

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Monday, Dec. 15

- Senior Menu: Cowboy/Calico casserole, fruit, dinner roll.
- School Breakfast: Egg bake.
- School Lunch: Chef salad.
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
- St. John's Lutheran: Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.
- Groton Senior Citizens meet at Community Center with potluck at noon.
- Webster JH wrestling, 4:30 p.m.
- 1st Grade Boys Basketball Practice, 4:30 p.m.
- Madison JV/MS Boys and Girls Wrestling Jamboree, 5 p.m.
- 5th Grade BBB, 6 p.m.

## Tuesday, Dec. 16

- Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes with gravy, peas and carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.
- School Breakfast: Muffins.
- School Lunch: Pasta with meat sauce, corn.
- St. John's Lutheran: Quilting, 9 a.m.
- Basketball at Sisseton (GBB: 7th grade @ 4pm, 8th grade @ 5pm (in aux gym); GJV, BJV, G Varsity, B Varsity).
- 5th Grade Girls Basketball, 4:15 p.m.
- City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.



## Wednesday, Dec. 17

- Senior Menu: Baked hot ham and cheese, broccolo potato soup, fruit, poke cake.
- School Breakfast: Oatmeal.
- School Lunch: Soup, sandwich.
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; League, 6:30 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 Ad Council, 7 p.m.
- Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.
- 6th Grade GBB Practice, 6 p.m.
- 5th Grade BBB, 6 p.m.
- 6th Grade Boys Basketball, 7:30 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.**

## **Brown University Shooting**

A gunman who targeted students at Brown University Saturday remained at large yesterday, after authorities said they would release a person of interest from custody. The gunman, who has yet to be publicly identified, killed two people and wounded nine others, with one of the wounded victims in critical condition as of this writing.

At roughly 4 pm ET, a masked gunman entered the university's engineering building and opened fire on people in the hallway. He then entered the first-floor lecture hall, where a group of about 60 students was wrapping up an economics study session. Some students managed to escape through the room's side doors, while many were shot while hiding under desks. Law enforcement officials say the attacker fired more than 40 rounds from a 9 mm handgun before fleeing. The introductory class, Principles of Economics, has 475 registered students, of whom over 80% are freshmen.

The attack follows deadly shootings this year at Kentucky State University, Utah Valley University, and Florida State University.

## **Bondi Beach Attack**

Two gunmen—a father and his son—attacked a Hanukkah event in Sydney, Australia, yesterday, killing at least 15 people and wounding dozens more. One gunman is dead, while the other is in custody. Authorities called the shooting a terrorist attack on Australia's Jewish community.

The attack took place shortly before 6:45 pm local time at Bondi Beach, Australia's most popular beach, where hundreds gathered to celebrate the first night of Hanukkah. Witnesses say the two attackers emerged from behind a small silver hatchback parked by a footbridge and opened fire on the crowd. A bystander was recorded tackling one of the gunmen and wresting the rifle from his hand. Improvised explosive devices were later found in one of the suspects' cars.

Shootings are rare in Australia, which has among the lowest gun-related death rates in the developed world. However, antisemitic incidents have been on the rise following Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks and the Israel-Gaza war. The country has the world's largest per-capita Holocaust survivor population after Israel.

## **Hoosier Hero**

Indiana quarterback Fernando Mendoza won the 2025 Heisman Trophy Saturday night, the first time in school history a player has won the sport's most prestigious award. It caps a perfect regular season for the No. 1 Hoosiers—also a school first—which won the Big Ten championship.

The selection is the latest in one of the most remarkable turnarounds in college sports history. Before this season, Indiana had had the worst winning percentage (43%) of any major conference team (going back to 1882). Since the arrival of head coach Curt Cignetti in 2024, the Hoosiers have gone 24-2 despite having a roster that ranks 72nd based on recruiting services. Indiana will face the winner of Oklahoma and Alabama in the upcoming playoff (Jan. 1).

In related news, Navy topped Army in the 126th meeting between the two service academies.

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## Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Two people are found dead at film director Rob Reiner's home in Brentwood, California; police had not identified the deceased as of this writing, though the age descriptions appeared to match those of Reiner and his wife, Michele.

