to stay through the end to honor all graduates.

For those unable to attend in person, the event will be streamed live via multiple platforms. The ceremony will be livestreamed through the NSU Facebook page, and broadcast locally on Midco channel 12 and NVC Channel 12. The broadcast will also be available channel 588 on Midco.

Live captioning will be provided on screen at the venue, as well as online through Facebook and the graduation webpage.

Winter Commencement marks a significant milestone for students as they celebrate their achievements and take the next step in their journeys.

Locals graduating are:

Emily Richie, Bristol (B.S.Ed Elementary Education)*

Logan Hinman, Groton (B.A. History)***

Stella Meier, Groton (B.A. in Honoribus English)*

Anthony Schinkel, Groton (B.S. Psychology)

***Summa Cum Laude

*Cum Laude



Tuesday, the 9th:

- JH GBB @ Northwestern (one game at 5pm)
- Girls Basketball @ Northwestern (JV @ 6pm, Varsity to follow)

Thursday, the 11th:

- MS/HS Christmas Concert (7pm - old gym)

Friday, the 12th:

- DH vs. Hamlin (Old Gym - C Boys @ 4pm, Arena
- JV Girls @ 4pm, JV Boys @ 5pm, Varsity Girls @ 6:15pm, Varsity Boys @ 7:30pm)
- Girls Wrestling @

Saturday, the 13th:

- Boys Wrestling @ Baltic (9am)
- JH GBB @ Northwestern Jamboree (Games at 9am and 10:30am)

Give the gift of support to arts nonprofits this season

By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

December marks the season of giving. As we consider those to whom we wish to be generous, we need to remember our nonprofit arts community—this year more than any other in recent memory. To retain programs that spark our children's creativity, to maintain the performance art opportunities that help our communities thrive and to build creative possibility for all South Dakotans, now is the time to give.

Here in South Dakota, we have a vibrant cultural environment. Community arts councils, local schools and special events all help to bring a holiday focus to performances, exhibitions and seasonal shows—and South Dakotans turn out to fill auditoriums across the state. As important as those ticket sales are to the strength of our creative organizations, charitable end-of-year giving to arts nonprofits is equally vital to maintaining our state's arts opportunities.

We have a unique nonprofit ecosystem in our country that depends on generous donations and active volunteers, especially this year. The arts community is fortunate in the continued support of advocates of all ages, not just in the larger cities, but in communities of every size.

One easy way to support the arts is to give the gift of South Dakota creativity. Choose a book by one of our state's authors or photographers, jewelry created by a local artisan, a print or painting by a South Dakota artist or tickets to a special performance, perhaps a musical event planned for the coming year.

This is the time of year for all of us to remember that the arts community does not thrive without individual support. Your favorite arts nonprofit organization probably has an online system for you to support its efforts financially—as does Arts South Dakota.

For more information about keeping arts nonprofits and community arts councils strong in the coming year and a calendar of upcoming arts events to help celebrate the season, check out our website at www.ArtsSouthDakota.org.



What can \$20 get you?



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Senior Citizens

or anyone using physical therapy
a gym membership at

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Open 24/7

GDI Living Fitness

Call/Text Paul at 605/397-7460

Call/Text Tina at 605/397-7285

for details



Annual Membership Rates

Student is \$29.82 per month or \$255.60 per year
Single is \$35.15 per month or \$319.50 per year
2-Person is \$55.45 per month or \$575.10 per year
Family is \$67.10 per month or \$702.26 per year

Month-to-Month Rates

Student is \$35.15 per month
Single is \$40.48 per month
2-Person is \$59.78 per month
Family is \$72.43 per month

**While many other rates have gone up, ours has not.
Same rates for several years!**

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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

December 9, 2025 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Department Reports
4. Open Sealed Bids for Hoist
5. Review Sealed Bids for City Roof Repair Project and Award
6. Approval of Kolker Second Subdivision Plat
7. First Reading of Ordinance No. 794 – Supplemental Appropriations
8. Northeast Council of Governments (NECOG) Joint Cooperative Agreement for 2026
9. Minutes
10. Bills
11. Reminder: Holiday Lighting Contest – December 18th, 2025 - \$100, \$75, & \$50 Utility Bill Credits to Be Given Away
12. Reminder: 2026 Dog Licenses are Due by December 31st, 2025
13. Announcement: City Offices Closed on December 24th, 25th, and 26th, 2025, for Christmas
14. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
15. First Reading of Ordinance No. 793 – 2026 Salaries
16. Hire Skating Rink Employees and Establish Wage
17. Adjournment

School board receives state budget update, virtual education programming

by Elizabeth Varin

The Groton Area School Board traded its regular meeting room for a change of scenery Monday night, convening at the Hot Spot in Bristol — a location that sits along the eastern edge of the district.

With a full agenda, board members received an update on the governor's proposed budget, heard about virtual education programming, scheduled the 2026 school board election, reviewed an early draft of the 2026-2027 school calendar.

Superintendent Joe Schwan updated the board on the governor's proposed budget, which included no increase in state aid to K-12 public schools. School administrators have been told to expect a "lean" budget due to sluggish state revenue collection.

However, the governor's December 4 budget address is only a recommended budget. A final budget will be debated and finalized by the state legislature during its session early next year.

Schwan also reviewed virtual education options. It comes as a handful of students have left the school for home schooling or other virtual options.

Some other districts have invested heavily in virtual education programs and have seen a growth in enrollment. It has come as Groton has seen a dip in enrollment, which impacts state aid funding the district receives.

The district would financially benefit (by about \$2,100-\$2,650 per year) for out-of-district students that choose to open-enroll into the district to complete a fully virtual program. The district also would lose about \$5,400 for each student that switches to open-enroll in another district.

Schwan told the board he wasn't recommending any action Monday night as there is a lot of information to digest.

Board President Grant Rix agreed.

"There's a lot of information," he said. "It's something we're going to have to discuss over the next couple of months."

The board took a step to decrease the cost of its upcoming election while setting dates for the 2026 school board election.

The district will hold an election for two seats on the board on June 2, 2026. However, the district approved cutting back on the number of precincts. In the past, precincts have been set up in Columbia, Andover, Bristol and Groton.

The board voted to only host a precinct at the high school, which is estimated to save about \$4,000. Absentee ballots will still be available.

- The board reviewed a preliminary 2026-2027 school year calendar. The first day of school would be August 19, 2026, and the last day of the school year would be May 17, 2027. However, the calendar has not been finalized.

- The board approved hiring Kyle Gerlach as the junior high boys basketball coach. The board also approved having Teagan Block as a volunteer wrestling coach.

- The board accepted the resignation of both Aubray Harry and Maddi Bjerke as cheer coach, effective at the end of the school year. Superintendent Schwan said they have both reached points in their lives where they're busy and they want to walk away from the cheer coach position.

- Board members were hesitant about hiring a weight room supervisor, which could cost the district about \$2,000, after cutting back on voting precincts to save about \$4,000.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Trump to send \$12 billion in one-time payments to farmers to offset ag losses

BY: JACOB FISCHLER

The federal government will provide \$12 billion to U.S. farmers who have been hurt by "un-fair market disruption," President Donald Trump said at a White House roundtable event Monday.

Trump said repeatedly the funding was available thanks to tariff revenues, framing his aggressive trade policy as a boon to farmers rather than a drag on their global market share as critics of the policy suggest.

"I'm delighted to announce this afternoon that the United States will be taking a small portion of the hundreds of billions of dollars we receive in tariffs... and we're going to be giving and providing it to the farmers in economic assistance," Trump said.

U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, though, told reporters following the event that the money came from the department's Commodity Credit Corporation, which is funded through regular appropriations from Congress, according to a White House pool report.

The money, which the administration officials described as "bridge payments," would be in farmers' hands by the end of February, Rollins said.

While not officially marketed as a part of a series of Trump events spotlighting affordability issues, the president said several times he was addressing an affordability crisis he "inherited" from President Joe Biden, a Democrat.

"The Democrats cause the affordability problem," Trump said. "And we're the ones that are fixing it."

The bulk of the funding, \$11 billion, would go to row crop farmers who grow barley, chickpeas, corn, cotton, lentils, oats, peanuts, peas, rice, sorghum, soybeans, wheat, canola, crambe, flax, mustard, rape-seed, safflower, sesame and sunflower, according to a USDA statement. The department was planning to



President Donald Trump participates in a roundtable discussion with farmers and lawmakers in the Cabinet Room of the White House on Dec. 8, 2025 in Washington, D.C. Left is Cordt Holub of Dysart, Iowa, and right is Meryl Kennedy of Monroe, Louisiana.(Photo by Alex Wong/Getty Images)

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reserve \$1 billion for unnamed specialty crops, Rollins said.

Payments to arrive before GOP law kicks in

Trump, Rollins and other Cabinet-level officials said the payments were to be used as a "bridge" before policies enacted in Republicans' massive spending and tax cuts law this year are implemented.

"This bridge is absolutely necessary based on where we are right now," Rollins said.

They blamed the Biden administration for a more negative outlook for farmers. Biden failed to close trade deals and a focus on environmental policy led to increased costs for the agriculture industry, they said.

The package limits payments to \$155,000 per recipient, USDA Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation Richard Fordyce told reporters on a conference call late Monday afternoon.

Iowa farmer Cordt Holub spoke at the White House event, where he thanked Trump for the package.

"I want to say thank you for this bridge payment," he said. "It's Christmas early for farmers."

Louisiana rice farmer Meryl Kennedy said the industry was struggling, but thanked Trump for the aid funding and changes to reference prices in the Republican megabill.

"Our farmers can feed this nation and many nations abroad, but we need fair trade, not free trade," she said.

Tariff impact ignored

But they did not mention the effects of tariffs, which critics of the president have said are responsible for diminishing agricultural exports and hurting farmers' bottom lines.

House Agriculture Committee ranking Democrat Angie Craig of Minnesota said in a statement the package "picks winners and losers in the farm economy," and would not provide certainty to farmers or reduce high operational costs.

"It will not bring U.S. agricultural exports back to pre-trade war levels," she said. "It also ignores (the) fact that the president's tariffs are responsible for the immense financial strain felt not just by America's farmers, but also working people, manufacturers, retailers and small businesses. All Americans are tired of the affordability crisis created by this administration and congressional Republicans. We will be right back here a year from now unless the administration changes its policies."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat, also slammed the program.

"The reason farmers need relief at all is largely because Donald Trump betrayed them and decimated their businesses with his disastrous tariffs," Schumer said in a floor speech Monday. "Now, Donald Trump is patting himself on the back, acting like a hero to farmers while using taxpayer dollars to clean up the mess he created. It's textbook Donald Trump incompetence."

Another round?

Asked by a reporter during the roundtable if he would be open to another round of relief for farmers, Trump said it would depend on how international trade develops and said farmers would not want further aid.

"It depends on where we go," he said. "China is buying a lot. Other countries are buying a lot. And you know, the interesting thing about the farmers, they don't want aid. They want to just have a level playing field."

He later indicated it would be unnecessary.

"We're going to make the farmers so strong — and I'm not even talking about financially, because they just want to be able to produce what they can produce," he said. "We're going to make them so strong that it will be, indeed, a golden age for farmers."

Rollins told reporters following the event that Trump was "open to more."

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

Attorney general of South Dakota chosen as president-elect of national association

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley has been elected unanimously to serve as president-elect of the National Association of Attorneys General, although he's hoping to be in the U.S. House before he gets a chance to serve as the association's president.

Jackley was chosen as president-elect Monday by the nation's attorneys general at their annual meeting in Washington, D.C. He had been serving as vice president for the past year.

"I am honored to serve alongside my fellow attorneys general as we enforce our state laws and promote sound law enforcement policies for our communities," Jackley said in a news release. "Serving in this leadership role will strengthen my ability to address issues on a national level that are important to South Dakota."

Jackley was previously elected president of the group in 2015, and was the first South Dakota attorney general to lead the association. Members are the attorneys general of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands, and the territories of American Samoa, Guam and the Virgin Islands.

Connecticut Attorney General William Tong, who had been serving as president-elect, will be the association's president for the coming year while Jackley serves as president-elect.

In the June 2026 primary election, Jackley is seeking the Republican nomination to run for South Dakota's lone U.S. House seat. The current holder of the seat, Republican Rep. Dusty Johnson, is running for governor.

In a statement to South Dakota Searchlight, Jackley said he's "focused on serving as the best attorney general I can be for South Dakota and president-elect of our nation's attorneys general." But, he added, "if blessed by the people of South Dakota, I will be a strong voice and leader for us in Congress."

If Jackley wins the Republican nomination for U.S. House and also wins in the November 2026 general election, he would become a member of Congress in January 2027.



Officers of the National Association of Attorneys General, from left: Connecticut Attorney General William Tong, president; District of Columbia Attorney General Brian Schwalb, vice president; and South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley, president-elect. (Photo

courtesy of South Dakota Attorney General's Office)

Grain-dealer bankruptcy hits creditors in multiple states, including South Dakota

BY: JEFF BEACH

Some North Dakota farmers are owed money after a large bankruptcy filing by a Nebraska-based grain dealer.

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture says farmers in the state are owed more than \$900,000 by the Hansen-Mueller Co.

The bankruptcy affects creditors in multiple states, including South Dakota and Minnesota. Creditors also include a trucking company in North Dakota.

David Barrett is a Bismarck ag law attorney with clients that include some of the North Dakota farmers who will be filing claims.

He has clients in other states, too, and has already filed a \$1.2 million claim for a grain elevator in Mississippi.

"There's creditors everywhere," Barrett said, with more filings to come.

Hansen-Mueller leases a grain storage facility in Grand Forks and has a roving grain buyers license in the state. As part of being licensed in the state, it also would have to secure a bond to help ensure it can pay for grain it has purchased.

However, the company filed for bankruptcy Nov. 17, before the Department of Agriculture could begin insolvency proceedings. Those proceedings could have allowed the state to access the company's bond to help repay farmers.

Shaun Quissell, director of the Grain and Livestock Division for the state Ag Department, said Hansen-Mueller was bonded for about \$778,000 — less than what is owed.

The state also has a credit sales indemnity fund, which helps protect farmers from fraudulent buyers.

Quissell also said the grain purchase agreements between Hansen-Mueller and the farmers were not credit sales contracts and would not have been covered by that fund.

Because the company declared bankruptcy, the bond money could become part of the bankruptcy proceeding, Quissell said.

Most of the North Dakota transactions involved oats, Quissell said. He did not have information on how many growers were affected.

Barrett said the farmers he's aware of being owed money are in the Red River Valley.

In a news release, state Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring encouraged farmers affected by the Hansen-Mueller bankruptcy to file claims with the bankruptcy court.

"Every producer who is owed money by Hansen-Mueller should be receiving notification from the bankruptcy court that they are a claimant and need to file a claim," Goehring said. "We understand the



A truck prepares to leave the Hansen-Mueller storage facility in Grand Forks, North Dakota, on Dec. 5, 2025. Hansen-Mueller has filed for bankruptcy with some North Dakota farmers still owed money. (Photo by Jeff Beach/North Dakota Monitor)

producer's frustration and are here to provide clear information to help those affected."

Bankruptcy information can be found at <https://dm.epiq11.com/case/hansenmueller/info> or by calling 877-717-1702.

In a news release announcing the bankruptcy, Hansen-Mueller said it hoped to find a buyer to continue operations.

Hansen-Mueller operates nine grain elevators, including five across the Midwest along Interstate 29. Its Minnesota operations include a facility at the Duluth port on Lake Superior.

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

North Dakota Monitor Deputy Editor Jeff Beach is based in the Fargo area. His interests include agriculture, renewable energy and rural issues.

US Education Department civil rights staff returning to work to tackle complaint backlog

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Education Department is bringing back hundreds of employees in its Office for Civil Rights who were placed on paid administrative leave earlier this year, according to a Dec. 5 email to those employees obtained by States Newsroom.

The effort came as the Office for Civil Rights, or OCR — which is tasked with investigating civil rights complaints from students and families — has seen a growth in its massive backlog of those complaints.

A spokesperson for the department confirmed the effort and said the staffers would resume work starting Dec. 15.



The Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Building on Nov. 25, 2024. (Photo by Shauneen Miranda/States Newsroom)

Dismantling of department

More than 200 OCR employees targeted as part of a larger Reduction in Force, or RIF, effort at the Education Department in March were placed on administrative leave amid legal challenges against President Donald Trump's administration.

Since taking office in January, Trump has sought to dismantle the 46-year-old agency in his quest to move education "back to the states." He tapped Education Secretary Linda McMahon to fulfill that mission.

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"The Department will continue to appeal the persistent and unceasing litigation disputes concerning the Reductions in Force, but in the meantime, it will utilize all employees currently being compensated by American taxpayers," Julie Hartman, a spokesperson for the department, said in a statement shared with States Newsroom.

In the email to employees, the department said "it is important to refocus OCR's work and utilize all OCR staff to prioritize OCR's existing complaint caseload."

"In order for OCR to pursue its mission with all available resources, all those individuals currently being compensated by the Department need to meet their employee performance expectations and contribute to the enforcement of existing civil rights complaints," the email notes.

The agency did not respond to States Newsroom's separate requests to confirm the text of the email. It is unclear how many of the more than 200 will return, or if some have taken other jobs.

Union says millions of dollars wasted

Rachel Gittleman, president of American Federation of Government Employees Local 252, which represents Education Department workers, said that "for more than nine months, hundreds of employees at the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) have been sidelined from the critical work of protecting our nation's most vulnerable students and families."

"Instead of following court orders and federal law, the Trump Administration chose to keep these civil rights professionals on paid administrative leave — a decision that has already wasted more than \$40 million in taxpayer funds — rather than letting them do their jobs," she said.

Gittleman pointed to "severe" consequences, noting that "by blocking OCR staff from doing their jobs, Department leadership allowed a massive backlog of civil rights complaints to grow, and now expects these same employees to clean up a crisis entirely of the Department's own making."

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.

Republicans left tribes out of their \$50B rural fund.

Now it's up to states to share.

BY: JAZMIN OROZCO RODRIGUEZ, KFF HEALTH NEWS

The Trump administration is touting its \$50 billion Rural Health Transformation Program as the largest-ever U.S. investment in rural health care. But the government made minimal mention of Native American tribes in sparsely populated areas and in need of significant improvements to health care access.

Federally recognized tribes can't directly apply for a share of the rural health fund — only states can. And states aren't required to consider tribes' needs. But state applications for the five-year payout show some states with significant Native American populations did so anyway.

Workforce development, technology upgrades, and traditional healing are a few of the initiatives specifically aimed at Native American communities that some states included in their applications, which were due to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services on Nov. 5. The fund was a late addition to the One Big Beautiful Bill Act in response to worries about the harm the spending reductions in Republicans' bill would have on rural hospitals' finances.

Some states, including Idaho, Nevada, and Oregon, are also considering setting aside 3% to 10% of their federal payouts to distribute among tribes. Washington proposed setting aside \$20 million per year.

Federally recognized tribes have direct relationships with the U.S. government, but state governments also allocate resources to tribes and can create policies that support tribal priorities. States and tribes share concerns about the effect that the massive GOP budget bill, which President Donald Trump signed into law in July, will have on the U.S. health system. The law is expected to reduce federal Medicaid spending by nearly \$1 trillion and increase the number of uninsured by approximately 10 million people, according

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to KFF, a health information nonprofit that includes KFF Health News.

Catherine Howden, a CMS spokesperson, said that states are required to develop their applications in collaboration with key stakeholders, including the state governments' tribal affairs offices or tribal liaisons, as well as "Indian health care providers, as applicable." But these entities do not include tribal governments or official tribal representatives.

Tribes can apply for Rural Health Transformation Fund subgrants through their states. But during a recent call with federal health officials, tribal leaders expressed frustration about being regarded as just another stakeholder in the issue rather than sovereign nations. Tribal sovereignty guides most government-to-government consultations over proposed federal actions that would have a substantial effect on tribes.

"Even in a scenario where tribal consultation is required, the quality and quantity of that tribal consultation on a state-by-state basis is all over the place," said Liz Malerba, director of policy and legislative affairs for the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund, which advocates for tribal nations from Texas to Maine. Malerba is a citizen of the Mohegan Tribe.

Federal policy works better when tribal nations are directly eligible for funding that supports essential services in their communities, Malerba said, adding that tribal leaders are concerned that the reach of the program into their communities will vary considerably.

There are 574 federally recognized tribes and more than 7 million Native American and Alaska Native people in the U.S. The population faces a lower life expectancy and among the poorest health outcomes when compared with other demographics. The Indian Health Service, the federal agency responsible for providing health care to Native Americans and Alaska Natives, has been historically underfunded by Congress.

KFF Health News analyzed how 12 states with significant Native American populations took tribes into account as they developed plans for the pot of federal money.

Idaho, Washington, Montana, and Arizona were among the states that held tribal consultations or listening sessions ahead of the Nov. 5 application deadline.

In states that did not initiate input from tribes, some Native American leaders made sure their voices were heard in other public hearings. Jerilyn Church, CEO of the Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board, said she attended an October public meeting in South Dakota because she felt it was important for state leaders to consider how they could use the program's resources on reservations. There are nine federally recognized tribes in the state, and Native American people make up 9% of the population.



The Indian Health Service office in Wagner, South Dakota. (Photo by John Hult/South Dakota Searchlight)

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"I felt like we needed to help be that advocate," said Church, a citizen of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe. In the proposed initiatives included in its rural fund application, South Dakota identified tribal community needs such as improved telehealth and funding for doula programs. It also said the state will continue meeting with the Great Plains tribal health board throughout the five-year funding cycle.

In Oklahoma — where more than 14% of the population is Native American, a higher share than in most other states — tribal representatives were invited to weigh in with the rest of the public when the state was gathering information for its application, the details of which have not been publicly released.

"We've welcomed input from any Oklahoman," said state health department spokesperson Erica Rankin-Riley.

North Dakota identified tribes in its state as partners in the Rural Health Transformation Program and included initiatives such as expanding physician residency slots with tribal-specific rotations and opportunities for farm-to-table food distributions. But lawmakers there declined to support a proposal that would have pledged 5% of its federal allotment to tribes. There are five federally recognized tribes in the state, and Native Americans make up nearly 5% of the population.

Some states did include proposals to fund high-priority initiatives for tribes.

Washington's application for the rural fund included an initiative focused on improving health among Native American communities. Its goals include investing in workforce development for tribes, better care coordination between tribes and rural hospitals, and \$2.4 million annually to support Washington State University's rural health education programs, including its Indigenous health program.

