

Groton Daily Independent

Wednesday, December 10, 2025 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 189 ~ 1 of 68

The Groton Area School District will be opening 2 hours late – Wednesday, December 10, 2025

The Northwestern game scheduled for last night has been rescheduled to January 12. A C game has been added for that night as well.

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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.

Thurs. Dec. 11

Senior Men: Baked lemon chicken, creamy noodles, tossed salad, fruit, dinner roll.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Lasagna bake, corn.

Groton Lions Club Meeting at 104 N main, 6 p.m.

4th Grade Girls' Basketball, 4 p.m.

3rd GBB Practice, 5 p.m.

4th Grade BB, 6 p.m.

MS/HS Christmas Concert, 7 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent
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1440

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

Australian Social Media Ban

Australia's nationwide ban on social media use for children under 16 takes effect today, making it the first country to prohibit underage users from major platforms outright.

Millions of accounts are expected to be affected as companies, such as TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube, and X, face fines of up to \$33M for serious or repeated noncompliance. The law places responsibility on companies rather than families, and platforms must demonstrate that they have taken "reasonable steps," such as age checks and the removal of suspected underage accounts. Some countries have taken similar steps, such as strict youth modes or time limits.

The measure is cast as a child-protection and mental health safeguard, citing research showing 96% of 10- to 15-year-olds use social media, with many encountering harmful content, grooming, or cyberbullying. Critics say the law is difficult to enforce, may push teens onto harder-to-monitor platforms, and poses privacy risks.

Campaign Finance Challenge

The Supreme Court yesterday heard a Republican-led challenge to federal limits on the amount of money political parties can spend in coordination with candidates.

The case, filed in 2022 by Republican congressional groups alongside then-Sen. JD Vance and former Rep. Steve Chabot, argues coordinated spending limits violate the First Amendment by restricting a party's ability to assist its nominees. Democrats counter that striking down the limits would allow wealthy donors to sidestep caps on how much individuals can contribute to candidates, potentially concentrating political influence in a few large gifts and weakening the impact of small-dollar contributions. Democratic candidates have recently outraised their Republican counterparts, largely due to smaller contributions.

The court is expected to rule by July. The case will be its first major campaign finance decision since it struck down limits on political spending by corporations and unions in 2010 and eliminated the aggregate cap on individual contributions in 2014.

Roman Recipe for Ruins

Newly discovered materials from Pompeii confirm how the Romans formulated concrete to build long-lasting structural masterpieces.

Architect Vitruvius described the Romans' building process nearly 2,100 years ago in "De Architectura"—the first known book on architectural theory—suggesting they mixed a water-lime paste with other ingredients to produce concrete. But a 2023 paper challenged this order. Researcher Admir Masic analyzed samples of a roughly 2,500-year-old city wall in Priverno, Italy, and found Romans used a "hot-mixing" process—first mixing dry ingredients including lime fragments and volcanic ash, then adding water. The approach released heat, allowing lime pieces to expand and fill gaps as cracks form. Now, analysis of a newly discovered site in Pompeii confirms Masic's theory using additional samples and a dry raw materials pile.

Masic has cofounded a company that aims to commercialize "self-healing" cement. DMAT recently raised \$4.5M in a round led by Italy's Primo Capital SGR.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Musician Raul Malo, best known as the frontman of Grammy-winning, multicultural Americana band The Mavericks, dies at age 60.

Federal judge postpones Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni's civil trial from March 9 to May 18, citing the need to prioritize two criminal trials.

Inter Miami's Lionel Messi named Major League Soccer's MVP, becoming the first player to earn the title in back-to-back seasons.

LA Dodgers' Shohei Ohtani selected as AP's Male Athlete of the Year for fourth time, tying for most nods.

Science & Technology

European Commission launches antitrust probe into Google's use of web content and YouTube videos to create the search engine's AI-generated overviews.

Microsoft to fund \$17.5B in new data centers, AI infrastructure, and skills programming in India from 2026 to 2029, building on \$3B committed in January and marking the company's largest investment in Asia.

Researchers record winds blasting from a black hole at more than 134 million miles per hour—about 20% the speed of light and the fastest ever observed.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.1%, Dow -0.4%, Nasdaq +0.1%); investors await today's Federal Reserve interest rate decision.

Silver rises above \$60 per ounce for first time.

Elon Musk's SpaceX reportedly to pursue initial public offering in 2026, seeking to raise more than \$30B at a valuation of about \$1.5T.

US job openings rise slightly to 7.67 million in October, from 7.66 million in September; layoffs rose to nearly 1.9 million—the most since January 2023.

Politics & World Affairs

Clashes between Cambodia and Thailand kill at least seven civilians, wound 20 others, and displace more than 20,000, per Cambodia.

French Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu passes a proposed 2026 spending plan through the National Assembly, sending bill to Senate; Lecornu previously resigned over his failure to pass a budget.

European Union's climate observatory projects 2025 will rank as the second-hottest year on record.

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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

South Dakota Housing Awards More Than \$60 Million for Affordable Housing in South Dakota

PIERRE, SD (12.10.25) – South Dakota Housing’s Board of Commissioners recently awarded \$59.4 million to support the construction and rehabilitation of multifamily and single-family rental housing across the state. An additional \$742,500 was awarded to nine programs that provide affordable housing assistance.

The developments received \$42 million in bond financing, \$3.25 million in Housing Infrastructure Financing, \$4.19 million in Housing Tax Credits, \$6.26 million in HOME Investment Partnership Program funds, \$1.93 million in Housing Opportunity Funds and \$2.62 million in Housing Trust Funds.

The developments that received Board approvals for funding:

BHAHFH Urban Homebuyer Assistance: Black Hills Area Habitat for Humanity received approval for \$55,000 in Housing Opportunity Fund funding for a homebuyer assistance program that will assist approximately five homeowners at or below 80 percent of the area median income for Pennington County.

Burke Friendship Village Rehab Project: Burke Housing Authority received approval for \$452,000 in a Housing Opportunity Fund loan. The development will be rehabilitation of eight units in Burke. There will be eight one-bedroom units for tenants at or below 115% AMI.

Cornerstone Rescue Mission Urban Homelessness Prevention: Cornerstone Rescue Mission received approval for \$55,000 in Housing Opportunity Fund funding for homelessness prevention activities that will assist 30 households at or below 80 percent of the area median income for Rapid City.

East Creek Village Project: Black Hills Habitat for Humanity received approval for \$729,431 in a Housing Infrastructure Financing Program grant. The project consists of infrastructure development for 40 single family lots.

Fall River Health Services Housing Development: Fall River Health Services received approval for \$1,159,089 in a Housing Infrastructure Financing Program grant. The project consists of infrastructure development for 35 single family lots and 36 multifamily units in Hot Springs.

FPDC-Governor’s Homes: Fort Pierre Development Corporation received approval for \$240,000 in a Housing Opportunity Fund loan. The development will be new construction of two single family Governor’s Houses. Each home will be three bedrooms and two baths in Fort Pierre. Potential homebuyers must income qualify at or below Governor’s House income limits.

GROW Rural Homebuyer Assistance: GROW South Dakota received approval for \$123,750 in Housing Opportunity Fund funding for a homebuyer assistance program that will assist approximately 30 homeowners at or below 80 percent of the area median income for rural South Dakota communities.

HAPI Rural Homebuyer Assistance: Homes Are Possible, Inc. received approval for \$82,500 in Housing Opportunity Fund funding for a homebuyer assistance program that will assist approximately 35 homeowners at or below 80 percent of the area median income for rural South Dakota communities.

ICAP Rural Homeowner Rehab: Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership received approval for \$129,800 in Housing Opportunity Fund funding for a homebuyer rehabilitation program that will assist approximately 16 homeowners at or below 50 percent of the area median income for rural South Dakota communities in ICAP’s service area.

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James Street Villas: Mesner Development Company received approval for \$1 million in a HOME loan, \$216,486 in a Housing Trust Fund loan and \$495,773 in Housing Tax Credits resulting in nearly \$4 million in Housing Tax Credit equity. The development will construct 20 new units for seniors (55+) in Vermillion. There will be 18 two-bedroom units for tenants at or below 60% AMI. Two units will be market rate.

Kangas West Addition Phase II: Kangor Venture, LLC received approval for \$346,570 in a Housing Infrastructure Financing Program grant. The project consists of infrastructure development for 21 single family lots.

Madison Park Townhomes Phase III: G.A. Haan Development, LLC. received approval for \$1 million in a HOME loan and \$832,632 in Housing Tax Credits resulting in more than \$6.6 million in Housing Tax Credit equity. The development will construct 34 new units in Vermillion. There will be 14 two-bedroom units and 13 three-bedroom units for tenants at or below 60% AMI. Seven units will be at market rate.

MAHI Rural Homebuyer Assistance: Mitchell Area Housing received approval for \$129,800 in Housing Opportunity Fund funding for a homebuyer assistance program that will assist approximately 31 homeowners at or below 80 percent of the area median income for Mitchell.

NLS Urban Homebuyer Assistance: Neighborhood Lending Services, LLC received approval for \$55,000 in Housing Opportunity Fund funding for a homebuyer assistance program that will assist approximately six homeowners at or below 115 percent of the area median income for Rapid City.

NWDHR Rural Homeowner Rehab: NeighborWorks Dakota Home Resources received approval for \$56,150 in Housing Opportunity Fund funding for a homeowner rehab program that will assist approximately eight homeowners at or below 115 percent of the area median income for the black hills area.

NWDHR Rural Homeowner Rehab: NeighborWorks Dakota Home Resources received approval for \$55,000 in Housing Opportunity Fund funding for a homeowner rehab program that will assist approximately three homeowners at or below 115 percent of the area median income for the Rapid City.

OLHA SD LIHTC #2: Oglala Lakota Housing Authority received approval for \$871,913 in Housing Tax Credits resulting in more than \$6.5 million in Housing Tax Credit equity. The development will construct 24 single family homes for rental in Pine Ridge. Each home will be three-bedrooms and two bathrooms with a car port and storage shed for tenants at or below 60% AMI.

Peak View Apartments II: Buxton Enterprises, LLC received approval for \$1,000,000 in a HOME loan, \$600,000 in a Housing Trust Fund loan and \$740,000 in Housing Tax Credits resulting in more than \$5.8 million in Housing Tax Credit equity. The development will be new construction of 32 units in Spearfish. There will be 8 one-bedroom units and 22 two-bedroom units for tenants at or below 60% AMI. Two units will be market rate.

Pine View Properties: Pine View Properties LLC received approval for \$264,914 in a HOME loan and \$500,000 in a Housing Opportunity Fund loan. The development will construct two twin homes in Canistota. Each home will be three bedrooms and two baths for tenants at or below 60% AMI for the HOME/HOF unit and 115% AMI for the HOF unit. The two remaining units will be market rate.

Roosevelt Street Apartments: Solara LLC received approval for \$1,016,691 in a Housing Infrastructure Financing Program loan. The project consists of infrastructure development for 236 multifamily units in Vermillion.

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Rosa Parks Apartments: Affordable Housing Solutions received approval for \$1,000,000 in a HOME loan, \$600,000 in a Housing Trust Fund loan and \$569,593 in Housing Tax Credits resulting in nearly \$4.5 million in Housing Tax Credit equity. The development will be new construction of 29 units in Sioux Falls. There will be 9 one-bedroom, 12 two-bedroom units and 8 three-bedroom units for tenants at or below 60% AMI.

Southeastern Behavioral Apartments: Southeastern Behavioral, LLC received approval for \$1 million in a HOME loan, \$600,000 in a Housing Trust Fund loan and \$132,000 in Housing Tax Credits resulting in \$1.1 million in Housing Tax Credit equity. The development will construct 55 new units for permanent supportive housing in Sioux Falls. There will be 20 single room occupancy units, 18 studio units, 14 one-bedroom units and 3 two-bedroom units for tenants at or below 60% AMI.

The Rhys Apartments: Big Red Development, LLC received approval for up to \$42 million in bond financing. The development will construct 178 new units in Sioux Falls. There will be 48 two-bedroom units, 114 three-bedroom units and 16 four-bedroom units for tenants at or below 60% AMI.

The Summit at Van Eps Apartments: The Summit at Van Eps, LLC received approval for \$1,000,000 in a HOME loan, \$600,000 in a Housing Trust Fund loan and \$548,859 in Housing Tax Credits resulting in \$4.3 million in Housing Tax Credit equity. The development will be new construction of 28 units in Madison. There will be 3 studio units, 15 one-bedroom, 6 two-bedroom units and 4 three-bedroom units for tenants at or below 60% AMI.

-30-

About South Dakota Housing

South Dakota Housing Development Authority was created by the South Dakota Legislature in 1973 with a stated mission to provide opportunities for quality, affordable housing for South Dakotans. South Dakota Housing is a self-supporting, nonprofit entity known for our commitment for providing innovative financing solutions to create and preserve affordable housing. South Dakota Housing utilizes housing bonds, tax credits, and other federal and state resources to fund housing programs which provide mortgage and downpayment assistance, housing construction and rehabilitation, homelessness prevention, rental assistance, and educational opportunities.

2026 DOG LICENSES DUE BY 12/31/2025

Fines start January 1, 2026



Spayed/Neutered dogs are \$5 per dog, otherwise \$10 per dog. Proof of rabies shot information is **REQUIRED!!**

Email proof to city. kellie@nvc.net, fax to

(605) 397-4498 or bring a copy to City Hall!!

Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have a dog(s) that were previously licensed!

Questions call (605) 397-8422

What can \$20 get you?



for
Senior Citizens

or anyone using physical therapy
a gym membership at

15 N Main - Ste. 101

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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Harrisburg – Tiger Nation Elevated Experience – 11/22/2026

9050A – G-Force: Co-Lead Jameson Penning & Haden Harder
Qualifier Ranking – Ranked 7th out of 22. (4 Wins/2 Losses/1 Tie) Struggle with mechanical issues. Lost in Quarter Finals – 16 to 28.

9050E – Galaxy: – Ayce Warrington, Rylee Hofer, Gideon Rix & Keith Furman
Qualifier Ranking – Ranked 11th out of 22. (4 Wins/3 Loss) Loss in Quarter Finals – 20 to 146.

9050B – Gearheads: Co-Lead: Logan Clocksene & Kira Clocksene. Emmett Zoellner, Simon Simunek
Qualifier Ranking – Ranked 22th out of 22. (0 Wins/7 Losses) Struggle with mechanical issues.

9050F – Gladiators: Lead: Garrett Schultz
Didn't attend competition

Future Robotics Events:

DSU VEX Robotics Qualifier	Madison, SD	12/20/2026	MS/HS
Tiger Robotics MS VEX V5RC Push Back	St. Cloud, MN	1/3/2026	MS
Diamond in the Desert High School Event	Mesa, AZ	1/3/2026	Gladiators
Valley City V5 Frozen Classic	Valley City, ND	1/16/2026	MS/HS
Carrot Cup Qualifier @ SDSU	Brookings, SD	1/18/2025	MS/HS
Spartan Robot Rally	Spearfish, SD	2/7/2026	MS/HS
South Dakota VEX V5 High School State Championship @ DSU	Madison, SD	2/27-2/28	MS/HS



Fact brief: Is SD's rate of chronic absenteeism increasing?



Michael Klinski 

Reporter

michael.klinski@sdnewswatch.org

NO

The number of students who are marked as chronically absent in the South Dakota public school system has stayed flat since falling from a COVID-era spike.

Chronically absent students jumped from 14% in 2018-19 to 22% in 2021-22 and have stayed at 21% since then. Chronic absenteeism is when students

miss more than 10% or more of school – about two days per month.

Nationally, chronic absenteeism reached 31% in 2021-22 and fell to 28% in 2022-23.

South Dakota's chronic absenteeism is largely fueled by absences at Native American schools. During the 2023-24 school year, 51% of Indigenous students were chronically absent from school.

Chronic absenteeism is linked to a higher likelihood of students not finishing high school.

In 2023, the state Department of Education awarded grants to nine South Dakota school districts to address chronic absenteeism by implementing programs that will fund transportation, community engagement opportunities and mentoring, among others.

City brings in new contractor for hail-damaged roofs

by Elizabeth Varin

After months of stalled progress on hail-damaged buildings, the Groton City Council approved hiring The Roofers of Hayti, S.D., to repair roofs on eleven city structures—replacing a contractor who received a \$45,000 deposit in February but later stopped responding.

The council also set salaries for 2026 and hired attendants for the skating rink at Tuesday's meeting.

Roof repairs have been in discussion since August, when Finance Officer Douglas Heinrich reported to the council that he had not been able to get in contact with Dakota Roofing about the roof repairs. The council had approved hiring the contractor in February, with work set to be completed in 2025.

The city went out to bid again on the project, and five sealed bids were opened in November.

- The Roofers bid roof repairs on eleven city buildings at \$109,482.24.
- All Over Roofing bid \$131,074.08 for all the work, with a 7% increase from 2024 to 2026.
- Five Star Roofing bid \$108,296.54 with bid bond included for a \$6,002 fee.
- Radiant Roofing bid \$177,151.49 for the work including full City Hall roof repair included.
- Ringneck Construction bid \$85,058.63 for roof repair on eight buildings or \$91,792.88 for that roof repair plus soffit/fascia work on the community center.

While the bid was approved with a unanimous vote, Mayor Scott Hanlon expressed some caution.

"We should be a little careful if we're giving money out, to protect ourselves," he said.

Finance Officer Heinrich said the winning contractor isn't going to require a 50% down payment until the city is in possession of the materials.

Council approves salary increases

After about an hour of closed session meeting, the council set city staff salaries for 2026.

Salaries for hourly and weekly staff increased by 3 percent as a cost-of-living increase. However, elected and appointed positions saw no salary increase.

The mayor will receive \$625 per month, and council members will receive \$3,000 per year as well as \$125 for special City Council meeting.

Board of equalization members (made up of City Council members) will receive \$200 per year.

Planning and zoning commissioners will receive \$35 per meeting and \$70 per special meeting.

Elected officials will also receive \$300 per full day of additional authorized meetings, and \$150 per half day of additional authorized meetings.

City staff salaries are set to adjust as follows:

- Finance Officer salary increasing from \$32 per hour in 2025 to \$32.96 in 2026
- Deputy Finance Officer salary increasing from \$30.28 per hour in 2025 to \$31.19 in 2026
- Assistant Finance Officer salary increasing from \$25.05 per hour in 2025 to \$25.80 in 2026
- Public Works Coordinator/Street and Water Superintendent salary increasing from \$38.69 per hour in 2025 to \$39.85 in 2026
- Wastewater Supervisor salary increasing from \$34.58 per hour in 2025 to \$35.62 in 2026
- Assistant Street Superintendent salary increasing from \$32.13 per hour in 2025 to \$33.09 in 2026
- Public Works Laborer salary increasing from \$31.35 per hour in 2025 to \$32.29 in 2026
- Technology Specialist salary increasing from \$33.84 per hour in 2025 to \$34.86 in 2026
- Electric Superintendent salary increasing from \$59.66 per hour in 2025 to \$61.45 in 2026
- Electric Lineman salary increasing from \$43.92 per hour in 2025 to \$45.24 in 2026
- Police Chief salary increasing from \$37.93 per hour in 2025 to \$39.07 in 2026
- Police Officer and Assistant Chief salary increasing from \$34.54 per hour in 2025 to \$35.58 in 2026
- Police Officer Level 1 salary increasing from \$32.28 per hour in 2025 to \$33.25 in 2026
- Police Officer Level 2 salary increasing from \$31.52 per hour in 2025 to \$32.47 in 2026

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Other city staff news includes hiring staff for the ice skating rink.

The council voted to hire Leah Jones as manager for the rink at \$13.10 per hour with an additional \$250 per month for the manager position.

Others hired as attendants will receive \$11.85 per hour. Those hired include Abby Fjeldheim, Jamie Mitchek, Claire Schuelke, Sydney Locke, Addison Hoffman, Jordan Schwan, Tenley Frost and Sophia Flihs.

- Darrell Hillestad with the Groton airport reported recent upgrades made at the airport north of town. Electrical equipment and a septic tank have been added to the structure moved out to the airport earlier this year. Hillestad advised the council to look into insurance for the structure after the start of the new year.

- The council accepted a bid to purchase a city-owned hoist. Two bids were submitted, with Troy and Darin Zoellner having the winning bid at \$1,500.

- The council reminded the community that the holiday lighting contest will take place Dec. 18. Utility bill credits ranging from \$50 to \$100 will be given away as prizes.

- The council reminded the community that 2026 dog licenses are due by Dec. 31.

- City offices will be closed Dec. 24, 25 and 26 for Christmas.

High wind causes power outages

There were a number of power outages reported last night from the high wind that swept through the area. Clark County reported 617 places without power, Spink County reported 237 and Brown County reported 776. There were many more other outages through the night. As of this morning, only 10 residents statewide were still without power.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Western South Dakota legal aid group survives assessment and keeps its funding

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

A nonprofit providing legal aid to low-income South Dakotans will retain its federal funding, despite claims of ineffectiveness from a fellow legal aid organization.