John Cena retires from wrestling after losing his final WWE match to Gunther; the 17-time WWE world champion is considered one of the greatest professional wrestlers of all time.

Explore what we've learned about pro wrestling.

New York Knicks, San Antonio Spurs advance to NBA Cup finals, streaming tomorrow at 8:30 pm ET on Amazon Prime Video.

## Science & Technology

SpaceX Falcon 9 launch marks the 550th time the company has successfully recovered its reusable rocket booster; milestone comes days ahead of the 10-year anniversary of its first demonstration.

Explore our favorite resources on SpaceX (1440 Topics)

US health regulators approve two new drugs to treat gonorrhea; the sexually transmitted disease infects about 80 million people globally per year, with drug-resistant strains becoming prevalent.

Scientists create first human heart organoid that can replicate atrial fibrillation; organoids are 3D, lab-grown organ-like structures.

## Business & Markets

US stock markets close down Friday (S&P 500 -1.1%, Dow -0.5%, Nasdaq -1.7%), driven by anxiety in AI stocks; Broadcom falls 11% despite beating Q4 projections.

United Kingdom GDP unexpectedly shrinks 0.1% in October; analysts say data increases likelihood Bank of England cuts interest rates this week.

US software firm ServiceNow reportedly close to acquiring cybersecurity company Armis for \$7B; would be ServiceNow's largest deal in company history.

## Politics & World Affairs

ISIS shooter kills at least three Americans—two US soldiers and one civilian interpreter—in Palmyra, Syria; President Donald Trump vows retaliation.

Israel kills a senior Hamas commander in Gaza, the most high-profile killing since ceasefire took effect two months ago.

Thailand says Cambodia rocket killed a Thai civilian, first civilian death amid renewed border clashes.

Chileans elect right-wing candidate José Antonio Kast as president in runoff election.

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## **Monday, the 15th:**

- JH Wrestling @ Webster (HS Gym - 4:30pm)
- JV Wrestling @ Madison (5pm)
- JH GBB vs. Webster (6pm - one 6-quarter game)

## **Tuesday, the 16th:**

- JH GBB @ Sisseton (4pm - one 6-quarter game)
- Doubleheader @ Sisseton (Boys C/Girls JV @ 4pm, Boys JV @ 5pm, Girls Varsity @ 6:15pm, Boys Varsity to follow)

## **Thursday, the 18th:**

- NEC Wrestling @ Clark (3:45 pm)
- JH GBB vs. Waubay/Summit (6pm - one 6-quarter game)

## **Friday, the 19th:**

- Doubleheader @ West Central (Girls and Boys C @ 4pm, Girls and Boys JV @ 5pm, Girls Varsity at 6:30pm, Boys Varsity to follow)
- Girls Wrestling @ Sioux Valley (4pm)

## **Saturday, the 20th:**

- Girls Wrestling @ South Border (9am)
- Boys Wrestling @ Sioux Valley (10am)

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Despite coming into this game knowing they were officially eliminated from playoff contention, the Minnesota Vikings played one of their best games of the season and left Dallas with a 34-26 victory. At 6-8 and with three games left in the season, it's still possible the team finishes with a winning record, but every game they win takes them further down the draft order.

The game got off to a disastrous start for the Vikings. Minnesota got the ball first, and on the second play of the drive, J.J. McCarthy threw an interception, which led to a Dallas touchdown. After both teams traded punts, the Vikings finally found the end zone with a quick two-play drive, tying the game when McCarthy threw a 20-yard pass to Jalen Nailor.

The Cowboys responded quickly in the second quarter, taking the lead back with a touchdown. Usually by this point, the Vikings would've started falling apart, but apparently being eliminated from the playoffs lit a fire under the team, because they responded with a TD drive of their own. I've lost count of how many times the Vikings and their opponent traded punts this season, so it was refreshing to see them trading haymakers instead. Things cooled off a little in the second half of the second quarter, but both teams still added a field goal apiece to make the score 17-17 heading into halftime.

The Cowboys got the ball to begin the second half, and despite moving the ball well, they had to settle for a field goal. The Vikings' first possession of the second half was a three-and-out (their only three-and-out of the game), and then Dallas added another field goal to take a six-point lead. However, on Minnesota's next possession, fullback C.J. Ham rumbled in from one yard out to reclaim the lead.