Alaska's proposal included integrating Indigenous traditional healing in Alaska Native village clinics. It would include offering traditional-healing house calls, hands-on training for healers, and traditional-medicine training for health care providers and staff, according to the application.

One of Oregon's five initiatives would support the state's nine federally recognized tribes in improving health outcomes. The state estimates the initiative would require \$20 million per year, or 10% of the Rural Health Transformation Program award.

Whether or not states identified funding for tribes or included tribal priorities in their proposals, tribes will be eligible to apply to their states for subgrants of the Rural Health Transformation Program money. While larger tribes that have more resources, such as grant writers and staff to implement programs, could benefit, smaller tribes may struggle to produce competitive applications.

Church said that the Great Plains Tribal Leaders' Health Board will know the fruits of its labor when states are notified of their rural health fund allotments by the end of the year.

"Hopefully the work that we did, the advocacy that we did, and the outreach," Church said, "will result in resources getting to our tribes."

KFF Health News South Dakota correspondent Arielle Zionts contributed to this report.

Jazmin Orozco Rodriguez is a Nevada correspondent for KFF Health News.

Governor: 'Not much I've seen that I could support' in legislative property tax proposals

BY: SETH TUPPER

South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden, who has his own idea to reduce property taxes, does not sound impressed with 19 recommendations from a legislative task force.

"I've realized that there's not much I've seen that I could support," Rhoden told South Dakota Searchlight during a visit to Rapid City last week.

The governor's own proposal, which he announced in March, would authorize an optional sales tax for counties. The revenue would be used to reduce property taxes for homeowners.

"And I'll say this, too: I'm not done yet," Rhoden added. "We're still looking at some other ideas."

Proposals from the governor and lawmakers will be debated during the annual legislative session at the Capitol in Pierre, which begins Jan. 13 and continues until March.

The legislative task force compiled its 19 recommendations throughout the summer. They include tweaks to existing practices, like creating an online system for property tax relief applications from elderly and disabled people, instead of requiring paper forms. Other recommendations would require major policy changes, such as cutting state spending and using the savings to provide property tax relief, capturing proceeds from a higher state sales tax rate to fund property tax reductions, and taking money from the state's reserve accounts and a housing infrastructure fund to provide property tax credits for homeowners.

The speaker of the state House of Representatives, Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, was the vice chairman of the Legislature's Comprehensive Property Tax Task Force. He's also one of the candidates challenging Rhoden for the Republican nomination for governor next year.

When the task force announced its 19 recommendations in October, Hansen framed high property taxes as a government spending problem. He authored two of the recommendations, including a request for the governor's cooperation in cutting 5% of the spending from the state's general fund.

"Real tax relief begins with right-sizing government," Hansen said in a news release at the time.

Rhoden challenged that framing last week during his annual budget address to the Legislature, saying there's little room for cuts in his lean budget proposal.

"I share the desire to cut property taxes," Rhoden said in the speech. "But slashing health care, education and public safety is not the way to do it."

Pressure to address rising taxes is coming from South Dakota homeowners, whose property tax payments increased nearly 40% during the past four years.

State government does not receive any property tax revenue. It relies mostly on sales taxes.

Property tax revenue goes primarily to schools and counties, with lesser amounts to cities and other local taxing entities. Cities can also impose sales taxes.

Rhoden's proposal would give counties the option to impose a half-percent sales tax. Revenue would be used to reduce the county portion of property taxes on owner-occupied homes. Any excess revenue would be used to reduce commercial and agricultural property taxes.

Because sales taxes apply to anyone spending money in the state, Rhoden has said his plan would "shift a portion of the county tax burden to out-of-state visitors."

County commissioners could impose the sales tax, and citizens could gather petition signatures to send the decision to local voters. The tax would be limited to a five-year renewable term.

It's the second property tax relief idea from Rhoden since he was elevated from lieutenant governor in January, after Gov. Kristi Noem's departure to run the federal Department of Homeland Security.

Lawmakers approved the first idea in March, and it took effect on July 1. The multifaceted law is intended to slow property tax increases. It places tighter limits on the growth of property assessments and local government budgets for five years, exempts some home improvements from affecting assessments, and makes more elderly and disabled people eligible for property tax assessment freezes by raising limits on their income and home values.

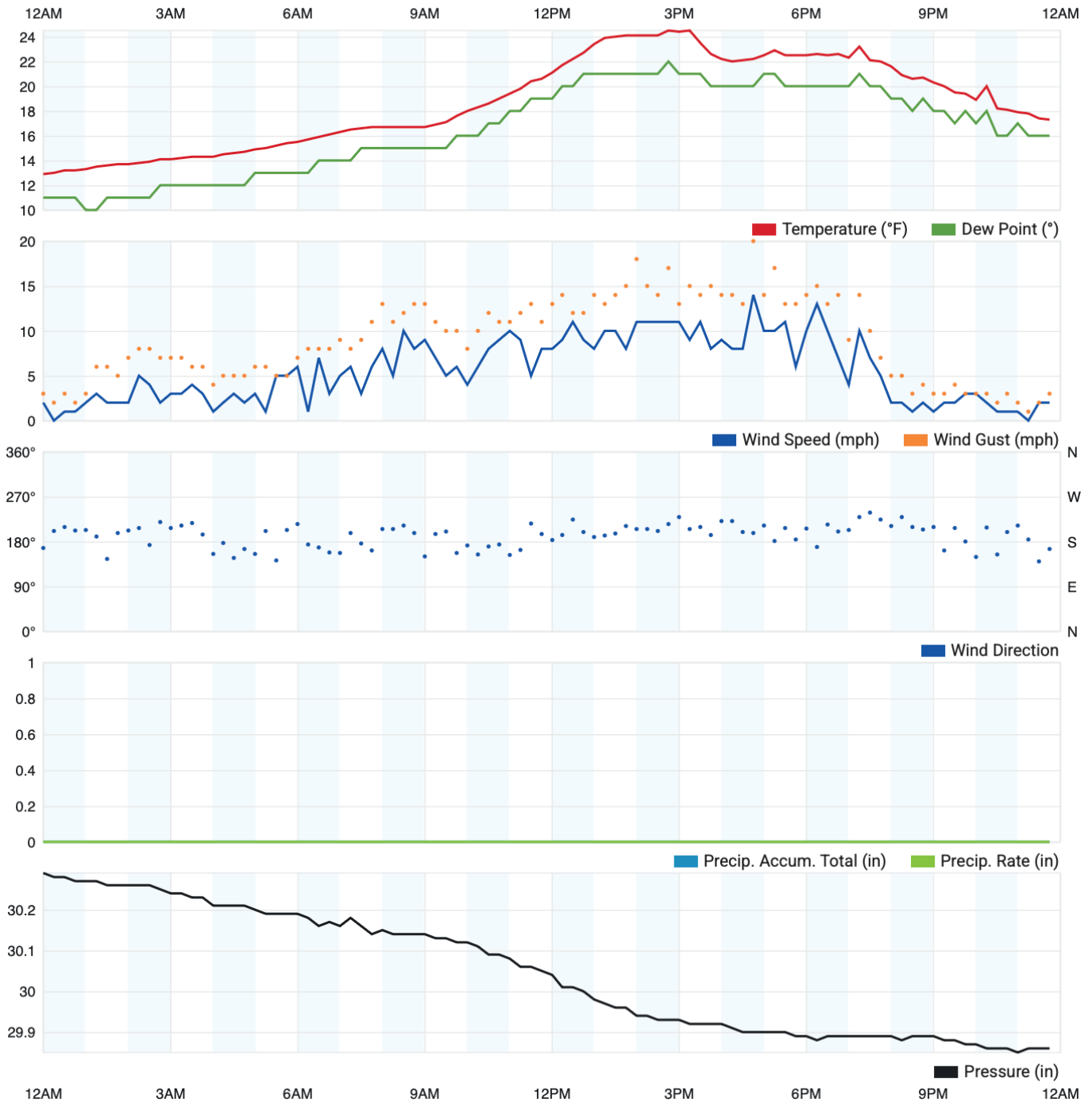
Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

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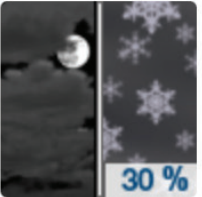

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

December 8, 2025



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Winter ... Today	High Wind Warning Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
				
100% → 60%	30% 20%		30%	50%
High: 40 °F	Low: 12 °F	High: 17 °F	Low: 8 °F	High: 23 °F
Freezing Rain and Freezing Fog then Rain Likely and Windy	Chance Rain/Snow and Windy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy then Chance Snow	Chance Snow

Freezing Rain Potential Tuesday December 8, 2025 3:39 PM

Freezing rain in the morning transitioning to rain

Key Messages:

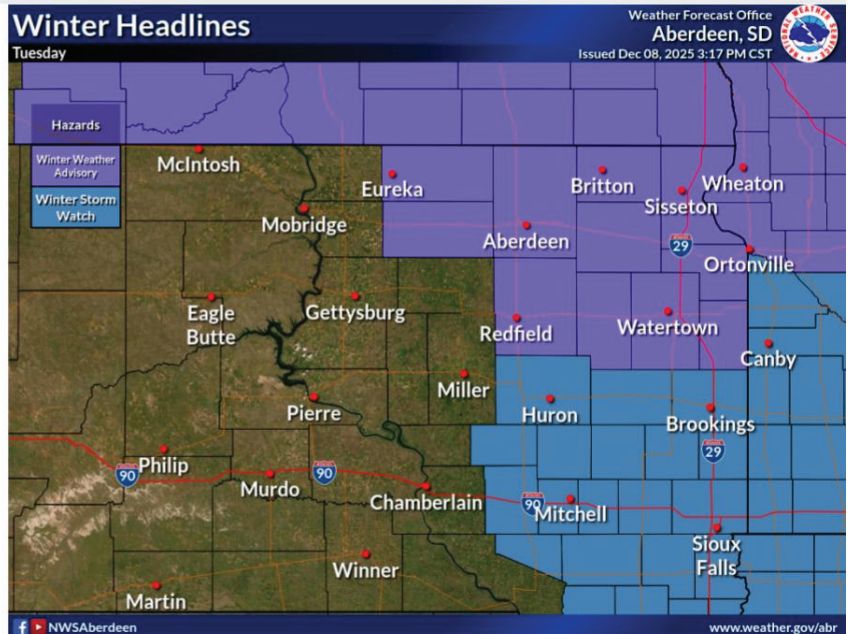
- **Early morning light freezing rain potential** exists before temperatures warm above freezing Tuesday morning/afternoon.
 - **Ice accumulations up to 0.10"**
 - Warm temperatures during the day should melt the ice
- **IMPACTS:** Difficult travel conditions are possible. **The hazardous conditions will impact the morning commute.**
- **Rain changing to light snow** Tuesday night east of the James River could result in areas of blowing snow

What Has Changed?

- Winter Weather Advisory issued for portions of north central and northeastern South Dakota

Next Scheduled Update:

- Tuesday morning



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

There is the potential for early morning freezing rain over portions of northern and northeastern SD into west central MN before temperatures warm above freezing late Tuesday morning/afternoon. Ice accumulations up to 0.10" are possible. Difficult travel conditions are possible. The hazardous conditions could impact the morning commute. Rain changing to light snow Tuesday night east of the James River could result in areas of blowing snow.

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Ice / Snow Accumulations

December 8, 2025
3:41 PM

Freezing rain transitioning to rain & snow/blowing snow potential

→ **Rain will be the main precipitation type through the day Tuesday.**

- ◆ **Freezing Rain** will be possible in the morning, when surface temperatures are below freezing. **Ice accumulations up to 0.10"**
- **A transition to snow** may occur Tuesday night with any lingering precipitation along and east of the James River.
- ◆ **Falling snow may combine with gusty winds to create Blowing Snow** (black circle).

Expected Ice: Official NWS Forecast

Valid 6 PM Mon Dec 8, 2025 through 6 PM Tue Dec 9, 2025

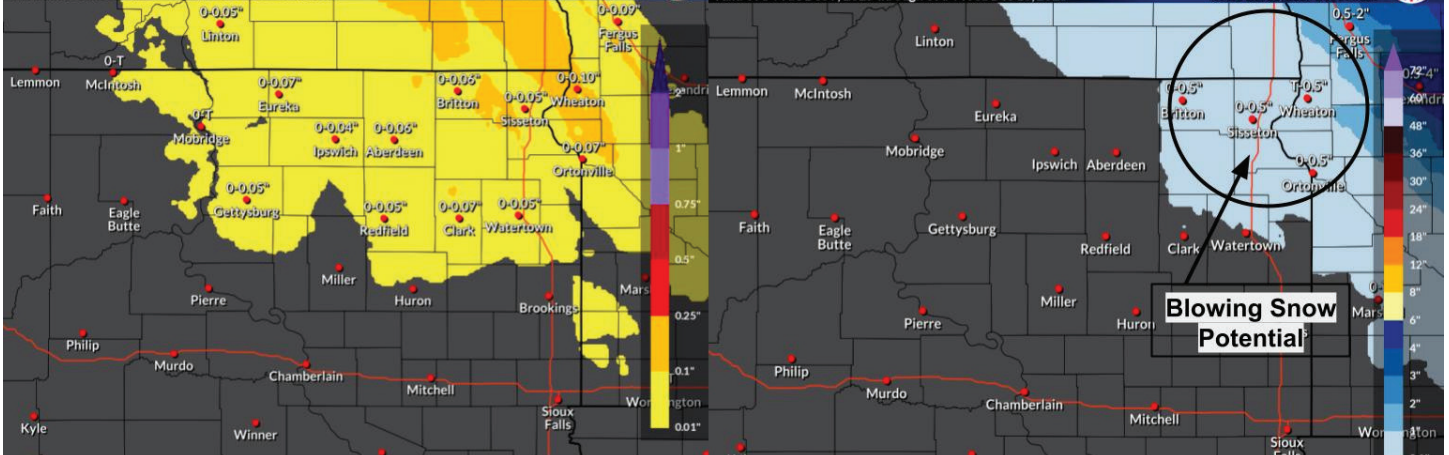
Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD



Expected Snowfall: Official NWS Forecast

Valid 6 AM Tue Dec 9, 2025 through 6 AM Wed Dec 10, 2025

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Freezing rain will transition to rain by the late morning to early afternoon. Ice accumulations up to a tenth of an inch is possible. A transition to light snow may occur Tuesday night with any lingering precipitation along and east of the James River. Falling snow may combine with gusty winds to create blowing snow.



Strong Winds Tuesday

December 8, 2025
3:43 PM

Wind gusts up to 60 mph over central SD

Key Messages:

- Northwest winds increase **Tuesday afternoon into late Tuesday night**
- Sustained winds 25 to 40 mph with gusts of 45 to 65 mph
 - Highest over north central South Dakota.
- **Impacts:** High winds may move loose debris, damage property, and cause power outages. **Travel could be difficult, especially for high profiles vehicles**



What Has Changed?

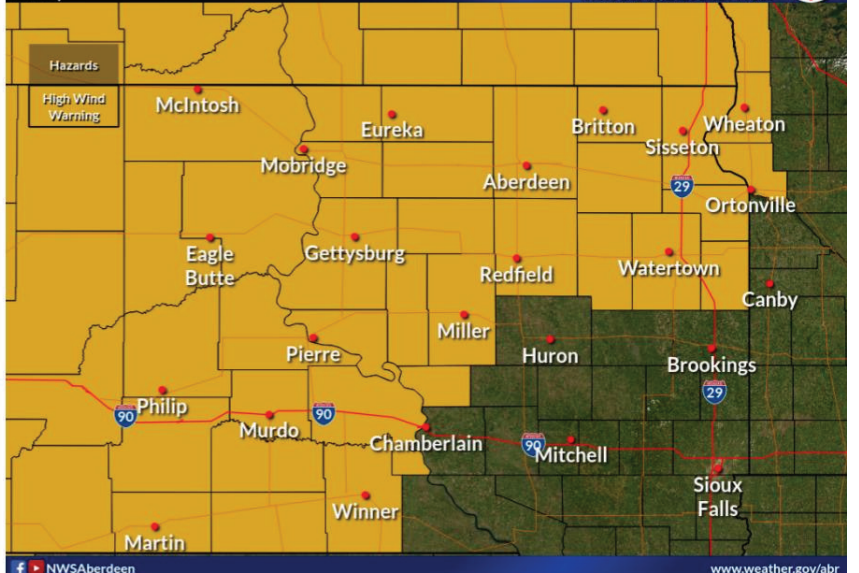
- High Wind Watch upgraded and expanded to a High Wind Warning

High Wind Warning

Tuesday

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD

Issued Dec 08, 2025 2:32 PM CST



NWSAberdeen

www.weather.gov/abr

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE

National Weather Service Aberdeen SD

303 AM CST Tue Dec 9 2025

SDZ006>008-011-018>023-091800-
/O.EXT.KABR.WW.Y.0015.251209T1300Z-251209T1800Z/
Brown-Marshall-Roberts-Day-Spink-Clark-Codington-Grant-Hamlin-Deuel-
Including the cities of Clark, Aberdeen, Hayti, Britton, Clear Lake, Milbank, Webster, Redfield, Sisseton,
and Watertown
303 AM CST Tue Dec 9 2025

...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY NOW IN EFFECT FROM 7 AM THIS MORNING TO NOON CST TODAY...

- * WHAT...Freezing rain expected. Total ice accumulations up to one tenth of an inch.
- * WHERE...A portion of northeast South Dakota.
- * WHEN...From 7 AM this morning to noon CST today.
- * IMPACTS...Difficult travel conditions are possible. The hazardous conditions could impact the Tuesday morning commute.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

Slow down and use caution while traveling. The latest road conditions can be obtained by calling 5 1 1.

High Wind Warning

Brown-Spink-
Including the cities of Aberdeen and Redfield
303 AM CST Tue Dec 9 2025

...HIGH WIND WARNING REMAINS IN EFFECT FROM 3 PM THIS AFTERNOON TO 6 AM CST WEDNESDAY...

- * WHAT...Northwest winds 25 to 40 mph with gusts up to 60 mph expected.
- * WHERE...Brown and Spink Counties.
- * WHEN...From 3 PM this afternoon to 6 AM CST Wednesday.
- * IMPACTS...High winds may move loose debris, damage property and cause power outages. Travel could be difficult, especially for high profile vehicles.

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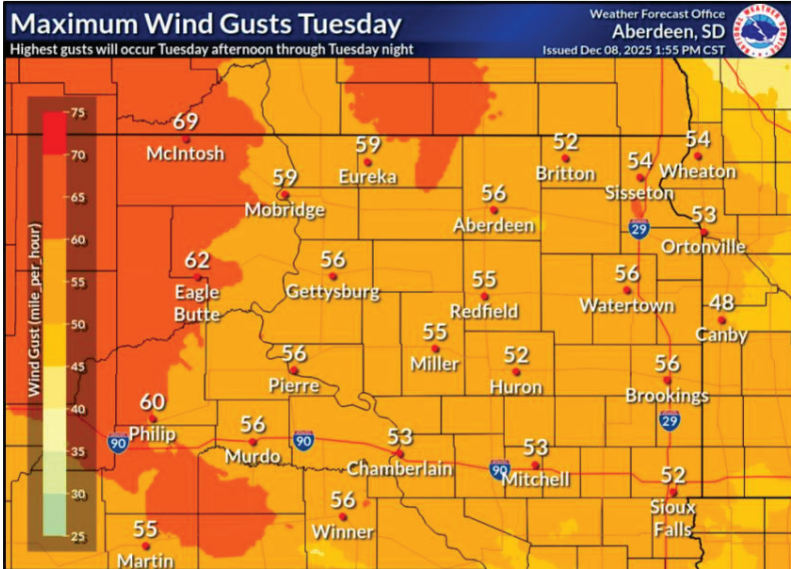
Maximum Wind Gusts and Timing Tuesday

December 8, 2025
3:45 PM

Strong Winds Expected Tuesday Afternoon Through Tuesday Night.

- Northwest Winds of 25-40 mph will gust to 65 mph. **Highest gusts expected over north central South Dakota.**
- IMPACTS:** High winds may move loose debris, damage property and cause power outages. Travel could be difficult, especially for high profile vehicles.

= High Wind Warning Timing



	Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)												
	12/9 Tue						12/10 Wed						
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm
Aberdeen	18	30	47	54	56	55	44	39	25	21	18	14	8
Britton	22	31	41	51	52	51	45	39	29	24	22	17	8
Brookings	16	25	38	47	49	49	47	41	30	25	22	20	10
Chamberlain	17	30	45	49	51	47	43	33	22	18	17	16	14
Clark	18	26	45	52	55	55	52	45	31	25	22	18	9
Eagle Butte	35	48	62	62	58	55	51	45	26	18	14	16	18
Ellendale	20	31	52	56	55	54	48	43	28	22	20	14	7
Eureka	23	40	53	56	59	56	47	41	29	22	17	14	12
Gettysburg	23	40	53	54	56	56	52	44	29	22	17	15	15
Huron	17	25	39	46	46	46	43	35	26	22	20	15	10
Kennebec	25	40	52	55	54	54	51	44	29	21	20	16	16
McIntosh	38	52	66	69	61	55	47	41	25	17	14	16	17
Milbank	13	17	36	49	53	53	49	45	29	25	23	20	12
Miller	23	38	48	53	55	55	47	44	29	23	21	15	12
Mobridge	28	44	55	59	58	55	46	41	25	20	16	14	14
Murdo	26	40	55	56	54	52	51	43	25	17	16	16	17
Pierre	25	38	52	55	55	54	47	43	23	16	15	14	14
Redfield	16	31	47	52	55	55	47	44	29	23	21	16	9
Sisseton	15	23	40	52	54	54	48	44	30	25	22	18	10
Watertown	16	25	43	52	55	55	51	45	31	26	23	18	10
Webster	21	30	45	52	55	56	51	45	30	26	23	18	10
Wheaton	12	21	29	44	54	54	45	41	29	25	23	20	12

Winds will be strengthening through the day Tuesday to be sustained around 25-40 mph and gusting up to 65 mph, with strongest winds occurring during the afternoon. These strong winds could cause damage to property and potentially cause power outages. Additionally, the strong winds during the night in north-eastern SD where falling snow will start falling could cause areas of blowing snow and reduced visibility.