The decision leaves South Dakota's legal aid landscape unchanged, but will increase scrutiny over Dakota Plains Legal Services operations over the next year.

Dakota Plains serves the western half of South Dakota, as well as Native Americans on and off tribal lands across the state. East River Legal Services, which serves the eastern part of the state, had said earlier this year that it would compete for Dakota Plains' federal grant funding because the organization was not effectively serving clients.

Lea Wroblewski, executive director for East River Legal Services, said in July that some organizations working with low-income, vulnerable communities in Dakota Plains' jurisdiction were unfamiliar with the nonprofit. She added that East River had "not been able to successfully refer a single housing case" to Dakota Plains in her three years on the job.

Representatives with the nationwide Legal Services Corporation spoke to members of the state Commission on Equal Access to Our Courts during a Tuesday virtual meeting. Corporation officials said they will award Dakota Plains one year's worth of funding rather than a standard three-year grant. Dakota Plains will receive nearly \$2 million in total grant funding for its geographical area and its services to Native Americans.

The organization will adhere to special grant conditions to centralize its intake system and involve leadership in a nationwide search for a permanent executive director. Interim Executive Director William Sulik requested another compliance review from the national corporation to assess the organization's effectiveness and train staff members.

"I know that this is a trust given to us," Sulik told commission members, "and we intend to keep that trust with the people of South Dakota."



The Dakota Plains Legal Services office in Rapid City, pictured on Aug. 14, 2025. (Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

The commission also voted to award funding that was withheld from Dakota Plains while the corporation's assessment was pending. The commission awarded Dakota Plains \$154,000, with the stipulation that the organization's Justice Bus operations are prioritized.

The Justice Bus launched at the beginning of this year and is the state's first mobile legal aid office, meant to increase accessibility to legal aid services across the state — especially in legal deserts.

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

Trump administration aims to officially scrap Biden-era student loan forgiveness program

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Education announced a proposed agreement Tuesday that would permanently axe an income-driven student loan repayment plan in which more than 7 million student loan borrowers are enrolled.

Under a joint proposal with seven Republican-led states that challenged the program, the department would not enroll any new borrowers in the Saving on a Valuable Education, or SAVE, plan, deny any pending applications and place borrowers currently in the plan into legally compliant repayment plans.

The program, introduced in 2023 under then-President Joe Biden's administration, was hit with legal challenges from several GOP-led

states, including Missouri, and has been blocked by the courts. The initiative sought to provide lower monthly loan payments for borrowers and forgive remaining debt after a certain period of time.

If a Missouri federal court approves the agreement, the department said borrowers currently enrolled in the SAVE plan "will have a limited time to select a new, legal repayment plan and begin repaying their student loans."

The agreement stems from a legal challenge to the plan brought by Missouri, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, North Dakota, Ohio and Oklahoma in 2024.



The U.S. Education Department proposed an agreement with Republican-led states to permanently eliminate the Biden-era SAVE plan. (Catherine Lane/Getty Images)

A 'deceptive scheme'

In a statement alongside the announcement, Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent said President Donald Trump's administration "is righting this wrong and bringing an end to this deceptive scheme."

"The law is clear: if you take out a loan, you must pay it back," Kent added. "Thanks to the State of Missouri and other states fighting against this egregious federal overreach, American taxpayers can now

rest assured they will no longer be forced to serve as collateral for illegal and irresponsible student loan policies.”

Republicans argued the permissive repayment plan let borrowers off the hook at the expense of federal taxpayers.

Missouri Attorney General Catherine Hanaway said in a statement Tuesday her office “fought for hard-working Americans who were being preyed upon by Biden Administration bureaucrats, and we won in court every time.”

“We appreciate President Trump’s real, long-term solutions instead of illegal student loan schemes,” Hanaway added.

Student advocates, though, said the agreement would place an additional burden on student borrowers already struggling with a rising cost of living.

Persis Yu, deputy executive director and managing counsel at the advocacy group Protect Borrowers, blasted the settlement agreement as “pure capitulation” in a Tuesday statement.

“While millions of student loan borrowers struggle amidst the worsening affordability crisis ... billionaire Education Secretary, Linda McMahon chose to strike a back-room deal with a right-wing state Attorney General and strip borrowers of the most affordable repayment plan that would help millions to stay on track with their loans while keeping a roof over their head,” Yu said.

Interest accumulating

In February, a federal appeals court upheld a lower court injunction that blocked the SAVE plan from going into effect. Borrowers under the plan were placed in an interest-free forbearance last year amid legal limbo.

But borrowers’ loans in the SAVE forbearance began to accrue interest Aug. 1 — a move the department announced in July to comply with court orders.

The SAVE plan was already set to be phased out by July 2028 under congressional Republicans’ tax and spending cut bill that Trump signed into law this year.

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.

Epstein co-conspirator grand jury records to be unsealed in New York under court order

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — A Manhattan federal judge granted an order Tuesday to unseal grand jury records in the case of Jeffrey Epstein co-conspirator Ghislaine Maxwell, who was convicted of sex trafficking minors among other offenses in 2021.

Federal Judge Paul Engelmayer wrote in a 24-page order that unsealing the documents fell within the scope of a new law passed by Congress and signed by President Donald Trump. The law compels the U.S. Department of Justice to release nearly all investigative files in the government’s case against Epstein, who died in jail in 2019 awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges.

The U.S. Department of Justice asked the court to release the records after Congress overwhelmingly passed the legislation last month requiring disclosure of “all unclassified records, documents, communications, and investigative materials in its possession that relate to Epstein or (co-conspirator Ghislaine) Maxwell.”

Attorney General Pam Bondi must release the material by Dec. 19 in accordance with the law, which lawmakers dubbed the Epstein Files Transparency Act.

Law covers grand jury material Engelmayer described the act's language as "strikingly broad" and wrote Congress was "undeniably aware" that grand jury materials in Maxwell's case were in possession of the U.S. attorney's office in the Southern District of New York.

"Its decision not to exclude grand jury materials despite knowledge as to their existence, while expressly excluding other categories of materials (such as classified information), indicates that the Act covers grand jury materials," Engelmayer wrote.

The order comes days after a Florida federal judge reached a similar conclusion Friday and ordered the unsealing of federal grand jury materials related to the government's investigation of Epstein from 2005 to 2007.

Epstein pleaded guilty to a state charge for soliciting a minor for prostitution but avoided a federal probe when then-U.S. Attorney Alexander Acosta cut a deal with state prosecutors. Acosta was later appointed secretary of Labor during Trump's first administration.

Florida interview

Maxwell is serving a 20-year prison sentence. The Trump administration recently transferred the sex offender to a minimum security prison shortly after Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche interviewed her in a Tallahassee, Florida, facility as pressure to release the Epstein files ramped up in Congress and among Trump's base.

According to transcripts, Maxwell told Blanche, Trump's former personal defense attorney, that she "never witnessed the president in any inappropriate setting in any way. The president was never inappropriate with anybody. In the times that I was with him, he was a gentleman in all respects."

Trump had a well-documented friendship with Epstein but denies any involvement with Epstein's alleged crimes. The president has said that he kicked Epstein out of his private Florida club, Mar-a-Lago, because Epstein had poached young female staffers from the club.

Maxwell was convicted in December 2021, after a one-month jury trial, of conspiracy to entice minors to travel to engage in illegal sex acts, conspiracy to transport minors to participate in illegal sex acts, transporting a minor to participate in illegal sex acts, sex trafficking conspiracy, and sex trafficking of a minor.

The Justice Department maintains Epstein had over 1,000 victims.

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



Then-U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York Geoffrey Berman announces charges against Jeffrey Epstein on July 8, 2019 in New York City. (Photo by Stephanie Keith/Getty Images)

New student loan rule could dissuade people from advanced nursing degrees

Yet nurse practitioners, anesthetists and midwives are needed to fill clinician gaps

BY: NADA HASSANEIN

Zoe Clarke became a hospital registered nurse two and a half years ago, following in the footsteps of her mother and grandmother.

Clarke, an ICU nurse in Asheville, North Carolina, wants to get her master's degree to become a nurse practitioner or a certified registered nurse anesthetist — occupations in high demand — and eventually work toward a doctoral degree.

But new borrowing limits on federal student loans may hinder her from reaching that goal.

A provision in the federal One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the tax and spending law enacted this summer, overhauls the federal student loan program for graduate students in an effort to simplify the loan process and discourage colleges from raising tuition.

To comply with the new law, the U.S. Department of Education recently issued a draft rule that would impose limits on how much graduate students can borrow — up to \$20,500 per year and \$100,000 in total for most students, but up to \$50,000 a year and \$200,000 in total for students in a new “professional” category. The category includes people studying to be medical doctors, dentists, veterinarians, pharmacists and lawyers.

Students pursuing advanced nursing degrees, however, are not included in the professional category. Advanced practice nurses, hospital associations and other health groups say the rule will make it unaffordable for many nurses to advance their careers — disproportionately affecting communities, especially rural ones, that rely on them amid physician shortages.

Advanced nurses can provide primary care, deliver babies as nurse midwives and anesthetize surgery patients where there aren't enough physicians to go around. They can also write some prescriptions. Advanced practice nurses also serve as college faculty in community colleges and nursing schools.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates the nation will employ an additional 134,000 nurse practitioners, nurse midwives and nurse anesthetists in the next decade, 35% more than there are now. In high demand, nurse practitioners are one of the fastest-growing occupations in the nation, the bureau says.

“We depend heavily on nurse practitioners,” said Sandy Reding, a president of the California Nurses Association and vice president of National Nurses United. “But if they don't have access to getting further education, we're not going to see additional nurse practitioners come into the field.”

Tuition, combined with living expenses, can far exceed \$50,000 a year for many post-bachelor's nursing programs.

“Potentially, this could devastate a whole generation of nurses getting their advanced practice degrees,”



Nurse practitioner Carol Biocic treats a Marine Corps veteran at a podiatry clinic for veterans in 2023 in Chicago. New professional student loan caps might make it more difficult for people to pursue advanced nursing degrees. (Photo by Scott Olson/Getty Images)

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Clarke said.

Some education advocates fear that losing a pipeline of advanced nursing practitioners to serve as college faculty also could lead to fewer registered and advanced nurses and other caregivers with two- and four-year degrees, because there would be fewer people to teach them.

Many advanced-degree nursing faculty are retiring. Nursing schools reported more than 2,100 full-time faculty vacancies in 2022, according to the American Nurses Association — leading to roughly 80,000 students being turned away.

States are already grappling with workforce shortfalls caused by exhausting work conditions that have led many nurses to burn out and leave the field, or leave bedside care to teach, nurses told Stateline.

In response to an uproar from nursing associations and others in health care, the Department of Education released a rebuttal last week defending its proposal, saying it is not a “value judgement about the importance of programs.”

It also said it may make changes in response to public comments. The new limits would take effect July 1, 2026.

Rural and underserved communities

Advanced practice registered nurses, known as APRNs, fill gaps in rural communities where there aren't enough clinicians. For example, nurses needed for surgeries — nurse anesthetists, or CRNAs — make up 80% of anesthesia providers in rural counties. About a fifth of APRNs nationwide worked in rural areas in 2022, according to one survey of more than 18,800 APRNs.

“The nurse practitioners, APRNs, are a needed lifeline to help fill those gaps,” said Heidi Lucas, executive director of the Missouri Rural Health Association and former director of the state's nurses association. “Putting barriers in the way to keep [nurses] from getting degrees — that's just going to exacerbate the problems that we already have.”

She said Missouri will be short about 2,000 physicians next year.

The new rule cutting options for federal student loans would only worsen staffing shortages amid tenuous rural hospital budgets, said state-level observers. Hospitals already are grappling with millions of dollars in looming Medicaid cuts over the next 10 years, said Rich Rasmussen, president of the Oklahoma Hospital Association.

Nurse practitioners often serve as primary care providers, writing prescriptions and managing patient care. About 80% of them see Medicaid and Medicare patients, according to the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, citing federal data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The proposal to deny advanced practice nurse practitioners the more generous loan options ignores the nation's needs, said nurse practitioner Valerie Fuller, president of the association.

“At a time when America needs more health care providers, we can't afford to put more obstacles in place for nurse practitioner students who want to go on and further their education and take care of the patients that need care,” said Fuller, former president of the Maine Nurse Practitioner Association. “We know it's going to harm our workforce.”

'Clipping the wings'

Rasmussen, of the Oklahoma Hospital Association, said he is concerned about the effect the rule will have on the pipeline for certified nurse midwives and the state's already dwindling rural maternal health care options.

“We are clipping the wings of rural [obstetrics] to be able to blossom in our state if we're going to put these types of restrictions on the borrowing capability of nurses who want to pursue obstetrical services in nursing as well,” he said. He added that the rules will force nurses to seek private sector loans — which don't qualify for federal loan forgiveness programs that encourage clinicians to come work in rural areas.

Teshieka Curtis-Pugh, executive director of the South Carolina Nurses Association, is also concerned about nurse midwives. South Carolina is expected to see a shortage of 3,200 physicians by 2030.

"We also live in a state that has very poor maternal outcomes, especially for women of color. So think about, how does that impact them?" she said. "That means we don't get the certified nurse midwives who are masters prepared, some of them are doctorally prepared, who are able to fill that gap for birth in that area."

Diversity and opportunity for students from marginalized groups could also take a hit, said Curtis-Pugh, a registered nurse with a master's of science in nursing. And for those going back to school while juggling parenting, federal loan dollars can help beyond tuition, she noted.

"They help that mom be able to supplement child care for their child, so that they can have child care while they go to school," she said. "There's tuition, there's books, there's keeping the lights on. They're feeding the family they're getting to and from."

The exclusion from the higher, "professional" category of student loan options is especially galling after nurses' work during the COVID-19 pandemic, said Reding, of National Nurses United.

"We were all heroes in 2020. Now, what are we?" Reding asked. "It's a slap in the face to the nurses that go to work every day doing our very best to care for our patients, even under very adverse conditions and even facing deadly viruses."

Clarke, the registered nurse considering a post-bachelor's degree, said nurses' pandemic-era devotion influenced her own career path.

"When I saw the nurses and the health care workers really working hard for their communities and sacrificing a lot, I was really inspired by that," Clarke said. "And that's why I went to school."

Stateline reporter Nada Hassanein can be reached at nhassanein@stateline.org.

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

Nada Hassanein is a health care reporter for Stateline with a focus on inequities.

US Senate GOP rolls out health care plan that fails to extend premium subsidies

Thune says Democrats' bill to continue enhanced ACA marketplace tax credits is unacceptable

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Republicans announced Tuesday they will hold a vote on their own health care proposal later this week to counter a Democratic bill that would extend enhanced tax credits for Affordable Care Act marketplace plans for three more years.

The 32-page GOP bill would not address the expiring ACA marketplace tax credits but would send payments to certain Americans through Health Savings Accounts to cover some of the cost of health care.

Neither measure has the 60 votes needed to advance under that chamber's rules. That would leave the ACA marketplace subsidies to expire at the end of the year and dramatically spike the cost of health insurance for the millions of people enrolled in those plans.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said Democrats' bill to simply extend the enhanced ACA



U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-South Dakota, speaks with reporters on Capitol Hill on Sept. 19, 2025. (Photo by Jennifer Shutt/

States Newsroom)

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marketplace tax credits to offset the costs Americans pay for that insurance was unacceptable.

"The way that the program is structured, the money goes straight to the insurance companies," Thune said. "And the way that we think this ought to work is you ought to come up with a way in which you can deliver the benefit to the patients and not to the insurance companies."

Thune said the Democratic bill lacks an income cap for ACA marketplace tax credits and allows \$0 premiums for health insurance plans — guaranteeing the measure will fail.

Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, of New York, called the GOP proposal a "nonstarter" that would lead to "junk insurance." He said the only way to avoid a dramatic increase in health insurance costs next year is to extend the enhanced ACA tax credits.

"Their phony proposal is dead on arrival," Schumer said. "The bill not only fails to extend the tax credits, it increases costs, adds tons of new abortion restrictions for women, expands junk fees and permanently funds cost-sharing reductions."

Multiple plans

Senate Republicans have debated for weeks whether to hold a vote on a GOP plan to show the party has something to offer toward reducing health care costs. Thune promised Democrats a vote on a health care bill of their choosing in exchange for votes to end the government shutdown.

Schumer announced last week that Democrats would hold the vote on a three-year extension of the enhanced ACA tax credits as they exist now.

Several GOP senators, including Maine's Susan Collins and Ohio's Bernie Moreno, have released plans that would include an extension of the expiring tax credits while beginning to transition away from those subsidies.

But Republican leaders ultimately decided to hold a vote on a proposal released earlier this week by Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Bill Cassidy, R-La., and Finance Committee Chairman Mike Crapo, R-Idaho.

The Cassidy-Crapo legislation would have the Department of Health and Human Services deposit money into Health Savings Accounts for people enrolled in bronze or catastrophic health insurance plans purchased on the ACA marketplace in 2026 or 2027, according to a summary of the bill.

Health Savings Accounts are tax-advantaged savings accounts that consumers can use to pay for medical expenses that are not otherwise reimbursed. They are not health insurance products.

ACA marketplace enrollees who select a bronze or catastrophic plan and make up to 700% of the federal poverty level would receive \$1,000 annually if they are between the ages of 18 and 49 and \$1,500 per year if they are between the ages of 50 and 64.

That would set a threshold of \$109,550 in annual income for one person, or \$225,050 for a family of four, according to the 2025 federal poverty guidelines. The numbers are somewhat higher for residents of Alaska and Hawaii.

The funding could not go toward abortion access or gender transitions, according to the Republican bill summary.

Proposal modeled on Trump comments

Cassidy and Crapo outlined how their proposal would work during afternoon floor speeches, where they also aired their grievances with how the Affordable Care Act has affected Americans' health care costs.

Crapo rebuked Democrats for establishing the enhanced ACA marketplace tax credits during the coronavirus pandemic and scheduling them to sunset at the end of this year.

"The pattern has become clear: Democrats respond to rising premiums by throwing taxpayer dollars at the problem," Crapo said. "Their supposedly short-term fixes only drive premiums higher and make the problem harder to solve. Leaving us with apparently no choice other than to do the same thing again and again and again."

The GOP plan, he said, was modeled off President Donald Trump's request to send funding directly to

Americans to spend on their health care.

"Families can use that money to cover costs not handled by their insurance policy without having to wait for insurance companies to approve their treatment decisions," Crapo said. "Because families want the best value for their money, they will seek out the most appropriate treatment. Over time this will result in lower health care costs as providers compete for patients."

Cassidy said the bill would not subsidize health insurance premiums but would help some Americans pay for doctor exams, dentist visits, glasses and prescriptions.

Once eligible ACA marketplace enrollees receive that funding in their Health Savings Accounts, he said, they will shop around for better prices, including on x-rays, which are often used to determine if someone has broken a bone.

"She's going to say, 'Wait a second, the x-ray is \$150 here and \$500 there. I'm going to where it's cheaper, not more expensive,'" Cassidy said, giving an example. "And I can tell you when that begins to happen, the people who are more expensive begin to lower their price."

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

State pledges investigation as national group launches abortion-pill ads in South Dakota

Nonprofit has previously advertised in multiple states with abortion restrictions

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

There's a new ad campaign promoting abortion pills at dozens of gas station pumps across South Dakota, and state officials said Tuesday they'll investigate it for potentially deceptive trade practices and possible violations of the state's anti-abortion laws.

The ads ask "Pregnant? Don't want to be?" and provide a link to the website of Mayday Health, a New York-based nonprofit that's dedicated to educating people about the safety and effectiveness of abortion pills. The group said the campaign started Monday at 30 gas stations and will run for six weeks, but locations checked by South Dakota Searchlight in Fort Pierre and Rapid City did not have the ads as of Tuesday afternoon.

The website offers legal and medical support, and links to purchase abortion pills and birth control.

Mayday Health's Executive Director Liv Raisner said the group isn't worried about legal repercussions, despite South Dakota's near-total abortion ban.

"It's really important to us that we can absorb the risk of spreading information about safe medication," Raisner said.

On Tuesday, Republican Gov. Larry Rhoden asked South Dakota Republican Attorney General Marty



South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden, left, delivers his annual budget address on Dec. 2, 2025, at the Capitol in Pierre while state Attorney General Marty Jackley, right, listens from the floor of the House of Representatives.

(Photos by Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

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Jackley to investigate the ad campaign.

South Dakota lawmakers adopted an abortion trigger ban in 2005 that took effect in 2022, after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. Abortions are prohibited in the state, unless the mother's life is threatened by a pregnancy. State lawmakers also passed legislation in 2022 banning "medical abortion by telemedicine."

Rhoden's office said Tuesday in a news release that Mayday's campaign could be in violation of South Dakota's anti-abortion laws and "could even be a deceptive trade practice."

Jackley pledged an investigation.

"All ad campaigns, no matter what the issue, need to follow state laws and fair trade practices," Jackley said in the release. "We will review these ads and determine if any laws have been broken. If laws have been broken, we will take appropriate action."

The gas station campaign has already had runs in West Virginia and Kentucky. Mayday Health has also flown airplanes towing messages over the Indianapolis 500 and Big Ten college football games, among other efforts. In July, the Arkansas attorney general sent a cease-and-desist letter to Raisner concerning Mayday's advertising practices in that state.