Dallas had the ball to start the fourth quarter, but their normally reliable kicker missed another field goal, giving Minnesota the ball near midfield. Five plays later, McCarthy found Nailor in the end zone again to extend the Vikings' lead to eight points. A failed fourth-down attempt on Dallas' next possession gave the ball to the Vikings, who ran over four minutes off the clock and kicked a field goal with about a minute left, making it a two-score game. A quick field goal by Dallas made it an eight-point game again, but the Vikings recovered the onside kick to seal the game.

J.J. McCarthy completed 15 of 24 passes for 250 yards, two touchdowns, and one interception. It was his best game yet in terms of passing yards, and only the second time in his young career that he eclipsed 200.

Aaron Jones Sr. and Jordan Mason combined for only 63 yards on 22 carries against a tough Cowboys run defense. Jordan Addison and T.J. Hockenson both had 66 receiving yards, while Nailor had 47 yards and two touchdowns. Justin Jefferson had another down game, only catching two passes for 22 yards despite leading the team in targets (8).

Blake Cashman led the team in tackles (11), Jonathan Greenard had one sack and three QB hits, Andrew Van Ginkel had a half-sack and four QB hits, and Harrison Smith and Byron Murphy Jr. each had two pass deflections.

The player of the game is a tie between J.J. McCarthy and Jalen Nailor. McCarthy's stats weren't eye-popping, but it was still the best game of his young career. Nailor set a career high with two touchdowns, and has really picked up the slack while Jefferson and McCarthy figure out how to get on the same page.

Looking ahead, the Vikings will travel to New York in a matchup against the Giants. Kickoff is this Sunday at noon. It will be interesting to see how Kevin O'Connell manages the roster now that the team is officially eliminated from the playoffs. Does he rest his starters to prevent an injury? Or does he let everyone play to build some momentum for next season?

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for details



**Annual Membership Rates**

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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

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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!**

## Names Released in Pennington County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: Sheridan Lake Road near Boulder Hill Road, 13 miles west of Rapid City, SD

When: 6:51 a.m., Thursday, December 11, 2025

Driver 1: Willard D. Howard, Jr., 52-year-old male from Rapid City, SD, serious, non-life-threatening injuries

Vehicle 1: 2007 Chevrolet Silverado

Seat belt Used: No

Passenger 1: Margo Lea Howard, 51-year-old female from Lambert, MT, fatal injuries

Seat belt Used: No

Driver 2: Allison K. Henderson, 29-year-old female from Rapid City, SD, minor injuries

Vehicle 2: 2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee

Seat belt Used: Yes

Pennington County, S.D.- Three people were injured, one fatally, in a two-vehicle crash Thursday morning 13 miles west of Rapid City, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Willard D. Howard, Jr., the driver of a 2007 Chevrolet Silverado, was traveling westbound on Sheridan Lake Road, near the intersection with Boulder Hill Road. While traveling down a long icy hill, the Chevrolet crossed the center line and collided head-on with an eastbound 2015 Jeep Grand Cherokee, driven by Allison K. Henderson.

Howard sustained serious, non-life-threatening injuries. Margo Lea Howard, a passenger in the truck, received fatal injuries. Neither were wearing seat belts. Henderson sustained minor injuries.

## Name Released in Gregory County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: 350th Avenue and 290th Street, seven miles north of Herrick, SD

When: 12:22 p.m., Tuesday, December 9, 2025

Driver 1: Cody Dean Vogt, 35-year-old male from Herrick, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 1: 2004 Chevrolet Silverado

Seat belt Used: No

Gregory County, S.D.- A Herrick, SD man died in a single vehicle crash Tuesday afternoon, seven miles north of Herrick, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Cody Dean Vogt, the driver of a 2004 Chevrolet Silverado was traveling southbound on 350th Avenue near 290th Street and left the roadway, entering the east ditch. The vehicle struck a fallen tree and rolled, coming to rest in a dry creek bed. Vogt died at the scene.