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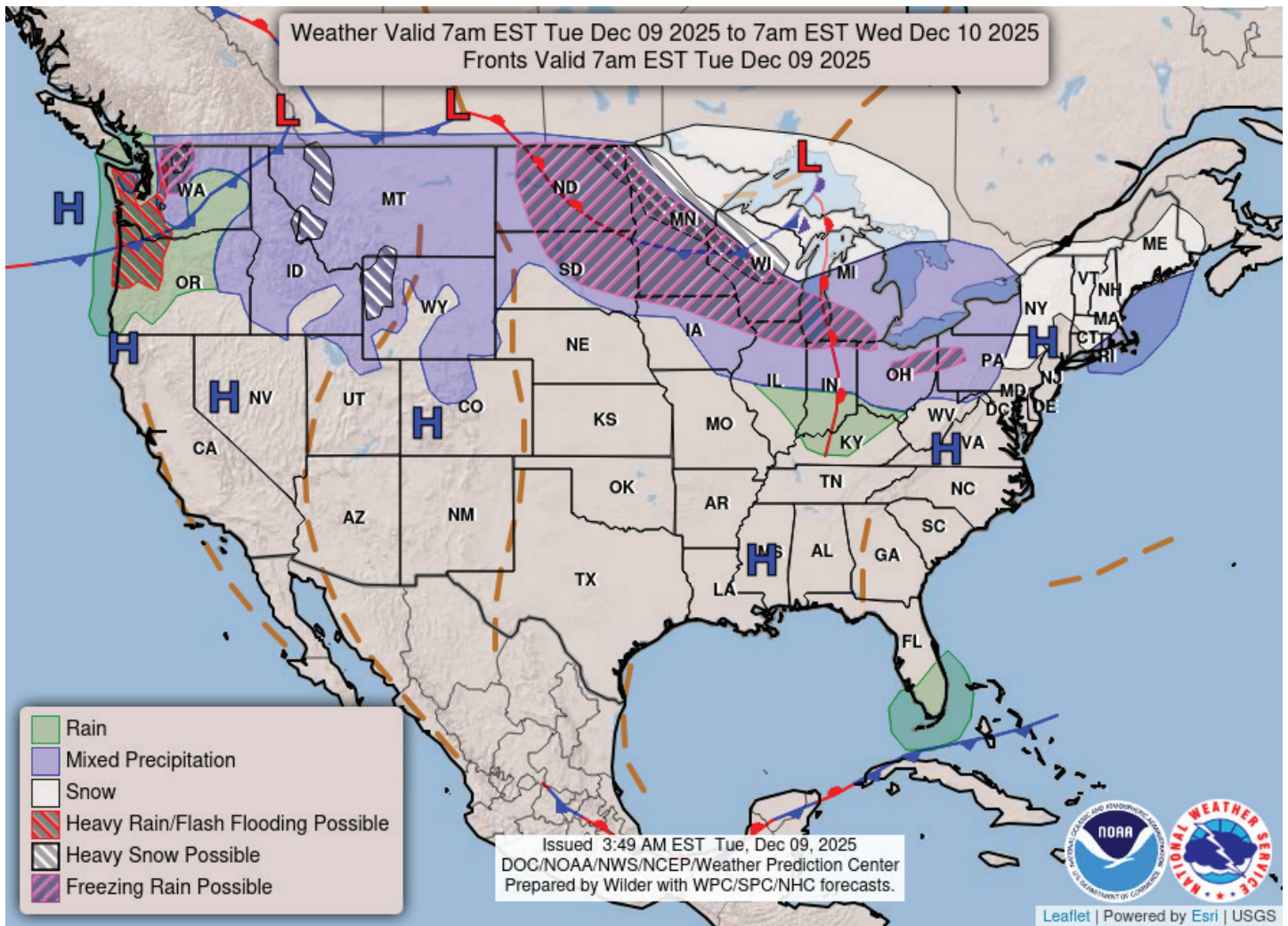
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 25 °F at 3:12 PM
Low Temp: 13 °F at 12:02 AM
Wind: 20 mph at 4:43 PM
Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 62 in 2020
Record Low: -27 in 1955
Average High: 31
Average Low: 10
Average Precip in Dec.: 0.18
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.28
Average Precip to date: 21.39
Precip Year to Date: 25.09
Sunset Tonight: 4:49 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:01 am



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Today in Weather History

December 9, 1961: A snowstorm moved through the area and dropped 3 to 6 inches of snow east of the Missouri River and 1 to 3 inches to the west of the river from late afternoon on the 8th through late afternoon on the 9th. The storm was accompanied by high winds, blowing snow, icy highways, and temperatures falling to near zero. Three men were killed and one injured in a two-car crash near Watertown as snow and blowing snow sharply reduced visibilities. A skidding accident on a slippery highway near Winner resulted in an automobile fatality of one man. In a rural area near Vale, in Meade County, one man abandoned his stalled vehicle and was found the next day, frozen to death. 6 inches of snow fell at Sisseton and Wheaton, with 5 inches at Aberdeen and Watertown and 3 inches at Mobridge. Only an inch fell at Pierre.

December 9, 1917: A severe winter storm struck the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes Region. It produced 25 inches of snow and wind gusts to 78 mph at Buffalo NY. The storm produced 26 inches of snow at Vevay Indiana, with drifts fourteen feet high.

December 9, 2003: Although it never threatened land, a subtropical storm became Tropical Storm Peter approx. 700 miles WNW of the Cape Verde Islands. Combined with Tropical Storm Odette from earlier in the month, this is the first time since 1887 that two tropical storms formed in the Atlantic Basin in December.

1786 - A second great snowstorm in just five days brought another 15 inches of snow to Morristown NJ, on top of the eight inches which fell on the 7th and 8th, and the 18 inches which fell on the 4th and 5th. The total snowfall for the week was thus 41 inches. New Haven CT received 17 inches of new snow in the storm. Up to four feet of snow covered the ground in eastern Massachusetts following the storms. (9th-10th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - The fifth storm in nine days kept the northwestern U.S. wet and windy. Winds along the coast of Washington gusted to 75 mph at Oceans Shores and at Hoquiam, and the northern and central coastal mountains of Oregon were drenched with three inches of rain in ten hours, flooding some rivers. Snowfall totals in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State ranged up to 36 inches in the Methow Valley. High winds in Oregon blew a tree onto a moving automobile killing three persons and injuring two others at Mill City. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A winter storm blanketed the Southern and Central Appalachians with up to ten inches of snow. Arctic air invaded the north central U.S. bringing subzero cold to Minnesota and North Dakota. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - A strong storm produced wind gusts of 40 to 65 mph from the Alaska Peninsula to the North Gulf Coast of Alaska. Southeasterly winds gusted to 75 mph in the Anchorage hillside. Gusty winds associated with a strong cold front caused a power outage across much of the island of Hawaii. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - Although it never threatened land, a subtropical storm became Tropical Storm Peter approx. 700 miles WNW of the Cape Verde Islands. Combined with Tropical Storm Odette from earlier in the month, this is the first time since 1887 that two tropical storms formed in the Atlantic Basin in December. Tropical Storm Peter was located over the Atlantic Ocean near 20.3S 37.1E at 17:00 UTC. Peter had been moving northward at 10 knots with maximum sustained winds estimated at 60 knots, gusts to 75 knots.

Clean Feet, Clean Heart Humbly serving others glorifies our Savior.

John 13:3-15: 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.

6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet."

Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me."

9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"

10 Jesus answered, "Those who have had a bath need only to wash their feet; their whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean.

12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

In ancient Israel, sandaled feet got filthy after a day of walking. It was customary for a person entering a home to remove his sandals and clean his feet. Or, if the homeowners were wealthy, servants would do the washing. This distasteful but necessary task fell to the worker of lowest position in the household.

Imagine the disciples' surprise when the Son of God put Himself in the role of a lowly servant and knelt to clean their feet. The need for such a service was great, but not one of them offered to do it. Jesus did more than fill a need; He offered an object lesson, explaining, "I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you" (John 13:15).

Jesus desires that we be willing to humble ourselves to serve others. He is looking for men and women who will ignore pride, position, and power in order to do whatever must be done, wherever it needs doing, and for whoever requires assistance.

Jesus performed this humble act of service the day before His trial and crucifixion. Yes, He washed dirty feet, using the same hands that would be pierced by nails. He took the time to show us that every task God gives us, no matter how "lowly," is important to His kingdom.

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:
12.05.25

34 38 42 44 69 8

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$60,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 7 Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.08.25

7 10 32 33 35 3

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$9,060,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 22 Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.08.25

11 14 28 30 41 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 37 Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.06.25

5 8 17 21 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$116,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 37 Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.08.25

22 26 54 64 65 1

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 6 Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
12.08.25

8 32 52 56 64 23

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$930,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 6 Mins 9 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Canton 58, Vermillion 51
Elkton-Lake Benton 63, Sioux Falls Lutheran 41
Hill City 54, Hot Springs 8
Rapid City Stevens 62, Douglas 18
Tea 56, Sioux City, North, Iowa 25

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

Rogers credits Campbell for making Iowa State job too good to pass up and setting him up for success

By ERIC OLSON AP College Football Writer

Jimmy Rogers admired Iowa State football from afar as Matt Campbell was leading the Cyclones through the best 10 years in program history, and he had designs on the coaching job long before it was open.

So much so, in fact, that when athletic director Jamie Pollard offered him the opportunity to be Campbell's successor, Rogers accepted before he was even told what he would be paid.

The 38-year-old Rogers signed a six-year contract that initially will pay him \$3 million per year, about double his salary in his one season at Washington State.

The Cyclones were 72-55 and played in six bowls under Campbell, who was hired last week to replace James Franklin at Penn State. Iowa State finished 8-4 this season, with the players voting to not play in a bowl.

"Matt Campbell is an unbelievable person, and I would be remiss if I didn't bring him up," Rogers said at his introductory news conference Monday. "What he's done for this university the last decade, how he's built the program, build a culture where the players love their coach. To walk into an unbelievable opportunity... a large part of what Iowa State is and what the football program has become is due to Matt Campbell, and I'm thankful for him and that friendship."

Rogers grew up in Chandler, Arizona, and was a walk-on linebacker at South Dakota State under long-time coach John Stiegelmeier. Rogers was on the SDSU staff for 10 years before he replaced the retiring Stiegelmeier after the 2022 season. Rogers led the Jackrabbits for two years, going unbeaten and winning the Championship Subdivision national title in 2023. He left for Washington State after last season and was 6-6 in his only year with the Cougars.

"I didn't take the Washington State job and move across the country to abandon (the school) in one year. I didn't," he said.

But the opportunity to chase Big 12 championships and College Football Playoff bids at Iowa State was too good to pass up, he said. Also, his wife, Haley, is from Mitchell, South Dakota, so moving closer to family was a strong pull.

Rogers indicated several members of his Washington State staff would join him at ISU. Rogers is a defensive specialist, and he said he planned to install a four-man front, a departure from the 3-3-5 alignment for which former coordinator Jon Heacock was known.

Rogers said he met with players Sunday night and described them as shaken by Campbell's sudden departure.

"The fact it feels this way and that you feel the pain and hurt, it's a credit to coach Campbell that there's this feeling inside of you," Rogers said he told the players. "I think that's a great sign of great coaching as far as how they were loved and treated inside of this program, but they're not going to be treated much different."

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Rogers said he hopes to retain the majority of the roster but knows a number of players will leave, including some who will follow Campbell to Penn State.

Pollard said he first met Rogers when they were paired at a professional development workshop in Austin, Texas.

"There was an immediate bond," Pollard said, with Rogers sitting next to him Monday. "The first time we talked, you asked me, 'What do I have to do to be the next head coach at Iowa State if coach Campbell leaves?' That's what we spent the bulk of the time talking about during that 48 hours. I immediately sensed his maturity, his laser focus."

The next time they talked was Friday on the phone.

"I said, 'I need to know one thing: If coach Campbell leaves, and I offer you the job, and I offer you...' and he said, 'Stop. You don't have to tell me what you're going to pay me. The answer is yes. I'm taking the job. I trust you. Don't worry about what you're paying me,'" Pollard said. "That should tell you all you need to know about how much this man wanted to be here."

Hispanic population thrives in one small South Dakota town

By MOLLY WETSCH/South Dakota News Watch South Dakota News Watch

Of the just 768 people who call Plankinton, South Dakota home, 163 identify as Hispanic, according to the 2023 American Community Survey. That's 1 in 5 people — far higher than the state's total proportion of Hispanic individuals, which sits at around 4% of the population.

Churches are working to provide Spanish language services and interpretation technology. The town's elementary school is one of the few of its size in the state to have an English as a Second Language (ESL) education program. And non-Hispanic residents, at a recent city council meeting, said they are looking into starting adult Spanish classes to "reach out more effectively with our Hispanic neighbors."

It's indicative of a larger trend in South Dakota, where diversity in rural communities grows as job opportunities flourish, in part due to new agricultural processing plants popping up in the central part of the state. It also demonstrates how non-Hispanic community members are embracing the new diversity in their towns.

Huron, 60 miles north of Plankinton, is the seat of Beadle County, which has the highest percentage of Hispanic residents in the state. But Plankinton's Aurora County, which has just one-seventh of Beadle's population, is the second-highest.

As diversity in rural areas increase, community members have come together to provide services that benefit those who speak Spanish as their primary home language.

More statewide interpretive and other Spanish services

Ivan Romero, vice president of the Sioux Falls-based South Dakota Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, said that statewide, people are seeing the benefits of increased diversity — even in small towns like Plankinton.

"In the past, it was really difficult for people to get services in their language. Going to the doctor you would need an interpreter and it would be difficult to find one. Daily necessities became difficult because of the language barriers that might've been there. But now, we do have a larger Hispanic population and not just people that cook. We also have people that are working professionals," he said.

"There's attorneys, real estate agents. There are doctors that speak Spanish, whereas a few years ago, even five years ago, we didn't see that. So that makes people comfortable. To have somebody that understands their culture and their language and is able to interact with them on a professional level. We have CPAs, we have accountants, we have just all kinds of folks that do speak Spanish, and are Hispanic as well, providing services through the wider community."

Worship services a key site of community gathering

Herman Perez has called South Dakota home for over a decade. A native of Puerto Rico, he's served missions across Central America, most recently in Mexico, but rural South Dakota has ended up an unexpected place for Spanish-language support needs.

Iglesia Renuevo, which means Renew Church in English, Perez's Spanish-language church service, has

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partnered with Sunnycrest United Methodist Church in Sioux Falls and the United Methodist Church of Plankinton to offer regular services in Spanish.

Perez said that the services in Plankinton have drawn in people from surrounding communities of White Lake, Mount Vernon and Stickney as well as town residents.

"Sometimes we have 10, 15 people, but we sometimes have up to 80 people in one service," Perez said. "Plankinton is a really small town. But they've got a really, really big population of Hispanics, and that's why we took advantage of that, started to open a service there once a week, and it's just a blessing for everybody."

Interpretive services have been available in larger cities for a while. But in more rural areas, gaps still exist. Plankinton, because of its large community and availability of Spanish-friendly services, has become somewhat of a gathering space for Hispanic people from nearby communities where the population is smaller, Perez said.

"Almost all of the people (in Plankinton) are very welcoming. You go to Mount Vernon, and they only have one Spanish family," Perez told News Watch. "You know, all of the little cities, like Kimball only has two families. But most of the people in the community (of Plankinton) are very welcoming, so they go there."

Romero said that, while the population is growing across the state, there are still barriers to be faced regarding the community's integration into conversation across the state. He said that many Hispanic people want to see greater collaboration between Hispanic and non-Hispanic people — even outside of important cultural times like Hispanic Heritage Month and Día de los Muertos.

"What I would want people to understand is that we are part of the community, we're not just an add-on to the community. We are the community," Romero said.

"People want our voice and our number at that moment when it's needed and convenient, but then after that we get forgotten. That's the biggest thing, is that we also sit at the table because we are in the same kitchen."

Immigration enforcement casts shadow, but ultimately brings community together

Immigration enforcement efforts have ramped up across the country in the past several months. In July, Gov. Larry Rhoden announced Operation: Prairie Thunder, a collaborative initiative focusing on both broadly targeting crime and working with immigration officials.

That operation was originally announced to run from August to December. But a spokesperson from the governor's office told News Watch that, "Our results remain impressive, and it is clear that this operation is keeping South Dakota strong, safe, and free — so we are going to keep it up!"

The majority of foreign-born people in South Dakota are Latin American, though other populations are not far behind, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. The title "foreign-born," though, does not indicate citizenship or other legal immigration status.

While those circumstances have caused some fear among residents, it has mostly created a sense of unity among the community that he serves, Perez said.

"People are in fear, but they cannot live in fear. In our case, we hear of more people coming to church after (immigration activity) happens," he said. "Churches are a very safe place for people, and they feel very welcomed and very safe there. When things get difficult, it's where they go."

Romero said that Hispanic-owned businesses have told him that they are seeing a decrease in business activity, as their community members leave the house less for leisure activity. He hopes that other people living in areas with Hispanic-owned businesses step in to support the business owners who have been feeling the pinch for several months.

"I'd just ask that people come out and support local Mexican restaurants, Hispanic restaurants, ethnic restaurants because the traffic is down. So not only is that gonna hurt the business owner, but it also hurts the employees that are not getting their hours. And then it's a ripple effect because now those people can't come to the hair salon and get a haircut. People are cautious about going out. They're also cautious about sharing information online, just because they don't want to get in trouble."

Romero said that while the day-to-day activities of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce have changed,

the mission remains the same: to uplift the Hispanic community in the state and provide services that allow businesses to thrive.

"We're playing a different role now. We're out advocating and trying to drum up more business. We're playing a different role than we were six months ago, for sure."

For Perez, towns like Plankinton remind him of the need to expand services in more areas of the state. He said that Iglesia Renuevo is looking to expand farther west in the coming months. But he hopes Plankinton's Hispanic community will continue to appreciate the services it provides.

"What a blessing, working with people in Plankinton," Perez said.

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Cambodia vows fierce fight against Thailand in escalating border conflict

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI and SOPHENG CHEANG Associated Press

SURIN, Thailand (AP) — Cambodia's powerful Senate President Hun Sen on Tuesday vowed that his country would carry out a fierce fight against Thailand as a second day of widespread renewed combat between the Southeast Asian neighbors drove tens of thousands of people to flee border areas.

Fighting broke out following a skirmish on Sunday during which two Thai soldiers were injured, derailing a ceasefire that ended fighting over competing territorial claims in July. The five days of fighting then left dozens dead on both sides, and forced the evacuation of over 100,000 civilians.

Both sides vow to keep fighting

In a sign that neither side was willing to back down, Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said Tuesday that Cambodia had not yet contacted Thailand about possible negotiations and the fighting would continue.

"We've got to do what we've got to do," he said. "The government will support all kinds of military operations as planned earlier." He had said Monday that military action was necessary to safeguard the nation's sovereignty and ensure public safety.

In a statement posted to Facebook and Telegram, Hun Sen claimed that his country had refrained from retaliating on Monday, but overnight began to fire back at Thai forces, saying Cambodia would "weaken and destroy enemy forces through counterattacks."

Thailand's military said Cambodia attacked Thai positions with artillery and rocket and drone attacks on Tuesday. Thailand says that Cambodian forces also fired at its troops Sunday and Monday, but each side blames the other for firing the first shots.

"Cambodia wants peace, but Cambodia is forced to fight back to defend its territory," Hun Sen wrote. He was Cambodia's long-serving prime minister until 2023, when he was succeeded by his son Hun Manet, but is still widely seen as the country's de facto leader.

Cambodia's military announced Tuesday that the new fighting had killed seven civilians and wounded 20. A Thai military spokesperson announced Tuesday that three soldiers have been killed in the new fighting.

Thailand on Monday carried out airstrikes along the frontier, which it said were a defensive action targeting military installations. Thai military spokesperson Rear Adm. Surasant Kongsiri said Tuesday that such operations would continue "until attacks stop."

Villagers on both sides flee to safety

Ordinary citizens meanwhile had to deal with life after being relocated from the danger zones.

An evacuation shelter at a university in Thailand's northeastern city of Surin is hosting more than 3,600 people. Evacuees sit or lie on thin mats spread across the floor, and several have set up small tents in their allotted areas as sleeping spaces.

At lunchtime, some line up with their own plates to receive cooked rice, while others wait in place to be served ready-to-eat meals packed in small plastic bags. An army band plays for their entertainment.

Portable fans cool them during the day. Blankets, in piles beside them, keep them warm at night, when

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temperatures can fall to as low as 18 C (64 F).

"We were preparing to evacuate. We hadn't left yet. But when we heard shots we hurried out immediately," cassava farmer Pan-ngam Kanchangthong told The Associated Press. "I was scared. Who wouldn't be scared of shelling?"

The Thai army said almost 500 temporary shelters have been set up in four border provinces, accommodating 125,838 people. Additionally displaced people from the fighting are expected to stay with relatives in safe areas.

Evacuees on the Cambodian side had similar experiences.

"I felt terrified when I heard the sound of the explosion from the shelling. At that time, I was working at the garment factory," said 44-year-old Vach Neang, a father of seven.

"I called my wife and my kids but couldn't reach them, and by that time the sound of explosions was getting louder, so the factory owner let us go home," said Vach Neang, speaking at a former market in Cambodia's northwestern province of Banteay Meanchey that has been repurposed as a shelter. He added that he packed just a few clothes before leaving his home.

Cambodian Information Minister Neth Pheaktra said almost 55,000 people have been evacuated and the numbers are mounting.

The two nations have a history of ill will

Thailand and Cambodia have a history of enmity over centuries and experience periodic tensions along their land border of more than 800 kilometers (500 miles). Centuries ago both were powerful empires, but Thailand's size and greater development over the past century give it the military advantage.

Some of the disputed territory hosts centuries-old temples that both nations covet as part of their legacy.

The ceasefire that ended July's fighting was brokered by Malaysia and pushed through by pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump, who threatened to withhold trade privileges from the two nations unless they agreed to it.

A more detailed agreement signed in October called for removing heavy weapons from the border; desisting from disseminating false information and harmful rhetoric; implementing measures to restore mutual trust; and coordinating operations to remove land mines.

None of these actions appear to have been fully implemented by either side. After the ceasefire, both nations continued to fight a bitter propaganda war using disinformation, alongside minor outbreaks of cross-border violence.

Prisoners and land mines have been sticky issues

A major Cambodian complaint has been that Thailand continues to hold 18 prisoners who were taken captive the same day the ceasefire went into effect. Thailand claims they approached its positions in a threatening manner, an allegation denied by Phnom Penh.

Meanwhile, Thailand accuses Cambodia of laying new land mines in the areas under dispute, in several cases maiming Thai soldiers. Cambodia says the mines are left over from decades of civil war that ended in 1999.