The nonprofit aims its campaigns at states that have higher restrictions on abortions. Mayday promotes resources at gas stations to reach people in everyday places with anonymity, Raisner said.

"Gas stations aren't just places for gas, especially in rural areas," Raisner said. "They're community hubs, and it's really critical to provide health information anonymously at places like gas stations."

Mayday was founded in response to the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade*.

In 2023, medication abortions accounted for 63% of abortions in the country, according to data from the Guttmacher Institute. The drugs mifepristone and misoprostol, commonly used in medication abortions, are also listed on the World Health Organizations' list of essential medicines. Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected an attempt by anti-abortion medical organizations to overturn the Food and Drug Administration's prescribing guidelines for mifepristone.

"There's a lot of misinformation out there, and that's why Mayday Health exists, to combat the misinformation," Raisner said.

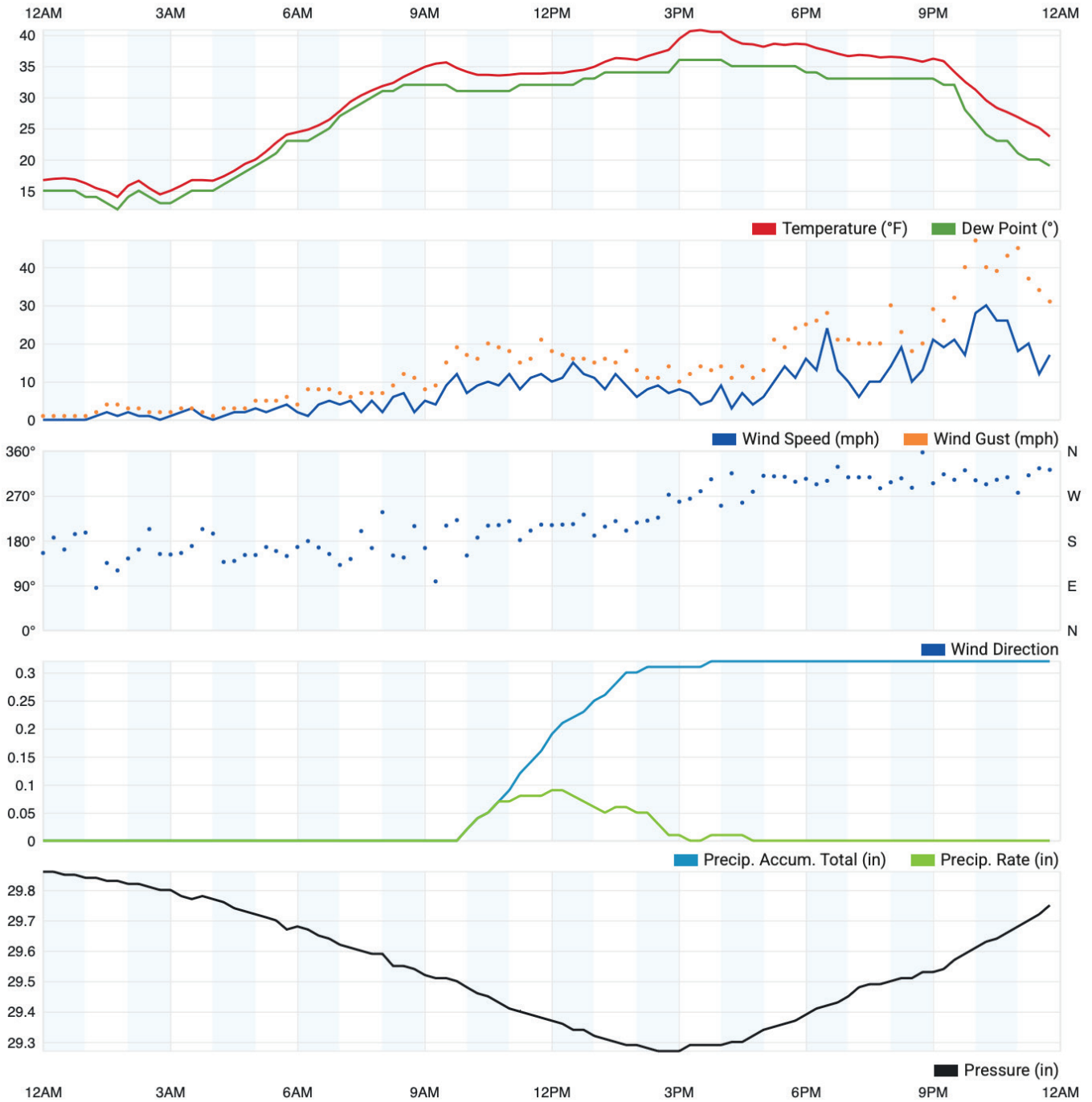
Meghan O'Brien is the audio reporter for South Dakota Searchlight where she covers the state government and its impact on South Dakotans. She's previously reported in Nebraska with a focus on health care and rural communities across the state.

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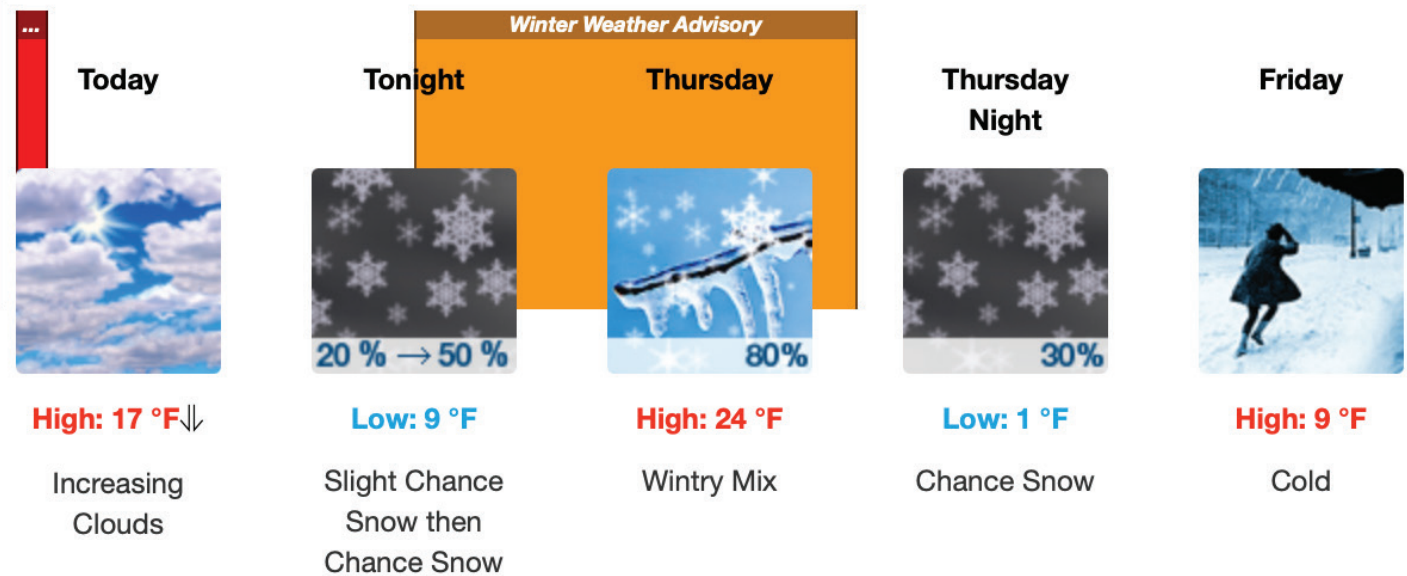
Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

December 9, 2025



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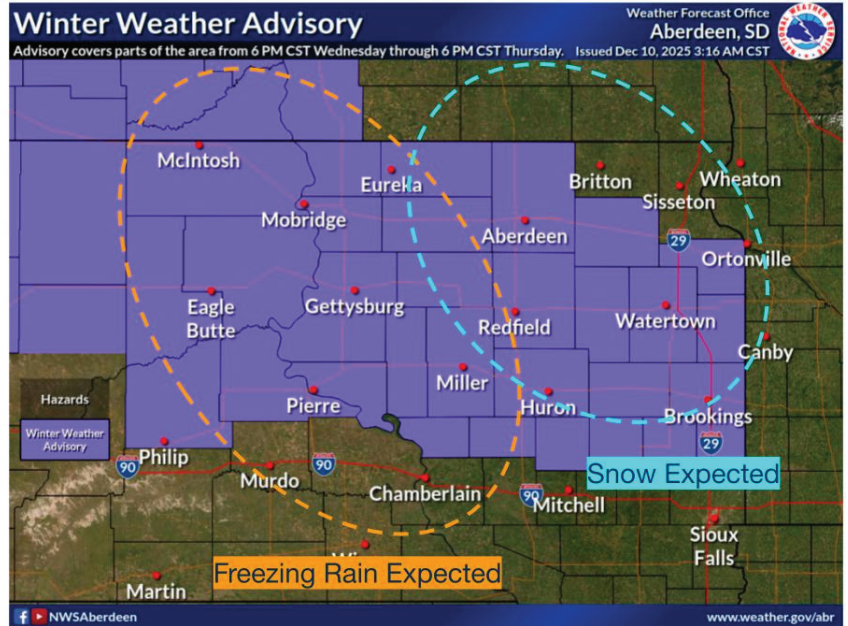


Heads Up: Freezing Rain Potential Thursday December 10, 2025 4:26 AM

A Winter Weather Advisory remains in effect from 6 PM CST Wednesday through 6 PM CST Thursday.

Key Messages:

- The next band of precipitation is expected to move into the area Wednesday night and continuing into Thursday. A **Winter Weather Advisory** has been issued.
- **A mix of freezing rain and snow is expected.**
 - Central and North Central South Dakota will mainly see **freezing rain**.
 - Northeastern South Dakota and Western Minnesota will see **snow**.
- Difficult travel conditions are possible. **The hazardous conditions could impact the Thursday morning commute.**



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Another round of precipitation is expected to move in Wednesday night into Thursday. A Winter Weather Advisory has been issued for parts of central and northeastern South Dakota. A mix of freezing rain (central and north central SD) and snow (northeastern SD) will fall. Ice accumulations up to a tenth of an inch will be possible.

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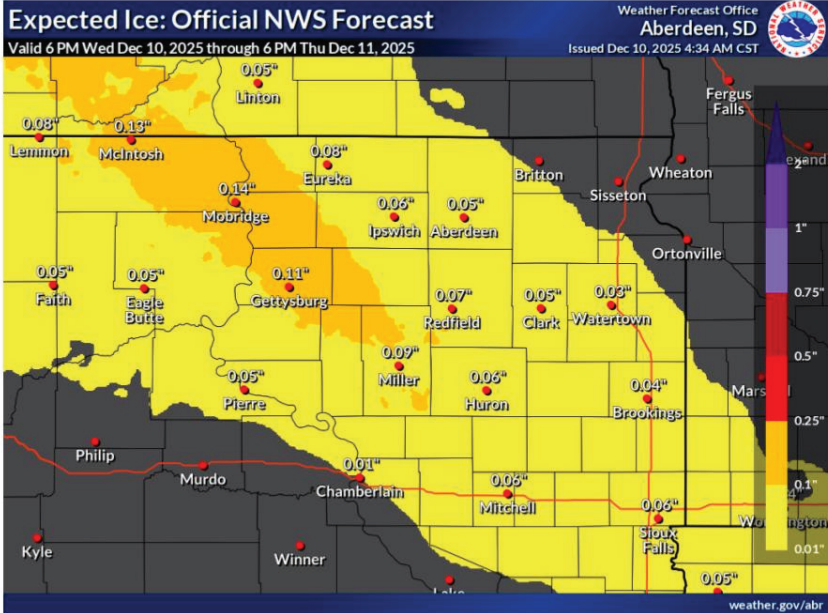
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Ice Accumulations Thursday Morning

December 10, 2025
4:26 AM

Freezing Rain is expected on the western edge of incoming precipitation.



- Ice accumulation is mainly expected over north central South Dakota.
- Up to a tenth of an inch of ice accumulation is expected, with locally higher amounts possible.
 - The heaviest ice accumulation is expected Thursday morning.
- **Plan for slippery road conditions. The hazardous weather could impact the Thursday morning commute.**



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A tenth of an inch or more of ice will accumulate Thursday morning. Plan for slippery roads during the Thursday morning commute, and use caution when driving!

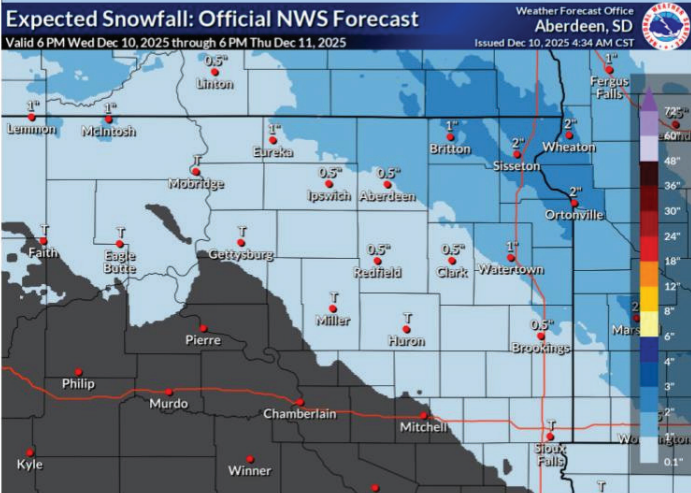


Snowfall Accumulations Thursday

December 10, 2025
4:26 AM

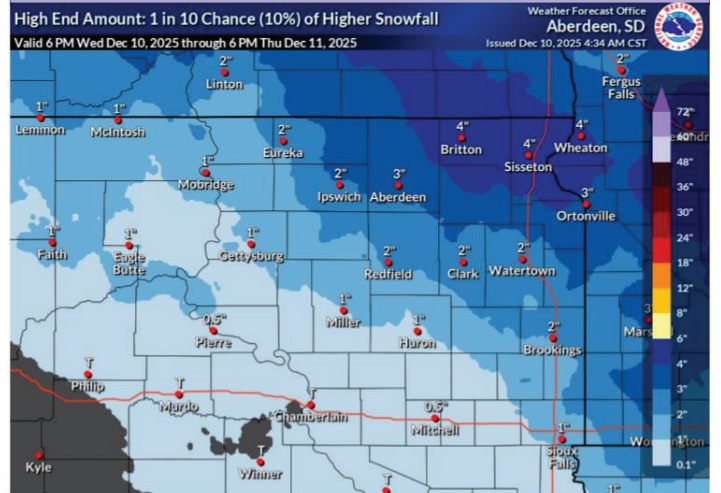
Factors Favoring Lower End Amounts

- Band of heaviest precipitation sets up further south in the warmer air.
- Snow is heavy and wet.



Factors Favoring Higher End Amounts

- Band of heaviest precipitation sets up further north in the colder air.
- Snow is light and fluffy.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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Winter Weather Advisory

URGENT - WINTER WEATHER MESSAGE
National Weather Service Aberdeen SD
213 AM CST Wed Dec 10 2025

McPherson-Brown-Spink-
Including the cities of Redfield, Eureka, and Aberdeen
213 AM CST Wed Dec 10 2025

**...WINTER WEATHER ADVISORY IN EFFECT FROM MIDNIGHT TONIGHT TO 6 PM
CST THURSDAY...**

* WHAT...Mixed precipitation expected. Total snow and sleet accumulations up to two inches and ice accumulations up to one tenth of an inch.

* WHERE...McPherson, Brown, and Spink Counties.

* WHEN...From midnight tonight to 6 PM CST Thursday.

* IMPACTS...Plan on slippery road conditions. The hazardous conditions could impact the Thursday morning and evening commutes.

PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...

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

Hazardous Weather Outlook

Hazardous Weather Outlook
National Weather Service Aberdeen SD
442 AM CST Wed Dec 10 2025

Corson-Campbell-McPherson-Brown-Walworth-Edmunds-Day-Dewey-Potter-Faulk-Spink-Clark-Codington-Grant-Hamlin-Deuel-Stanley-Sully-Hughes-Hyde-Hand-Buffalo-
442 AM CST Wed Dec 10 2025 /342 AM MST Wed Dec 10 2025/

This Hazardous Weather Outlook is for central South Dakota, northcentral South Dakota and northeast South Dakota.

.DAY ONE...Today and tonight.

A wintry mix of snow, sleet and freezing rain is expected later tonight, mainly across portions of central and north central South Dakota.

.DAYS TWO THROUGH SEVEN...Thursday through Tuesday.

A wintry mix of snow, sleet and freezing rain is expected to persist on Thursday across portions of central and north central South Dakota, while expanding into portions of northeast South Dakota on Thursday.

Another round of precipitation, in the form of snow, is possible Friday night into Saturday, mainly across portions of central and north central South Dakota.

.SPOTTER INFORMATION STATEMENT...

Spotter activation may be requested. Weather spotters are encouraged to submit reports to the National Weather Service in Aberdeen. The public can submit reports on our web page, Facebook page, or our X feed.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 41 °F at 3:37 PM

Low Temp: 14 °F at 1:38 AM

Wind: 47 mph at 9:56 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 1979

Record Low: -29 in 1972

Average High: 31

Average Low: 10

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.20

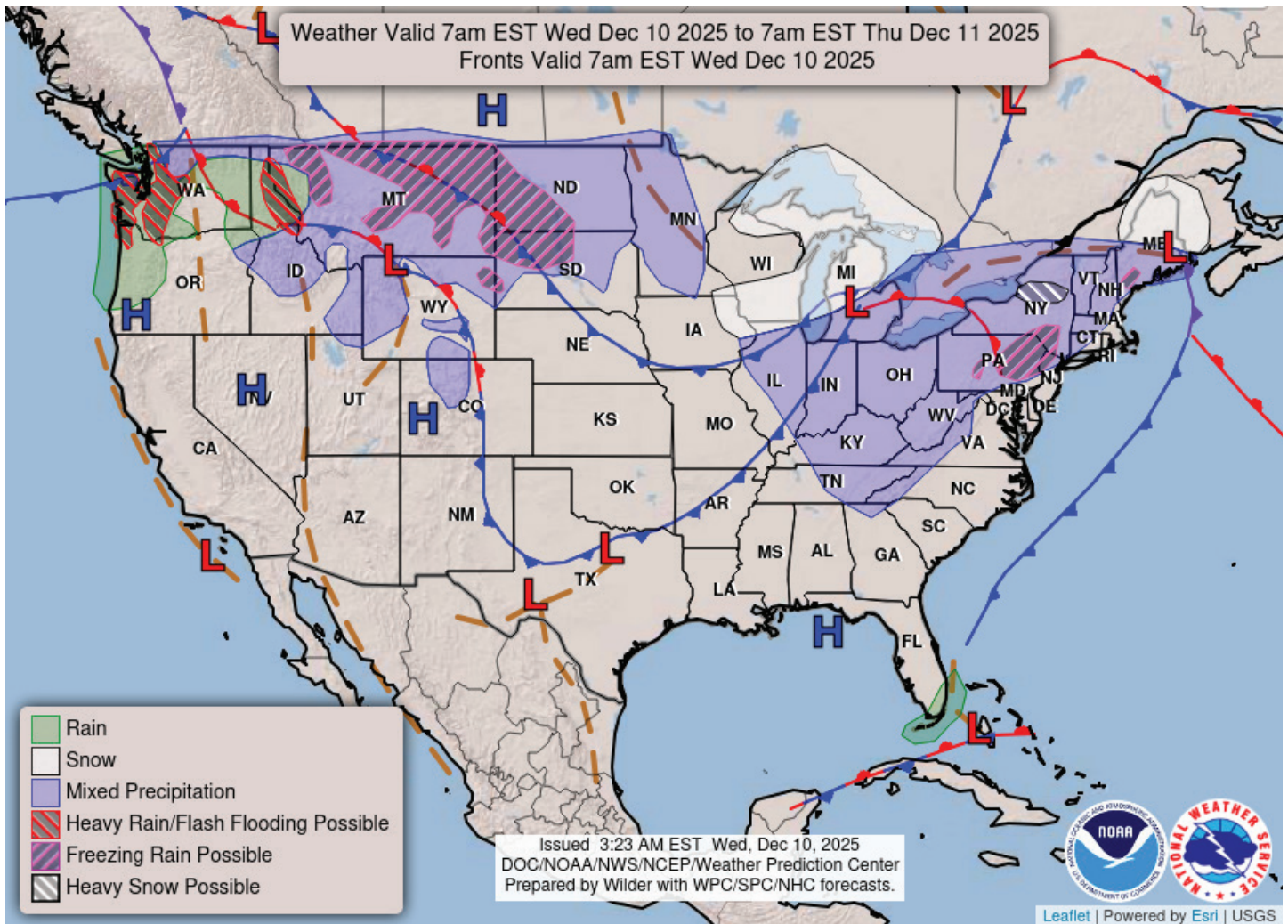
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.28

Average Precip to date: 21.41

Precip Year to Date: 25.09

Sunset Tonight: 4:49 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:02 am



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Today in Weather History

December 10, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 8 inches fell across parts of Lyman and Jones Counties on the 10th and 11th. Some amounts included 6 inches at Kennebec and Okaton and 8 inches at Murdo.