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

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

## Happy Holidays! Use Occupations to Balance Seasonal Stress

The holiday season is fast approaching with all its festive occupations like decorating the house, buying and wrapping presents and preparing and serving holiday meals. Between the additional time requirements, costs, travel and interactions with family members, this can be a particularly stressful time of year. Difficulties with getting around the house or community, remembering and managing multiple to-do lists, and feeling comfortable socializing for long periods of time can compound holiday stress. While some people experience a sense of deep engagement and enjoyment with holiday preparations and celebrations, others find the additional demands tiring and overwhelming. Many of us experience a variety of emotions, from deep joy to stress, during this busy time. No matter how you view the season, faculty in the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of South Dakota have some advice to help reduce stress and enjoy your festive occupations this year.



Take a moment to think about your favorite holiday activities and identify what makes these moments enjoyable for you. This might include visiting friends and family, the smell of peppermint hot chocolate or memories associated with listening to songs from your childhood. Early in the season, map out the preparations that need to occur ahead of various celebrations or events. Using a calendar or planner to proactively schedule activities and tasks reduces the demand on your memory, especially during times of high emotion. This may involve scheduling a time to wrap presents ahead of a gift exchange or planning when to make appetizers ahead of an after-work party. Break larger occupations like decorating the house into smaller tasks that can be spread over time. Try to balance completing stressful tasks and fun activities across a week. If a large holiday gathering is planned for a Friday, consider scheduling quiet activities that you can complete independently the day or two before. Physically demanding occupations like hanging holiday lights or going shopping can be balanced with smaller activities like writing greeting cards.

You can also reduce stress during holiday preparations by avoiding multi-tasking. Evidence from the occupational therapy and cognitive psychology literature suggests that trying to engage in multiple activities at the same time results in worse performance and higher feelings of stress and anxiety. Use this as an opportunity to fully engage your senses and emotions in the event. Put on holiday music or a favorite movie while decorating the house or wrapping presents. For those who enjoy socializing, seek out small groups for wrapping or cookie decorating parties. Don't forget to engage your other senses by enjoying the special tastes and smells of the holidays. Finally, be sure to schedule quiet moments for yourself to relax and recharge. Research has found that scheduling periodic breaks ahead of time provides greater stress reduction than waiting until you feel overwhelmed to take a break. Go for a walk, enjoy a holiday coffee, take a long bath or just take a moment to rest and remind yourself of the joy of the season.

Karen Hebert, Ph.D., OTR/L, is an assistant professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of South Dakota. She studies how working memory and cognitive processing influence the experience of positive and negative emotions during the completion of daily occupations, particularly among those with neurological and mental health conditions. Her favorite occupations include reading, swimming and traveling with her husband and two girls. Mackenzie Feldhacker, OTD, OTR/L, CLT-LANA, is an associate professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of South Dakota. Her interests are the scholarship of teaching and learning and the needs of individuals with neurological conditions, particularly Parkinson's disease. Her favorite occupations include baking, spending time outdoors and playing games with her family. Follow The Prairie Doc® at [www.prairiedoc.org](http://www.prairiedoc.org), Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).

## EARTHTALK

### Declining U.S. Bird Populations Worry Environmentalists

by Dora Zhao

Dear EarthTalk: How are bird populations doing in the U.S. these days and what can we do to help them?  
—Jamie Rivers, Des Moines, IA

Bird populations in the United States are facing alarming declines. Since 1970, North America has lost approximately 2.9 billion birds, representing more than one in four of all birds. Birds act as important indicators of ecosystem health, and their decline suggests that habitats, food sources, and environmental conditions are under increasing stress. "The rapid declines in birds signal the intensifying stressors that wildlife and people alike are experiencing around the world because of habitat loss, environmental degradation, and extreme weather events," said Dr. Amanda Rodewald, faculty director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Center for Avian Population Studies.

The 2025 U.S. State of the Birds report identifies 229 species in urgent need of conservation action, including 112 "Tipping Point" species that have lost over half their populations in the past 50 years. Even once-stable groups, like waterfowl, are trending downward, while grassland, aridland, and shorebird populations have seen dramatic declines.