The mines issue caused Thailand to declare earlier this month that it was indefinitely pausing implementation of the details of the ceasefire until Cambodia apologized for the latest incident wounding Thai soldiers.

Trump's ceasefire plan for the Israel-Hamas war faces pitfalls as it moves into a new phase

By JOSEF FEDERMAN Associated Press

DOHA, Qatar (AP) — With the remains of one hostage still in Gaza, the first phase of the U.S.-brokered ceasefire in the war between Israel and Hamas is nearly complete, after a two-month process plagued by delays and finger-pointing.

Now, the key players — including Israel, the Palestinian militant Hamas group, the United States and a diverse list of international parties — are to move to a far more complicated second phase that could

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reshape the Middle East.

U.S. President Donald Trump's 20-point plan — which was approved by the U.N. Security Council — lays out an ambitious vision for ending Hamas' rule of Gaza. If successful, it would see the rebuilding of a demilitarized Gaza under international supervision, normalized relations between Israel and the Arab world and a possible pathway to Palestinian independence.

But if the deal stalls, Gaza could be trapped in an unstable limbo for years to come, with Hamas remaining in control of parts of the territory, Israel's army enforcing an open-ended occupation and its residents stuck homeless, unemployed, unable to travel abroad and dependent on international aid to stay alive.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, the prime minister of Qatar and a key mediator, said over the weekend that the ceasefire is at a critical point, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is set to travel to the White House this month to discuss the next steps.

Here is a closer look at the next stages of the ceasefire and the potential pitfalls.

Troops for Gaza

Trump's plan calls for the formation of an international force — known as International Stabilization Force — to maintain security and train Palestinian police to one day to take over. That force has not yet been formed, and a deployment date has not been announced.

Some countries — including Egypt, Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan and Indonesia — have expressed willingness to participate. But no firm decisions have been made.

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss diplomatic talks, says partner countries are holding meetings this month to finalize operations. He predicted "boots on the ground" in early 2026.

But there are pitfalls. The force's command structure and authorities remain unknown.

Hamas says it will oppose any attempts by the force to disarm it, and contributing nations may not want to risk clashes to take away its weapons. Israel, meanwhile, is hesitant to trust an international body with its security needs.

Board of Peace

Trump has said he will head an international board to supervise a committee of Palestinian technocrats running Gaza's day-to-day affairs. The board will oversee reconstruction and an open-ended reform process by the Palestinian Authority, with the goal of one day allowing the internationally recognized authority to govern Gaza.

So far, Trump is the only board member officially named, though former British Prime Minister Tony Blair's name has been floated as a possibility. Another U.S. official, also speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss closed-door deliberations, says members of the board will be announced in the coming weeks.

The key challenge will be forming a board that can work with Israel, Hamas, the mediators and international aid agencies.

Reconstruction

Trump's plan calls for an economic development plan to "rebuild and energize Gaza," which suffered widespread destruction during the war and where most of the territory's 2 million people are displaced and unemployed.

Still, no such plan has been announced. Egypt is expected to host a conference this month for donor nations to pledge reconstruction aid.

The United Nations has estimated the cost of rebuilding Gaza would amount to \$70 billion. Raising that money will be difficult. Even more difficult would be finding a plan acceptable to the many governments involved, along with their private sector partners.

Disarmament

The ceasefire deal calls for Hamas to surrender all of its weapons under the supervision of international monitors. Militants who disarm will be granted amnesty and the option to leave Gaza.

However, Hamas, whose ideology is based on armed resistance against Israel, says it will not disarm until Israel ends its occupation of Palestinian territories.

Bassem Naim, a senior Hamas official, told The Associated Press that the group is open to "freezing or storing" its weapons while a political process takes place, perhaps over many years. It is unclear whether

that is sufficient for Israel.

Failure to disarm Hamas could lead to renewed fighting with Israel, clashes with international troops and block progress on the rest of the peace plan.

A Palestinian government

The Palestinians are to form a "technocratic, apolitical" committee to run daily affairs in Gaza, under the supervision of the Board of Peace.

The committee's members have not been announced and Israel's opposition to having any Palestinians connected to Hamas or the Palestinian Authority on it could make choosing them more difficult.

It is also not clear if the committee will give Palestinians any real voice in the government or will exist only to implement decisions by the Board of Peace. If the committee is seen as just a façade, it risks not gaining public support and some figures may balk at joining it.

Israeli withdrawals

Under the ceasefire, Israel is to withdraw from all of Gaza, with the exception of a small buffer zone along the border. At the moment, Israel retains control of just over half of Gaza.

The plan says further withdrawals will be based upon "standards, milestones and timeframes linked to demilitarization" to be negotiated by Israel, the U.S., the international force and other "guarantors."

There are no firm timelines for further withdrawals, and Israel may refuse to pull back further. Its military chief, Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, called the so-called Yellow Line that divides the Israeli-held part of Gaza from the rest a "new border" that would serve as a "forward defensive line for our communities."

Palestinian Authority

The plan calls for a reform of the Palestinian Authority, which runs the West Bank, and create conditions for a "credible pathway" to Palestinian statehood.

Palestinian officials have met with Blair and U.S. officials, and have said they have begun reforms in key areas such as corruption, the education system and payments to families of prisoners convicted in attacks on Israelis.

Israel rejects the creation of a Palestinian state, opposes any role for the authority in postwar Gaza and may oppose attempts to bring it in even if some reforms are made. Without a pathway to statehood, any Palestinian support for the new system could crumble. The plan also offers no clear benchmarks or timelines for the reform process.

ICE arrests of Afghans are on the rise in the wake of National Guard attack, immigration lawyers say

By SAHAR AKBARZAI, MARTHA BELLISLE, REBECCA SANTANA and JULIE WATSON Associated Press SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — On a recent afternoon, Giselle Garcia, a volunteer who has been helping an Afghan family resettle, drove the father to a check-in with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. She warned him and his family to prepare for the worst.

The moment the father stepped into the ICE office in California's capital city, he was arrested.

Coming just days after the shooting of two National Guard troops by an Afghan national suspect, federal authorities have carried out increased arrests of Afghans in the U.S., immigration lawyers say as Afghans both in and outside the country have come under intense scrutiny by immigration officials.

Garcia said the family she helped had reported to all their appointments and were following all legal requirements.

"He was trying to be strong for his wife and kids in the car, but the anxiety and fear were palpable," she said. "His wife was trying to hold back tears, but I could see her in the rearview mirror silently crying."

They had fled Afghanistan under threat by the Taliban because the wife's father had assisted the U.S. military, and they had asked for asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border, Garcia said. She is not identifying him or his family for fear other members could be arrested.

Afghan men arrested in wake of shooting

Since the Nov. 26 Guard shooting, The Associated Press has tracked roughly two dozen arrests of Afghan

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immigrants, most of which happened in Northern California. In Sacramento, home to one of the nation's largest Afghan communities, volunteers monitoring ICE activities say they witnessed at least nine arrests at the federal building last week after Afghan men received calls to check in there.

Many of those detained had requested asylum at the U.S.-Mexico border in the last two years. Others were among the 76,000 Afghans brought to the U.S. under Operation Allies Welcome, created by former President Joe Biden's administration after the chaotic withdrawal of the U.S. from their country.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Dec. 1 that the Trump administration is "actively re-examining" all the Afghan nationals who entered the U.S. during Biden's administration.

The AP couldn't independently determine each of the Afghans' immigration statuses or the reasons put forward by authorities for their arrests. In one case, the man had been arrested twice on suspicion of domestic violence, according to the government.

Tricia McLaughlin, a spokesperson for the Department of Homeland, said in an email that the agency "has been going full throttle on identifying and arresting known or suspected terrorists and criminal illegal aliens that came in through Biden's fraudulent parole programs and working to get the criminals and public safety threats OUT of our country."

Rahmanullah Lakanwal, the 29-year-old Afghan suspect in the shooting, was granted asylum earlier this year, according to advocate group #AfghanEvac.

Critics say Afghans paying price for one bad actor

Since the shooting, the U.S. government introduced sweeping immigration changes, including pausing asylum applications and requiring increased vetting for immigrants from certain countries. The administration also took steps specifically targeted at Afghans, including pausing all their immigration-related applications and visas for Afghans who closely helped the war effort.

Those who work with Afghans say the stepped-up enforcement amounts to the collective punishment of a population, many of whom risked their lives to protect U.S. troops.

"Not to discount the horrific killing that happened, but that was one bad actor who should be prosecuted by the full extent of the law," Democratic Rep. Ami Bera, whose California district includes Sacramento, said of Lakanwal. "A lot of these people kept our troops safe and served side by side with our soldiers for two decades in Afghanistan."

Cuffed after reporting to ICE

In Sacramento, Afghan men arrived one by one to the ICE office Dec. 1 after being asked to immediately report there, drawing the attention of volunteers who have been at the federal building for more than six months to monitor ICE activities and alert immigrants.

As each man entered the office, agents handcuffed them, said Garcia, a volunteer with NorCal Resist.

"What we saw on Monday was an influx of Afghan immigrants called randomly starting at 6 a.m. and asked to do a check-in and report immediately," Garcia said. "Most of these Afghan men already had ankle monitors on them."

Her organization's volunteers witnessed ICE arrest six Afghans that day.

Arrests and cancellations cause fear

In Des Moines, Iowa, Ann Naffier, with the Iowa Migrant Movement for Justice, said her Afghan client was detained Dec. 2 on the way to work by agents who called him a "terrorist." He was held for two hours before he was released with an apology.

Wahida Noorzad is an immigration attorney in Northern California who has two Afghan clients who were arrested last week by ICE. Both entered the U.S. in recent years through the southern border. One used the app set up by the Biden administration to make an appointment to request asylum at the border.

Noorzad felt both had strong cases to eventually be granted asylum in the U.S. She also said she found no criminal records for them.

Spojmie Nasiri, another immigration attorney in Northern California, said she's received numerous calls from worried Afghans, including a man who called her terrified as agents stood outside his home. He put her on speaker phone so she could tell them that her client was a U.S. citizen.

Iqbal Wafa, an Afghan immigration consultant in Sacramento, said officials told his client when he went

to his appointment last week that that interviews for Afghans are canceled, and he observed interviews for other Afghan immigrants were canceled as well inside a federal building in Sacramento.

A family left crying

Garcia said she listened through the wall of the waiting room at the ICE office and heard agents handcuff the father of the family she was helping.

"I'm screaming his rights through the wall so he could hear me. 'Remain silent! Please don't sign anything!'" she said. She left after security approached.

When she walked out of the building without him, she said his wife broke down sobbing.

Their daughter tried to console her, telling her, "Mommy, don't cry. Everything will be OK when daddy comes."

Takeover bid of parent company means limbo for CNN, some fellow cable networks

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

Paramount Skydance's hostile takeover bid of Warner Bros. Discovery, announced Monday, places CNN and its sister cable networks squarely back into what is likely to be an extended period of management limbo.

There was some relief at CNN with last Friday's announcement that Netflix was buying Warner's studio and streaming businesses, since the cable network would not be a part of that deal. Paramount's bid, if successful, opens the possibility of a combined CNN and CBS News.

The management uncertainty adds to what is already a challenging time at CNN, where there was no doubt who was in charge before swashbuckling founder Ted Turner sold his company in 1996. "That era might as well be the roaring '20s for how long ago it feels," said Ross Benes, senior analyst at emarketer.com.

Paramount's bid, which must be approved by shareholders and regulators, could be seen favorably by President Donald Trump, who is closely allied with Paramount Skydance chairman and CEO David Ellison as well as his father, Oracle founder Larry Ellison. But Trump has already expressed anger at the company on social media for Sunday's "60 Minutes" report on former U.S. Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene.

Prior to Friday's announcement, Warner Bros. Discovery had said it planned to spin off its cable television networks including CNN, Discovery, HGTV, the Food Network and TLC, into a separate company. The growth of streaming has made cable networks an unattractive business.

CNN's television ratings have tumbled to the extent that it is firmly the third-rated cable news network behind Fox News Channel and MS NOW, formerly MSNBC. Its CEO, Mark Thompson, has aggressively moved into digital with a new subscription service and said that management of Discovery Global, the spinoff company, has already approved a 2026 budget investing in the plan.

"I know this strategic review has been a period of inevitable uncertainty across CNN and indeed the whole of WBD," Thompson told staff in a memo Friday. "Of course, I can't promise you that the media attention and noise around the sale of our parent will die down overnight. But I do think the path to the successful transformation of this great news enterprise remains open."

Thompson had no additional comment on Monday, a spokeswoman said.

Since Paramount's takeover of CBS News this past summer, the network has taken steps to appeal to more conservative viewers with the installation of Free Press founder Bari Weiss as editor-in-chief. Weiss is moderating a prime-time discussion this weekend with Erika Kirk, widow of slain conservative activist Charlie Kirk.

During an appearance on CNBC Monday, Ellison answered, "yeah," when asked if he would combine CNN's newsgathering operation with CBS News. What exactly that means is unclear.

"We want to build a scaled news service that is basically, fundamentally, in the trust business, that is in the truth business, and that speaks to the 70% of Americans that are in the middle," Ellison said.

Trump has spoken highly of both Ellison and his billionaire father. But he was clearly angry about Lesley Stahl's "60 Minutes" interview with former MAGA supporter Greene, who broke with him and recently resigned from Congress. Trump said on Truth Social that his real problem with the show is that the new corporate ownership allowed it to air.

"THEY ARE NO BETTER THAN THE OLD OWNERSHIP," Trump said, adding he believed that "60 Minutes" had gotten worse from his perspective since the changeover.

CNN is not likely to find out soon who its new owners would be. Even before the Paramount bid, experts had predicted the Netflix deal would face more than a year of regulatory hurdles.

And if Netflix eventually wins, emarketer.com's Benes predicted it would be likely that the spinoff company, Discovery Global, would be shopped around to other buyers.

"CNN will be in limbo for a while no matter which bidder purchases CNN," he said.

Democratic Rep. Jasmine Crockett announces US Senate bid in Texas, tells Trump 'I'm coming for you'

By BILL BARROW and JOHN HANNA Associated Press

Democratic Rep. Jasmine Crockett launched a campaign Monday for the U.S. Senate in Texas, telling President Donald Trump, "I'm coming for you," and bringing a national profile to what could be a critical race for Democrats' long-shot hopes of reclaiming a Senate majority in next year's midterm elections.

Crockett, one of Congress' most outspoken Democrats, a frequent target of GOP attacks and a Trump target, jumped into the race on the final day of qualifying in Texas. She is seeking the Senate seat held by Republican John Cornyn, who is running for reelection in the GOP-dominated state.

"As a candidate who is constantly attacked and seen as a threat, it's because I am," Crockett told supporters in Dallas. "I'm the only one who has gone toe to toe with Donald Trump, and there's a reason he's always got my name in his mouth."

Democrats need a net gain of four Senate seats to wrest control from Republicans next November, when most of the seats up for reelection are in states like Texas that President Donald Trump won last year. Democrats have long hoped to make Texas more competitive after decades of Republican dominance. Cornyn, first elected to the Senate since 2002, is facing the toughest GOP primary of his career against Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton and U.S. Rep. Wesley Hunt.

Crockett's announcement came hours after former Rep. Colin Allred ended his own campaign for the Democratic nomination in favor of attempting a House comeback bid. She faces a March 3 primary against Democratic state Rep. James Talarico, a former teacher with a rising national profile fueled by viral social media posts challenging Republican policies such as private school vouchers and requiring the Ten Commandments in classrooms.

"It's going to be a sprint from now until the primary, but in Texas you have to think about the voter base overall in November, too," said Kamau Marshall, a Democratic consultant who has worked for Allred before and worked on other campaigns in Texas. "Who can do the work on the ground? After the primary, who can win in the general?"

GOP hopes to make Crockett's style a liability

Talarico raised almost \$6.3 million in the three weeks after he formally organized his primary campaign committee in September and had nearly \$5 million in cash on hand at the end of the month, campaign finance reports showed. Crockett raised about \$2.7 million for her House campaign fund from July through September and ended September with \$4.6 million.

Crockett could test Democratic voters' appetite for a blunt communicator who is eager to take on Republicans as Democrats pursue their first statewide victory in Texas since 1994.

Republicans were quick Monday to try to turn Crockett's penchant for public clashes with opponents into liabilities. Paxton called her "Crazy Crockett."

Cornyn told reporters at the U.S. Capitol he was eager for the chance to face her.

"I think that would be a lot of fun," he said. "She just says such inflammatory and crazy things."

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Talarico welcomed Crockett to the Democratic primary but pointed to his fundraising and said he has 10,000 volunteers.

"Our movement is rooted in unity over division," he said in a statement.

Crockett speaks directly to Trump

Democrats see their best opportunity to pick up the Texas seat if Paxton wins the Republican nomination because he has been shadowed for much of his career by legal and personal issues. Yet Paxton is popular with Trump's most ardent supporters.

Hunt, who has served two terms representing a Houston-area district, defied GOP leaders by entering the GOP race.

Crockett told her cheering crowd in Dallas to "tune out" those who say she can't win in the GOP-dominated state because she is Black, a woman or a Democrat.

Ahead of her 43-minute speech, Crockett's campaign played a video of her with audio of Trump criticizing her playing over it, mocking the idea that she's represents the Democratic Party's future. Trump has called her a "low IQ person." In response, Crockett said she would agree to take an IQ test against the president.

Crockett addressed the president directly several times.

"You better get to work because I'm coming for you," she said. "I'm not going away. I'm not giving up."

Crockett is known for her viral moments

Crockett is a civil rights attorney and a former public defender and once the youngest Black Democratic county chair in Texas. She served in the Texas House before winning the first of her two terms in Congress in 2000.

She's built her national profile with a candid style and viral moments on Capitol Hill. Crockett traded insults with Republican Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, who announced last month that she would resign in January, and had heated exchanges with Rep. Nancy Mace of South Carolina.

She also mocked Republican Texas Gov. Greg Abbott — who uses a wheelchair — as "Gov. Hot Wheels." She later said she was referring to Abbott's policy of using "planes, trains and automobiles" to send thousands of immigrants in Texas illegally to Democratic-led cities.

Democrats' best showing in a statewide race in the past three decades was in 2018, when former U.S. Rep. Beto O'Rourke came within 3 points of ousting Republican Sen. Ted Cruz. It was the midterm election of Trump's first administration, and Democrats believe next year's race could be similarly favorable to their party.

A former professional football player and civil rights attorney, Allred was among Democrats' star recruits in 2018.

Allred lost to Cruz by 8.5 points last year. He is running for the House in a Dallas-Fort Worth area district under a new map approved this year by the GOP-controlled Texas Legislature to meet Trump's call for more winnable Republican seats. The district has some areas Allred represented for six years before his run for the Senate in 2024.

Allred says he wants to avoid a bruising primary

An internal party battle, Allred said, "would prevent the Democratic Party from going into this critical election unified against the danger posed to our communities and our Constitution by Donald Trump and one of his Republican bootlickers."

Marshall said Crockett is a "solid national figure" who has a large social media following and is a frequent presence on cable news. That could be an advantage with Democratic primary voters, Marshall said, but not necessarily afterward.

Talarico, meanwhile, must raise money and build name recognition to make the leap from the Texas House of Representatives to a strong statewide candidacy, Marshall said.

A winning Democratic candidate in Texas, Marshall said, would have to energize Black voters, mainly in metro Houston and Dallas, win the kind of diverse suburbs and exurbs like those Allred once represented in Congress, and get enough rural votes, especially among Latinos in the Rio Grande Valley.

"It's about building complicated coalitions in a big state," Marshall said.

Zelenskyy meets in London with European allies on the US peace plan and Ukrainian security

By JILL LAWLESS and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met British, French and German leaders in London on Monday in a show of European support for Ukraine at what they called a “critical moment” in the U.S.-led effort to end Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer held talks with Zelenskyy, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz at the British leader’s 10 Downing St. residence to try to strengthen Ukraine’s hand amid mounting impatience from U.S. President Donald Trump.

After the meeting, Starmer, Zelenskyy and the other leaders called Kyiv’s European allies, urging them to keep up the pressure on Russian President Vladimir Putin.

“The leaders all agreed that now is a critical moment and that we must continue to ramp up support to Ukraine and economic pressure on Putin to bring an end to this barbaric war,” Starmer’s office said in a statement.

“This is the furthest we’ve got in four years, and we welcome the fact that these talks are continuing at every level,” said Starmer’s spokesman, Tom Wells. He added that “intensive work” will continue in the days ahead, although “there are still outstanding issues.”

Macron’s office said the session allowed the leaders “to continue joint work on the U.S. plan in order to complement it with European contributions, in close coordination with Ukraine.”

Answering reporters’ questions in a WhatsApp chat later Monday, Zelenskyy said the current U.S. peace plan differs from earlier versions in that it now has 20 points, down from 28, after what he called some “obvious anti-Ukrainian points were removed.”

On security guarantees, Zelenskyy said the main questions to be resolved are: “What if after the end of the war, Russia will start another aggression? What will the partners be ready for? What could Ukraine count on?”

The answers to these questions “must be in the core of the security guarantees for Ukraine,” he said.

In an exchange with reporters on Sunday night, Trump appeared frustrated with Zelenskyy, claiming the Ukrainian leader “hasn’t yet read the proposal.”

Zelenskyy said Monday that Trump “certainly wants to end the war. ... Surely, he has his own vision. We live here, from within we see details and nuances, we perceive everything much deeper, because this is our motherland.”

Starmer, Macron and Merz took a more supportive stance toward Kyiv in comments before their Monday meeting, which lasted about two hours. The U.K. leader said the push for peace was at a “critical stage,” and stressed the need for “a just and lasting ceasefire.”

Merz, meanwhile, said he was “skeptical” about some details in documents released by the U.S. “We have to talk about it. That’s why we are here,” he said. “The coming days ... could be a decisive time for all of us.”

European leaders are working to ensure that any ceasefire is backed by solid security guarantees both from Europe and the U.S. to deter Russia from attacking again. Trump has not given explicit guarantees in public.

Zelenskyy said late Sunday that his talks with European leaders this week in London and Brussels will focus on security, air defense and long-term funding for Ukraine’s war effort. He said Monday that Ukraine needs support from both Europe and the U.S.

“There are some things we can’t manage without the Americans, things which we can’t manage without Europe, and that’s why we need to make some important decisions,” he said at Downing Street.

Starmer’s office said the leaders instructed their national security advisers to continue discussions in the coming days, underscoring “the need for a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, which includes robust security guarantees.”

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Obstacles in the peace plan

U.S. and Ukrainian negotiators completed three days of talks on Saturday aimed at trying to narrow differences on the U.S. administration's peace proposal.