December 10, 1699: A severe ice storm hit Boston, Massachusetts causing much damage to orchards.

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)

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 IND, with drifts fourteen feet high. By the 16th of the month people could walk across the frozen Ohio River from Vavey into Kentucky. (8th-9th) (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)

December 10, 2002: A shower of tiny fish rained down on Korona, a village in the mountains of northern Greece. A Greek television reported a waterspout caused the incident on Lake Doirani.

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.



Relying on Something Other Than God

Jesus saves us—and provides everything needed for daily living.

1 John 2:15-17: On Not Loving the World

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father[a] is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

In Luke 18:18-30, a wealthy ruler approached Jesus to learn how to secure his future in eternity. Jesus used the moment to reveal the man's wrong thinking and a spiritual stumbling block.

First, the affluent man erroneously believed good deeds were the means of entering heaven. Eternal life is not "bought"; it is a free gift through faith in Jesus Christ. Nor is it something we can attain apart from God. Eternal life becomes ours at the moment of salvation, when the life of God comes to us in the person of His indwelling Holy Spirit (John 4:14; John 14:16-17).

Second, the man's identity was tied up in material things. Jesus addressed this spiritual obstacle by issuing a loving challenge: "Sell all you possess and give to the poor ... and come, follow Me" (Mark 10:21). The Lord was not saying that giving everything away was the path to salvation. He wanted this young man to realize his difficulty—that his possessions owned him. Jesus offered treasure in heaven, but the man turned away.

Have we fallen into the same trap of believing in Jesus for salvation but trusting exclusively in ourselves for daily living? It can be tempting to depend on our own intelligence, talents, material possessions, or family instead of looking to God for direction and solutions. On whom or what do you depend?

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:

12.09.25

19 32 41 49 66 6

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$70,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 54 Mins 32 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: 16 Hrs 9 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.09.25

19 24 33 39 40 6

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 24 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.06.25

5 8 17 21 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$116,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 24 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.08.25

22 26 54 64 65 1

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 32 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: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 32 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Belle Fourche 50, Lead-Deadwood 21
Chamberlain 50, Stanley County 38
Kadoka 49, Little Wound 32
Kimball-White Lake 47, Lower Brule 34
Parkston 55, Freeman 46
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 42, Hanson 41
West Central 81, Baltic 29
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=
Huron vs. Yankton, ppd. to Dec 30th.
Iroquois-Lake Preston vs. Oldham-Ramona-Rutland, ppd.
Jones County vs. Dupree, ppd.
Leola-Frederick High School vs. Strasburg, N.D., ppd.
Mt. Vernon/Plankinton vs. McCook Central-Montrose, ppd.
Standing Rock, N.D. vs. Cheyenne-Eagle Butte, ccd.
Webster vs. Waubay/Summit, ppd.
Western Christian, Iowa vs. Sioux Falls Christian, ppd.
Wolsey-Wessington vs. DeSmet, ppd.

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

Pacific Northwest braces for more heavy rain, after powerful storm caused flooding, rescues

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Pacific Northwest residents braced for another round of heavy rain Wednesday after a powerful storm clobbered the region the day before, swelling rivers, closing roads and prompting high water rescues.

The first in what is expected to be a series of damaging storms this week caused power outages, flooding and school closures in parts of Oregon and Washington on Tuesday. Drivers had to navigate debris slides and water that closed roads and submerged vehicles.

Fire officials northeast of Seattle said rescue crews used inflatable kayaks to pull people from stranded cars, and carried another person about a mile (1.6 kilometers) to safety after they were trapped in the woods by rising water.

Washington Gov. Bob Ferguson said in a post on the social platform X on Tuesday night that the state's Emergency Operations Center had moved to its highest activation level because of the rain and wind.

Forecasters warned that the worst was still to come, with some major rivers expected to crest later in the week. The Skagit River near Concrete, which is northeast of Seattle, was forecast to rise more than 15 feet (4.6 meters) above major flooding levels by Thursday, which would break a record, according to the National Water Prediction Service.

Harrison Rademacher, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service's Seattle office, described the atmospheric river soaking the region as "a jet stream of moisture" stretching across the Pacific Ocean "with the nozzle pushing right along the coast of Oregon and Washington."

The National Weather Service forecast several days of heavy rainfall along the coast and more than a foot (30 centimeters) of new snow in the northern Rockies in northwestern Wyoming. Flood watches were in effect, with scattered flash flooding possible along the coast and into the Cascade Mountains through

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midweek.

Along Interstate 5 between Seattle and Portland, firefighters conducted five rescues for people who tried to drive on flooded roads, including a semitruck driver, said Malachi Simper, spokesperson for Lewis County Fire Protection District #5. Authorities also rescued a family of six from their home in Chehalis, he said, adding that the road to the house was under about 4 feet (1.2 meters) of water at the time. None of those rescued were injured, he said.

Police said deputies went door to door in certain neighborhoods to warn residents of imminent flooding, and evacuated a mobile home park along the Snohomish River, northeast of Seattle. The city of Snohomish issued an emergency proclamation due to flooding, while in Auburn, south of Seattle, workers installed temporary flood control barriers along the White River.

On the Columbia River, farther south near the Oregon border, the city of Longview said it was opening a severe weather shelter Tuesday night.

Another storm system is expected to bring rain to the region starting Sunday, Rademacher said. "The pattern looks pretty unsettled going up to the holidays," he said.

Portland transportation officials warned of an increased risk of car crashes because of hydroplaning or driving through flooded roads.

In southeast Alaska, an arctic blast could bring wind chills as low as minus 50 degrees (minus 45.6 Celsius) in Skagway and minus 15 degrees (minus 26 C) in the capital city, Juneau, according to the National Weather Service.

Meanwhile, a fast-moving storm tracking across the Upper Midwest on Tuesday was forecast to bring freezing rain, high winds and heavy snow.

Weather forced some schools to close or move to virtual lessons.

Most of the Dakotas were under a high wind warning. Winds of up to 65 mph (105 kph) were expected Tuesday, said Connor Smith, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Bismarck.

Parts of central and northern Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin could see heavy snow, with a mix of winter weather forecast across the Twin Cities metro and southwest Minnesota, with potentially strong winds to follow, said Ryan Dunleavy, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in the Twin Cities.

Commuters should allow for extra time traveling, he said. The storm was expected to head into the Great Lakes region by Wednesday.

Meyer scores 26, Wyoming knocks off South Dakota 106-79

By The Associated Press undefined

LARAMIE, Wyo. (AP) — Nasir Meyer had 26 points in Wyoming's 106-79 win against South Dakota on Tuesday.

Meyer also contributed seven rebounds for the Cowboys (8-2). Damarion Dennis scored 21 points while shooting 7 for 9 (1 for 3 from 3-point range) and 6 of 6 from the free-throw line. Adam Harakow finished 4 of 6 from the field to finish with 10 points.

The Coyotes (5-6) were led by Isaac Bruns, who recorded 22 points. South Dakota also got 17 points from Uzziah Buntyn. Jesse McIntosh had 15 points.

Wyoming led 48-32 at halftime, with Dennis racking up 15 points. Meyer scored 19 points in the second half.

Garry's 15 lead South Dakota State past Ball State 68-64

By The Associated Press undefined

MUNCIE, Ind. (AP) — Kalen Garry's 15 points helped South Dakota State defeat Ball State 68-64 on Tuesday.

Garry added eight rebounds and seven assists for the Jackrabbits (6-5). Damon Wilkinson scored 14 points (7 of 12 from the field) and added eight rebounds and three blocks. Matthew Mors went 4 of 4 shooting to finish with 10 points, while grabbing six rebounds.

Joey Hart led the way for the Cardinals (3-7) with 18 points. Ball State also got 12 points, nine rebounds and two blocks from Kayden Fish. Davion Hill also had 10 points.

Garry scored 11 points in the first half and South Dakota State went into halftime trailing 40-39. South Dakota State used a 9-0 second-half run to break a 53-53 tie and take the lead at 62-53 with 8:49 remaining in the half before finishing off the victory. Jaden Jackson scored seven second-half points.

Ukraine can hold elections within months if security is ensured, Zelenskyy says

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and DEREK GATOPOULOS Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian officials were expected to hand their latest peace proposals to United States negotiators Wednesday, according to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who also said Ukraine would be ready for elections within three months if partners can guarantee a safe vote during wartime and if its electoral law can be altered.

Zelenskyy was responding to comments by U.S. President Donald Trump in which he questioned Ukraine's democracy and suggested the Ukrainian leader was using the war as an excuse not to hold an election.

Zelenskyy told reporters late Tuesday that he is "ready" for an election but would need help from the U.S. and possibly Europe to ensure security for a vote to happen. He suggested that Ukraine could be ready to hold balloting in 60 to 90 days if that proviso is met.

"To hold elections, two issues must be addressed: primarily, security — how to conduct them, how to do it under strikes, under missile attacks; and a question regarding our military — how they would vote," Zelenskyy said.

"And the second issue is the legislative framework required to ensure the legitimacy of elections," he said.

Previously, Zelenskyy had pointed out that a ballot can't legally take place while martial law imposed due to Russia's invasion nearly four years ago is in place. He has also asked how a vote could happen when civilian areas of Ukraine are being bombarded by Russia and almost 20% of the country is under Russian occupation.

Zelenskyy said he has asked lawmakers from his party in Parliament to draw up legislative proposals that would allow elections while Ukraine is under martial law.

Ukrainians have on the whole supported Zelenskyy's arguments, and there has been no clamor in Ukraine for an election. Under the Ukrainian law that is in force, Zelenskyy's rule is legitimate.

But with Trump pressing hard for a deal between Kyiv and Moscow, Zelenskyy is walking a tightrope between defending Ukrainian interests and showing the American president that he is willing to make some compromises.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly complained that Zelenskyy can't legitimately negotiate a peace settlement because his five-year term in office that began in 2019 has expired.

"I think it's an important time to hold an election. They're using war not to hold an election," Trump said in an interview with Politico, echoing Moscow's stance.

US, Russia seek closer ties

A new U.S. national security strategy released last Friday made it clear that Trump wants to improve America's relationship with Moscow and "reestablish strategic stability with Russia."

The document also portrays European allies as weak.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Wednesday praised Trump's role in the Ukraine peace effort, saying in a speech at the Federation Council, the upper house of Russia's Parliament, that Moscow appreciates his "commitment to dialogue." Trump, Lavrov said, is "the only Western leader" who shows "an understanding of the reasons that made war in Ukraine inevitable."

While Trump's decisions are likely to be pivotal for Ukraine, Washington's peace efforts have run into sharply conflicting demands from Moscow and Kyiv.

Trump's initial peace proposal was heavily slanted toward Russia's demands. To counter that, Zelenskyy has turned to his European supporters.

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In recent days, Zelenskyy met the leaders of Britain, Germany and France in London, and the heads of NATO and the European Union in Brussels, before traveling on to Rome for talks with the Italian prime minister and Pope Leo XIV.

Zelenskyy said three documents were being discussed with American and European partners — a 20-point framework document that is constantly changing, a document on security guarantees, and a document about Ukraine's recovery.

Military aid for Ukraine declines

Europe's support is uneven, however, and that has meant a drop-off in military aid since the Trump administration this year cut off supplies to Kyiv unless they were paid for by other NATO countries.

Foreign military help for Ukraine fell sharply over the summer, and that trend continued through September and October, a German body that tracks international help for Ukraine said Wednesday.

Average annual aid, mostly provided by the U.S. and Europe, was around 41.6 euros billion (\$48.4 billion) between 2022–2024. But so far this year Ukraine has received just 32.5 billion euros (\$37.8 billion), the Kiel Institute said.

"If this slower pace continues in the remaining months (of the year), 2025 will become the year with the lowest level of new aid allocations" since the war began, it said.

This year, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden have substantially increased their help for Ukraine, while Germany nearly tripled its average monthly allocations and France and the U.K. both more than doubled their contributions, according to the Kiel Institute.

On the other hand, it said, Spain recorded no new military aid for Kyiv in 2025 while Italy reduced its low contributions by 15% compared with 2022–2024.

19 killed in building collapse in Morocco's third-largest city

FEZ, Morocco (AP) — Two four-story buildings collapsed overnight in the Moroccan city of Fez, killing 19 people in the second fatal collapse there this year, authorities said on Wednesday.

Morocco's state news agency reported the two residential buildings housed eight families. Sixteen people were injured in the collapse and sent for treatment at a nearby hospital. Authorities said the neighborhood had been evacuated and search and rescue efforts were ongoing.

It was unclear what caused the collapse or how many people were unaccounted for on Wednesday morning.

Fez is Morocco's third-largest city and one of the hosts of this month's Africa Cup of Nations and the 2030 FIFA World Cup. It is best known for its walled city packed with medieval souks and tanneries. But beyond tourism, it's also one of the country's poorest urban centers, where aging infrastructure is common in many neighborhoods.

Another collapse in May killed 10 people and injured seven in a building that had already been slated for evacuation, according to Moroccan outlet Le360.

Building codes are often not enforced in Morocco, especially in ancient cities where aging multifamily homes are common. Gaps in basic services were a focal point of protests that swept the country earlier this year, with demonstrators criticizing the government for investing in new stadiums instead of addressing inequality in health care, education and other public services.

Paramount says China's Tencent withdrew from its Warner Bros bid to avert national security issues

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — Paramount Skydance says the Chinese gaming and social media giant Tencent Holdings withdrew from its bid to buy Warner Bros Discovery to avert a possible national security review.

Paramount's revised filing with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission of its takeover bid said the Chinese company had dropped its \$1 billion financing commitment out of concern, since it would be a

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"non-U.S. equity financing source," that its bid might be subject to a review by the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States, known as CFIUS. That was even though approval by CFIUS or by the Federal Communications Commission was not a condition of the bid.

The SEC filing, dated Monday, said that foreign sovereign wealth funds of Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi and Qatar, which are providing \$24 billion for Paramount's bid, had agreed to give up a right to participate in Warner Bros' management to avoid the additional scrutiny.

On Monday, Paramount launched a hostile \$77.9 billion takeover offer for Warner Bros. Discovery, competing with rival bidder Netflix to buy the company behind HBO, CNN and a famed movie studio.

Big deals that involve foreign companies are sometimes subject to national security reviews by CFIUS, a U.S. government group chaired by the Treasury Secretary that studies mergers for national-security reasons. It has the power to force companies to change ownership structures or divest completely from the U.S.

Under former President Joe Biden as well as President Donald Trump, the Treasury Department has sought to strengthen its powers as national security concerns related to foreign investment have increased.

Tencent is among dozens of Chinese companies that the U.S. Defense Department has included in a list of companies it said have ties to China's military. Tencent, whose shares are listed in Hong Kong, denies that.

Based in the southern technology and financial hub of Shenzhen, Tencent owns the League of Legends developer Riot Games and has ties with other big U.S. entertainment brands. It also has a streaming deal with the National Basketball Association.

It is the world's largest equity investor in online games and a major entertainment and social media company, operating the WeChat messaging and payments service in popular China and with Chinese emigrants abroad. Tencent has a market capitalization of over \$700 billion, according to Hong Kong's stock exchange.

There was no immediate comment from Tencent.

Renewed Thailand-Cambodia border fighting displaces hundreds of thousands

By JERRY HARMER and JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

SURIN, Thailand (AP) — Renewed border fighting between Thailand and Cambodia showed no signs of abating Wednesday, leaving hundreds of thousands of displaced people in both countries living in strained conditions as more flooded into temporary shelters.

Associated Press reporters on the Thai side of the border heard sounds of outgoing, indirect fire Wednesday.

About 400,000 people have been evacuated from affected areas in Thailand and around 700 schools closed while fighting was ongoing in four border provinces, Thai military spokesperson Rear Adm. Surasant Kongsiri said Wednesday.

Cambodia evacuated more than 127,000 villagers and hundreds of schools closed, the defense ministry said.

Thailand's military announced that casualties this week include five soldiers killed and dozens wounded. Cambodia said seven civilians died and 20 others were wounded, though it did not update those figures on Wednesday.

There is not yet a clear path to peace as Thailand's Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul vowed to continue to fight and Cambodia's powerful Senate President Hun Sen promised a fierce response.

A knock-on effect of the fighting and bad blood between the nations was Cambodia's withdrawal of its entire team from the 33rd Southeast Asian Games, which began Tuesday in Thailand. A Wednesday announcement from the National Olympic Committee of Cambodia said it regretted the action but the families of competitors were concerned about their safety.

Trump says he will return sides to peace

The new, widespread fighting followed a skirmish Sunday that wounded two Thai soldiers and derailed a ceasefire pushed by U.S. President Donald Trump that ended armed combat in July.

The five days of fighting over territorial disputes left dozens dead on both sides and forced the evacuation of thousands of civilians. The ceasefire was brokered by Malaysia and pushed through by pressure from Trump, who threatened to withhold trade privileges from the two nations unless they agreed.

Late Tuesday at a Pennsylvania political event, Trump said he would use his sway to end the renewed combat.

"Tomorrow I'll have to make a phone call," Trump said. "Who else could say, 'I'm going to make a phone call and stop a war between two very powerful countries, Thailand and Cambodia?'"

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio earlier called on the two sides to live up to the commitments made at an October meeting in Malaysia that reaffirmed the July ceasefire and called for removing heavy weapons from the border, coordinating removal of land mines and other steps.

Thai foreign ministry spokesperson Nikordej Balankura said Wednesday that there had not yet been any contact with the United States on the matter. He added that Thailand will not likely accept if another third party proposes to mediate since "the line has been crossed."

The ceasefire was fragile from the start as both nations carried on a bitter propaganda war and minor incidents of cross-border violence continued.

Thailand deployed jet fighters to carry out airstrikes on what it says are military targets, while Cambodia's most fearsome weapons are BM-21 rocket launchers with a range of roughly 30-40 kilometers (19-25 miles). They are capable of firing salvos of 40 rockets at a time and mounted on trucks, making them less vulnerable to attack.

A Thai army statement said Cambodia on Tuesday launched approximately 125 salvos from BM-21 launchers totaling about 5,000 rockets and that some had hit civilian areas, though no casualties were reported.

Shelters provide safe haven but concerns remain

Away from the battlefronts, anxious evacuees are the most visible sign of the crisis.

In a gymnasium in the northeastern Thai city of Surin, around 550 people are waiting out the combat, many having hurriedly fled after the first shots were fired Sunday.

Officials have provided food and diversions for children. The cooler, winter temperatures have kept the situation in the shelter bearable, but there is inevitable boredom and concern about what they left behind including homes, valuables and animals.

Thidarat Homhual, a 37-year-old farmer in the shelter with her family, said her mind is on cows, ducks, four dogs and nine cats left to fend for themselves.

"We are behind the front line. We can live like this. It's OK," she said. "But I want it to be over. I miss my pets. I really miss my pets, all the animals at home. I can't really put it into words."

Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado will miss Nobel Peace Prize ceremony

By DAVID KEYTON Associated Press

OSLO, Norway (AP) — Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado will miss the ceremony to award her the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo on Wednesday, the head of the Norwegian Nobel Institute said.

Machado last appeared in public 11 months ago. Nobel Institute director Kristian Berg Harpviken told public broadcaster NRK the Venezuelan opposition leader was not in the Norwegian capital on the day of the ceremony and her daughter will accept the prize on Machado's behalf.

"We confirm that she will not attend the Nobel ceremony, but we are optimistic about her presence on the rest of the day's agenda," said Machado's spokesperson, Claudia Macero. She did not give information on Machado's current location.

Prominent Latin American figures planned to attend Wednesday's ceremony in a signal of solidarity with Machado, including Argentine President Javier Milei, Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa, Panama's President José Raúl Mulino and Paraguayan President Santiago Peña.

Machado has been living in hiding and has not been seen in public since Jan. 9, when she was briefly detained after joining supporters in a protest in Caracas, Venezuela's capital.

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The 58-year-old's win for her struggle to achieve a democratic transition in her South American nation was announced on Oct. 10, and she was described as a woman "who keeps the flame of democracy burning amid a growing darkness."

Machado won an opposition primary election and intended to challenge President Nicolás Maduro in last year's presidential election, but the government barred her from running for office. Retired diplomat Edmundo González took her place.

The lead-up to the July 28, 2024 election saw widespread repression, including disqualifications, arrests and human rights violations. That increased after the country's National Electoral Council, which is stacked with Maduro loyalists, declared the incumbent the winner.

González sought asylum in Spain last year after a Venezuelan court issued a warrant for his arrest.

U.N. human rights officials and many independent rights groups have expressed concerns about the situation in Venezuela, and called for Maduro to be held accountable for the crackdown on dissent.

Five past Nobel Peace Prize laureates were detained or imprisoned at the time of the award, according to the prize's official website, most recently Iranian activist Narges Mohammadi in 2023 and Belarusian human rights advocate Ales Bialiatski in 2022.

The others were Liu Xiaobo of China in 2010, Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar in 1991 and Carl von Ossietzky of Germany in 1935.