Several key factors drive these declines. Habitat loss, from urbanization, agriculture, and deforestation, removes nesting and feeding areas. "Habitat loss due to agricultural intensification and urbanization is arguably the biggest threat to birds, along with climate change," says Ashley Dayer, an associate professor in the College of Natural Resources and Environment and a Global Change Center affiliated faculty member at Virginia Tech. Pollution, including plastics and pesticides, contaminates food and water sources, often causing direct harm to birds. Climate change shifts migration patterns and breeding cycles, while extreme weather events increase mortality.

The consequences of these declines extend beyond wildlife. Birds provide critical ecosystem services, including pest control, pollination, and seed dispersal. They also enrich human lives through birdwatching, which supports the economy with billions in revenue and over a million jobs. Conserving birds ensures the continued health of ecosystems that sustain agriculture, clean water, and overall environmental balance.

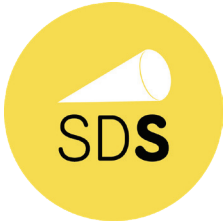
Solutions are available and effective when implemented. Innovations such as PLA plastics made from corn or sugarcane provide sustainable alternatives to petroleum-based plastics. Shade-grown coffee protects forest habitats critical for migratory birds. On a larger scale, habitat restoration, wetland conservation, and strategic conservation partnerships have been proven to boost bird populations when supported consistently.

Individuals also play a vital role in reversing declines. Simple actions, like keeping cats indoors, making windows safer, planting native vegetation, reducing pesticide use, and limiting light and plastic pollution, create safer environments for birds. Participating in citizen science programs such as eBird or Project Feederwatch helps track populations and informs conservation strategies.

Birds unite ecosystems, humans, and wildlife in ways both visible and unseen. Protecting them requires combined efforts from scientists, conservationists, and everyday citizens. By making mindful choices, we can help ensure that future generations continue to experience the wonder of birds..



**A white ibis at Audubon Corlscrow Swamp Sanctuary, Estero, Florida.** Credit: Roddy Scheer



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **South Dakota having less success keeping truancy cases out of court**

**Legislator plans to introduce bill changing alternative instruction law to improve accountability**

**BY: MAKENZIE HUBER**

South Dakota's success rate for keeping truancy cases out of court is the lowest it's been in a decade, according to an annual report presented to a state committee.

The Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Oversight Council is a group of representatives from law enforcement, schools, the Legislature, social services and the court system. It is responsible for tracking South Dakota's efforts to reduce the number of children in custody.

The group first came together in 2015, following a set of juvenile justice reforms meant to address South Dakota's status at the time as the state most likely to lock up children. The number of delinquency petitions has decreased from 3,025 in 2014 to 2,489 in 2025.

A delinquency petition is a legal document that launches the juvenile court equivalent of an adult criminal case. Diversion programs typically allow children to avoid such a petition.

Truancy diversion programs redirect chronically absent students and their families away from the justice system by providing support and services to address the cause of the absenteeism.

The success rate of truancy diversions dropped to 63% in fiscal year 2025, which ran from July 2024 through June 2025. That rate has declined from a high of 97% in 2021.

Truancy can be more than students not attending school, State Court Administrator Greg Sattizahn said at the meeting, since it can be a "reflection of a lot of other things happening" in the child's life, including "breakdown in a family structure," abuse or neglect, criminal activity or substance abuse.

"A \$100 fine as diversion is not going to address that meaningfully," Sattizahn said, adding, "There is just a lot that you have to unpack in those truancy cases, so they continue to be a challenge."

Truancy diversion success rates significantly dropped in fiscal year 2023, following a 2021 law making it easier for parents to pull their children from school and place them in alternative instruction, such as online schooling or homeschooling.

The law change struck down testing requirements and instruction time requirements, and removed a clause that allowed the state's Department of Education to investigate situations where there's concern a child might not be getting the instruction they're required to under state law.

Committee member Rep. Mike Stevens, R-Yankton, told South Dakota Searchlight that the report overall shows that the 2015 changes have been largely effective. But truancy, he said, is a "big area that we have to look at as a state."

Truancy diversions have decreased since the 2021 truancy law changes took effect, gradually dropping to 270 in 2024 and 171 in 2025. There were 694 diversions in 2021 and 565 in 2022.

Parents can avoid potential truancy charges by signing their kids up for homeschooling without accountability, Stevens said.