Zelenskyy said on Telegram that talks had been "substantive" and that National Security and Defense Council Secretary Rustem Umerov and Chief of the General Staff Andrii Hnatov were traveling back to Europe to brief him.

A major sticking point in the plan is the suggestion that Kyiv must cede control of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine to Russia, which illegally occupies most but not all of the territory. Ukraine and its European allies have balked at the idea of handing over land.

Starmer said he "won't be putting pressure" on Zelenskyy to accept a peace settlement.

Trump has had a hot-and-cold relationship with Zelenskyy since winning a second term, insisting the war was a waste of U.S. taxpayers' money. Trump has also repeatedly urged the Ukrainians to cede land to Russia to end the nearly four-year conflict.

US releases national security strategy

The European talks follow the publication of a new U.S. national security strategy that alarmed European leaders and was welcomed by Russia.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the document, which spells out the administration's core foreign policy interests, was largely in line with Moscow's vision.

"The nuances that we see in the new concept certainly look appealing to us," he said Monday. "It mentions the need for dialogue and building constructive, friendly relations. This cannot but appeal to us, and it absolutely corresponds to our vision. We understand that by eliminating the irritants that currently exist in bilateral relations, a prospect may open for us to truly restore our relations and bring them out of the rather deep crisis."

The document released Friday by the White House said the U.S. wants to improve its relationship with Russia after years of Moscow being treated as a global pariah and that ending the war is a core U.S. interest to "reestablish strategic stability with Russia."

The document also says NATO must not be "a perpetually expanding alliance," echoing another complaint by Russia. It was scathing about the migration and free speech policies of longstanding U.S. allies in Europe, suggesting they face the "prospect of civilizational erasure" due to migration.

Starmer's government declined comment on the document, calling it a matter for the U.S. government.

Aerial attacks continue

Russia continued attacking Ukraine amid the diplomatic efforts. Its drones struck high-rise apartments in the northeastern Ukrainian city of Okhtyrka overnight, injuring seven people and extensively damaging the building, according to the head of the regional administration, Oleh Hryhorov.

In the northern city of Chernihiv, a Russian drone exploded outside a residential building, injuring three people and damaging a kindergarten, gas lines and cars, regional head Viacheslav Chaus said.

Ukraine's air force said Russia fired 149 drones overnight, with 131 neutralized and 16 others striking their targets.

Meanwhile, Russian air defenses destroyed 67 Ukrainian drones overnight, Russia's Defense Ministry said. The drones were shot down over 11 Russian regions, it said.

The new fighting between Thailand and Cambodia is rooted in old enmity

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A history of enmity between Thailand and Cambodia over competing territorial claims has broken into open combat again, just a few months after the two sides agreed to a ceasefire promoted by U.S. President Donald Trump to end their border fighting.

The two Southeast Asian nations fought in July for five days in and around disputed frontier territory,

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causing dozens of civilian and military deaths and the evacuation to safety of tens of thousands of villagers on both sides.

On Monday, the heaviest fighting since the ceasefire erupted. While it is unclear who took the first shot, Thailand launched airstrikes along the border as ground combat also broke out.

The dispute goes back to the early 20th century

Thailand and Cambodia have a history of enmity over centuries and experience periodic tensions along their land border of more than 800 kilometers (500 miles).

The competing territorial claims largely stem from a 1907 map created while Cambodia was under French colonial rule, which Thailand contends is inaccurate. Many Thais are still angered by a 1962 ruling by the International Court of Justice, which awarded sovereignty of disputed land to Cambodia — a decision reaffirmed in 2013. The disagreement fueled several armed clashes between 2008 and 2011.

The Trump-backed ceasefire was fragile

An uneasy peace was reached in late July, when Malaysia pushed for peace talks and President Trump brought the contending sides to the negotiating table by leveraging the importance of the U.S. market for both nations' exports, threatening to withhold crucial trade privileges.

Trump afterward claimed this intervention as one example among several from around the world where his actions led to peace between warring nations.

The preliminary pact was followed by a more detailed October agreement. Its terms called for coordination of de-mining operations, removal of heavy weapons and equipment from the border, implementation of measures to restore mutual trust, and desisting from harmful rhetoric and the dissemination of false information. None of these actions were implemented in full, if at all.

Both nations continued fighting a bitter propaganda war and there have been occasional minor outbreaks of cross-border violence.

A major Cambodian complaint has been that Thailand continues to hold 18 troops taken prisoner. Thailand accuses Cambodia of laying new land mines in the areas under dispute that maimed Thai soldiers. Cambodia says the mines are left over from decades of civil war that ended in 1999.

The failure to implement the ceasefire terms was used by the Thai side as an excuse not to promptly release the Cambodian prisoners, even though the October agreement urged it to do so "as a demonstration of Thailand's desire to promote mutual confidence and trust."

The conflict impacts diplomacy, trade and tourism

Thailand is one of Washington's closest and most longstanding allies. The country also holds a huge military advantage, best demonstrated by its mostly unchallenged ability to use air power.

But Cambodia has also been trying to strengthen its hand diplomatically. It was among the first countries to strongly support a Nobel Peace Prize nomination for Trump, even bringing out crowds to demonstrate in favor of that.

Cambodia has also employed an intensive propaganda campaign on social media portraying itself as the underdog and issuing frequent unverifiable accusations about Thai actions. Nationalistic saber-rattling has been ubiquitous on both sides.

Washington for its part appears to be trying to actively build better relations with Cambodia to woo it away from its close relationship with China, but that in turn has bred resentment in Thailand.

Cambodia has made further progress toward finalizing a trade deal with Washington than has Thailand, whose economy is much bigger and more complex.

Potential economic consequences go beyond trade.

The renewed fighting comes just as the winter tourism season is hitting its peak, and risks deterring tourists. Tourism is a major earner for both nations, which are still trying to recover from the battering the industry took during the coronavirus pandemic.

Cultural competition is also a factor

The ill feeling between the two neighbors is not just about overlapping border claims, but also deep-seated cultural enmity that has its roots from centuries ago, when they were large and competing empires.

In more modern times, bad feelings have lingered, as Cambodia's development, hindered by French colonialism and, in the 1970s, the brutal rule of the communist Khmer Rouge, has fallen well behind Thailand. Both have fought over claims on cultural products ranging from boxing, mask dancing, traditional clothing and food.

Court settlement approved for New Orleans Archdiocese to pay hundreds of clergy abuse victims

By JACK BROOK Associated Press/Report for America

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The New Orleans Archdiocese will pay at least \$230 million to hundreds of victims of clergy sexual abuse under a settlement approved Monday by a federal judge that follows years of negotiations.

Richard Trahan, an attorney representing victims in the case, and a spokesperson for the archdiocese both confirmed approval of the settlement to The Associated Press by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Meredith Grabill.

Earlier this month, some of the survivors behind the more than 500 abuse claims testified in court, saying they are still affected decades later by the painful memories they shared publicly. The archdiocese had filed for bankruptcy in May 2020 rather than handle each abuse claim separately. Survivors noted that doing so enabled church leadership to avoid tougher questions they would have to face in court.

Some recalled battling substance abuse, struggling with intimacy and wondering whether they themselves were to blame for what happened. Some said they forgave the church, while others could not.

In her testimony, Kathleen Austin recalled being abused hundreds of times as a child and watching the perpetrator continue in a role within the Catholic Church even after its leadership knew what he was doing. She expressed skepticism that the church would hold clergy accountable in the future given how much she said it resisted responding to her experiences.

"Why has it taken so long to get to this point and at such a high cost?" she asked.

The Associated Press doesn't generally identify people who are victims of sexual abuse unless they come forward publicly, such as those who testified in New Orleans.

Archbishop Gregory Aymond, the head of the archdiocese who is handing church leadership to a successor, listened to the survivors' testimony last week.

"I also apologize for the church, that I'm embarrassed by what has happened in the church," Aymond told reporters afterward. He added he hopes survivors have found some "closure" but said he understood that there is "still a lot of suffering" they are experiencing.

Chris Naquin testified that his abuse began when he was 4 years old and that he cycled through decades of mental institutions and prisons.

"I don't think I will ever, ever get over it. There's no amount of money in the world," Naquin said as he teared up. "I never had a childhood and I'm just now starting my adult life at 56 years old."

Billy Cheramie, who said he felt he died the day he was abused as a little boy, told the archdiocese he forgave it for what he went through. He said God later helped him realize the abuse he suffered was not his fault, thus allowing him to release some of the anger that had propelled him to join the U.S. military to learn how to kill.

"Killing did not fix the pain and the memories," he said.

Neil Duhon testified that he still struggles with the idea of forgiveness.

"This legal thing will maybe end but what it has done to us, the trauma it has done to us, will not ever end," Duhon told the court, saying his perpetrator, former priest Lawrence Hecker, received a life sentence after pleading guilty to charges including rape and aggravated kidnapping.

Aymond, 75, had long resisted calls to resign from survivors who said the church did not take action against credibly accused perpetrators. The accusations of clergy abuse triggered a sweeping FBI probe and a cascading crisis for the Catholic Church, which drew on help from New Orleans Saints executives to help behind the scenes with damage control, an AP investigation revealed.

The finalized settlement plan, which received overwhelming approval by survivors during a vote in October, includes policies intended to prevent abuse from occurring in the future.

A survivor will have a seat on the archdiocese's internal review board that handles claims of sexual abuse. An outside expert is to monitor the church's child abuse prevention practices. The church also is adopting a survivors' bill of rights and survivors will have a direct line of communication to the archbishop to direct complaints of misconduct. And a public archive will be established to share long withheld documents related to abuse claims.

In September, Pope Leo XIV named Bishop James F. Checchio, of the diocese of Metuchen, New Jersey, as coadjutor archbishop of New Orleans in line to succeed Aymond when he retires.

Bullets in Luigi Mangione's bag convinced police that he was UnitedHealthcare CEO killing suspect

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Moments after Luigi Mangione was handcuffed at a Pennsylvania McDonald's, a police officer searching his backpack found a loaded gun magazine wrapped in a pair of underwear.

The discovery, recounted in court Monday as Mangione fights to keep evidence out of his New York murder case, convinced police in Altoona, Pennsylvania, that he was the man wanted in the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson in Manhattan five days earlier.

"It's him, dude. It's him, 100%," an officer was heard saying on body-worn camera video from Mangione's Dec. 9, 2024 arrest, punctuating the remark with expletives as the officer combed the bag, Christy Wasser, held up the magazine.

Wasser, a 19-year Altoona police veteran, testified on the fourth day of a pretrial hearing as Mangione sought to bar prosecutors from using the magazine and other evidence against him, including a 9 mm handgun and a notebook found during a subsequent bag search.

The testimony shed light on the critical minutes after Mangione was spotted at the McDonald's and the sometimes unusual steps police officers took in collecting evidence critical to tying him to the crime.

Why the defense says the evidence shouldn't be used at trial

Mangione's lawyers argue the items should be excluded because police didn't have a search warrant and lacked the grounds to justify a warrantless search. Prosecutors contend the search was legal and that police eventually obtained a warrant.

Wasser, testifying in full uniform, said Altoona police protocols require promptly searching a suspect's property at the time of an arrest, in part for dangerous items.

On body-worn camera video played in court, Wasser was heard saying she wanted to check the bag for bombs before removing it from the McDonald's. Despite that concern, she acknowledged in her testimony Monday that police never cleared the restaurant of customers or employees.

Mangione, 27, has pleaded not guilty to state and federal murder charges. He appeared in good health on Monday, pumping his fist for photographers and chatting with his lawyers as testimony resumed.

The hearing, which was postponed Friday because of Mangione's apparent illness, applies only to the state case. His lawyers are making a similar push to exclude the evidence from his federal case, where prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

Why prosecutors say jurors should be able to see the evidence

Prosecutors have said the handgun found in the backpack matches the firearm used in the killing and that writings in the notebook showed Mangione's disdain for health insurers and ideas about killing a CEO at an investor conference.

Thompson, 50, was killed as he walked to a Manhattan hotel for his company's investor conference on Dec. 4, 2024. Surveillance video showed a masked gunman shooting him from behind. Police have said "delay," "deny" and "depose" were written on the ammunition, mimicking a phrase used to describe how insurers avoid paying claims.

Mangione was arrested in Altoona, about 230 miles (370 kilometers) west of Manhattan, after police

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there received a 911 call about a McDonald's customer resembling the suspect.

Wasser testified that she went to the McDonald's on her own to assist another officer, Joseph Detwiler. Before that, she said, she had seen some coverage of Thompson's killing on Fox News, including the surveillance video of the shooting and images of the suspected shooter.

Wasser began searching Mangione's bag as officers took him into custody on initial charges of forgery and false identification, after he acknowledged giving them a bogus driving license, police said. The same fake name was used by the alleged gunman used at a Manhattan hostel days before the shooting.

By then, a handcuffed Mangione had been informed of his right to remain silent — and invoked it — when asked if there was anything in the bag that officers should be concerned about.

Wasser told another officer she wanted to check the bag for a bomb before leaving the McDonald's because she didn't want to repeat an incident in which another Altoona officer had inadvertently brought a bomb to the police station.

What did police find in Mangione's bag?

"Did you call the bomb squad?" Mangione lawyer Karen Friedman Agnifilo asked.

"No. I didn't find a bomb yet," Wasser responded.

According to body-worn camera video, the first few items Wasser found were innocuous: a hoagie, a loaf of bread and a smaller bag containing a passport, cellphone and computer chip.

Then she pulled out a gray pair of underwear, unwrapping them to reveal the magazine.

Satisfied there was no bomb, she suspended her search and placed some of the items back in the bag. Some evidence, including Mangione's laptop computer, was transported to the police station in a brown paper McDonald's takeout bag, body-worn camera video showed.

Wasser resumed her search after an 11-minute drive to the police station and almost immediately found the gun and silencer — the latter discovery prompting her to laugh and exclaim "nice," according to body-worn camera footage. Wasser said the gun was in a side pocket that she hadn't searched at McDonald's.

Later, while cataloging everything in the bag in what's known as an inventory search, she found the notebook and other notes, including what appeared to be to-do lists and possible getaway plans.

"Isn't it awesome?" Wasser said at one point during the search, according to the body-worn camera video.

Asked to explain, she told Friedman Agnifilo on Monday that she was proud of her police department's work in helping to capture Thompson's suspected killer.

A Blair County, Pennsylvania, prosecutor testified that a judge later signed off on a search warrant for the bag, a few hours after the searches were completed. The warrant, she said, provided a legal mechanism for Altoona police to turn the evidence over to New York City detectives investigating Thompson's killing.

As he has throughout the case, Assistant District Attorney Joel Seidemann described Thompson's killing as an "execution" and referred to his notebook as a "manifesto" — terms that Mangione's lawyers said were prejudicial and inappropriate.

Judge Gregory Carro said the wording had "no bearing" on him, but warned Seidemann that he's "certainly not going to do that at trial" when jurors are present.

Trump is giving farmers \$12B in aid. They've been hit hard by his trade war with China

By SEUNG MIN KIM, JOSH FUNK and DIDI TANG Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump announced a \$12 billion farm aid package Monday — a boost to farmers who have struggled to sell their crops while getting hit by rising costs after the president raised tariffs on China as part of a broader trade war.

He unveiled the plan Monday afternoon at a White House roundtable with Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, lawmakers from farm states, and farmers who thanked him for the help.

"With this bridge payment, we'll be able to farm another year," Iowa farmer Cordt Holub told Trump during the event.

Rollins put the immediate value of the program at \$11 billion — money that the White House said will

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offer one-time payments to row-crop farmers. Another \$1 billion will be put aside for specialty crops as the administration works to better understand the circumstances for those farmers, Rollins said. The aid will move by the end of February, she said.

"We looked at how they were hurt, to what extent they were hurt," Trump said, explaining how the administration came up with the size of the package. Trump said the money for the program will come from tariff revenue.

Later this month, the USDA will use a formula that estimates production costs to come up with a per-acre payment for each type of crop. Payments will be capped at \$155,000 per farm or person, and only entities that make less than \$900,000 a year will be eligible for aid. That will limit payments to large farms, which was a criticism of farm aid Trump delivered in his first term.

Farmers have backed Trump politically, but his aggressive trade policies and frequently changing tariff rates have come under increasing scrutiny because of the impact on the agricultural sector and because of broader consumer worries.

The aid is the administration's latest effort to defend Trump's economic stewardship and answer voter angst about rising costs. Trump has been dismissive of the affordability issue at times, but on Tuesday, he is set to travel to Pennsylvania to talk about how his administration is trying to address a concern that is important for voters.

China purchases have been slow

Soybeans and sorghum were hit the hardest by Trump's trade dispute with China because more than half those crops are exported each year with most of the harvest going to China.

In October, after Trump met Chinese leader Xi Jinping in South Korea, the White House said Beijing had promised to buy at least 12 million metric tons of U.S. soybeans by the end of the calendar year, plus 25 million metric tons a year in each of the next three years. China is the world's largest buyer of soybeans, but in recent years it has increasingly been shifting its purchases over to Brazil and other South American nations.

China has purchased more than 2.8 million metric tons of soybeans since Trump announced the agreement at the end of October. That's only about one quarter of what administration officials said China had promised, but Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent has said China is on track to meet its goal by the end of February, which is two months later than the White House originally promised.

The size of the \$12 billion aid package is roughly the value of total U.S. soybean exports to China in 2024 and half the total exports of U.S. farm goods to China in 2024.

Farmers say their costs have surged

Farmers appreciate the aid package, but they say it's likely only a down payment on what's needed and government aid doesn't solve the fundamental problems of soaring costs and uncertain markets. During Trump's first term, he gave farmers more than \$22 billion in aid payments in 2019 at the start of his trade war with China and nearly \$46 billion in 2020, although that year also included aid related to the COVID pandemic.

Farmers say want to make a profit off selling their crops -- not rely on government aid to survive.

"That's a start, but I think we need to be looking for some avenues to find other funding opportunities and we need to get our markets going. That's where we want to be able to make a living from," said Caleb Ragland, a Kentucky farmer who serves as president of the American Soybean Association.

Most at risk are younger farmers and those who rent -- instead of own -- their land because they don't have much ability to borrow against the equity in their farms. If farmers can't make ends meet this year, there could be additional consolidation in the industry with giant industrial farms getting bigger and the number of smaller family farmers continuing to shrink.

Iowa farmer Robb Ewoldt is in a difficult position because he only owns 160 of the 2,000 acres he farms. So he says he's selling some of his equipment that's not essential and looking into whether he can pick up some overnight trucking jobs to help raise some cash.

"It is to the point where I don't want to saddle my kid with the kind of stress that my wife and I are under right now," Ewoldt said.

But fourth-generation Minnesota farmer Darin Johnson said he's more optimistic that most farmers will be able to endure this latest trade war.

"A lot of farms are pretty well-established and they have the equity to be able to still keep borrowing money to get through tougher times like this," Johnson said.

Trump has also been under pressure to address soaring beef prices. Trump has asked the Department of Justice to investigate foreign-owned meat packers he accused of driving up the price of beef, although he has not provided evidence to back his claims.

On Saturday, Trump signed an executive order directing the Justice Department and Federal Trade Commission to look at "anti-competitive behavior" in food supply chains — including seed, fertilizer and equipment — and consider taking enforcement actions or developing new regulations.

Supreme Court declines to hear Texas book ban appeal in case watched by free speech groups

By JIM VERTUNO Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday declined to hear an appeal on a Texas free speech case that allowed local officials to remove books deemed objectionable from public libraries.

The case stemmed from a 2022 lawsuit by a group of residents in rural Llano County over the removal from the public library of more than a dozen books dealing with sex, race and gender themes, as well as humorously touching on topics such as flatulence.

A lower federal appeals court had ruled that removing the books did not violate Constitutional free speech protections.

The case had been closely watched by publishers and librarians across the country. The Supreme Court's decision to not consider the case was criticized by free speech rights groups.

The Texas case has already been used to ban books in other areas of the country, said Elly Brinkley, staff attorney for U.S. Free Expression Programs at PEN America.

"Leaving the Fifth Circuit's ruling in place erodes the most elemental principles of free speech and allows state and local governments to exert ideological control over the people with impunity. The government has no place telling people what they can and cannot read," Brinkley said.

Sam Helmick, president of the American Library Association, said the Supreme Court's decision not to consider the case "threatens to transform government libraries into centers for indoctrination instead of protecting them as centers of open inquiry, undermining the First Amendment right to read unfettered by viewpoint-based censorship."

The Texas case began when a group of residents asked the county library commission to remove the group of books from circulation. The local commission ordered librarians to comply and a separate group of residents sued to keep the books on the shelves.

Llano County, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) northwest of the Texas capital of Austin, has a population of about 20,000. It is mostly white and conservative, with deep ties to agriculture and deer hunting.

The book titles originally ordered removed included, "Caste: The Origins of Our Discontent" by Isabel Wilkerson; "They Called Themselves the K.K.K.: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group," by Susan Campbell Bartoletti; "In the Night Kitchen" by Maurice Sendak; "It's Perfectly Normal: Changing Bodies, Growing Up, Sex and Sexual Health" by Robie H. Harris; and "Being Jazz: My Life as a (Transgender) Teen" by Jazz Jennings.

Other titles include "Larry the Farting Leprechaun" by Jane Bexley and "My Butt is So Noisy!" by Dawn McMillan.

A federal judge ordered the county to restore some of the books in 2023, but that decision was reversed earlier this year by the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which covers Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

The county at one point briefly considered closing its public libraries rather than return the books to the shelves after the federal judge's initial order.

In its order on May 23, the appeals court's majority opinion said the decision to remove a book from

the library shelf is not a book ban.

"No one is banning (or burning books). If a disappointed patron can't find a book in the library, he can order it online, buy it from a bookstore or borrow it from a friend," the appeals court opinion said.

Llano County Judge Ron Cunningham, the ranking official in the county, did not immediately respond to an email to his office seeking comment.

Trump's former lawyer Alina Habba resigns as top federal prosecutor in New Jersey

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

President Donald Trump's former personal attorney, Alina Habba, resigned Monday as the top federal prosecutor for New Jersey, leaving the job after an appeals court said she had been serving in the post unlawfully.

In a statement posted on social media, Habba assailed the court's ruling as political, but said she was resigning "to protect the stability and integrity" of her office.

"But do not mistake compliance for surrender," she said, adding that the administration would continue its appeal of the court rulings ousting her from the position. "This decision will not weaken the Justice Department and it will not weaken me."