"There is a long tradition that when a Peace Prize laureate cannot be present, close family members represent them," Harpviken said. "That happened with Narges Mohammadi, and with Ales Bialiatski; both were imprisoned at the time. And the same will happen with Maria Corina Machado today. The daughter will deliver the statement her mother has written."

Social media ban for children under 16 starts in Australia

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese welcomed a world-first social media ban for children younger than 16 that took effect Wednesday as families taking back power from tech giants but warned the implementation would be difficult.

Many children posted farewell messages, while parents reported distraught children discovering they'd been shut out of platforms as the landmark law took effect. Some young children reported fooling the platforms' age estimation technology by drawing on facial hair. Parents and older siblings are also expected to help some children circumvent the restrictions.

"This is the day when Australian families are taking back power from these big tech companies and they're asserting the right of kids to be kids and for parents to have greater peace of mind," Albanese told the Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"This reform will change lives. For Australian kids ... allowing them to just have their childhood. For Australian parents, enabling them to have greater peace of mind. But also for the global community, who are looking at Australia and saying: well, if Australia can do it, why can't we?" Albanese later told a gathering of reform supporters at his official Sydney residence, including parents who blame social media for a child's suicide.

Facebook, Instagram, Kick, Reddit, Snapchat, Threads, TikTok, X, YouTube and Twitch face fines of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars (\$32.9 million) from Wednesday if they fail to take reasonable steps to remove the accounts of Australian children younger than 16.

Australia to report by Christmas if social media ban is working

The ban will be enforced by Australia's eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant. She said the platforms already had the technology and personal data about their users to enforce the age restriction with precision.

She would send the 10 targeted platforms on Thursday notices demanding information on how the age restriction was being implemented and how many accounts had been closed.

"We will provide information to the public before Christmas on how these age restrictions are being implemented and whether preliminarily we see them working," Inman Grant said.

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"The responses to these notices will form the baseline against which we will measure compliance," she added.

Communications Minister Anika Wells said the age-restricted platforms "may not agree with the law and that's their right — we don't expect 100% universal support," but that all had undertaken to comply with the Australian law. She said more than 200,000 TikTok accounts in Australia had already been deactivated by Wednesday.

Wells also warned young children who had so far evaded detection that they would eventually be caught. A child who used a virtual private network to appear to be in Norway would be caught out if they were routinely posting images of Australian beaches, Wells said.

"Just because they might have avoided it (detection) today doesn't mean they will be able to avoid it in a week's time or a month's time because social media platforms have to go back and routinely check under-16 accounts," Wells said.

"These social media platforms have so much data on us because we choose to give it to them because we like social media and because you've had your older brother scan their face for you today, which has bought you a bit of time, doesn't mean that these accounts aren't going to see you talking to other 14-year-olds tonight about the under-16 soccer carnival on weekend, about your upcoming school holidays and what your Year 10 teacher is next year," she added.

Albanese said the implementation would be difficult and "won't be perfect."

"This is about, importantly, pushing back against big tech, saying that social media companies have a social responsibility," he said.

Father of sextortion scam victim says social media ban is a start

Wayne Holdsworth, who became an age restriction advocate because his son Mac took his own life after falling victim to an online sextortion scam, described the new law as a start. Children must now be educated about online dangers before they turn 16.

"Our kids that we've lost haven't died in vain because today they'll be looking down very proud of the work that we've all done," Holdsworth told the Sydney gathering.

Flossie Brodribb, a 12-year-old advocate for a social media ban for young children, told the gathering she hoped other countries would follow Australia's lead.

"This ban is bold and brave and I believe it will help kids like me to grow up healthier, safer, kinder and more connected to the real world," Flossie said.

Simone Clements said the social media ban would come at a financial cost to her 15-year-old twins Carlee and Hayden Clements. Carlee is an actor, model, dancer, singer and influencer. Her brother is an actor and model.

"I know that our situation is unique to our family because the kids are in the entertainment industry and social media goes hand-in-hand with the entertainment industry. We have used social media in the most positive way. And it's a platform for them to basically show their portfolio, and ... this is an income stream for the children," the mother said.

Privacy commissioner unclear how social media will verify ages

Australia's Privacy Commissioner Carly Kind said the platforms could potentially ask all account holders across the country to prove they were 16 or older.

The platforms' age verification options were to ask for copies of identification documents, use a third party to apply age estimation technology to analyze an account holder's face, or make inferences from data already available such as how long an account has been held, Kind said.

"There's quite strong privacy protections in the legislation. They require social media platforms to delete any data they collect for the purpose of age assurance under this scheme and to not use it for secondary purposes unless they have individuals' consent. And that's a really strong and important safeguard," Kind said.

The government has said requesting all account holders verify their ages would not be a reasonable step, given the platforms already held sufficient personal data of most people to perform that task.

The platforms also cannot compel users to provide government-issued identification.

Democrat wins Miami mayor's race for the first time in nearly 30 years

By ADRIANA GOMEZ LICON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Democrat Eileen Higgins won the Miami mayor's race on Tuesday, defeating a Republican endorsed by President Donald Trump to end her party's nearly three-decade losing streak and give Democrats a boost in one of the last electoral battles ahead of the 2026 midterms.

Higgins, 61, will be the first woman to lead the city of Miami. She spoke frequently in the Hispanic-majority city about Trump's immigration crackdown, saying she has heard of many people in Miami who were worried about family members being detained. She campaigned as a proud Democrat despite the race being officially nonpartisan and beat Trump-backed candidate Emilio Gonzalez, a former city manager, who said he called Higgins to congratulate her.

"We are facing rhetoric from elected officials that is so dehumanizing and cruel, especially against immigrant populations," Higgins told The Associated Press after her victory speech. "The residents of Miami were ready to be done with that."

With nearly all votes counted Tuesday, Higgins led the Republican by about 19 percentage points.

The local race is not predictive of what may happen at the polls next year. But it drew attention from the two major national political parties and their leaders. The victory provides Democrats with some momentum heading into a high-stakes midterm election when the GOP is looking to keep its grip in Florida, including in a Hispanic-majority district in Miami-Dade County. The area has shifted increasingly rightward politically in recent years, and the city may become the home of Trump's presidential library.

"Tonight's result is yet another warning sign to Republicans that voters are fed up with their out-of-touch agenda that is raising costs," said Ken Martin, the chair of the Democratic National Committee, in a statement.

Some nationally recognized Democrats supported Higgins, including former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. U.S. Sen. Ruben Gallego and former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel traveled to Miami on Sunday and Monday to rally voters for the Democrat who served as a Miami-Dade county commissioner for seven years.

Higgins, who speaks Spanish, represented a district that leans conservative and includes the Cuban neighborhood of Little Havana. When she first entered politics in 2018, she chose to present herself to voters as "La Gringa," a term Spanish speakers use for white Americans, because many people did not know how to pronounce her name.

"It just helps people understand who I am, and you know what? I am a 'gringa,' so, what am I going to do, deny it?" she told the AP.

Republicans' anxiety grows

Republicans in Florida have found strong support from voters with heritage from Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, because they likened some members of the Democratic party's progressive wing with politicians from the governments they fled. Trump and other GOP members have tapped into those sentiments over the past eight years.

However, some local Republicans are growing increasingly frustrated since November's elections when Democrats scored wins in New Jersey and Virginia, where both winning gubernatorial candidates performed strongly with nonwhite voters.

The results from those races were perceived as a reflection of concerns over rising prices and the Trump administration's aggressive immigration policies.

U.S. Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar, a Republican whose district is being targeted by Democrats and includes the city of Miami, called the elections elsewhere a "wake-up call." She said Hispanics also want a secure border and a healthy economy but some relief for "those who have been here for years and do not have a criminal record."

"The Hispanic vote is not guaranteed," Salazar said in a video posted on X last month. "Hispanics married President Trump, but they are only dating the GOP."

David Jolly, who is running to represent Democrats in the Florida governor's race next year, said the mayoral election was good news for Democrats in what used to be a battleground state.

"Change is here. It's sweeping the nation, and it's sweeping Florida," Jolly said.

Miami mayor-elect gains national platform

The mayoral position in Miami is more ceremonial, but Higgins promised to execute it like a full-time job.

The city is part of Miami-Dade County, which Trump flipped last year, a dramatic improvement from his 30 percentage point loss to Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016.

As Florida's second-largest city, Miami is considered the gateway to Latin America and attracts millions of tourists. Its global prominence gives Higgins a significant stage as mayor.

Her pitch to voters included finding city-owned land that could be turned into affordable housing and cutting unnecessary spending.

Opponents of Trump-backed redistricting in Missouri submit a petition to force a public vote

By DAVID A. LIEB and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Opponents of Missouri's new congressional map submitted thousands of petition signatures Tuesday calling for a statewide vote on a redistricting plan backed by President Donald Trump as part of his quest to hold on to a slim Republican majority in next year's elections.

Organizers of the petition drive said they turned in more than 300,000 signatures to the secretary of state's office — well over the roughly 110,000 needed to suspend the new U.S. House districts from taking effect until a referendum election can be held next year.

The signatures still need to be verified by election authorities and Republican Secretary of State Denny Hoskins, who could declare the referendum petition unconstitutional. A legal fight appears likely.

A referendum could create a significant obstacle for Republicans, who hope the new districts could help them win a currently Democratic-held seat in the Kansas City area.

Republican Attorney General Catherine Hanaway issued a statement saying the new House districts took effect Tuesday and will remain in place unless Hoskins determines the referendum petition is constitutional and contains sufficient signatures. Petition sponsors said the new districts were immediately suspended when they submitted signatures, which is how the secretary of state's office handled things during Missouri's most recent referendum petition in 2017.

Hoskins promised a "slow and steady" review of the signatures, which must equal 5% of the votes cast in the last gubernatorial election in at least six of the state's eight congressional districts. Missouri has more than 6 million residents. Hoskins said election authorities have until July 28 to finish the verification process, and he isn't likely to determine the measure's constitutionality until that's done.

"I'm going to do everything I can to protect Gov. (Mike) Kehoe's Missouri First Map — the map the General Assembly passed," Hoskins told The Associated Press.

That raises the prospect that Missouri congressional candidates might not know with certainty the makeup of their districts when they file for office between Feb. 24 and March 31. A similar scenario existed in 2022, when the governor approved congressional districts based on the census 50 days after candidate filing ended.

Referendum votes in Missouri are automatically set for the upcoming November election, unless lawmakers approve an earlier date. Referendum backers said they are confident they will clear any legal hurdles to holding an election.

Redistricting spreads through states

Redistricting typically happens once a decade, after each census. But the national political parties are engaged in an unusual mid-decade redistricting battle after Trump urged Republican-led states to reshape House voting districts to their advantage. Democrats need a net gain of just three seats to win control of

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the chamber, and Trump is trying to avert a historical tendency for the incumbent's party to lose seats in midterm elections.

Texas was the first to respond to Trump's call by passing a congressional map that could help Republicans win five additional seats. The U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way last week for the new districts to be used in the 2026 elections.

Republicans could also gain a total of four seats under new maps passed in Missouri, North Carolina and Ohio. In Indiana, senators are considering a proposal this week that also could help Republicans win two more seats.

Democrats scored a victory in California in November when voters approved a congressional map that could help the party win five additional seats, and new congressional districts imposed by a Utah judge could help them pick up one of the state's four seats.

Utah Republicans scramble to shield House seats

In a special session Tuesday, Utah's Republican-controlled Legislature pushed back the filing deadline for congressional candidates in 2026 to allow more time for a legal challenge of the map ruling.

Judge Dianna Gibson ruled in November that a map proposal advanced by state lawmakers "unduly favors Republicans and disfavors Democrats." She imposed an alternative map that places heavily Democratic Salt Lake County almost entirely within one district rather than dividing it among the four Republican-leaning districts.

Republican state Rep. Karianne Lisonbee said it's "vital" that lawmakers move the candidate filing period from early January to mid-March "to give us some space to work through the courts." Legislative leaders have yet to formally file their appeal to the high court but have asked Gibson to hit pause on implementing the new map, which she declined.

Lawmakers also voted to give the state Supreme Court exclusive jurisdiction on elections and redistricting cases and said they must be expedited.

House and Senate Democrats decried the decisions, saying Republicans were undermining the will of the people, creating confusion in the election process and weakening anti-gerrymandering standards established by Utah voters.

Missouri referendum sparks intense battle

Republicans have tried to thwart Missouri's referendum effort in numerous ways.

Organizations supporting the Republican redistricting attempted to pay people up to \$30,000 to quit gathering petition signatures, according to a lawsuit filed by Advanced Micro Targeting Inc., a company hired by People Not Politicians.

Hoskins, the secretary of state, contends he cannot legally count tens of thousands of signatures gathered before Oct. 14, when he approved the referendum's format.

Hoskins also wrote a ballot summary stating the new map "repeals Missouri's existing gerrymandered congressional plan ... and better reflects statewide voting patterns." That's the opposite of what referendum backers contend it does.

Meanwhile, Hanaway filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of Hoskins and the General Assembly asserting that congressional redistricting legislation cannot be subject to a referendum. Although a federal judge dismissed that suit Monday, the judge said Hoskins has "the power to declare the petition unconstitutional himself," which would likely trigger a new court case.

Missouri's new congressional districts face several legal challenges. On Tuesday, a judge rejected a lawsuit alleging that mid-decade redistricting isn't allowed under the state constitution.

Hegseth tells congressional leaders he is weighing release of boat strike video

By STEPHEN GROVES and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told congressional leaders Tuesday that he was

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still weighing whether to release the full video of an attack on an alleged drug boat that killed two survivors, even as he faced intensifying demands from Congress for disclosure.

Hegseth provided a classified briefing for congressional leaders alongside Secretary of State Marco Rubio and CIA Director John Ratcliffe at the Capitol. Inside the secure room, Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer asked the defense secretary whether he would allow every member of Congress to view the video of the attack from September.

Schumer said Hegseth's response was: "We have to study it."

Lawmakers are demanding a full accounting from the Department of Defense on the military campaign and the particular attack that killed two people who were clinging to the wreckage of an initial strike. Legal experts say that action may have violated the laws governing the use of deadly military force. The situation has awakened the Republican-controlled Congress to its oversight role after months of frustration about the trickle of information from the Pentagon.

Schumer described the briefing as "very unsatisfying" and added that "Democrats and Republicans had a right to see it, wanted to see it, and should see it."

Separately Tuesday, the U.S. Navy admiral who is retiring early from command of the campaign to destroy vessels allegedly carrying drugs near Venezuela spoke to key lawmakers overseeing the U.S. military. The classified video call between Adm. Alvin Holsey, who will be retiring from U.S. Southern Command in the coming days, and the GOP chair and ranking Democrat of the Senate Armed Services Committee represented another determined step by lawmakers to get answers about the operation.

Sen. Roger Wicker, the Republican chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, declined to discuss the specifics of the call, but described Holsey as a "great public servant." He also said that the Pentagon is weighing whether releasing the video would disclose classified information.

In its annual defense authorization bill, which was crafted by both Republicans and Democrats, Congress is demanding that the Pentagon turn over unedited video of the strikes, as well as the orders authorizing the attacks. The legislation threatens to withhold a quarter of Hegseth's travel budget if he refuses.

"There is a growing demand that everyone get a right in the Senate to see it," said Sen. Jack Reed, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

He added that Holsey answered the senators' questions but also said that "there are still many questions to be answered." Reed later added that Holsey did not give a reason for his retirement other than saying it was a personal decision.

Congress presses for more information

Lawmakers are trying to understand the purpose and parameters of President Donald Trump's campaign, which has struck 22 boats and killed at least 87 people since it started in September. Trump has also been making threats against Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, sending a fleet of warships near the South American country, including the largest U.S. aircraft carrier.

On Tuesday, the U.S. military flew a pair of fighter jets over the Gulf of Venezuela in what appears to be the closest American warplanes have come to the country's airspace since the start of the Trump administration's pressure campaign.

Holsey became the leader of U.S. Southern Command just over one year ago, but in October, Hegseth announced that Holsey would be retiring early from his post. As commander of U.S. forces in the region, Holsey oversaw a command structure that has in recent years been mostly focused on building stability and cooperation across much of the region.

Trump's drug boat campaign, however, has added a new, deadly dynamic to its mission. Rather than trying to interdict drug-carrying vessels, as forces like the U.S. Coast Guard have traditionally done, the Trump administration asserts that the drugs and drug-smugglers are posing a direct threat to American lives. Officials say they are applying the same rules as the global war on terror to kill drug smugglers.

Trump this week justified the Sept. 2 strike that killed two survivors by claiming that the two suspected drug smugglers were trying to right the part of the boat after it had capsized in the initial attack. However, Adm. Frank "Mitch" Bradley, the special operations commander who ordered the second strike, told lawmakers in a closed-door briefing last week that he ordered the follow-up strike to ensure that the cocaine

in the boat could not be picked up later by cartel members.

The entire House Armed Services Committee will also hear from Bradley next week, said Rep. Adam Smith, the top Democrat on the panel.

"We need an all-member briefing for the House of Representatives," House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries told The Associated Press.

Lawmakers want access to boat strike video

For the last several months, the Trump administration has brandished videos of the strikes — black and white footage of boats exploding into flames — on social media. But access to the full, unedited videos has now become a point of contention between the Pentagon and Congress.

Sen. Mark Warner, the top Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, called it a "little strange" for officials to now claim that full, unedited video of the strike is classified and cannot be released even to members of Congress.

"We got a little pushback," said Rep. Jim Himes the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, who acknowledged potential concerns over disclosing sources and methods used in the strikes. "But we said, 'Look, you're posting — every time we take a strike you post it.'"

The Democrats also say that the logic underpinning the entire operation is deeply problematic.

"They are using expensive, exquisite American military capabilities to kill people who are the equivalent of corner dealers," said Sen. Chris Coons, a Delaware Democrat.

Lawmakers are also questioning what intelligence the military is using to determine whether the boats' cargo is headed for the U.S. As they have looked closer at the Sept. 2 strike, lawmakers learned that the destroyed boat was heading south at the time of the attack and that military intelligence showed it was headed toward another vessel that was bound for Suriname.

Still, it remains to be seen whether the Republican-controlled Congress will push back on the Trump administration's campaign. Many have so far stood behind it, but worry is also growing about the prospect of war.

House Speaker Mike Johnson missed the classified briefing -- the only leader to do so, according to two people familiar with the private session who spoke on the condition of anonymity. Johnson's absence was notable from the speaker, who is second in line of succession to the president, especially as Congress is expected to have the final say on the military's use of the nation's war powers.

War powers resolution vote

A group of senators — three Democrats and one Republican — is also preparing to force a vote on legislation as soon as next week that would halt Trump's ability to use military force against Venezuela directly without congressional approval.

The senators have already tried unsuccessfully to pass a similar resolution, but almost all Republicans voted against it. However, the senators say there is now renewed interest from GOP lawmakers.

"These follow-on strikes of people who are wounded in the ocean is really against our code of military justice," said Sen. Rand Paul, the Kentucky Republican who is sponsoring the legislation. "They are illegal."

Trump's speech on combating inflation turns to grievances about immigrants from 'filthy' countries

By MARC LEVY and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

MOUNT POCONO, Pa. (AP) — On the road in Pennsylvania on Tuesday, President Donald Trump tried to emphasize his focus on combating inflation, yet the issue that has damaged his popularity couldn't quite command his full attention.

The president told the crowd gathered at a casino and resort in Mount Pocono that inflation was no longer a problem and that Democrats had used the term "affordability" as a "hoax" to hurt his reputation. But his remarks weaved wildly to include grievances he first raised behind closed doors in his first term in 2018 — and later denied saying — asking why the U.S. doesn't have more immigrants from Scandinavia.

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"Why is it we only take people from s---hole countries, right?" Trump said onstage. "Why can't we have some people from Norway, Sweden, just a few?"

Trump said he objected to taking immigrants from "hellholes like Afghanistan, Haiti, Somalia and many other countries." He added for emphasis that those places "are a disaster, right? Filthy, dirty, disgusting, ridden with crime."

Tuesday's gathering in the swing state — and in a competitive House district — was an official White House event, yet it seemed more like one of his signature campaign rallies that his chief of staff said he would hold regularly ahead of next year's midterms. But instead of being in an arena that could draw several thousand attendees, it was held in a conference center ballroom at the Mount Airy Casino Resort in Mount Pocono, a small town of about 3,000 residents.

Voters starting to blame lasting inflation on Republicans

Following dismal results for Republicans in last month's off-cycle elections, the White House has sought to convince voters that the economy will emerge stronger next year and that any anxieties over inflation have nothing to do with Trump.

He displayed a chart comparing price increases under his predecessor, Joe Biden, to prices under his own watch to argue his case. But the overall inflation rate has climbed since he announced broad tariffs in April and left many Americans worried about their grocery, utility and housing bills.

"I have no higher priority than making America affordable again," Trump said. "They caused the high prices and we're bringing them down."

As the president spoke, his party's political vulnerabilities were further seen as Miami voters chose Eileen Higgins to be their first Democratic mayor in nearly 30 years. Higgins defeated the Trump-endorsed Republican Emilio Gonzalez.