"We don't know where those kids are going to school. That's a real issue," Stevens said.

Because parents can more easily remove their children from schools, he said, it gives the state less opportunity to intervene.

Stevens plans to address truancy this coming session with a proposal to require families who enroll their child in alternative instruction to tell the state each year where their child is receiving their education.

"I have no problem with someone homeschooling their child or sending them to private school. But there are kids out there that we don't know if they're going to school or not," Stevens said. "That's a real

concern and something that could easily be taken care of.”

Committee member Sen. Red Dawn Foster, D-Pine Ridge, hopes to better understand the “root causes” of youth involvement in the justice system and the overrepresentation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system.

In the case of truancy, she wants to understand the connection between academic achievement, educational opportunities and truancy rates. Foster works with the Boys and Girls Club in Pine Ridge.

Foster told South Dakota Searchlight that understanding ways to not only divert children from the justice system but address “root causes” is more urgent as the Legislature discusses prison construction and rehabilitation reform.

“As Native people, we understand what is happening in our community, and a lot of times we don’t have the resources or data to do something about it,” Foster told South Dakota Searchlight. “If you have the right resources and access to data, you can support others doing phenomenal work to address these issues.”

*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.*

## A community in grief gathers to hold light in ‘one of Providence’s darkest times’

BY: CHRISTOPHER SHEA

PROVIDENCE — It was supposed to be a joyful event. But a Christmas tree and menorah lighting scheduled for late Sunday afternoon at Lippitt Memorial Park was turned into a vigil for the victims of Saturday’s shooting at Brown University.

Despite the mid-20-degree weather and falling snow in Providence, over 200 people gathered to light candles to honor the two students who were killed and nine others who were wounded inside the Barus and Holley engineering building.

Councilor Sue AnderBois began the holiday event at the park near the Pawtucket line last year.

“Instead, we are gathered here to share light with one another in one of Providence’s darkest times,” AnderBois told the crowd. “We’re here together to be together and to support.”

AnderBois was joined by several of Rhode Island’s elected officials including Gov. Dan McKee, who earlier in the afternoon ordered flags at all state buildings and facilities to be lowered to half-staff as a sign of respect for the victims of the shooting.

McKee did not speak during the vigil, nor did most elected officials in attendance. Remarks during the 10-minute ceremony were given by AnderBois, Mayor Brett Smiley and Sarah Mack, senior rabbi of Temple Beth-El near Wayland Square in Providence.

Smiley, who converted to Judaism last year, invoked the first night of Hanukkah in his remarks, noting that the initial lighting of the menorah represents a small spark that grows into a bright light by the end of the eight-night festival. He said he hoped the vigil would be “the first little flicker for our community to start to heal and get better together.”

“It’s going to be a long road, but what I know about this community is that we will be here for one another,” Smiley said.

Mack similarly spoke of the need for Rhode Islanders to come together as a way to provide light in these dark times.

“We can use our light to kindle other lights — to care for one another,” she said. “That is how we get through this dark moment.”

After Mack concluded her speech, the crowd spontaneously began to sing “Amazing Grace.” Officials had no further press briefings scheduled for Sunday night on the status of their investigation.