Habba is one of several acting U.S. attorneys around the country to have their appointments by the Trump administration challenged on the basis that they stayed in the temporary jobs longer than the law allows.

She said she would remain with the Justice Department as a senior adviser to U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi. Her former duties will, for now, be split between three Justice Department lawyers.

Habba's term was temporary

Habba, 41, was appointed in March to serve a temporary term as acting U.S. attorney for New Jersey, a powerful post charged with enforcing federal criminal and civil law.

Once a partner in a small New Jersey law firm, Habba was among Trump's most visible legal defenders before his return to the White House, representing him in court and frequently appearing on cable TV news on his behalf.

But she had a partisan bent and no experience as a prosecutor. New Jersey's two Democratic senators indicated they would block her confirmation in the U.S. Senate.

She brought a trespassing charge, eventually dropped, against the Democratic mayor of Newark, New Jersey, stemming from his visit to an immigration detention center. Habba later charged Democratic U.S. Rep. LaMonica McIver with assaulting a federal agent during the same incident. McIver says she didn't assault anyone. The case is pending.

Trump calls it a 'sad situation'

Asked about Habba's resignation on Monday, Trump lashed out at the Senate over its tradition of refusing to act on nominees if they are opposed by the senators representing the state involved.

"It's a horrible thing. It makes it impossible to appoint a judge or a U.S. attorney," Trump told reporters at the White House. "I guess I just have to keep appointing people for three months and then just appoint another one, another one. It's a very sad situation. We're losing a lot of great people."

When Habba's term expired in July, a panel of federal judges appointed one of her subordinates to the role. But Bondi promptly fired the replacement, blaming Habba's removal on "politically minded judges."

A lower-court judge's finding that Habba was unlawfully serving in the position soon triggered a monthslong legal standoff, prompting confusion and delays within New Jersey's federal court system.

Then, earlier this month, a federal appeals court in Philadelphia disqualified her from serving in the role, writing in their opinion that "the citizens of New Jersey and the loyal employees in the U.S. Attorney's Office deserve some clarity and stability."

Trump's critics say he has been exploiting legally questionable loopholes to put unqualified loyalists in jobs that require U.S. Senate confirmation.

Justice Department vows to fight disqualifications

Bondi said Habba will return as U.S. attorney if the administration's court appeals are successful.

"These judges should not be able to countermand the President's choice of attorneys entrusted with carrying out the executive branch's core responsibility of prosecuting crime," she said.

Besides Habba, several other Trump administration prosecutors have had their appointments as U.S. attorneys challenged including those in eastern Virginia, Nevada, Los Angeles and northern New York.

In Virginia, a judge dismissed criminal cases against former FBI Director James Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James on the grounds that the interim U.S. attorney who filed the charges, Lindsey Halligan, was unlawfully appointed.

In September and October, federal judges disqualified the acting U.S. attorneys in Nevada and Southern California, Sigal Chattah and Bill Essayli, saying they had stayed in the temporary jobs longer than allowed by law.

On Thursday, another federal judge heard an argument by New York Attorney General Letitia James that the administration also twisted the law to make John Sarcone the acting U.S. attorney for northern New York.

Supreme Court seems likely to back Trump's power to fire independent agency board members

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Monday seemed likely to expand presidential control over independent federal agencies, signaling support for President Donald Trump's firing of board members.

The court's conservative majority suggested it would overturn a unanimous 90-year-old decision that has limited when presidents can fire agencies' board members — in part to try to ensure decision making free of political influence — or leave it with only its shell intact.

Justice Brett Kavanaugh said the crux of the issue is that the officials who direct the agencies "are exercising massive power over individual liberty and billion-dollar industries" without being accountable to anyone.

Liberal justices warned that a ruling sought by the administration to overturn the decision known as *Humphrey's Executor* would give the president, as Justice Elena Kagan said, "massive unchecked, uncontrolled power."

Agencies that have been in place for a century or more also would be robbed of their expertise, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson said.

"So having a President come in and fire all the scientists and the doctors and the economists and the PhDs and replacing them with loyalists and people who don't know anything is actually not in the best interest of the citizens of the United States," Jackson said.

No president before Trump has sought to wrest control of the agencies that regulate wide swaths of American life, including nuclear energy, product safety and labor relations. But the six conservatives, including three appointed by Trump, seemed more concerned about issuing a ruling that would endure than handing too much power to Trump.

Their rhetoric was reminiscent of the presidential immunity case in 2024 that allowed Trump to avoid prosecution for his efforts to undo the 2020 election results. The court is writing a decision "for the ages," Justice Neil Gorsuch said then.

Solicitor General D. John Sauer, who argued the immunity case for Trump, defended the president's decision to fire Federal Trade Commission member Rebecca Slaughter without cause and called on the court to jettison *Humphrey's Executor*.

Sauer said the decision "hasn't withstood the test of time" and had enabled a "headless fourth branch" of government, the administrative state that conservatives and business interests have been taking aim at for decades.

Chief Justice John Roberts referred to *Humphrey's Executor* as "a dried husk."

The conservative side of the court already has signaled support for the administration's position, over

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the liberals' objection, by allowing Slaughter and the board members of other agencies to be removed from their jobs even as their legal challenges continue.

Members of the National Labor Relations Board, the Merit Systems Protection Board and the Consumer Product Safety Commission also have been fired by Trump.

The only officials who have so far survived efforts to remove them are Lisa Cook, a Federal Reserve governor, and Shira Perlmutter, a copyright official with the Library of Congress. The court has suggested that it will view the Fed differently from other independent agencies, and Trump has said he wants her out because of allegations of mortgage fraud. Cook says she did nothing wrong.

A second question in the Slaughter case could affect Cook. Even if a firing turns out to be illegal, the court wants to decide whether judges have the power to reinstate someone.

Gorsuch wrote earlier this year that fired employees who win in court can likely get back pay, but not reinstatement.

That might affect Cook's ability to remain in her job. The justices have seemed wary about the economic uncertainty that might result if Trump can fire the leaders of the central bank. The court will hear separate arguments in January about whether Cook can remain in her job as her court challenge proceeds.

Kavanaugh signaled that he is inclined to side with Cook, describing as an "end run" the idea that an illegally fired official would only be entitled to her salary.

Under Roberts' leadership, the court has issued a series of decisions dating back to 2010 that have steadily whittled away at laws restricting the president's ability to fire people.

In 2020, Roberts wrote for the court that "the President's removal power is the rule, not the exception" in a decision upholding Trump's firing of the head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau despite job protections similar to those upheld in Humphrey's case.

In the 2024 immunity decision, Roberts included the power to fire among the president's "conclusive and preclusive" powers that Congress lacks the authority to restrict.

The court also was dealing with an FTC member who was fired, by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1935, who preferred his own choice at an agency that would have a lot to say about the New Deal.

William Humphrey refused Roosevelt's request for his resignation. After Humphrey died the next year, the person charged with administering his estate, Humphrey's executor, sued for back pay.

The justices unanimously upheld the law establishing the FTC and limiting the president to removing a commissioner only for "inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office."

California man marks his 15,000th spin on Disneyland's 'Cars' ride

AMY TAXIN Associated Press

SANTA ANA, Calif. (AP) — For a Disneyland enthusiast who marked his 15,000th spin Monday on an auto-racing attraction inspired by the animated film "Cars," it's not about winning.

It's about the ride.

Jon Alan Hale said he was eager to try out the Radiator Springs Racers ride at Disney California Adventure after undergoing gastric bypass and knee replacement surgeries in 2010 and 2011. He said he quickly found himself hooked on the ride, which debuted in 2012, and began tracking his races in a notebook, jotting down his car's color, lane and whether he wins or loses.

"I fell in love with the ride," said the television technician from Brea, California.

Hale said he started carrying a sign to mark every hundredth ride, and remembered how Disneyland workers clapped when he reached 1,000.

On Monday, Hale took the ride with friends who work at the theme park while wearing a "Cars" themed cap and holding a 15,000 sign.

Hale said he's visited the Anaheim, California, resort known as the "Happiest Place on Earth" more than 1,100 times. He said he's taken the ride on average 13 times each visit, largely thanks to the fast-moving line for single riders.

He said he doesn't tire of it, especially since he never knows which car is going to pull ahead and win.

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"You don't know who is going to win the race," Hale said. "There is no pattern of who wins or loses."

Hale said there's no formal record for riding the attraction inspired by the 2006 Pixar film released by Walt Disney Pictures. He said Disneyland officials said they don't have one and Guinness World Records said they don't track it either. Disneyland officials did not immediately comment on Hale's ride Monday.

But on his quest, Hale said he's come away with more than just a number. He's gotten to know people at the park and become friends with some of the workers.

"It's like family," Hale said. "Everybody recognized me, they're rooting for me."

What to know about Paramount's hostile bid for Warner Bros. Discovery

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Warner Bros. Discovery's friendly agreement to sell itself to Netflix just got upended by a hostile actor -- Paramount, which made Warner shareholders a higher offer and touched off what is likely to be a lengthy fight in the latest episode of media industry consolidation.

The bid comes after Warner last week agreed to be bought by Netflix for \$72 billion.

The competing offers set the stage for combining some of the most beloved entertainment properties. Netflix's vast library includes "Stranger Things" and "Squid Game," while the much smaller Paramount owns its Hollywood studio and major TV networks like CBS and MTV. Both covet Warner, which owns Warner Bros. Pictures, HBO and the Harry Potter franchise.

"Whichever media company, if any, ultimately secures (Warner), controls the calculus of the streaming wars and so much more," said Mike Proulx, vice president and research director at research firm Forrester.

Both offers will face regulatory scrutiny, an issue President Donald Trump has already weighed in on.

Here's what to know about the three players and what the bids mean for the entertainment industry.

A look at the offers

CEO David Zaslav has been seeking offers for Warner Bros. Discovery since at least October, when he said the company might be open to selling all or parts of its business.

Paramount said Monday it had submitted six proposals to Warner over a 12 week period before its offer was rejected in favor of Netflix.

So Paramount decided to go straight to Warner shareholders with a bid worth about \$74.4 billion, or \$30 per share in cash. Paramount, unlike Netflix, is also offering to buy the cable assets of Warner, and asking shareholders of the company to reject the Netflix bid.

Paramount CEO Larry Ellison said the offer is worth about \$18 billion more in cash than the competing cash-and-stock bid from Netflix.

The Paramount deal includes help from investors such as Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and funds controlled by the governments of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, according to a regulatory filing.

Netflix is offering a combination of cash and stock valued at \$27.75 per Warner share. Its offer values Warner at \$72 billion, excluding debt, but it is not bidding on Warner-owned networks such as CNN and Discovery.

Before Paramount's bid, the Netflix deal was expected to close in the next 12 to 18 months, after Warner completes its previously announced separation of its cable operations.

Competing bids makes an eventual deal more likely

Matthew Dolgin, senior equity analyst at research firm Morningstar, said there are still many unknowns, including whether Netflix will now sweeten its bid.

But, he said, a competing offer makes it more likely that Warner will eventually be acquired.

"With Paramount now also being involved formally with an offer to shareholders, it's even more likely to us that Warner gets acquired, because it's no longer a single decision that may or may not hinge on regulatory approval," he said.

Shareholders have until Jan. 8, 2026, to vote on Paramount's tender offer.

Donald Trump weighed in earlier

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Another wild card could be President Trump. He already weighed in on Sunday, saying the deal struck by Netflix to buy Warner "could be a problem" because of the size of the combined market share.

The Republican president said he will be involved in the decision about whether the federal government should approve the deal.

Paramount's CEO is the son of Oracle founder Larry Ellison, an ally of Trump. Federal regulators under Trump approved Paramount's \$8 billion merger with Skydance in July.

Regulatory scrutiny awaits either deal

On the Netflix offer, state or federal regulators could be most concerned about the massive size of a combined Netflix and Warner subscription service, said Morningstar's Dolgin. Netflix is already the world's largest streaming service.

That's less of a concern with the Paramount deal, because its streaming service is smaller and has less of an international footprint than Netflix. But regulators may raise red flags over the combination of the Paramount and Warner film and television studios, because relatively few of those remain, Dolgin said.

A pattern of media acquisitions

As the streaming landscape has matured, more media companies are seeking growth through acquisitions.

Warner Bros. Discovery itself was created in 2022 when U.S. telecom giant AT&T Inc. spun off and then combined its WarnerMedia operations with Discovery Inc.

In 2021, Amazon said it would buy MGM, the movie and TV studio behind James Bond, "Legally Blonde" and "Shark Tank." Disney bought Fox's entertainment service in 2019.

"Technology always faces this pattern of startups, lots of different players, legacy companies getting in on the action, and then ultimately lots of consolidation," said Forrester's Proulx. "And this is the state that we're in right now in the streaming wars saga, and in 2026 we'll see continued consolidation."

UN Palestinian aid agency says Israeli police 'forcibly entered' its Jerusalem compound

By MEGAN JANETSKY and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli police forcibly entered the compound of the United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees in east Jerusalem early Monday, escalating a campaign against the organization that has been banned from operating on Israeli territory.

The U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, or UNRWA, said in a statement that "sizable numbers" of Israeli forces, including police on motorcycles, trucks and forklifts, entered the compound in the Palestinian neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah.

"The unauthorized and forceful entry by Israeli security forces is an unacceptable violation of UNRWA's privileges and immunities as a U.N. agency," the statement said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said that he will meet with U.S. President Donald Trump on Dec. 29, although Israel did not confirm the location of the meeting. On Monday, Netanyahu met with U.S. officials in Jerusalem about collaboration on the U.S.-brokered plan on the future of Gaza.

Israel's long campaign against UNRWA

The raid was the latest in Israel's campaign against the agency, which provides aid and services to some 2.5 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, as well as 3 million more refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

Photos taken by an Associated Press photographer show police erecting an Israeli flag on the compound, and police cars on the street. Photos provided by UNRWA staff show a group of Israeli police officers in the compound.

Police said in a statement they entered for a "debt-collection procedure" initiated by Jerusalem's municipal government, which did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The agency was established to help the estimated 700,000 Palestinians who fled or were driven out of what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding the creation of the Israeli state. UNRWA supporters say Israel hopes to erase the Palestinian refugee issue by dismantling the agency. Israel says the refugees

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should be permanently resettled outside its borders.

For months following the start of the Israel-Hamas war that began on Oct. 7, 2023, UNRWA was the main lifeline for Gaza's population during Israel's offensive there.

Throughout the war, Israel has accused the agency of being infiltrated by Hamas, using its facilities and taking aid — claims for which it has provided little evidence. The U.N. has denied it. Israel also has claimed that hundreds of Palestinian militants work for UNRWA. UNRWA has denied knowingly aiding armed groups and says it acts quickly to purge any suspected militants.

After months of attacks from Netanyahu and his far-right allies, Israel banned UNRWA from operating on its territory in January. The U.S., formerly the largest donor to UNRWA, halted funding to the agency in early 2024.

UNRWA has since struggled to continue its work in Gaza, with other U.N. agencies, including the World Food Program and UNICEF, stepping in. Tamara Alrifai, UNRWA's director of external relations and communications, said UNRWA has been excluded from ceasefire talks.

"If you squeeze UNRWA out, what other agency can fill that void?" Alrifai said.

On Monday, Israeli government spokesperson Shosh Bedrosian called UNRWA "a stain on the United Nations" which has "perpetuated the problem" of Palestinian refugees. "UNRWA has proven its enormous failures and it's time for it to be dismantled," she said.

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres "strongly condemns the unauthorized entry" to the compound, spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric said.

Guterres "urges Israel to immediately take all necessary steps to help restore, preserve and uphold the inviolability of UNRWA premises and refrain from taking any further action with regard to UNRWA premises in line with Israel's obligations under the charter of the U.N. and its other obligations under international law," Dujarric said.

US officials meet Netanyahu

Netanyahu met with the U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Mike Waltz, and other officials on Monday in a visit the Trump administration said was aimed at pushing forward the U.S.-drafted 20-point plan for Gaza that includes the current ceasefire and following stages.

Israel's government later said Trump and Netanyahu would meet on Dec. 29 to "discuss the future steps and phases and the international stabilization force of the ceasefire plan." The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the Netanyahu meeting.

One of the thorniest issues in the U.S.-brokered agreement has been the demand for Hamas to disarm. On Sunday, Hamas expressed some willingness to draw down its arsenal as a senior Hamas official told the AP the group is ready to discuss "freezing or storing or laying down" its weapons as part of the ceasefire.

With the remains of one hostage in Gaza yet to be handed over to Israel, Arab and Western officials have said they expect an international governing body in Gaza to be announced in the coming weeks. A search was underway on Monday for the hostage's remains, Hamas said. Waltz met with the parents of the last hostage, Israeli policeman Ran Gvili, on Monday. Gvili's parents urged Waltz not to move to the second stage of the ceasefire until their son's remains are returned, the Hostages Families Forum said.

On Sunday, Waltz met with Jordan's King Abdullah II and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, and discussed expanding humanitarian aid for Gaza and the need for stability in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, according to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

The war started when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel, leaving around 1,200 people dead and abducting 251 others.

Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 70,365 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which operates under the Hamas-run government. The ministry does not differentiate between civilians and combatants, but says nearly half the dead have been women and children. The ministry's numbers are considered reliable by the U.N. and other international bodies.

The ministry also says over 376 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli strikes since the ceasefire took effect in October.

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Violence has also risen in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where Israel's military shot and killed one man Sunday night. Officials said he was throwing rocks at soldiers with two others, one of whom was arrested. Palestinian health officials said the third man was wounded. The military said no soldiers were injured.

Palestinian authorities identified the man killed as a 19-year-old from the northern city of Qalqilya.

Construction of barrier along Israel-Jordan border

Israel began construction of a 50-mile (80-kilometer) barrier along its border with Jordan, Israel's defense minister Israel Katz said Monday.

Katz said the construction was aimed at preventing "efforts of Iran and its proxies to establish an eastern front against the state of Israel."

The final project will include increased security along 310 miles (500 kilometers) of border areas in eastern Israel, and would cost the government around \$1.7 billion, according to Israeli government figures.

What Netflix's acquisition of Warner Bros. means for the movies

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

Netflix's deal to acquire Warner Bros., one of Hollywood's oldest movie studios, poses seismic shifts to the entertainment industry and the future of moviegoing.

As one of the remaining "big five" studios, the 102-year-old Warner Bros. is an essential part of movie theater business.

The studio currently boasts three of the top five earning films domestically, including "A Minecraft Movie," in first place, "Superman" and "Sinners," as well as the Oscar frontrunner, "One Battle After Another."

There are more questions than answers about how ownership from a streaming giant would change things for Warner Bros. It's not even clear if it will pass antitrust scrutiny, or, if it does, what the details will look like.

Here are some things to know, and lingering questions.

Paramount's hostile takeover bid

Paramount on Monday launched a hostile takeover bid for Warner Bros. Discovery, going straight to Warner shareholders with a bid worth about \$74.4 billion, or \$30 per share in cash. Unlike Netflix, Paramount is also offering to buy the cable television assets. Paramount executives said their offer is worth about \$18 billion more than the competing bid from Netflix. It is the same bid that Warner Bros. had earlier rejected in favor of Netflix's offer.

Donald Trump's response

President Donald Trump said Sunday before the Kennedy Center Honors that Netflix's acquisition of Warner Bros. "could be a problem" because of the size of the combined market share.

"Netflix is a great company. They've done a phenomenal job. Ted is a fantastic man," Trump said of Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos, noting that they met in the Oval Office last week before the deal was announced Dec. 5. "I have a lot of respect for him but it's a lot of market share, so we'll have to see what happens."

Will Warner Bros. continue releasing movies in theaters?

Yes, but it might change as well. For starters, it'll be at least 12 to 18 months before the deal officially goes through and moviegoers can expect essentially business as usual until then. Sarandos said Friday that they will "continue to support" a "life cycle that starts in the movie theater" for Warner Bros. movies. But he also commented that he doesn't think that "long exclusive windows" are consumer friendly.

With the rise of streaming, and especially in the pandemic era, studios experimented with different theatrical windows. For many years, a 90-day theatrical window was standard, but now it's closer to 45 days and often a film-by-film decision.

Netflix and movie theaters

Netflix does release some films theatrically, but not usually more than a few weeks before they hit streaming. Sometimes that's to qualify for awards eligibility, sometimes it's a gesture to top filmmakers. This year those releases included Guillermo del Toro's "Frankenstein," Kathryn Bigelow's "A House of Dynamite" and Noah Baumbach's "Jay Kelly."

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Major chains like AMC and Regal had refused to program Netflix releases until 2022, when enthusiasm for the "Knives Out" movie "Glass Onion" helped break the stalemate.

Earlier this year, "KPop Demon Hunters" unofficially topped the box office charts, earning nearly \$20 million from a one-weekend run in theaters two full months after it debuted on the streamer.

Netflix also owns and operates several movie theaters, including the Paris Theater in New York and the Egyptian Theatre in Los Angeles.

Upcoming Warner Bros. movies

The studio has a diverse slate of films expected in 2026, with high profile titles including the Margot Robbie-led "Wuthering Heights" in February, "Supergirl" in June, "Practical Magic 2" in September, Alejandro Iñárritu's untitled Tom Cruise movie in October and Denis Villeneuve's "Dune: Part Three" in December.

Movies planned for 2027 include sequels to "Superman," "A Minecraft Movie" and "The Batman."

Earlier this year the company said its target was 12 to 14 releases annually across its four main labels, Warner Bros. Pictures, DC Studios, New Line Cinema and Warner Bros. animation.

What does it mean for movie theaters?

So much of this depends on the details, but Cinema United president and CEO Michael O'Leary said hours before the news broke that it posed "an unprecedented threat to the global exhibition business."

He added: "Regulators must look closely at the specifics of this proposed transaction and understand the negative impact it will have on consumers, exhibition and the entertainment industry."

Theatrical exhibition has not fully recovered since the pandemic. Before 2020, the annual domestic box office regularly surpassed \$11 billion. Since then it has only surpassed \$9 billion once, in 2023, driven largely by "Barbie," a Warner Bros. release.

How will top filmmakers react?

It's too early to tell, but Warner Bros. has always prided itself on being one of the premier homes for top filmmakers, this year releasing films from Paul Thomas Anderson, Ryan Coogler and James Gunn. Other longstanding relationships include Villeneuve, who has "Dune: Part Three" coming next year, Clint Eastwood and Todd Phillips. Much likely depends on whether robust theatrical releases will be honored — many of these filmmakers are vocal champions of the theatrical experience and may not stick around if it shifts.