The president's reception in the county hosting his Tuesday rally showed he could still appeal to the base, but it was unable to settle questions of whether he could hold together his 2024 coalition. Monroe County flipped to Trump last year after having backed Biden in 2020, helping the Republican win the swing state of Pennsylvania and return to the White House after a four-year hiatus.

As home to the Pocono Mountains, the county has largely relied on tourism for skiing, hiking, hunting and other activities as a source of jobs. Its proximity to New York City — under two hours by car — has also attracted people seeking more affordable housing.

In Monroe County, people agree that prices are a problem

But what seems undeniable — even to Trump supporters in Monroe County — is that inflation seems to be here to stay.

Lou Heddy, a retired maintenance mechanic who voted for Trump last year, said he's noticed in the past month alone that his and his wife's grocery bills have risen from \$175 to \$200, and he's not sure Trump can bring food prices down.

"Once the prices get up for food, they don't ever come back down. That's just the way I feel. I don't know how the hell he would do it," said Heddy, 72.

But Suzanne Vena, a Democratic voter, blames Trump's tariffs for making life more expensive, as she struggles with rising bills for food, rent and electricity on a fixed income. She remembers Trump saying that he would stop inflation.

"That's what we were originally told," said Vena, 66. "Did I believe it? That's another question. I did not."

The area Trump visited could help decide control of the House in next year's midterm elections.

Trump held his rally in a congressional district held by first-term Republican Rep. Rob Bresnahan, who is a top target of Democrats. Scranton Mayor Paige Cagnetti, a Democrat, is running for the nomination to challenge him.

Speaking to the crowd before Trump, Bresnahan said the administration was working to lower costs, but voters "aren't asking for partisan arguments — they're asking for results."

It's not clear if Trump can motivate voters in Monroe County to show up in next year's election if they're worried about inflation.

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Nick Riley, 38, said he's cutting back on luxuries, like going out to eat, as he absorbs higher bills for food and electricity and is having a hard time finding a good deal on a used car. Riley voted for Trump in 2020, but he sat out the 2024 election and plans to do so again next year.

"We're all broke. It doesn't matter whether you support Republicans or support Democrats," Riley said. "We're all broke, and we're all feeling it."

Trump to start holding more rallies before midterm elections

White House chief of staff Susie Wiles said on the online conservative talk show "The Mom View" that Trump would be on the campaign trail next year to engage supporters who otherwise might sit out a congressional race.

Wiles, who helped manage Trump's 2024 campaign, said most administrations try to localize midterm elections and keep the president out of the race, but she intends to do the opposite of that.

"We're actually going to turn that on its head," Wiles said, "and put him on the ballot because so many of those low-propensity voters are Trump voters."

The challenge for Trump is how to address the concerns of voters about the economy while simultaneously claiming that the economy is enjoying a historic boom.

Asked on a Politico podcast how he'd rate the economy, Trump leaned into grade inflation by answering "A-plus," only to then amend his answer to "A-plus-plus-plus-plus-plus."

Trump says economy is strong, but Americans should buy fewer dolls

The U.S. economy has shown signs of resilience with the stock market up this year and overall growth looking solid for the third quarter. But many Americans see the prices of housing, groceries, education, electricity and other basic needs as swallowing up their incomes, a dynamic that the Trump administration has said it expects to fade next year with more investments in artificial intelligence and manufacturing.

So far, the public has been skeptical about Trump's economic performance. Just 33% of U.S. adults approve of Trump's handling of the economy, according to a November survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

But Trump indicated that his tariffs and other policies were helping industries such as the steel sector. He said those industries mattered for the country as he then specifically told Americans that they should buy fewer pencils and dolls from overseas.

"You don't need 37 dolls for your daughter," he told the crowd. "Two or three is nice."

Storms bring heavy rain to the Pacific Northwest, snow and freezing rain to the Upper Midwest

By CLAIRE RUSH Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — The first of a series of powerful storms dumped heavy rain and swelled rivers in the Pacific Northwest on Tuesday, closing roads and prompting high water rescues.

Residents in parts of Oregon and Washington grappled with power outages, flooding and school closures, while drivers navigated debris slides and water that closed roads and submerged vehicles.

Fire officials northeast of Seattle said crews conducted several rescues, using inflatable kayaks to pull people from stranded cars and carrying another person about a mile (1.6 km) to safety after they were trapped in a wooded area by rising water.

Forecasters warned that the worst was still to come, with some major rivers expected to crest later in the week.

"We're starting to see a lot of rivers begin to rise and move very rapidly with lots of runoff with the rain," said Harrison Rademacher, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service's Seattle office.

Rademacher described the atmospheric river soaking the region as "a jet stream of moisture" stretching all the way across the Pacific Ocean "with the nozzle pushing right along the coast of Oregon and Washington."

The National Weather Service forecast several days of heavy rainfall along the coast and more than a foot of new snow in the northern Rockies in northwestern Wyoming. Flood watches were in effect with

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scattered flash flooding possible along the coast and into the Cascade Mountains through midweek.

Along Interstate 5 between Seattle and Portland, firefighters conducted five rescues for people whose vehicles were overcome by water when they attempted to drive on flooded roads, including a semitruck driver, said Malachi Simper, spokesperson for Lewis County Fire Protection District #5. Authorities also rescued a family of six from their home in Chehalis, he said, adding that the road to the house was under about four feet (1.2 meters) of water at the time. None of those rescued were injured, he added.

Police said deputies went door-to-door in certain neighborhoods to warn residents of imminent flooding, including evacuating a mobile home park along the Snohomish River northeast of Seattle. The city of Snohomish issued an emergency proclamation due to flooding, while in Auburn, south of Seattle, workers installed temporary flood control barriers along the White River.

On the Columbia River further south near the Oregon border, the city of Longview said it will open a severe weather shelter Tuesday night for anyone affected by flooding or closed streets.

Another storm system is expected to bring rain to the region starting Sunday, Rademacher said. "The pattern looks pretty unsettled going up to the holidays," he said.

Portland transportation officials warned of an increased risk of car crashes because of hydroplaning or driving through flooded roads.

Further north, an arctic blast is affecting parts of southeast Alaska, with wind chills possibly hitting as low as minus 50 degrees (minus 45.6 Celsius) in Skagway, minus 25 (minus 31.6 Celsius) in Haines and minus 15 degrees (minus 26 C) in Alaska's capital city, Juneau, according to the National Weather Service.

Meanwhile, a fast-moving storm tracking across the Upper Midwest on Tuesday was forecast to bring freezing rain, high winds and heavy snow.

Much of North Dakota was under a no-travel advisory because of freezing rain and slippery roads. Some schools closed or moved to virtual lessons due to the weather conditions.

Most of Montana and the Dakotas were under a high wind warning. Winds of up to 65 mph (105 kph) were expected Tuesday, said Connor Smith, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Bismarck. High winds could make travel difficult and blow around unsecured objects, Christmas decorations and already fallen snow, he said.

Wintry weather was also expected to impact the evening commute in Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin, starting Tuesday afternoon and lasting into the night, said Ryan Dunleavy, meteorologist for the National Weather Service in the Twin Cities. Parts of central and northern Minnesota and northwest Wisconsin could see heavy snow, with a mix of winter weather forecast across the Twin Cities metro and southwest Minnesota, with potentially strong winds to follow, Dunleavy said.

Commuters should allow for extra time traveling, he said. The storm is expected to head into the Great Lakes region by Wednesday.

Luigi Mangione's notes to self: 'Pluck eyebrows,' 'Keep momentum, FBI slower overnight'

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Pluck eyebrows. Buy less conspicuous shoes. Take a bus or a train west toward Cincinnati and St. Louis. Move around late at night. Stay away from surveillance cameras.

A to-do list and travel plans found during Luigi Mangione's arrest and revealed in court this week shed new light on the steps he may have taken — or planned to take — to avoid capture after UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson's killing last year.

"Keep momentum, FBI slower overnight," said one note. "Change hat, shoes, pluck eyebrows," said another.

The notes, including a hand-drawn map and tactics for surviving on the lam, were shown on Monday at a pretrial hearing as Mangione's bid to prevent prosecutors from using evidence seized during his Dec. 9, 2024, arrest at a McDonald's in Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Excerpts of body-worn camera footage of the arrest, previously unseen by the press or the public, were

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released on Tuesday.

Police said they discovered the notes in Mangione's backpack, along with a 9 mm handgun that prosecutors said matches the one used to kill Thompson five days earlier; a loaded gun magazine and silencer; and a notebook in similar handwriting which he purportedly described his intent to "wack" a health insurance executive.

Mangione's lawyers haven't disputed the authenticity of the notes or the provenance of the gun, pocket knife, fake ID, driver's license, passport, credit cards, AirPods, protein bar, travel toothpaste, flash drives and other items seized from him and his backpack.

But they argue that anything found in the bag should be barred because police didn't have a search warrant and lacked the grounds to justify a warrantless search. Prosecutors contend the search was legal — officers said they were checking for a bomb — and that police eventually obtained a warrant.

The notes, along with other evidence highlighted at the pretrial hearing, underscore that Mangione's stop in Altoona, a city of about 44,000 people about 230 miles (370 kilometers) west of Manhattan, was only meant to be temporary.

One note said to check for "red eyes" from Pittsburgh to Columbus, Ohio or part way to Cincinnati ("get off early," it reads). The map drawn below shows lines linking those cities, as well as other possible destinations, including Detroit, Indianapolis and St. Louis.

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 and then fleeing the area. Over the next hours and days, police released photos of a suspect — first showing him in a mask and hooded coat and then his face and thick eyebrows.

Mangione, 27, has pleaded not guilty to state and federal murder charges. The pretrial hearing, which resumes for a sixth day on Thursday, 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.

Among the notes revealed this week was one with a heading "12/5" and a starred entry that said: "buy black shoes (white stripes too distinctive)."

Another, also written in to-do list style, suggested spending more than three hours away from surveillance cameras and using different modes of transportation to "Break CAM continuity" and avoid tracking. Below that, it said: "check reports for current situation," a possible reference to news reports about the search for Thompson's killer.

According to prosecutors, Mangione fled to Newark, New Jersey, immediately after the shooting and took a train to Philadelphia. Among the evidence shown at the pretrial hearing was a Philadelphia transit pass purchased at 1:06 p.m. — a little more than six hours after the shooting — and a ticket for a Greyhound bus, booked under the name Sam Dawson, leaving Philadelphia at 6:30 p.m. and arriving in Pittsburgh at 11:55 p.m.

A note with the heading "12/8" lists a number of tasks, including an apparent trip to Best Buy to purchase a digital camera and accessories, "hot meal + water bottles," and "trash bag(s)." Under "12/9," the day of Mangione's arrest, the note lists tasks including "Sheetz," an Altoona-based convenience store chain, "masks" and "AAA bats." Under "Future TO DO," it listed "intel checkin" and "survival kit."

Mangione had a Sheetz hoagie in his backpack when he was arrested, along with a loaf of Italian bread from a local deli, according to police officers testifying Monday and Tuesday. It had been raining, and the bag and items inside it were wet, the officers said. They were heard on body-worn camera footage played in court theorizing that Mangione had gotten soaked walking from the city's bus station.

Police responded to the McDonald's after a manager called 911 to relay concerns from customers who thought that Mangione, eating breakfast in a back corner, resembled the man wanted for killing Thompson. On the call, played in court, the manager could be heard saying that because Mangione was wearing a medical mask, she could only see his eyebrows and that she searched online for a photo of the suspect for comparison.

Altoona Police Officer Stephen Fox testified on Tuesday that Mangione, the Ivy League-educated scion

of a wealthy Maryland family, expressed concern for the 911 caller's wellbeing. Fox said Mangione asked if police had planned on releasing her name, which they didn't. The officer recalled him saying: "It would be bad for her" and "there would be a lot of people that would be upset."

At another point, Fox said, a shackled Mangione stumbled while trying to keep up with the brisk-moving officer. Fox said he apologized and said, "I forgot you were shackled."

He said Mangione responded: "It's OK, I'm going to have to get used to it."

US stocks hold in place in the countdown to the Federal Reserve's meeting on Wednesday

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks largely held in place on Tuesday as Wall Street waits to hear what the Federal Reserve will say Wednesday about where interest rates are heading.

The S&P 500 edged down by 0.1% and remained near its all-time high set in October. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 179 points, or 0.4%, and the Nasdaq composite added 0.1%.

JPMorgan Chase was the heaviest weight on the market after a top executive, Marianne Lake, said the bank's expenses could rise to \$105 billion next year.

That would be up 9% from an estimated \$95.9 billion in expenses this year, though Lake also said JPMorgan Chase is "feeling pretty good about the underlying financial health of the borrowers in our portfolio." Its stock fell 4.7%.

Another drop came from Toll Brothers, which lost 2.4% after the homebuilder reported weaker results for the latest quarter than analysts expected.

CEO Douglas Yearley Jr. said demand for new homes remains soft across many markets, and he talked about "affordability pressures" that could be affecting potential homebuyers.

One big factor in that affordability question is mortgage rates. They're cheaper than they were at the start of the year, though they perked up a bit after October. That's largely because of questions in the bond market about how much more the Federal Reserve will cut its main interest rate.

The widespread expectation is that the Fed will cut interest rates Wednesday afternoon, which would be the third such easing of the year. Lower interest rates can give the economy and prices for investments a boost, though the downside is they can worsen inflation.

The U.S. stock market has run to the edge of its records in part because of the growing assumption that the Fed will cut rates again on Wednesday.

The big question is what the Fed will say about where interest rates will go after that. Many on Wall Street are bracing for talk aimed at tamping down expectations for more cuts in 2026.

Inflation has stubbornly remained above the Fed's 2% target, and Fed officials are notably split in their opinions about whether high inflation or the slowing job market is the bigger threat to the economy.

Treasury yields climbed in the bond market after a report on Tuesday showed that U.S. employers were advertising 7.7 million job openings at the end of October. That's up a smidgen from the month before and the highest number since May.

If the job market is not worsening, it may not need as much help from the Fed through more cuts to rates.

After the report on job openings came out, the yield on the 10-year Treasury erased what had been an earlier dip and rose to 4.18% from 4.17% late Monday.

The yield on the two-year Treasury, which moves more closely with expectations for what the Fed will do, rose to 3.60% from 3.57% late Monday.

Elsewhere on Wall Street, Exxon Mobil climbed 2% after increasing its forecast for profit over the next five years, thanks in part to strength for its fields in the Permian basin in the United States and off Guyana's shore.

Ares Management rallied 7.3% after S&P Dow Jones Indices said the investment company will join its widely followed S&P 500 index. It will replace Kellanova, the maker of Pringles and Pop-Tarts, which is being bought by Mars, the company behind Snickers and M&Ms.

CVS Health rose 2.2% after unveiling new financial forecasts, including expectations for annual compounded growth in earnings per share at a "mid-teens" percentage over the next three years.

Home Depot fell 1.3% after flipping between gains and losses. It gave a preliminary forecast for 2026 that said the broad home improvement market may shrink by up to 1%. But it also gave a separate set of forecasts saying its earnings per share could grow in the mid- to high-single digit percentages if the housing market recovers.

The market's most influential stock, Nvidia, slipped 0.3% after President Donald Trump allowed it to sell an advanced chip used in artificial-intelligence technology to "approved customers" in China. The H200 is not Nvidia's top product.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 6.00 points to 6,840.51. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 179.03 to 47,650.29, and the Nasdaq composite rose 30.58 to 23,576.49.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed Europe and Asia.

Indexes fell 1.3% in Hong Kong and 0.7% in Paris for two of the world's bigger moves.

Díaz agrees to \$69M, 3-year deal with World Series champion Dodgers, AP source says, leaves Mets

By RONALD BLUM AP Baseball Writer

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Closer Edwin Díaz has agreed to a \$69 million, three-year contract with the World Series champion Los Angeles Dodgers, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press.

The person spoke Tuesday on condition of anonymity because the agreement was subject to a successful physical. Díaz's agreement includes deferred payments by the Dodgers, who already owed \$1.051 billion in deferred pay to eight players from 2028-46.

"The Dodgers are the Goliath and they went and got something that they really, really needed," said agent Scott Boras, who does not represent Díaz. "I'm sure that there was a goal on the part of the player that he felt that maybe he could achieve his goals differently with the Dodgers than he could with the Mets. ... Right now in our industry when a Goliath snaps his fingers, he seems to be getting what he wants."

A three-time All-Star who turns 32 on March 22, Díaz joins a Dodgers bullpen that struggled last season, causing the team to shift rookie starter Roki Sasaki to closer in the postseason. Los Angeles relievers had a 4.27 ERA, 21st among the 30 teams.

Relying on a 97-98 mph fastball and slider, Díaz became a fan favorite at Citi Field, where horns blared and fans danced when he entered games to "Narco" by Blasterjaxx & Timmy Trumpet.

"Since the deal is not official, I can't comment on it. I'm very optimistic about where our offseason is headed," Mets president of baseball operations David Stearns said. "We certainly have work to do, but there are many good players out there. I'm confident we'll like where our team is once we get to opening day."

New York prepared for Díaz's possible departure by agreeing to a \$51 million, three-year contract with Devin Williams, who left the crosstown Yankees after one season.

"I've certainly seen Devin perform at a very high level for a long time," Stearns said. "Have full confidence that he can be one of the best relievers in baseball. I think he's very motivated to do that."

Signing Williams may have impacted the Mets' approach to Díaz.

"Once you add to a certain part of your team, that will change the calculus and how you look at your team in general," Stearns said.

Díaz joins a Dodgers bullpen that includes left-hander Tanner Scott, who was bothered by elbow inflammation in his first season after signing a \$72 million, four-year contract. Jack Dreyer, Anthony Banda and Alex Vesia also are in the bullpen.

Díaz had 28 saves in 31 chances last season with a 6-3 record and 1.63 ERA for a disappointing Mets team that failed to reach the playoffs despite spending the second-most behind the Dodgers. He struck out 98 in 66 1/3 innings.

He has 253 saves in 294 chances over nine seasons with the Seattle (2016-18) and the Mets, who acquired him along with second baseman Robinson Canó for five players that included Jarred Kelenic and

Anthony Swarzak. Díaz missed the 2023 season after tearing the patellar tendon in his right knee during a postgame celebration with Puerto Rico at the World Baseball Classic.

Díaz agreed to a \$102 million, five-year contract with the Mets after the 2022 season, a deal that included deferred money payable through 2042. He had the right to opt out after three years and \$64 million to become a free agent again. Of that \$64 million, \$15.5 million is deferred and payable through July 1, 2039.

New York has lost two significant players from the roster that helped it reach the 2024 NL Championship Series. The Mets traded outfielder Brandon Nimmo to Texas.

First baseman Pete Alonso, who has been meeting with teams at the winter meetings, is a free agent and it remains uncertain whether he will remain with New York.

Justice Department challenges court order limiting access to evidence in Comey investigation

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department on Tuesday challenged a court order that complicated efforts to seek a new indictment against former FBI Director James Comey by making a trove of evidence off-limits to prosecutors.

An order issued over the weekend by a federal judge in Washington barred the Justice Department at least temporarily from accessing computer files belonging to Daniel Richman, a close Comey friend and Columbia University law professor who prosecutors see as a central player in any potential case against the former FBI director.

Prosecutors moved Tuesday to quash that order, calling Richman's request for the return of his files a "strategic tool to obstruct the investigation and potential prosecution." They said the judge had overstepped her bounds by ordering Richman's property returned to him and said the ruling had impeded their ability to proceed with a case against Comey.

The Justice Department alleges that Comey used Richman to share information with the news media about his decision-making during the FBI's investigation into Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server. Prosecutors charged the former FBI director in September with lying to Congress by denying that he had authorized an associate to serve as an anonymous source for the media.

That indictment was dismissed last month after a federal judge in Virginia ruled that the prosecutor who brought the case, Lindsey Halligan, was unlawfully appointed by the Trump administration. But the ruling left open the possibility that the government could try again to seek charges against Comey, a longtime foe of President Donald Trump. Comey has pleaded not guilty, denied having made a false statement and accused the Justice Department of a vindictive prosecution.

After the case was thrown out, Richman filed a motion that sought the return of his computer records, which the Justice Department obtained through search warrants in 2019 and 2020 as part of a media leak investigation that was later closed without charges.

Richman and his lawyers say that even after that investigation ended, the Justice Department continued for years to hold onto the materials it had collected from Richman's computer, email and iCloud accounts despite those files containing a "significant quantum of privileged information."

Justice Department officials searched the files this year for communications between Comey and Richman that could be used to build a case against Comey. But Richman and his lawyers say prosecutors conducted new, warrantless searches that went beyond the scope of the warrants and retained his files for years without any legitimate purpose.

U.S. District Judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly sided with Richman's lawyers and issued a temporary restraining order Saturday that required the Justice Department to return the files and to no longer access them.

The Justice Department challenged that order Tuesday, calling Richman's request for his materials "a transparent effort to suppress evidence in the Comey matter." Prosecutors said Richman's motion had "effectively enjoined the government from investigating and potentially prosecuting Comey.