"Sentimental Value" director Joachim Trier on Monday told The Associated Press, "I make films for the big screen and believe in the theatrical experience and I just want to make sure the experience is maintained."

Director Park Chan-wook, also speaking to AP Monday, said that he didn't want to speak about it specifically because nothing has been confirmed, but that, regardless, "I still believe that movies should be watched in theaters."

The studio's controversial decision to release films simultaneously in theaters and on HBO Max in 2021 during the pandemic led to a rift with Christopher Nolan, who after making eight major films with the company, including the "Dark Knight" trilogy, partnered with Universal to make his next two films, "Oppenheimer" and next year's "The Odyssey."

Will HBO Max and Netflix become one service?

That's also unclear. If the two platforms remain separate subscriptions, there may be "bundling" options, as with Disney and Hulu. Netflix on Friday said that the addition of HBO and HBO Max programming will give its members "even more high-quality titles from which to choose" and "optimize its plans for consumers."

The Warner Bros. library of films includes classics like "Casablanca" and "Citizen Kane" as well as the "Harry Potter" movies.

Bomb explosion kills over 30 in eastern Congo after army clashes with pro-government militia

By JUSTIN KABUMBA and MONIKA PRONCZUK Associated Press

GOMA, Congo (AP) — A bomb explosion killed more than 30 people and wounded 20 others in eastern Congo following a dispute between the Congolese army and a pro-government militia, despite a deal signed in Washington and touted as a major step toward peace in the country.

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Residents and civil society leaders told The Associated Press that the FARDC, the Congolese army's acronym, and Wazalendo, which has been helping the army combat the insurgents, clashed before they felt the blast in the town of Sange in South Kivu Sunday evening.

More than 100 armed groups vie for a foothold in mineral-rich eastern Congo near the border with Rwanda, most prominently the Rwanda-backed M23 group. The conflict has created one of the world's most significant humanitarian crises with more than 7 million people displaced, officials say.

The explosion came less than a week after a U.S.-brokered peace agreement was finalized in an attempt to stop the ongoing war between the Congolese armed forces and the Rwanda-backed M23 rebel group in the eastern part of Congo. But the fighting continues, according to residents, civil society and analysts.

"FARDC soldiers were coming from the front lines and wanted to reach the city of Uvira," said Faraja Mahano Robert, a civil society leader in Sange. "Once in Sange, they were ordered not to proceed, but some disagreed. That's when they started shooting at each other, and then a bomb exploded, killing many people."

Many residents have fled for safety, mainly in the direction of Burundi, eyewitnesses said Monday.

"This morning, we woke up a little better, but people are still leaving the Sange area," said Amani Safari, a resident. "To the east of the town, there were clashes between the Wazalendo and the FARDC; two FARDC soldiers were killed around 7:30 AM."

Another resident, David Kaserore, said: "It's difficult to distinguish between the enemy and the FARDC, as they are killing all the civilians. We demand that the government end this war. We are tired."

The army did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Meanwhile, Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi accused Rwanda in a speech in parliament on Monday of violating the peace agreement and "organizing the plundering of our natural resources and destabilizing our institutions."

Tshisekedi and his Rwandan counterpart, Paul Kagame, met U.S. President Donald Trump in Washington last week to sign the peace deal. Lauded by the White House as a "historic" agreement, the pact followed monthslong peace efforts. The agreement finalized a deal signed in June.

"The very next day after the signing, units of the Rwandan Defence Forces conducted and supported heavy weapons attacks launched from the Rwandan town of Bugarama, causing significant human and material damage," he said, calling the incident an "aggression by proxy" and refuting claims of internal rebellion.

Edouard Bizimana, the foreign minister of Burundi, accused Rwanda on Monday of "playing a double game. (Rwanda) claims to be negotiating and signing agreements, but in the meantime, it is intensifying attacks on the civilian population with kamikaze drones that kill instinctively."

Burundian forces fight alongside the Congolese army to combat the M23 armed group.

Bizimana accused Rwanda of "indiscriminate attacks" on the civilians and troops, calling them "a provocation that Burundi cannot tolerate."

He added his country has formally warned Kigali and "if this is repeated, Burundi has the right to prosecute those who have attacked Burundi."

There was no immediate comment from Rwandan authorities.

Last week, residents said the fighting had intensified in South Kivu despite the deal. M23 and Congolese forces have repeatedly accused each other of violating the terms of the ceasefire agreed on earlier this year.

Earlier this year, M23 seized Goma and Bukavu, two key cities in eastern Congo, in a major escalation of the conflict.

The rebels in Congo are supported by about 4,000 troops from neighboring Rwanda, according to U.N. experts, and at times have vowed to march as far as Congo's capital, Kinshasa, about 1,600 kilometers (1,000 miles) to the east.

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Arizona takes No. 1 in AP Top 25 men's basketball poll, Iowa State up to No. 4, Gonzaga into top 10

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Basketball Writer

Arizona took over the top spot in the AP Top 25 men's college basketball poll on Monday, a reward for a perfect start to the season that includes a quartet of wins against ranked foes, including a lopsided victory over Auburn last weekend.

Purdue, which had spent the past three weeks at No. 1, slid to sixth following its 81-58 home loss to Iowa State and the entire poll got a shakeup as only two teams remained in the same spots from last week.

The Wildcats received 33 of 60 first-place votes from a national media panel to claim No. 1 for the first time since Dec. 11, 2023, and only the third time since the 2013-14 season. They edged No. 2 Michigan, which earned 19 first-place votes, thanks in part to wins over Florida, UConn and UCLA, along with their 97-68 romp over the then-No. 20 Tigers on Saturday night.

"Obviously it's nothing you shy away from," Wildcats coach Tommy Lloyd said of being No. 1. "You know, you're at Arizona. The big stage. It's part of being at a program like this. But we have bigger things on our mind."

The Wolverines also moved up one spot for their best ranking since March 2021. Duke claimed six first-place votes and moved up to No. 3. And the Cyclones parlayed their big win in West Lafayette, Indiana, into a six-spot climb to No. 4 and a first-place vote. Iowa State has never been ranked No. 1 in the AP poll era, which began with the 1948-49 season.

"They stole our spirit," said Purdue coach Matt Painter, whose team tied a record for largest margin of defeat at home as the nation's No. 1 team. "Our reason for having a high frustration level was them. They're damn good. They took us to the woodshed."

UConn remained ahead of Purdue at No. 5 after beating Kansas inside Allen Fieldhouse last week.

Houston was seventh, Gonzaga climbed three spots to eighth, Michigan State was ninth and BYU rounded the top 10 following a week of high-profile matchups across college basketball.

Louisville dropped five spots to No. 11 after losing to Arkansas. Alabama remained at No. 12, followed by Illinois, North Carolina and Vanderbilt, the only unbeaten team left in the SEC and one of just eight left in Division I men's basketball.

Texas Tech was next, followed by the Razorbacks, who jumped eight spots after also beating Fresno State last week. Florida fell to No. 18 following its 67-66 loss to the Blue Devils, while Kansas moved up to No. 19 and Tennessee finished out the top 20.

The last five in the poll were Auburn, St. John's, Nebraska, Virginia and UCLA.

The No. 23 Huskers are 9-0 for only the third time in school history, and they have won 13 straight dating to last season, the third-longest run in school history. The ranking is their best since they were 21st the second week of the 2014-15 season.

Rising and falling

Arkansas was No. 14 in the preseason poll, nearly dropped out entirely, but made a big jump this week back to No. 17 following its two wins. Iowa State's climb to No. 4 has been a steady one since it was ranked 16th in the preseason poll.

Tennessee tumbled seven spots to No. 20 this week following losses to Syracuse and Illinois. Purdue and Louisville each fell five spots.

In and out

Nebraska and Virginia both made their poll debuts, replacing Indiana and USC. The Cavaliers did not receive a single vote last week but earned enough to join the rankings at No. 24. UCLA also returned to the rankings while Kentucky dropped out.

Conference watch

The Big 12, Big Ten and SEC lead the way with six ranked teams apiece, but the Big 12 has the nation's No. 1 team. It also has four in the top 10, while the Big Ten has three and the SEC none. The ACC has four ranked teams, the Big East two and the West Coast one.

Big Ten ties record with nine teams in AP Top 25 women's basketball poll; UConn, Texas still 1-2

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

The Big Ten matched The Associated Press Top 25 women's basketball record with nine ranked teams as Nebraska entered at No. 24 on Monday.

The conference set the mark last year on Dec. 2 and this week has three teams in the top 10 alone.

UConn still is No. 1, receiving 23 first-place votes from a national media panel. Texas garnered the other nine votes to remain second.

The top 10 was unchanged this week. South Carolina and UCLA stayed third and fourth with LSU and Michigan next. Maryland was seventh after rallying to beat Minnesota in double overtime Sunday.

TCU, Oklahoma and Iowa State rounded out the first 10. The Cyclones play in-state rival No. 11 Iowa on Wednesday.

Other Big Ten teams in the poll include No. 16 USC, No. 20 Washington, No. 21 Ohio State and No. 25 Michigan State. The Cornhuskers are ranked for the second consecutive season after starting 9-0.

"I've been honored to be a part of this league for the last 13 seasons, working on year 14, where I've watched the league just get better and better," Michigan coach Kim Barnes Arico said. "And then when you have that type of improvement, and then add the four West Coast teams that are tremendous as well, I just think it added another top four teams to an already great league."

Tennessee's milestone ranking

The 18th-ranked Lady Vols appeared in the poll for the 800th time in the 50-year history of the rankings. Tennessee had a stretch of being in the Top 25 for 565 straight weeks, a record later surpassed by UConn.

Conference supremacy

The Big Ten took over the top spot with nine teams while the Southeastern Conference was next with eight. The Big 12 has four and the Atlantic Coast Conference has three. The Big East has one.

Struggling ACC

The ACC had a rough week, going 3-13 against the SEC in the conference challenge. The ACC saw its run of having at least one top 10 team in every poll end earlier this season after 453 consecutive weeks.

Games of the week

No. 1 UConn at No. 16 Southern California, Saturday. The Huskies head across the country for one of the few ranked games left on their schedule. The two teams have met a few times over the last couple of seasons, including in the NCAA Tournament regional final in 2024 and 2025. UConn won both of those matchups while the Trojans were victorious in Connecticut during a regular-season game.

No. 2 Texas vs No. 13 Baylor, Sunday. The two former Big 12 rivals will tip-off in the Sprouts Farmers Market espnW Invitational in Fort Worth, Texas. The game will be played at the site of one of the two regionals for the NCAA Tournament.

What to know about changes to Disney parks' disability policies

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Changes that Disney made to a popular program that lets qualifying disabled people skip long lines at its California and Florida theme parks are too restrictive, disabled fans contend in a federal lawsuit and shareholder proposal that seek to expand eligibility.

The battle over who can skip long lines on popular rides because of their disabilities marks the latest struggle by Disney to accommodate disabled visitors while cracking down on past abuses. But some Disney fans say the company has gone too far and has no right to determine who is disabled.

"This isn't right. This isn't what Walt and Roy would have wanted," said Shannon Bonadurer, referring to the Disney brothers who founded the entertainment empire. Despite being unable to wait for long periods of time in the heat because she uses an ileostomy bag, Bonadurer was denied a pass for the disability

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program.

In a statement, Disney said it was committed to providing a great experience to all visitors, particularly those with disabilities who may require special accommodations.

Here's a look at changes to Disney parks' policies for disabled visitors.

What is the disability program?

The Disability Access Service, or DAS, program allows pass-holders and their immediate family members to make an online reservation for a ride while in the park and then get into an expedited line that typically takes about 10 minutes when it's their time to go on the ride. DAS guests never have to wait in normal standby lines, which on the most popular attractions can be two hours or more.

The DAS program started in 2013 in response to past abuses by disabled "tour guides" who charged money, sometimes hundreds of dollars, to accompany able-bodied guests, enabling such guests to go to the front of lines. Disney says the DAS program needed changing because it had grown fourfold. Before last year's changes, the percentage of guests having DAS passes jumped from around 5% to 20% over the past dozen years "and showed no signs of slowing," the company said in court papers.

Disney parks make other accommodations for disabled visitors, including maps in Braille, a device that helps transfer visitors from wheelchairs to ride seats, quiet break locations and American Sign Language interpreters for some live shows. The parks permit some service animals on rides and allow some disabled guests to leave a line and rejoin their party before boarding a ride.

Who qualifies now?

Disney narrowed the scope from people with a wider range of disabilities to mostly guests who "due to a developmental disability such as autism or similar" have difficulties waiting in a long line. Under the changes, guests seeking a DAS pass must be interviewed via video chat by a Disney worker and a contracted medical professional who determine if the person is eligible. Visitors found to have lied can be barred from the parks.

Some people with disabilities who have been denied say the new policy is too restrictive. Not only was Bonadurer denied a pass, but so was her 25-year-old son, who is blind and has cerebral palsy and autism.

"They are making a determination about whether you're disabled enough," said Bonadurer, a professional travel adviser from Michigan. "I would love to wait in line with everyone else, and so would my son, since that would mean he has a normal life. But we don't, and unfortunately for us, we need adaptations to how we wait."

Disney says the Americans with Disabilities Act doesn't require equal treatment of people with varying disabilities. The company accommodates those visitors who don't meet the new DAS criteria with alternatives, Disney said in court filings responding to a federal lawsuit in California.

"For example, in a crowded movie theater, a person using a wheelchair may be entitled to priority seating even if they arrive shortly before the movie starts, while a deaf person may only be entitled to a seat with closed captioning," the company said.

At Disney's main theme park rival, Universal, disabled visitors can get shorter lines if they have a card issued by an international board that certifies venues for their accessibility.

What's next?

A shareholder proposal submitted on behalf of DAS Defenders, an advocacy group of Disney fans opposed to the DAS changes, calls on the company next year to commission an independent review of its disability policies and publicly release the findings. The shareholder proposal claims the change to the DAS program has contributed to lower park attendance.

Disney's attorneys told the Securities and Exchange Commission in a November letter that it intends to block the proposal ahead of the company's 2026 shareholder meeting, saying it was false and misleading about the reasons for an attendance decline, which the company attributed to hurricanes. The company also argued the shareholder proposal amounts to micromanaging day-to-day operations.

'One Battle After Another' leads Golden Globe nominations, while 'Wicked: For Good' falters

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

Paul Thomas Anderson's "One Battle After Another" scored a leading nine nominations to the 83rd Golden Globe Awards on Monday, adding to the Oscar favorite's momentum and handing Warner Bros. a victory amid Netflix's acquisition deal.

In nominations announced from Beverly Hills, California, "One Battle After Another" landed nods for its cast — Leonardo DiCaprio, Teyana Taylor, Sean Penn and Chase Infiniti — and for Anderson's screenplay and direction. It's competing in the Globes' category for comedy and musicals.

Close on its heels was Joachim Trier's "Sentimental Value," a Norwegian family drama about a filmmaking family. The Neon release's eight nominations included nods for four of its actors: Stellan Skarsgård, Renate Reinsve, Elle Fanning and Inga Ibsdotter Lilleaas.

The Globe nominations, a tattered but persistent rite in Hollywood, are coming on the heels of the a potentially seismic shift in entertainment. On Friday, Netflix struck a deal to buy Warner Bros. Discovery for \$72 billion. If approved, the deal would reshape Hollywood and put one of its most storied movie studios in the hands of the streaming giant.

Warner Bros., Netflix and the Golden Globes

Both companies are prominent in this year's awards season. Along with "One Battle After Another," Warner Bros. has "Sinners," Ryan Coogler's acclaimed vampire hit. It was nominated for seven awards by the Globes, including box office achievement, best actor for Michael B. Jordan and Coogler for best director.

Netflix's contenders include Noah Baumbach's "Jay Kelly" (which landed nods for George Clooney and Adam Sandler), Guillermo del Toro's "Frankenstein" (five nominations) and the streaming smash hit, "KPop Demon Hunters." Arguably the most-watched movie of the year, the three nominations for "KPop Demon Hunters" included one for cinematic and box office achievement — an oddity for Netflix, which typically gives its films only small, limited theatrical runs but found a No. 1 box office weekend in singalong screenings for the animated film.

The two studios led all others in nominations across film and television on Monday. Netflix landed 35 nominations, boosted by its expansive film slate and television nominees like the British limited series "Adolescence" (five nominations). Warner Bros. had 31 nominations, including 15 from HBO Max for series such as "The White Lotus," the lead TV nominee with six.

The proposed deal for Warner Bros. has stoked concern throughout the industry that Netflix might devote one of the most theatrical-focused studios to streaming. Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos has pledged a theatrical commitment to many Warner releases, but the leading trade group for exhibitors has called the deal "an unprecedented threat." On Sunday, President Donald Trump said the market share created by the merger "could be a problem," and Paramount said Monday it was mounting a hostile bid for Warner Bros.

Neon shines on a bad day for 'Wicked: For Good'

Yet the studio that triumphed on the movie side of the Globe nominations was Neon. The indie specialty film company has emerged as a dominant force in international releases, winning a string of Palme d'Or awards at the Cannes Film Festival. It earned 21 nominations Monday, including five of the six international film nominees.

Some of those nominations came at the expense of some high-profile studio films. "Wicked: For Good" was nominated for five awards, including two nods for its songs and acting nominations for Cynthia Erivo and Ariana Grande. But it was overlooked for an award it was presumed to be in contention for: best comedy or musical.

The nominees instead were "One Battle After Another," Yorgos Lanthimos' "Bugonia," Josh Safdie's "Marty Supreme," Park Chan-wook's "No Other Choice" (a Neon release) and a pair of Richard Linklater movies in "Blue Moon" and "Nouvelle Vague."

In the drama category, Chloé Zhao's "Hamnet" scored six nominations, including nods for its stars, Jes-

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sie Buckley and Paul Mescal. It was nominated for best film, drama, along with "Frankenstein" and three Neon titles: "The Secret Agent," "Sentimental Value" and "It Was Just an Accident."

Jafar Panahi's "It Was Just an Accident," the acclaimed Iranian revenge drama, was nominated for a total of four awards. At different times, Panahi has often been imprisoned, put under house arrest and prohibited from leaving Iran by the Islamic Republic while making films over the past two decades. Earlier this month, while traveling outside of Iran with the film, he was sentenced to a year in prison and a new two-year travel ban.

Podcasters and A-listers mingle

As the Globes continue to transition out of their scandal-plagued past, there's one notable change this year. For the first time, the Globes are giving a best podcast trophy. The inaugural nominees are "Armchair Expert With Dax Shepard," "Call Her Daddy," "Good Hang With Amy Poehler," "The Mel Robbins Podcast," "SmartLess" and NPR's "Up First."

Many of those nominees aren't exactly outsiders to Hollywood. But they'll mingle with a wide array of stars that the Globes, long known for packing their red carpet with A-listers, were sure to nominate.

Those include Timothee Chalamet, nominated for his performance in "Marty Supreme," Jennifer Lawrence ("Die My Love"), Julia Roberts ("After the Hunt"), Tessa Thompson ("Hedda"), Jeremy Allen White ("Springsteen: Deliver Me From Nowhere"), Emma Stone ("Bugonia"), Ethan Hawke ("Blue Moon") and the two stars of "The Smashing Machine," Dwayne Johnson and Emily Blunt.

After a series of controversies for the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the group that previously put on the ceremony, the Globes were sold in 2023 to Todd Boehly's Eldridge Industries and Dick Clark Productions, a part of Penske Media. A new, larger voting body of more than 300 people now vote on the awards, which moved from NBC to CBS on a shorter, less expensive deal.

Nikki Glaser is returning as host to the Jan. 11 Globes, airing on CBS and streaming on Paramount+. This past January, Glaser won good reviews for her first time emceeding the ceremony. Ratings were essentially unchanged, slightly dipping to 9.3 million viewers, according to Nielsen, from 9.4 million in 2024.

Helen Mirren will receive the Cecil B. DeMille Award in a separate prime-time special airing Jan. 8. Sarah Jessica Parker will be honored with the Carol Burnett Award.

EU leader warns of US interference in Europe's affairs as Russia praises Trump's security vision

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

BRUSSELS (AP) — A top European Union official on Monday warned the United States against interfering in Europe's affairs and said only European citizens can decide which parties should govern them.

European Council President António Costa's remarks came in reaction to the Trump administration's new national security strategy, which was published on Friday and paints European allies as weak, while offering tacit support to far-right political parties.

The document, which was praised by Russia, formalizes in writing months of Trump administration criticism of EU policy and perceived restrictions on free speech that started with a lecture to European allies in Germany in February by U.S. Vice President JD Vance.

It's "good" that the strategy depicts European countries as an ally, but "allies don't threaten to interfere in the domestic political choices of their allies," Costa said.

"What we can't accept is the threat of interference in European political life. The United States cannot replace European citizens in choosing what the good or the bad parties are," he said in Paris at the Jacques Delors Institute, a think tank.

Lessons from history

Fabian Zuleeg, chief executive at the European Policy Centre think tank, said that stridently nationalist parties in Europe will be emboldened by the strategy document and "will intensify efforts to hollow out the EU from within."

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"Pro-European liberal forces need to finally wake up: Trump's America is not an ally, but an adversary to Europe's freedoms and fundamental values. His objective is to replace our democratic system with the illiberal populism now entrenched in the U.S.," Zuleeg said.

The strategy was also critical of European free speech and migration policy. U.S. allies in Europe face the "prospect of civilizational erasure," the document said, raising doubts about their long-term reliability as American partners.

But Costa, who chairs summits of the EU's 27 national leaders, said that Europe's "history has taught us that you can't have freedom of speech without freedom of information."

The former Portuguese prime minister also warned "there will never be free speech, if the freedom of information of citizens is sacrificed for the aims of the tech oligarchs in the United States."

Speaking to reporters in Berlin, German government spokesperson Sebastian Hille underlined that "Europe and the U.S. are historically, economically and culturally linked, and remain close partners."

"But we reject the partly critical tones against the EU," he said. "Political freedoms, including the right to freedom of expression, belong to the fundamental values of the European Union. We view accusations regarding this more as ideology than strategy."

Russia welcomes new vision

The security strategy is the administration's first since U.S. President Donald Trump returned to office in January. It breaks starkly from the course set by U.S. President Joe Biden's Democratic administration, which sought to reinvigorate Washington's alliances.

It comes as the U.S. seeks an end to Russia's nearly four-year war in Ukraine, a goal that the national security strategy says is in Washington's vital interests.

But the text makes clear that the U.S. wants to improve its relationship with Russia after years of Moscow being treated as a global pariah, and ending the war is a core U.S. interest to "reestablish strategic stability with Russia."

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov has said the document "absolutely corresponds to our vision." Over the course of the war, Russia has worked to drive a wedge between NATO allies, particularly between the U.S. and Ukraine's main backers in Europe.

"If we read closely the part about Ukraine, we can understand why Moscow shares this vision," Costa said. "The objective in this strategy is not a fair and durable peace. It's only (about) the end of hostilities, and the stability of relations with Russia."

"Everyone wants stable relations with Russia," he added, but "we can't have stable relations with Russia when Russia remains a threat to our security."

Top EU officials and intelligence officers have warned that Russia could be in a position to launch an attack elsewhere in Europe in three to five years should it defeat Ukraine.

Hille noted that "the strategy doesn't classify Russia as a threat; we don't share this assessment. We are sticking with NATO's joint analysis." Trump and his NATO counterparts noted, in a summit statement in June, "the long-term threat posed by Russia to Euro-Atlantic security."

However, Hille insisted that "in view of the great security policy challenges, trans-Atlantic cooperation is now and will be in the future of central significance for our common security."

'It's not safe to live here.' Colombia is deadliest country for environmental defenders

By STEVEN GRATTAN Associated Press

PUERTO ASIS, Colombia (AP) — Jani Silva sits inside the wooden house she built on the banks of Colombia's Putumayo River — a home she hasn't slept in for more than eight years.

The longtime environmental activist has been threatened for work that includes protecting part of the Amazon from oil and mining exploitation. She describes a tense escape one night through a back window after community members tipped her that armed men were outside.

"Since leaving because of the threats, I'm afraid ... it's not safe to live here," she told The Associated

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Press. She only comes now for brief daytime visits when accompanied by others. "The two times I've tried to come back and stay, I've had to run away."

Activists like Silva face steep risks in Colombia, the deadliest country in the world for people protecting land and forests. Global Witness, an international watchdog monitoring attacks on activists, recorded 48 killings in Colombia in 2024, nearly a third of all cases worldwide.

Colombia says it protects activists through its National Protection Unit, which provides bodyguards and other security measures. Officials also point to recent court rulings recognizing the rights of nature and stronger environmental oversight as signs of progress.

Silva, 63, now lives under guard in Puerto Asis, a river town near the Ecuador border. She has had four full-time bodyguards for 12 years provided by the National Protection Unit. Yet the threats have not pushed her from her role at ADISPA, the farming association that manages the Amazon Pearl reserve she previously lived on and has worked to protect.

"I have a calling to serve," Silva said. "I feel like I am needed ... there is still so much to do."

Colombia's ministries of Interior, National Defense and Environment did not respond to requests for comment.

About 15,000 people nationwide receive protection from the NPU, the Interior Ministry said in a 2024 report. They include environmental and human rights defenders, journalists, local officials, union leaders and others facing threats, though watchdog groups say protections often fall short in rural conflict zones.

Community buffer stands in a violent corridor

The Amazon Pearl is home to roughly 800 families who have spent decades trying to keep out oil drilling, deforestation, illicit crops and the armed groups that enforce them. Silva describes the community-run reserve, about 30 minutes by boat down the Putumayo from Puerto Asis, as "a beautiful land ... almost blessed, for its biodiversity, forests and rivers."

The preserve's 227 square kilometers (87 square miles) host reforestation projects, programs to protect wetlands and forest threatened by oil exploration and efforts to promote agroecology. The farming association has community beekeeping projects to support pollination and generate income, organizes community patrols, supports small sustainable farming and has carried out major restoration, including cultivating more than 120,000 native seedlings to rebuild degraded riverbanks and forest corridors.

Silva has been a main voice challenging oil operations inside the reserve. As president of ADISPA, she documented spills, deforestation and road-building tied to Bogota-based oil company GeoPark's Platanillo block and pushed environmental regulators to investigate.

Advocates say those complaints, along with ADISPA's efforts to keep new drilling and mining out, have angered armed groups that profit from mining and oil activity in the region.

GeoPark said it complies with Colombian environmental and human-rights regulations and has not received environmental sanctions since operations began in 2009.

The company maintains formal dialogue with local communities, including Silva, and "categorically rejects" threats or links to armed groups and its activities require environmental licenses and undergo regular inspections, GeoPark said in a written statement to the AP.

Rubén Pastrana, 32, runs one of the Pearl's beekeeping projects in the riverbank community of San Salvador, where ADISPA works with children using native stingless bees to teach biodiversity and forest conservation.

"They're very gentle," he said of the bees, and their calm nature lets children learn without fear.

More than 600 families now take part in conservation and agroecology projects, many launched through community initiative.

"The first project was started on our own initiative," Silva said. "We started setting up nurseries at our homes ... and reforesting the riverbank."

Women exchanged native seeds and organized replanting drives, and the community agreed to temporary hunting bans after seeing pregnant armadillos killed — a move Silva said allowed wildlife to recover. Families now map their plots to balance production with conservation.

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Border Commandos control the territory

Armed groups known locally as Comandos de la Frontera, or Border Commandos, operate throughout this stretch of Putumayo, controlling territory, river traffic and parts of the local economy.

The Commandos emerged after Colombia's 2016 peace accord with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, the Marxist guerrilla army whose demobilization ended a half-century conflict but left power vacuums across the Amazon and Pacific regions. In places like Putumayo, those gaps were quickly filled by FARC dissidents, former paramilitaries and other criminal networks.

The Commandos enforce control through extortion, illegal taxation and by regulating, or profiting from, coca cultivation, clandestine mining and key river routes. Residents say the group forces some communities to perform unpaid labor or face fines, further eroding livelihoods in an area where most families rely on tending their farms.

The AP saw illegal coca growing near the beekeeping project via drone imagery.

Human Rights Watch on Friday said armed groups in Putumayo have tightened their control over daily life and committed serious abuses against civilians including forced displacement, restricting movement and targeting local leaders.

Andrew Miller, head of advocacy at the U.S.-based advocacy group Amazon Watch, said Colombian authorities must go beyond providing bodyguards and prosecute those behind threats and attacks on defenders.

Developing the next generation

Pastrana, from the beekeeping project, said Silva's long-term vision has nurtured new leaders and guided young people, helping them develop the grounding to resist recruitment by armed groups.

Silva's daughter, Anggie Miramar Silva, is part of ADISPA's technical team. The 27-year-old grew up inside the reserve's community process and watched her mother move constantly between meetings, workshops and patrols, pushing others to defend the land.

She admires that resolve, even as she lives with the same fear that trails her mother. While people often suggest she might one day take her mother's place, she is not convinced.

"My mother's work is extremely hard," Miramar said. "I don't know if I would be willing to sacrifice everything she has."

Jani Silva knows the risks. But stopping doesn't feel like an option.

"We have to continue defending the future," she said, "and we need more and more people to join this cause."

Indiana grabs top seed in College Football Playoff. Alabama and Miami make it, Notre Dame left out

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

Nobody paying attention over the past 24 months would be surprised to see Indiana leading the way into this year's College Football Playoff.

But anyone paying attention over the last 24 hours knew the only sure thing beyond the Hoosiers was that the playoff selection committee was destined to get picked apart when it released the pairings for this season's 12-team bracket on Sunday.

Most of that second-guessing came from Notre Dame, which was passed over in favor of Alabama and Miami for two of the bracket's bubble spots. The Fighting Irish dropped two notches in the CFP rankings over the last two weeks, to No. 11, despite a 10-game winning streak, winning their finale by 29 points and simply sitting on the couch Saturday.

"There is no explanation that could possibly be given to explain the outcome," Irish athletic director Pete Bevacqua told Yahoo Sports, hours after the bracket was revealed and Notre Dame said it would skip bowl season altogether. "We feel like the playoff was stolen from our student-athletes."

Notre Dame's loss was Alabama's gain. The Crimson Tide didn't move an inch the CFP rankings despite a 28-7 loss to No. 3 Georgia that looked worse than that.

No. 10 Miami didn't play, either, but the Hurricanes' 27-24 win over Notre Dame in Week 1 played a role

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once the teams were grouped right next to each other after BYU lost its game on Saturday and dropped one spot.

"Everyone can spin the metrics in favor of the team or teams they support," committee chairman Hunter Yurachek said. "You're always going to have controversy. That's why we debated for so long, 9, 10 and 11, into the early-morning hours, and woke up at sunrise to do the same thing — make sure we got it right."

The committee's other key decision was choosing James Madison over Duke for the final spot. The selection left the Atlantic Coast Conference champion out of the mix, but didn't fully exclude the ACC because Miami made it.

The rest of the field includes No. 2 seed Ohio State, No. 3 Georgia and No. 4 Texas Tech, all of which joined Indiana in getting first-round byes.

The Hoosiers moved up to No. 1 with their 13-10 win over the Buckeyes on Saturday — their first Big Ten title since 1967 — and the teams' 1-2 positioning sets up a possible rematch in the national title game Jan. 19.

Then it was No. 5 seed Oregon, followed by Mississippi, Texas A&M, Oklahoma, Alabama, Miami, American champion Tulane and James Madison of the Sun Belt.

The playoffs start Dec. 19 with No. 9 Alabama at No. 8 Oklahoma. On Dec. 20, it's No. 10 Miami at No. 7 Texas A&M, No. 11 Tulane at No. 6 Ole Miss and No. 12 James Madison at No. 5 Oregon.

The winners move to the quarterfinals, which will feature Ohio State in the Cotton Bowl on New Year's Eve, then Texas Tech in the Orange Bowl, Indiana in the Rose Bowl and Georgia in the Sugar Bowl on Jan. 1.

A costly miss for Notre Dame

It was a particularly costly and painful snub for the Fighting Irish.

They lost their first two games of the season — one to Miami, the other to Texas A&M — by a combined four points. They did not play a tough schedule the rest of the way; it was ranked 44th, compared to sixth for Alabama but 45th for Miami. But the Irish won all those games easily.

It also hurts the pocketbook. Where conferences split \$4 million for each team they place into the first round, Notre Dame — as an independent — would have banked the full amount for itself.

Yurachek said the committee had not previously considered Miami's Aug. 31 win over Notre Dame because there were always other teams in the mix, namely Alabama and BYU. But when BYU lost, the Irish and Hurricanes ended up right next to each other, which made that Miami win more important. Yurachek directed the committee to go back and rewatch it.

"Really, how Miami's defense dominated Notre Dame's running game, where for the rest of the season, their running game dominated most of the teams they played," Yurachek said when asked what the committee saw in that game.

Alabama back in after snub last year

Alabama (10-3) is in despite three losses. Those who believe the Tide deserve it will look at these factors: — An eight-game winning streak after a shocking 14-point, season-opening loss to Florida State that included a 24-21 victory at Georgia for a season split while, for instance, BYU lost both its games against Texas Tech.

— Ignoring the above, there was the "you can't lose ground for playing in the title game" argument. Last year, Alabama had three losses and was passed over for SMU, which was coming off a loss in the ACC title game. Using the same logic, someone other than the Tide needed to go this time.

Duke's argument falls on deaf ears

Duke tried to make a compelling argument that its seven wins over Power Four teams, including the victory over Virginia in the ACC title game, made it more deserving than James Madison for that fifth and final automatic spot for conference champs.

But the Blue Devils had five losses. And Virginia was ranked four (now nine) spots lower than Miami, the ACC's best team by many measurements.

James Madison's playoff game against a mega-team from a mega-conference — Oregon — will suss out whether teams like that should be playing for the title.

History, however, might look back on Duke's win if league title games are ever eliminated from the

schedule due to their growing irrelevance. Other than eliminating BYU (but not Alabama) and flip-flopping Indiana and Ohio State, this year's set of games in the Power Four meant next to nothing.

Trump hosts Kennedy Center Honors, a touchstone in his attack against what he calls 'woke' culture

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE and HILLEL ITALIE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Sunday hosted the Kennedy Center Honors and praised Sylvester Stallone, Kiss, Gloria Gaynor, Michael Crawford and George Strait, the slate of honorees he helped choose, as being "legendary in so many ways."

"Billions and billions of people have watched them over the years," Trump, the first president to command the stage, said to open the show.

The Republican president said the artists, recognized with tribute performances during the show, are "among the greatest artists and actors, performers, musicians, singers, songwriters ever to walk the face of the Earth."

Since returning to office in January, Trump has made the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, which is named after a Democratic predecessor, a touchstone in a broader attack against what he has lambasted as "woke" anti-American culture.

Trump said Saturday that he was hosting "at the request of a certain television network." He predicted the broadcast scheduled for Dec. 23 on CBS and Paramount+, would have its best ratings ever.

Before Trump, presidents watched the show alongside the honorees. Trump skipped the honors altogether during his first term.

Asked how he got ready for the gig, Trump said as he moved along the red carpet with his wife, first lady Melania Trump, that he "didn't really prepare very much."

"I have a good memory, so I can remember things, which is very fortunate," the president said. "But just, I wanted to just be myself. You have to be yourself."

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, one of several Cabinet secretaries attending the ceremony, said his boss "is so relaxed in front of these cameras, as you know, and so funny, I can't wait for tonight." Lutnick arrived with his wife, a member of the Kennedy Center's board.

Trump appeared on stage three times to open and close the show, and after intermission. He also talked up each artist in prerecorded videos that played before their tributes.

Trump was both gracious and critical in the comments he delivered from the stage, lavishing the honorees with effusive praise but at times showing a mean streak. After returning from intermission, he said he'd toured some of the construction projects he has launched to renovate the performing arts center. And he said it was a "fantastic" night.

"Well, we're really having a good time tonight," Trump said. "So many people I know in this audience. Some good. Some bad. Some I truly love and respect. Some I just hate."

Since 1978, the honors have recognized stars for their influence on American culture and the arts. Members of this year's class are pop-culture standouts, including Stallone for his "Rocky" and "Rambo" movies, Gaynor for her "I Will Survive" feminist anthem and Kiss for its flashy, cartoonish makeup and onstage displays of smoke and pyrotechnics.

Strait is a leader in the world of country music and Crawford, a Tony Award-winning actor, is best known for starring in "Phantom of the Opera," the longest-running show in Broadway history.

Trump said persistence is a trait shared by the honorees, several of whom had humble beginnings.

"Some of them have had legendary setbacks, setbacks that you have to read in the papers because of their level of fame," he said from the stage. "But in the words of Rocky Balboa, they showed us that you keep moving forward, just keep moving forward."

He said many of the politicians, celebrities and others in the audience shared the trait, too.

"I know so many of you are persistent," Trump said in his opening. "Many of you are miserable, horrible people. You are persistent. You never give up. Sometimes I wish you'd give up, but you don't."

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The ceremony was expected to be emotional for the members of Kiss. The band's original lead guitarist, Ace Frehley, died in October after he was injured during a fall. During the tribute to Kiss, a lone red guitar that emitted smoke was placed on stage in remembrance of Frehley, who was known for having a smoke bomb in his instrument.

The program closed with a rousing performance by Cheap Trick of Kiss' "Rock and Roll All Nite" that brought the audience to its feet.

Stallone said receiving the honor was like being in the "eye of a hurricane."

"This is an amazing event," he said on the red carpet. "But you're caught up in the middle of it. It's hard to take it in until the next day. ... but I'm incredibly humbled by it."

Crawford also said it was "humbling, especially at the end of a career."

Gaynor said it "feels like a dream" to be honored. "To be recognized in this way is the pinnacle," she said after arriving.

Mike Farris, an award-winning gospel singer who performed for Gaynor, called her a dear friend. "She truly did survive," Farris said. "What an iconic song."

Trump has taken over the Kennedy Center

Trump upended decades of bipartisan support for the center by ousting its leadership and stacking the board of trustees with Republican supporters, who elected him chair. He has criticized the center's programming and the building's appearance — and has said, perhaps jokingly, that he would rename it as the "Trump Kennedy Center." He secured more than \$250 million from Congress for renovations of the building.

Asked Sunday night about a possible renaming, Trump said it would be up to the board. Still, he joked at one point about the "Trump Kennedy Center."

Presidents of each political party have at times found themselves face to face with artists of opposing political views. Republican Ronald Reagan was there for honoree Arthur Miller, a playwright who championed liberal causes. Democrat Bill Clinton, who had signed an assault weapons ban into law, marked the honors for Charlton Heston, an actor and gun rights advocate.

During Trump's first term, multiple honorees were openly critical of the president. In 2017, Trump's first year in office, honors recipient and film producer Norman Lear threatened to boycott his own ceremony if Trump attended. Trump stayed away during that entire term.

Trump has said he was deeply involved in choosing the 2025 honorees and turned down some recommendations because they were "too woke." He said Sunday that about 50 names were whittled down to five. While Stallone is one of Trump's Hollywood "special ambassadors" and has likened Trump to George Washington, the political views of Sunday's other guests are less clear.

Honorees' views about Trump

Strait and Gaynor have said little about their politics, although Federal Election Commission records show that Gaynor has given money to Republican organizations in recent years.

Simmons spoke favorably of Trump when Trump ran for president in 2016. But in 2022, Simmons told Spin magazine that Trump was "out for himself" and criticized Trump for encouraging conspiracy theories and public expressions of racism.

Fellow Kiss member Paul Stanley denounced Trump's effort to overturn his 2020 election defeat to Democrat Joe Biden, and said Trump supporters who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, were "terrorists." But after Trump won in 2024, Stanley urged unity.

"If your candidate lost, it's time to learn from it, accept it and try to understand why," Stanley wrote on X. "If your candidate won, it's time to understand that those who don't share your views also believe they are right and love this country as much as you do."

Thailand launches airstrikes along border with Cambodia as tensions reignite

By JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI and SOPHENG CHEANG Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Thailand launched airstrikes along the disputed border with Cambodia on Monday as

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both sides accused the other of breaking a ceasefire that halted fighting earlier this year.

Longstanding border disputes erupted into five days of combat in July that killed dozens of soldiers and civilians. U.S. President Donald Trump pushed the Southeast Asian neighbors to sign a truce agreement in October, but tensions have continued to simmer.

The Thai army said that more than 50,000 people have left areas near the border for shelters, while Cambodia's Information Minister Neth Pheaktra said that tens of thousands of residents had been displaced from several villages near the border.

The latest round of clashes has killed at least one Thai soldier and four Cambodian civilians, officials said.

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said in a televised speech that military operations would be carried out as necessary to defend the country and protect public safety.

"Thailand has never wished for violence. I'd like to reiterate that Thailand has never initiated a fight or an invasion, but will never tolerate a violation of its sovereignty," he said.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet wrote on Facebook that his government's immediate tasks were to protect the people and the country's sovereignty.

"I ask all ministries, institutions, authorities at all levels, all types of armed forces and all Cambodian citizens to unite for the cause of the nation and the homeland during this difficult period," he wrote.

Fighting follows exchange of fire on Sunday

The ceasefire was strained in early November after Thai troops were injured by land mines, leading Thailand to announce that it would indefinitely suspend implementation of the agreement. Both sides continue to trade accusations over responsibility, even as they are supposed to be cooperating in getting rid of the mines.

Trump said in mid-November that he'd intervened to preserve the ceasefire as tensions simmered between the two countries.

But another brief episode of fighting took place along the border Sunday, after which both sides said the other fired first. The Thai army said Cambodian fire injured two Thai soldiers and Thai troops retaliated, resulting in an exchange of fire that lasted around 20 minutes. Cambodia said that the Thai side fired first and that its own troops did not retaliate.

On Monday, Thai army spokesperson Maj. Gen. Winthai Suvaree said the Cambodian troops fired first into Thai territory in multiple areas. He said at least one Thai soldier was killed and about eight other soldiers were wounded. Thailand then used aircraft "to strike military targets in several areas to suppress Cambodian supporting fire attacks," he said.

The Thai army said artillery rounds landed near residential areas on the Thai side, but reported no civilian casualties so far.

Cambodian Defense Ministry spokesperson Maly Socheata said the Thai military attacked the Cambodian troops first on Monday, and that Cambodia did not retaliate during the initial attacks.

"Cambodia urges that Thailand immediately stop all hostile activities that threaten peace and stability in the region," she said.

Neth Pheaktra, the Cambodian Minister of Information, said fire from Thai forces killed four Cambodian civilians and injured about nine others.

The prime minister of regional neighbor Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, called for restraint in a statement posted to social media and said that his country is ready to support efforts to avert further fighting.

"Our region cannot afford to see long-standing disputes slip into cycles of confrontation," he wrote.

Centuries of rivalry lie beneath territorial dispute

Thailand and Cambodia have a history of enmity going back centuries, when they were warring empires. Their modern territorial claims stem largely from a 1907 map drawn when Cambodia was under French colonial rule, which Thailand has argued is inaccurate.

The International Court of Justice in 1962 awarded sovereignty to Cambodia over an area that included the 1,000-year-old Preah Vihear temple, which still rankles many Thais.

The ceasefire does not spell out a path to resolve the underlying basis of the dispute, the longstanding differences over where the border should run.

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Today in History: December 9, smallpox is declared eradicated

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 9, the 343rd day of 2025. There are 22 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Dec. 9, 1979, scientists certified the global eradication of smallpox, a disease which killed an estimated 300 million people in the 20th century.

Also on this date:

In 1965, "A Charlie Brown Christmas," the first animated TV special featuring characters from the "Peanuts" comic strip by Charles M. Schulz, premiered on CBS.

In 1990, Solidarity founder Lech Wałęsa (lek vah-WEN'-sah) won Poland's first free presidential election since 1926.

In 1992, the first U.S. Marines made a predawn beach landing in Somalia in support of Operation Restore Hope; they were met by hundreds of reporters awaiting their arrival.

In 2006, the space shuttle Discovery launched on a mission to add to and rewire the International Space Station.

In 2013, scientists revealed that NASA's Curiosity rover had uncovered signs of an ancient freshwater lake on Mars.

In 2019, an island volcano off New Zealand's coast called Whakaari, or White Island, erupted, killing 22 tourists and guides and seriously injuring several others. Most of the 47 people on the island were U.S. and Australian cruise ship passengers on a walking tour with the guides.

In 2021, a cargo truck jammed with migrants crashed in southern Mexico, killing at least 53 people and injuring dozens more.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Judi Dench is 91. Actor Beau Bridges is 84. World Golf Hall of Famer Tom Kite is 76. Actor John Malkovich is 72. Singer Donny Osmond is 68. Actor Felicity Huffman is 63. Empress Masako of Japan is 62. Democratic Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York is 59. Rock singer-musician Jakob Dylan (Wallflowers) is 56. Actor Simon Helberg is 45. Olympic gymnastics gold medalist McKayla Maroney is 30. Actor Nico Parker is 21.