"But federal courts cannot enjoin federal criminal prosecutions; a civil plaintiff cannot circumvent bedrock federal criminal procedure via an equitable proceeding like this one," they said. "So the Court should dissolve its temporary restraining order and deny Petitioner's motion."

In response to the Justice Department's objections, Kollar-Kotelly did not immediately lift her order but did allow for further filings from both sides. She signaled her position that Richman should be given a chance to review the materials and assert any attorney-client privilege claims he thinks are necessary.

Zelenskyy reaffirms his refusal to cede land to Russia as he rallies European support

By PAOLO SANTALUCIA and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has reaffirmed his strong refusal to cede any territory, resisting U.S. pressure for painful concessions to Russia as he moved ahead Tuesday to rally more European support for his country.

"Undoubtedly, Russia insists for us to give up territories. We, clearly, don't want to give up anything. That's what we are fighting for," Zelenskyy told reporters in a WhatsApp chat late Monday.

"Do we consider ceding any territories? According to the law we don't have such right," he said. "According to Ukraine's law, our constitution, international law, and to be frank, we don't have a moral right either."

In an interview with Politico released Tuesday, U.S. President Donald Trump pressed Zelenskyy to accept the U.S. proposal that Ukraine cede territory to Russia, arguing Moscow has the "upper hand" in its nearly 4-year-old invasion, and that Zelenskyy's government must "play ball."

Zelenskyy met in Rome with Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, discussing the progress of the peace process, her office said. They emphasized the importance of U.S. and European unity and of solutions "that will have repercussions on the continent's security," the statement said.

They also discussed "developing robust security guarantees to prevent future aggression and maintaining pressure on Russia to join the negotiating table in good faith," it said.

Earlier, Zelenskyy met with Pope Leo XIV at Castel Gandolfo, a papal residence outside Rome. The Vatican said Leo reiterated the need for continuing dialogue and "expressed his urgent desire that the current diplomatic initiatives bring about a just and lasting peace."

The Holy See has tried to stay neutral in the war while offering solidarity and assistance to what it calls the "martyred" people of Ukraine. Leo has met three times with Zelenskyy and has spoken by telephone at least once with Russian President Vladimir Putin, calling for a ceasefire and urging Moscow to make gestures promoting peace.

On Monday, Zelenskyy held talks in London with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz to strengthen Ukraine's hand amid mounting impatience from Trump.

Ukraine faces US pressure

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

A major sticking point is the suggestion that Kyiv must give up control of the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine to Russia, which occupies most but not all of the territory. Ukraine and its European allies firmly resist the idea of handing over land.

"You know, a lot of people are dying," Trump told Politico on Monday, claiming that other Ukrainian officials that he identified only as Zelenskyy's "lieutenants, his top people" agree with the U.S. administration.

Other than Zelenskyy's comments Monday, Ukrainian negotiators have said little in public about the content of the U.S. proposal or their attitude toward it.

Speaking to reporters again Tuesday on WhatsApp, Zelenskyy said three documents were being discussed with American and European partners — a 20-point framework document that is constantly changing, a document on security guarantees and a document about Ukraine's recovery.

Zelenskyy told reporters that Ukraine's updated version of the proposal would be given to the U.S. on

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Russia, Trump said, is too powerful for Ukraine to continue fighting.

"I give the people of Ukraine and the military of Ukraine tremendous credit for the, you know, bravery and for the fighting and all of that," he said. "But you know, at some point, size will win, generally."

Trump also repeated his call for Ukraine to hold a presidential election even though martial law doesn't allow it and Zelenskyy, elected in 2019, had his five-year term extended because of the war. Trump's position on Ukraine's failure to hold an election mirrors frequent statements on the subject by Putin.

Responding to Trump's remarks, Zelenskyy asked for help from the U.S. and possibly Europe "to ensure security for the elections" and suggested that Ukraine could be ready to hold balloting in 60 to 90 days.

In past comments, Zelenskyy has declined to hold elections until a ceasefire is declared and martial law lifted, and Ukrainians have largely supported that decision.

European leaders repeat support for Kyiv

Starmer, Macron and Merz strongly backed Kyiv, with the U.K. leader saying Monday that the push for peace was at a "critical stage" and stressing 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 and his European allies have repeatedly accused Putin of slow-walking the talks to press ahead with the invasion.

Both sides exchange aerial strikes

Ukraine's air force said Russia fired 110 drones across the country overnight. While air defenses neutralized 84 drones, 24 more struck their targets.

Several regions of Ukraine faced emergency blackouts Tuesday due to Russian attacks on energy infrastructure, according to Ukraine's national energy operator, Ukrenergo.

U.N. deputy humanitarian chief Joyce Msuya said Tuesday only 65% of the \$278 million required to fund a winter response plan in Ukraine has been received, forcing cuts to services like cash assistance, heating support, mental health care and protection for women and girls.

This means families are facing freezing temperatures without heating, women and girls are losing access to "safe spaces" and older people in front-line areas are left without the means to evacuate, she told the U.N. Security Council.

The U.K. Defense Ministry said a member of the British military died Tuesday of his injuries from an accident while observing Ukrainian troops test a defensive system away from the front lines — the first U.K. servicemember to die in Ukraine in the war. It was not immediately clear what role he was serving or where the accident occurred.

The U.K. military has said a small number of personnel are in Ukraine to protect British diplomats and support Ukrainian troops.

Ukraine also continued its drone attacks on Russia.

Russia said it destroyed 121 drones in various regions and in the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014. In Chuvashia, a region about 900 kilometers (about 560 miles) northeast of the Ukrainian border, an attack damaged residential buildings and injured nine people, Gov. Oleg Nikolayev said.

Ukraine's Security Service carried out a drone attack on a liquefied gas terminal at the port of Temryuk in Russia's Krasnodar region on Dec. 5, according to an official with knowledge of the operation who spoke to The Associated Press.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to comment publicly, said the strike sparked a fire at the facility, with more than 20 storage tanks set ablaze for over three days.

Justice Department can unseal Ghislaine Maxwell sex trafficking case records, judge says

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday granted the Justice Department's request to publicly release grand jury transcripts and other material from Ghislaine Maxwell's sex trafficking case, citing a new law that requires the government to open its files on Jeffrey Epstein and his longtime confidant, but he cautioned that people shouldn't expect to learn much new information from them.

Judge Paul A. Engelmayer, who along with other judges had previously rejected Justice Department unsealing requests before the transparency law was passed, said the materials "do not identify any person other than Epstein and Maxwell as having had sexual contact with a minor."

"They do not discuss or identify any client of Epstein's or Maxwell's," Engelmayer wrote. "They do not reveal any heretofore unknown means or methods of Epstein's or Maxwell's crimes."

Engelmayer, in Manhattan, ruled Tuesday after the Justice Department had asked judges in the wake of the law's passage last month to lift secrecy orders in Maxwell's and Epstein's cases that had kept some records under wraps. A request to unseal records from Epstein's 2019 sex trafficking case is pending.

Engelmayer is the second judge to act after the Epstein Files Transparency Act created a narrow exception to rules that normally keep grand jury proceedings secret. Last week, a Florida federal judge ordered the release of transcripts from an abandoned Epstein federal grand jury investigation in the 2000s.

The law, signed by President Donald Trump after months of public and political pressure, requires the Justice Department to provide the public with Epstein-related records by Dec. 19.

The fate of the government's Epstein files has dominated the first year of Trump's second term in office. The Republican campaigned for reelection last year on a promise to release the files, and his administration did disclose some records earlier this year — almost all of them already public — but suddenly stopped in July after promising a "truckload" more.

Forced to act by the new transparency law, the Justice Department says it plans to release 18 categories of investigative materials gathered in the massive sex trafficking probe, including search warrants, financial records, notes from interviews with victims, and data from electronic devices.

Epstein, a millionaire financier, was arrested in July 2019 on sex trafficking charges and killed himself in jail a month later. Maxwell, a British socialite, was convicted of sex trafficking in December 2021. She is serving a 20-year prison sentence. After giving an interview to the Justice Department's second-in-command in July, she was moved from a federal prison in Florida to a prison camp in Texas.

The Justice Department said it was conferring with victims and their lawyers and planned to redact or black out portions of records to protect victims' identities and prevent dissemination of sexualized images. Engelmayer said Manhattan U.S. Attorney Jay Clayton must personally certify that records have been "rigorously reviewed" to avoid an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.

Maxwell's lawyer told Engelmayer last week that unsealing records from her case could spoil her plans to file a habeas petition, a legal filing seeking to overturn her conviction. The release "would create undue prejudice so severe that it would foreclose the possibility of a fair retrial," Maxwell lawyer David Markus wrote. The Supreme Court in October declined to hear Maxwell's appeal.

Annie Farmer, a vocal Epstein and Maxwell accuser, fought for the transparency act's passage and supports the release of court records. She said through her lawyer, Sigrid S. McCawley, that she "is wary of the possibility that any denial of the motions may be used by others as a pretext or excuse for continuing to withhold crucial information concerning Epstein's crimes."

In August, Engelmayer and Judge Richard M. Berman denied the department's requests to unseal grand jury transcripts and other material from Maxwell's and Epstein's cases, ruling that such disclosures are rarely, if ever, allowed.

Tens of thousands of pages of records pertaining to Epstein and Maxwell have already been released through lawsuits, public disclosures and Freedom of Information Act requests.

Many of the materials the Justice Department plans to release stem from reports, photographs, videos and other materials gathered by police in Palm Beach, Florida, and the U.S. attorney's office there, both of which investigated Epstein in the mid-2000s.

Last year, a Florida judge ordered the release of about 150 pages of transcripts from a state grand jury that investigated Epstein in 2006. On Dec. 5, at the Justice Department's request, a Florida judge ordered the unsealing of transcripts from a federal grand jury there that also investigated Epstein.

That investigation ended in 2008 with a then-secret arrangement that allowed Epstein to avoid federal charges by pleading guilty to a state prostitution charge. He served 13 months in a jail work-release program.

Supreme Court questions limits on political party spending in federal elections, hearing GOP appeal

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Conservative Supreme Court justices on Tuesday appeared to back a Republican-led drive that would erase limits on how much political parties can spend in coordination with candidates for Congress and president and overturn a quarter-century-old decision.

A day after the justices indicated they would reverse a 90-year-old precedent limiting the president's power to fire independent agency heads, the court took up a 2001 decision that upheld a provision of federal election law that is more than 50 years old.

The lawsuit, which originated in Ohio, includes Vice President JD Vance, who joined in the Republican challenge to the limits when he was a senator from Ohio. The arguments touched on whether Vance would run for president in 2028, and whether his plans should figure in the outcome.

The case is the latest in which the conservative majority could upend congressionally enacted limits on raising and spending money to influence elections. The court's 2010 Citizens United decision opened the door to unlimited independent spending in federal elections.

Two hours of arguments showed entrenched divisions between the liberal and conservative justices over campaign finance restrictions.

"Every time we interfere with the congressional design, we make matters worse," said Justice Sonia Sotomayor, a dissenter in Citizens United and the court's other campaign money cases.

By contrast, Justice Samuel Alito, a member of the Citizens United majority, described the decision as "much maligned, I think unfairly maligned." The effect of the decision was to "level the playing field," Alito said, by expanding the right to spend freely that had previously belonged only to media companies.

The limits on party spending stem from a desire to prevent large donors from skirting caps on individual contributions to a candidate by directing unlimited sums to the party, with the understanding that the money will be spent on behalf of the candidate.

The Republican committees for House and Senate candidates filed the lawsuit in Ohio in 2022, joined by Vance and then-Rep. Steve Chabot.

The court should cast a skeptical eye on the limits because they are "at war" with recent high court decisions, lawyer Noel Francisco said, representing Republican interests. The Federal Election Commission, which changed its view on the issue after Trump took office, also argued that the limits should be struck down.

Democrats are calling on the court to uphold the law, even though there is wide agreement that the spending limits have hurt political parties in an era of unlimited spending by other organizations.

"That's the real source of the disadvantage, right?" Justice Brett Kavanaugh said. "You can give huge money to the outside group, but you can't give huge money to the party. And so the parties are very much weakened compared to the outside group."

Alito, Kavanaugh and Justice Clarence Thomas all voiced skepticism about the limits, while the three liberal justices signaled they would vote to uphold them. The other three members of the court, Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Amy Coney Barrett and Neil Gorsuch, either said nothing during the arguments or not enough to indicate how they might vote.

After the Trump administration joined with Republicans to ask the court to strike down the campaign finance law, the justices appointed a lawyer to defend it.

Roman Martinez, an experienced Supreme Court advocate, offered the justices a way out of the case without deciding anything. Among the reasons, Martinez told the court, is that Vance's claim is moot because the vice president has "repeatedly denied having any concrete plan to run for office in 2028."

The justices did not seem to be looking for the off ramp that Martinez was offering.

In 2025, the coordinated party spending for Senate races ranges from \$127,200 in several states with small populations to nearly \$4 million in California. For House races, the limits are \$127,200 in states with only one representative and \$63,600 everywhere else.

How a rare drug made from scientists' blood saves babies from botulism

By JONEL ALECCIA AP Health Writer

When Alessandro Barbera was rushed to a California hospital with infant botulism in October, his father had barely heard of the disease, never mind the rare and costly treatment that likely saved the newborn's life.

Now, however, Tony Barbera is deeply grateful for BabyBIG, the sole antidote to the paralyzing and potentially deadly illnesses linked to contaminated ByHeart infant formula.

"It is hugely remarkable," said Barbera, 35, whose son is slowly recovering.

The botulism outbreak tied to ByHeart formula has sickened at least 39 babies across in 18 states since August — and showed the value of the treatment made from blood plasma donated by a small group of scientists and other volunteers.

"This is almost like a miracle," said Dr. Vijay Viswanath, a pediatric neurologist at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, who has treated several children with botulism during his career — including one in the current outbreak.

"Prior to the discovery of BabyBIG, some of these hospitalizations would take two or three months," Viswanath said, if infected children recovered at all.

Licensed in 2003, BabyBIG is the brand name for human botulism immune globulin, an IV medication that uses antibodies from volunteers vaccinated against botulism to help babies too young to fight the disease on their own.

Treatment relies on donors

The treatment was the brainchild of the late Dr. Stephen Arnon, who was a scientist with the California Department of Public Health. In 1976, Arnon and colleagues identified the rare form of botulism that affects infants younger than 1 — and then spent his 45-year career figuring out how to treat it. The disease occurs when babies ingest botulism spores that germinate in the intestine and produce a dangerous toxin that attacks the nervous system.

More than 3,700 children worldwide have been treated with BabyBIG since Arnon and his team conducted a pivotal clinical trial in California in 1997 that showed the medication could shorten hospital stays and reduce the need for breathing machines.

Produced in small batches every five years, BabyBIG costs nearly \$70,000 per treatment, according to the California Infant Botulism Treatment and Prevention Program, which Arnon founded. Under state law, fees from the sale of the drug are used only to fund the botulism program.

The medication relies on donors like Nancy Shine, a 76-year-old retired biochemist in California who was vaccinated against botulism because she worked with the lethal germ in a lab. Arnon first recruited Shine and other scientists for the BabyBIG project two decades ago because their blood produced high levels of antibodies, the blood proteins that neutralize the botulism toxin.

The early protocol required the volunteers to receive booster doses of an investigational botulism vaccine also used by the U.S. military and then undergo a procedure that harvests the blood plasma that contains antibodies against botulism types A and B.

"It was not very pleasant to be vaccinated with," Shine recalled. "There were a lot of side effects, like big welts where you got vaccinated and a little bit of pain."

Still, Shine contributed to three batches of the antitoxin produced between 2008 and 2019.

"It's probably the highlight of my career that I actually was able to participate in this project and donate plasma," Shine said. "We made a product that could save infants' lives."

Development faced hurdles

Because infant botulism is rare, with fewer than 200 cases reported in the U.S. each year, finding funding and other resources to develop the BabyBIG treatment took nearly 15 years and \$10.6 million — and faced substantial hurdles, Arnon noted in a 2007 article.

Today, about 30 people on average provide plasma for each batch of BabyBIG, California health officials said. Batch 8, the latest edition, is being manufactured now at a Takeda Pharmaceutical Co. plant near Los Angeles, according to Giles Platford, president of the company's plasma-derived therapies unit. The company contracts with California officials to produce BabyBIG on a "not-for-profit basis," Platford said.

Some of the earliest donors, like Shine, have aged out of the BabyBIG program, which collects blood from adult volunteers up to age 70. New donors are accepted, but they must enroll in a clinical study directed by the California health department and agree to receive a booster dose of a different investigational botulism vaccine.

California officials estimate they have enough BabyBIG in reserve to last until next summer, based on current projections. The ByHeart outbreak is part of a worrisome rise of at least 107 infant botulism cases treated in the U.S. since August, said Dr. Jessica Khouri, senior medical officer for the state program.

Shine recently received a booklet filled with photos and letters from families whose children have recovered from botulism after receiving BabyBIG.

"It's really wonderful. I read a couple each day," she said. "Every single one of them makes you want to cry."

Colts sign 44-year-old Philip Rivers to practice squad with 2 quarterbacks injured, AP source says

By MICHAEL MAROT AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The Indianapolis Colts bolstered their injury-depleted quarterback corps Tuesday by bringing 44-year-old Philip Rivers out of retirement and signing him to the practice squad, a person with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the team had not yet made an official announcement.

The move comes less than 24 hours after Colts coach Shane Steichen confirmed Indy's starter, Daniel Jones, would miss the rest of this season after tearing his right Achilles tendon and backup Riley Leonard injured his right knee during Sunday's loss at Jacksonville.

Rivers hasn't taken a snap since finishing his career with a playoff loss following the Colts 2020 season. That was the last time Indy (8-5) made the postseason. The eight-time Pro Bowler announced his retirement in January 2021 and has been coaching St. Michael High School in Fairhope, Alabama, ever since.

But it's not clear how long it will take Rivers to learn Indy's playbook — or work his way into game shape — as the reeling Colts try to snap a three-game losing streak next weekend at Seattle (10-3).

"Things happen, wacky stuff has happened in this league, your depth gets tested, your resolve gets tested as you get thrown into some adversity as a unit, as a coaching staff, as a position group," offensive coordinator Jim Bob Cooter said, declining to take specific questions about Rivers. "We've been through some fire out there, but our coaching staff's excited to draw a plan up and teach it."

Neither Steichen nor players were made available because the Colts typically take Tuesday off.

Rivers rejoins a team desperately trying to rebound from its worst stretch of the season, four losses in five games. The result: Indy has fallen out of the race for the AFC's top seed and is tied for second in the AFC South with Houston (8-5), one game behind division leader Jacksonville (9-4).

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Rivers ranked among the NFL's career leaders in yards passing with 63,440, 421 touchdown passes and 12 4,000-yard seasons when he retired and was a semifinalist in his first year of eligibility for the Pro Football Hall of Fame last month.

So the question is how much does Rivers have left in the tank?

In his first and only season with Indy, it appeared his arm strength already was diminished though he masterfully navigated the Colts through a season unlike any other — playing in front of empty or sparsely-populated stadiums because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also unclear is whether the Colts will need him this weekend.

Jones was having a career year and had entered the midseason MVP discussion but had struggled over the last five games. He also played through a lower left leg injury that impeded his mobility during each of Indy's last three losses.

Then Sunday, he crumpled to the ground and grabbed toward his lower right leg on a play he did not take a hit. He slammed his helmet into the ground before limping off the field. Jones later returned to the rainy sideline in a protective walking boot.

"He'll have surgery within the week," Steichen said Monday. "Obviously, just really feel for him, just an unfortunate situation. The work he puts in, the grind, a team captain for us. One of the toughest guys I've ever been around. Just praying for a speedy recovery for him."

Leonard did a solid job in relief of Jones, going 18 of 29 for 145 yards and one interception in his most extensive action since Notre Dame lost last year's national championship game. When he reported to the team headquarters Monday, they found out Leonard also had been hurt during the game.

The orbital bone injury to Anthony Richardson, the No. 4 draft pick in 2023, only compounded the problem. He still has not been activated from injured reserve to practice and Steichen said Monday he did not expect Richardson's status to change this week either.

That left the Colts with only one other option — veteran Brett Rypien, who has not been elevated from the practice squad to the active roster since he was signed in mid-October — if Leonard can't play this weekend.

So they added Rivers, who was with the San Diego/Los Angeles Chargers when Steichen was serving as the team's quarterbacks coach and interim offensive coordinator. Oddly, Leonard played prep ball at a different high school in Fairhope.

And now all three will be working together to try and help Indy turn things around as they enter a brutal final four-game stretch to salvage their playoff hopes.

Hamas calls for more international pressure on Israel before ceasefire's next phase

By MEGAN JANETSKY and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Hamas on Tuesday called for more international pressure on Israel before the militant group moves forward with the next phase of the ceasefire in Gaza, with a Hamas leader saying it wants Israel to open a key border crossing, cease deadly strikes and allow more aid into the strip devastated by the two-year war.

The demand came as Israel's government says it is ready to move into the next and more complicated phase of U.S. President Donald Trump's 20-point ceasefire agreement, while calling on Hamas to return the remains of the last Israeli hostage held in Gaza as envisioned in the deal.

Husam Badran, a member of Hamas' political wing, called for the "full implementation of all the terms of the first phase" before moving forward, including an end to what he called the continuing demolition of Palestinian homes in the majority of the territory still controlled by Israel.

Israeli airstrikes and shootings in Gaza have killed at least 376 Palestinians since the ceasefire took hold on Oct. 10, according to Palestinian health officials.

A difficult, second phase

Badran said it was not possible to enter the second phase of the ceasefire unless the steps he demanded

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were taken — remarks that reflect a hardening of tone from Hamas.

However, the group has little leverage in ceasefire negotiations and could come under heavy pressure from regional powers like Qatar and Turkey to not hit the brakes on the fragile truce.

Israel has also accused Hamas of violating the ceasefire and says its recent strikes in Gaza are in retaliation for militant attacks against its soldiers, and that its troops have fired on Palestinians who approached the "Yellow Line" — a vague line between Israeli-controlled territory and the rest of Gaza.

It says those killed were suspected militants who posed a threat to troops, but it appears at least some were civilians who ventured too close to the line, and those killed have included women and children.

The lack of aid

As a humanitarian crisis continues in Gaza, the United Nations and other aid organizations said that not nearly enough aid is entering the territory, parts of which have faced famine.

Under the ceasefire deal, the number of trucks of supplies was supposed to ramp up to at least 600 a day. For the past month, the U.N. has recorded an average of around 120 trucks of aid entering Gaza. The figure does not include commercial trucks, whose precise numbers are not known.

COGAT, the Israeli military body in charge of coordinating aid entry, has said 600-800 trucks are entering daily.

But the U.N. humanitarian agency OCHA said in its latest weekly report that many of the commercial goods in the market remain unaffordable to many Palestinians, and "dietary diversity remains poor, with essential protein sources still largely unavailable."

The agency also said the entry of medical supplies has "not increased in any meaningful way" and some hospitals still face severe shortages of essential drugs and supplies.

Israel said on Wednesday it would begin to allow aid destined for Gaza through a crossing on the Jordan-Israel border.

A key border crossing

The ceasefire deal also calls for the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt to be opened for traffic in both directions. Israel has said it is prepared to open the crossing for Palestinians to leave the territory, but not yet to enter.

The U.S.-led plan outlining the future for the devastated territory has gained momentum in recent weeks. The two sides and mediators are to enter negotiations soon over the terms of the next phases, which call for Hamas to be disarmed.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that Israel and Hamas are "very shortly expected to move into the second phase of the ceasefire," after Hamas returns the remains of the last hostage. Hamas has said the destruction by Israeli strikes in Gaza has been an obstacle in their search for the remains.

Meanwhile, officials have said that an international body tasked with governing Gaza is expected to be announced by the end of the year.

Israel's 2-year-long campaign in Gaza has killed more than 70,300 Palestinians, roughly half of them women and children, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between militants and civilians in its count. The ministry, which operates under the Hamas-run government, is staffed by medical professionals and maintains detailed records viewed as generally reliable by the international community.

The campaign was triggered by the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, when militants killed around 1,200 people and took 251 hostages. Almost all of the hostages or their remains have been returned in ceasefires or other deals.

Shohei Ohtani is the AP's Male Athlete of the Year for record-tying 4th time

By BETH HARRIS AP Sports Writer

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — Shohei Ohtani is catching up with more legends.

The baseball superstar ends 2025 by winning The Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year for the fourth

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time, tying him with Lance Armstrong, LeBron James and Tiger Woods for most among male honorees. "Receiving this award multiple times is something truly special," Ohtani said in Japanese in an exclusive interview with the AP.

Ohtani received 29 of 47 votes in balloting among sports journalists from the AP and its members after his two-way dominance culminated in a repeat World Series title for his Los Angeles Dodgers – delivering perhaps the greatest single-game individual performance in sports history along the way. He previously won the award in 2024, his first season with the Dodgers, and in 2023 and 2021, when he was with the Los Angeles Angels.

The AP honor has been given out since 1931. Multisport standout Babe Didrikson Zaharias won six times over the 1930s, '40s and '50s, the most by a man or woman.

The ultra-competitive Ohtani's latest win broke a tie with Michael Jordan, who along with Woods, he followed while growing up in Japan.

"Last year, I said I wanted to win this award again, and I will work hard so that I can win it again next year as well," he said.

Swedish-American pole vaulter Armand Duplantis, who won his third consecutive world title and has set the world record 14 times, including four times in 2025, was second with five votes in balloting announced Tuesday. Carlos Alcaraz, the world's top-ranked tennis player who won titles at the French and U.S. Opens, was third with four.

The AP Female Athlete of the Year will be announced Wednesday.

Ohtani returns to two-way supremacy

Ohtani has shown remarkable consistency since joining the Los Angeles Dodgers on a then-record \$700 million, 10-year contract in December 2023.

He won his fourth career Most Valuable Player award (second with the Dodgers) by unanimous vote, the first player in major league history to do so.

This year, he posted a 1.014 OPS and hit 55 home runs. Returning to the mound for the first time since 2023, he had a 2.87 ERA and 62 strikeouts in 47 innings over 14 starts.

Ohtani saved his best for the postseason.

In Game 4 of the National League Championship Series against the Milwaukee Brewers, he pitched six scoreless innings with 10 strikeouts and hit three home runs to earn MVP honors. He said it was his greatest game in a career full of incredible feats.

"If you think about it in terms of a single game, I'd say that's probably true," he said. "It was a crucial game in the postseason, and I personally feel I played quite well in that game."

Does he surprise himself?

"Well, yes, there are times when I feel that way about myself, and of course there are times when I think I'm not good enough," he said, "so I suppose athletes experience both kinds of feelings."

Another year, another championship for Ohtani and the Dodgers

Ohtani showed he's human in Game 7 of the World Series. He singled in the first inning and then took the mound on short rest, but he struggled with his command. He gave up a three-run homer to Toronto's Bo Bichette along with five hits in 2 1/3 innings.

But he and the Dodgers raised a second straight World Series trophy after outlasting the Blue Jays in the most scintillating Series in recent memory.

"Shohei obviously has the weight of the world on his shoulders as far as expectations, being probably the face of baseball, certainly when you're talking about the world," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said after Game 7. "It's just really special what he's done. Just a great person and a great competitor."

Ohtani's presence has been transformative for MLB's global reach. Game 7 of this World Series averaged 13.1 million viewers in Japan, the most-watched World Series game on a single network there ever, and 51 million watched worldwide to make it the most-viewed since Game 7 of the 1991 World Series.

How does Ohtani keep topping himself?

"I think the higher your goals are, the more you have to do, and the more you want to do," he said. "If

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you're satisfied with where you are now, I don't think it's possible to achieve your goals without putting in the effort. So, setting goals high is what I believe is most important."

The Dodgers carefully managed Ohtani's return to pitching this year by gradually increasing his workload after rehabbing from elbow surgery in September 2023. His innings were initially capped before he was allowed to make longer starts as he felt better.

"When it comes to feeling nervous, being on the mound definitely makes me more tense," he said. "It's a position where you can single-handedly ruin a game, and at the same time, it's also a position where you can contribute to a win. So, in my mind, I feel that being a pitcher is truly a special role."

At 31, Ohtani has undergone three major surgeries: two on his right elbow and another on his left shoulder. Regardless of the physical and mental wear and tear, he plans on remaining a two-way player his entire career.

"I think it's best to keep doing it right up until the moment I retire," he said.

Ohtani plans to play for Japan in the World Baseball Classic in March.

"I'm still not sure whether I'll be pitching," he said. "I've been given permission to play in the tournament, but as for how much and in what way, including on the batting side, that's something we'll be discussing."

Winning a third consecutive World Series championship is among Ohtani's biggest goals in 2026.

"Staying healthy and appearing in every game without injury, that's the smallest goal I have," he said.

An exciting year off the field, too

Ohtani became a father for the first time when his wife, Mamiko Tanaka, gave birth to their daughter in April. He carefully guards against revealing her name and any details about his home life. No word on how his beloved dog Decoy reacted to having a new sibling, either.

Ohtani's American fans enjoy hearing him speak English on the rare occasions he's done so publicly, including at both World Series celebrations. He understands most of the language, although he uses an interpreter in interviews.

"I think it would be best if I could speak in English, so even if it's just small steps, I want to keep working at it," he said. "Whether it's with fans or in different situations, being able to speak directly in English might help bridge the gap between us."

In the meantime, he'll keep letting his bat and arm speak volumes.

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

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

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

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

On Tuesday, a federal judge said the department could release grand jury transcripts and other documents from the sex trafficking case brought against Ghislaine Maxwell, Epstein's former girlfriend. Judge Paul A. Engelmayer had previously rejected the Justice Department's unsealing requests before the transparency law was passed. In Tuesday's ruling, he cautioned that people shouldn't expect to learn much new information from the records, saying they "do not reveal any heretofore unknown means or methods of Epstein's or Maxwell's crimes."

Last week, a different federal judge gave the department permission to release transcripts of a grand jury investigation into Epstein's abuse of underage girls in Florida.

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

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

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

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point:

Who is Jeffrey Epstein?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The transcripts that will be released after Friday's ruling by a Florida federal judge could shed more light on federal prosecutors' decision not to go forward with their case from two decades ago. It's not known when the transcripts will be made public.

What isn't authorized for release under the law?

Anything containing a victim's personally identifiable information.

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

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

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

When will the files be available to the public?

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

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

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

That investigation, taken up at Trump's urging despite the Justice Department previously finding no evidence to support such a probe, could give the government grounds to temporarily withhold at least

some of the material.

What about the so-called client list?

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

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

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

Why are these records being released now?

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

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

As public and political pressure mounted, including from some Trump allies, Congress swiftly passed the Epstein Files Transparency Act on Nov. 18 and Trump signed it into law the following day.

Haven't some Epstein files already been made public?

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

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

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

Long Island's Bruce Blakeman is running for governor, will challenge Stefanik in Republican primary

By ANTHONY IZAGUIRRE and PHILIP MARCELO Associated Press

Bruce Blakeman, a Republican county official in New York's City's suburbs, announced Tuesday that he's running for governor, setting up a primary clash with fellow Trump ally U.S. Rep. Elise Stefanik.

Blakeman, who has cast himself as a bulwark against the liberal policies of urban Democrats, criticized Gov. Kathy Hochul as a "failure" in an appearance on the Fox News "Fox and Friends" show.

"I'm running for office to make people more prosperous, to make them safer and to make New Yorkers happy again," said Blakeman, the Nassau County executive.

Blakeman's candidacy kicks off what is expected to be a heated Republican contest against Stefanik, a conservative from northern New York who President Donald Trump picked to be his U.N. ambassador, only to withdraw the nomination over concerns that the slim GOP majority couldn't afford to lose any more House seats.

Trump has — so far — avoided taking sides, telling reporters this week "He's great, and she's great. They're both great people."

Stefanik's campaign assailed Blakeman as a weak candidate who has a record of "supporting corrupt Far Left Democrats." Its statement called him "an early Christmas present to Kathy Hochul as he works to blow Republicans' best chance to win."

Democrats enjoy a strong voter registration advantage in New York, but next year's race for governor is expected to be one of the nation's most watched contests. Hochul, a moderate Democrat, is facing a

primary challenge from her own lieutenant governor, Antonio Delgado.

Registered Democrats also outnumber Republicans in Nassau County, where 1.4 million people live just east of New York City. But county voters narrowly favored Trump over Democrat Kamala Harris in the last presidential election.

As the county executive, Blakeman has pushed through a policy that bans transgender athletes from using county sports facilities, created a volunteer law enforcement unit that his critics have labeled a militia and directed county detectives to work alongside federal authorities in Trump's immigration crackdown.

Nassau's first Jewish county executive, he also signed a local ban on wearing face masks in public except for health or religious reasons, a measure that critics complain is aimed at cracking down on pro-Palestine demonstrations.

Blakeman cruised to victory in his election to a second term in November. Previously, he served in the Hempstead Town Council and held an appointed post as the commissioner of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

But bigger elective offices have eluded him. Hochul's campaign issued a statement saying Blakeman "has lost just about every race he's touched — county legislator, comptroller, Congress, even U.S. Senate. There's a reason: just like Donald Trump, he takes money out of New Yorkers' pockets and squeezes working families at every turn."

Both Blakeman and Stefanik now frame themselves as candidates who could appeal to moderate Democrats as well as Republicans, even though both have adopted the brash political rhetoric of Trump, who remains unpopular in New York.

They've also drawn contrasts between themselves and Zohran Mamdani, while simultaneously adopting some of the New York City mayor-elect's messaging around affordability as a campaign issue.

Former Gov. George Pataki was the state's last Republican governor, leaving office about two decades ago.

Raul Malo, the soulful tenor and frontman of The Mavericks, has died at age 60

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — Raul Malo, the soulful tenor and frontman of the genre-defying, Grammy-winning band The Mavericks, has died. He was 60.

Malo died Monday night, his wife, Betty Malo, posted on his Facebook page. He had been battling cancer. The frontman of The Mavericks had documented his health journey on social media since he disclosed in June 2024 that he was receiving treatment for colon cancer.

In September 2025, Malo said on Instagram that he was battling LMD, or leptomeningeal disease, a rare complication when cancer spreads to membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord.

The diagnosis forced The Mavericks to cancel dates with Dwight Yoakam in the middle of a joint tour. Malo left home in Nashville, Tennessee, to seek treatment in Houston, keeping his fans updated along his health journey.

"He was called to do another gig — this time in the sky — and he's flying high like an eagle," Betty Malo wrote. "No one embodied life and love, joy and passion, family, friends, music, and adventure the way our beloved Raul did. Now he will look down on us with all that heaven will allow, lighting the way and reminding us to savor every moment."

Malo's band praised his deep commitment to the "preservation of the multilingual American musical repertoire" and his steadfast championing of "music education as an inspiration for every child across America and throughout the world."

Born Raul Francisco Martínez-Malo Jr. in Miami to Cuban parents, he co-founded The Mavericks in 1989 with drummer Paul Deakin and bass guitarist Robert Reynolds. Their self-titled debut album was released the following year on the independent, Miami-based label Y&T Music.

Some call the band alt-country. Others describe it as Americana, roots, Latin, Tejano or swing. It's all

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of the above and more, driven by songs written by Malo, his expansive guitar style and his broad vocal range, from a soaring, velvety baritone to operatic high notes.

His musical prowess was in the blend, also incorporating rock, traditional country and surf. In the early days in Miami, The Mavericks played punk and rock clubs to get their sound out there.

"I grew up in a household where we listened to all kinds of music," Malo said in a 2020 NPR interview. "I just remember it was a celebration of all these cultures."

At that time, The Mavericks had just released an all-Spanish album, "En Español," featuring original songs and classic Latin American standards. In 2002, Malo released an all-Spanish album for children, "el Cancionero de la Familia Volume 1," featuring vocals from his sister, Carol, wife, Betty, and mother, Norma, along with other guests.

The band has taken on various iterations over the years as some members came and went. The Mavericks also disbanded a couple of times. Malo put out a dozen or so solo albums and collaboration projects as well, including his instrumental "Say Less," "You're Only Lonely" and "Sinners & Saints."

The Mavericks released their 13th studio album, "Moon & Stars," in 2024. Between that and their debut, the band received a Grammy, two Country Music Association awards and three Academy of Country Music Awards.

Raul has a BMI award for songwriting, for "All You Ever Do Is Bring Me Down," and was nominated for several solo Grammys, including one for his album "Lucky One" and another for his work with the Latin supergroup "Los Super Seven."

He is survived by his wife of 34 years, Betty; sons Dino, Victor, and Max, mother Norma, sister Carol, and Mavericks bandmates Paul Deakin, Eddie Perez, and Jerry Dale McFadden.

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

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

Paramount Skydance's hostile takeover bid of Warner Bros. Discovery 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. But that quickly changed on Monday with Paramount's announced bid, which includes the cable assets that Netflix doesn't want and, 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.

The dueling bids between Paramount and Netflix now "lead to more uncertainty and greater anxiety among the current CNN staff and among those of us who served for many years as leaders of CNN under Ted," said Tom Johnson, former CNN president in the 1990s.

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.

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"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.

"There is such a need for independent, unbiased news services," Johnson said. "I so hope that the new CNN owners will see that as their fundamental mission."

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.

Japan assesses damage from 7.5 magnitude quake that injured 34

By MARI YAMAGUCHI Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan was assessing damage Tuesday and cautioning people of potential aftershocks after a late-night 7.5 magnitude earthquake caused injuries, light damage and a tsunami in Pacific coastal communities.

At least 34 people were injured, one seriously, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency said. Most of them were hit by falling objects, public broadcaster NHK reported.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told reporters an emergency task force was formed to urgently assess damage. "We are putting people's lives first and doing everything we can," she said.

At a parliamentary session Tuesday, Takaichi pledged the government would continue its utmost effort and reminded people they have to protect their own lives.

The 7.5 magnitude quake struck around 11:15 p.m. in the Pacific Ocean, around 80 kilometers (50 miles) off the coast of Aomori, the northernmost prefecture of Japan's main Honshu island. The U.S. Geological Survey measured the quake at 7.6 magnitude and said it occurred 44 kilometers (27 miles) below the surface.

A tsunami of up to 70 centimeters (2 feet, 4 inches) was measured in Kuji port in Iwate prefecture, just south of Aomori, and waves up to 50 centimeters struck other communities in the region, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. NHK reported the waves damaged some oyster rafts.

The agency lifted all tsunami advisories by 6:30 a.m. Tuesday.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said about 800 homes were without electricity and Shinkansen bullet trains and some local lines were suspended in parts of the region in the early hours of Tuesday. East Japan Railway said bullet trains resumed operation in the region later Tuesday.

Power was mostly restored by Tuesday morning, according to the Tohoku Electric Power Co.

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About 480 residents sheltered at Hachinohe Air Base and 18 defense helicopters were mobilized for a damage assessment, Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi said.

About 200 passengers were stranded for the night at New Chitose Airport in Hokkaido, NHK reported. Part of a domestic terminal building was unusable Tuesday after parts of its ceiling cracked and fell to the floor, according to the airport operator.

The Nuclear Regulation Authority said about 450 liters (118 gallons) of water spilled from a spent fuel cooling area at the Rokkasho fuel reprocessing plant in Aomori, but that its water level remained within the normal range and there was no safety concern. No abnormalities were found at other nuclear power plants and spent fuel storage facilities, the NRA said.

JMA cautioned about possible aftershocks in the coming days. It said there is a slight increase in risk of a magnitude 8-level quake and possible tsunami occurring along Japan's northeastern coast from Chiba, just east of Tokyo, to Hokkaido. The agency urged residents in 182 municipalities in the area to monitor their emergency preparedness in the coming week, reminding them that the caution is not a prediction of a big one.

Monday's quake occurred just north of the coastal region where the magnitude 9.0 quake and tsunami in 2011 killed nearly 20,000 people and destroyed the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

"You need to prepare, assuming that a disaster like that could happen again," JMA official Satoshi Harada said.

Smaller aftershocks were continuing Tuesday. The U.S. Geological Survey reported a magnitude 6.6 and later a 5.1 quake in the hours after the initial temblor.

Today in History: December 10

Teddy Roosevelt is first American to win Nobel Prize

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Dec. 10, the 344th day of 2025. There are 21 days left in the year.

On Dec. 10, 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt became the first American to win a Nobel Prize, winning the Nobel Peace Prize for helping to negotiate peace in the Russo-Japanese War.

Also on this date:

In 1861, the Confederacy admitted Kentucky as it recognized a pro-Southern shadow state government that was acting without the authority of the pro-Union government in Frankfort.

In 1898, a treaty was signed in Paris officially ending the Spanish-American War.

In 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. received his Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo, saying he accepted it "with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind."

In 1967, singer Otis Redding, 26, and six others were killed when their plane crashed into a Wisconsin lake; trumpeter Ben Cauley, a member of the group the Bar-Kays, was the only survivor.

In 1994, Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to advance the Middle East peace process.

In 2007, former Vice President Al Gore accepted the Nobel Peace Prize with a call to confront human-caused climate change and stop waging war on the environment.

In 2021, a two-day outbreak of tornadoes in the U.S. Midwest and South killed more than 90 people across five states, including 77 in Kentucky. The National Weather Service recorded more than 40 twisters Dec. 10 and Dec. 11.

In 2022, Morocco became the first African country to reach the World Cup semifinals by beating Portugal 1-0.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Fionnula Flanagan is 84. Actor-singer Gloria Loring is 79. Republican Sen. John Boozman of Arkansas is 75. Actor Susan Dey is 73. Jazz musician Diane Schuur is 72. Actor-director Kenneth Branagh (BRAH'-nah) is 65. Actor Nia Peeples is 64. TV chef Bobby Flay is 61. Rock musician Meg White (The White Stripes) is 51. Actor Emmanuelle Chriqui is 50. Actor Raven-Symone is 40. Actor/singer Teyana Taylor is 35. Actor Kiki Layne is 34. Cyclist Jonas Vingegaard is 29.