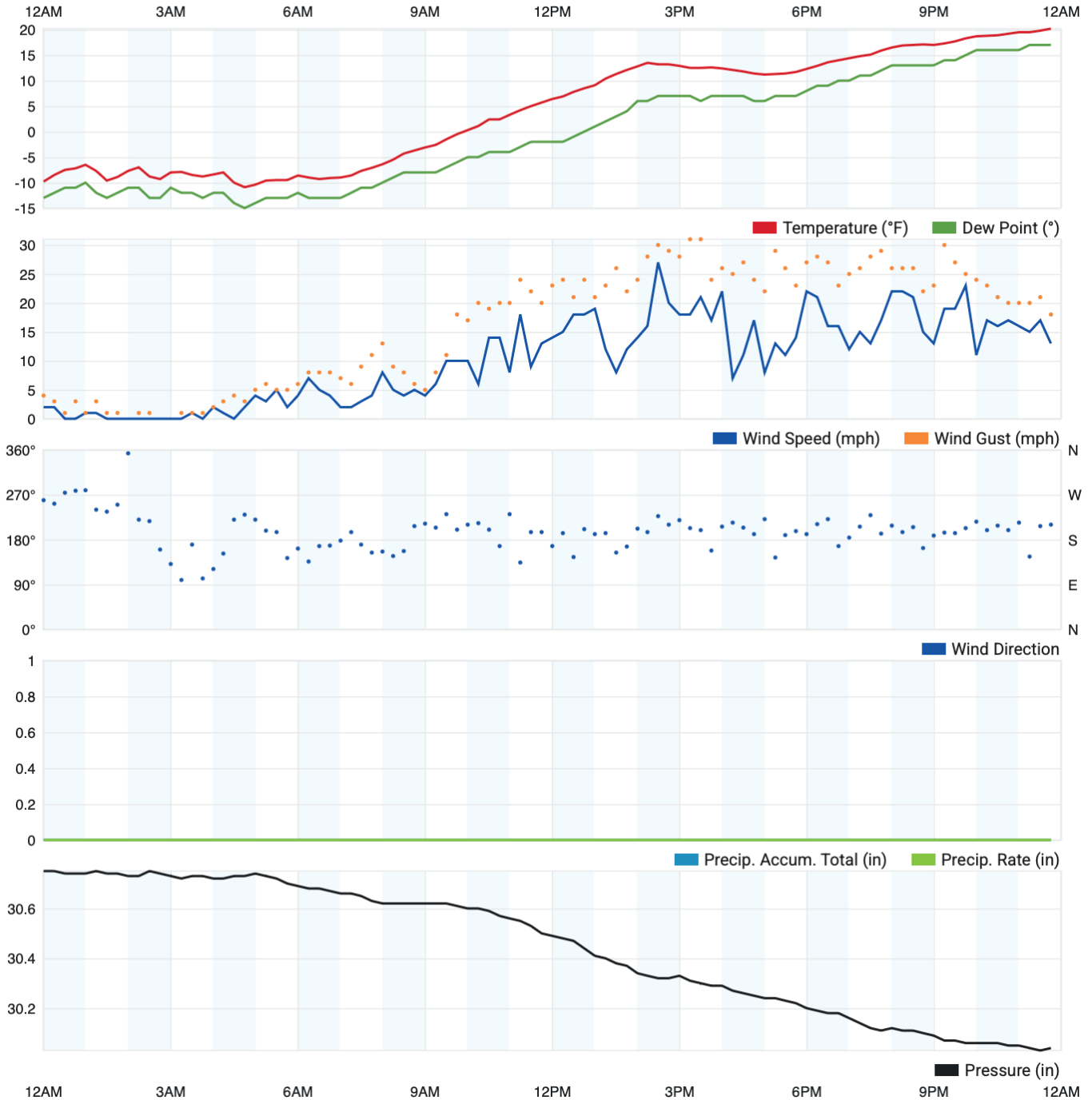
*Christopher Shea covers politics, the criminal justice system and transportation for the Rhode Island Current.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

December 14, 2025



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Today

Tonight

Tuesday

Tuesday Night

Wednesday



High: 32 °F

Mostly Sunny



Low: 22 °F↑

Mostly Cloudy



High: 41 °F

Decreasing  
Clouds



Low: 22 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 40 °F

Partly Sunny  
then Mostly  
Cloudy and  
Breezy

## A Windy Week Ahead



Monday



Highs:  
45 - 28



5 - 15 mph

Tuesday



Highs:  
50 - 43



25 - 40 mph

Wednesday



Highs:  
58 - 40



30 - 40 mph

Thursday



Highs:  
26 - 15



40 - 50 mph

Friday



Highs:  
54 - 27



20 - 35 mph

Milder air moves into the region today, with light winds, but those winds increase for the middle of the work week, but at least the mild air persists. That is until we're hit with another Arctic blast Wednesday night. Temperature will plummet and winds could exceed 50 mph. Snow showers and reduced visibility are possible.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 20 °F at 11:28 PM

Low Temp: -11 °F at 4:38 AM

Wind: 34 mph at 2:06 PM

Precip: : 0.00

## Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1939

Record Low: -24 in 1917

Average High: 29

Average Low: 8

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.29

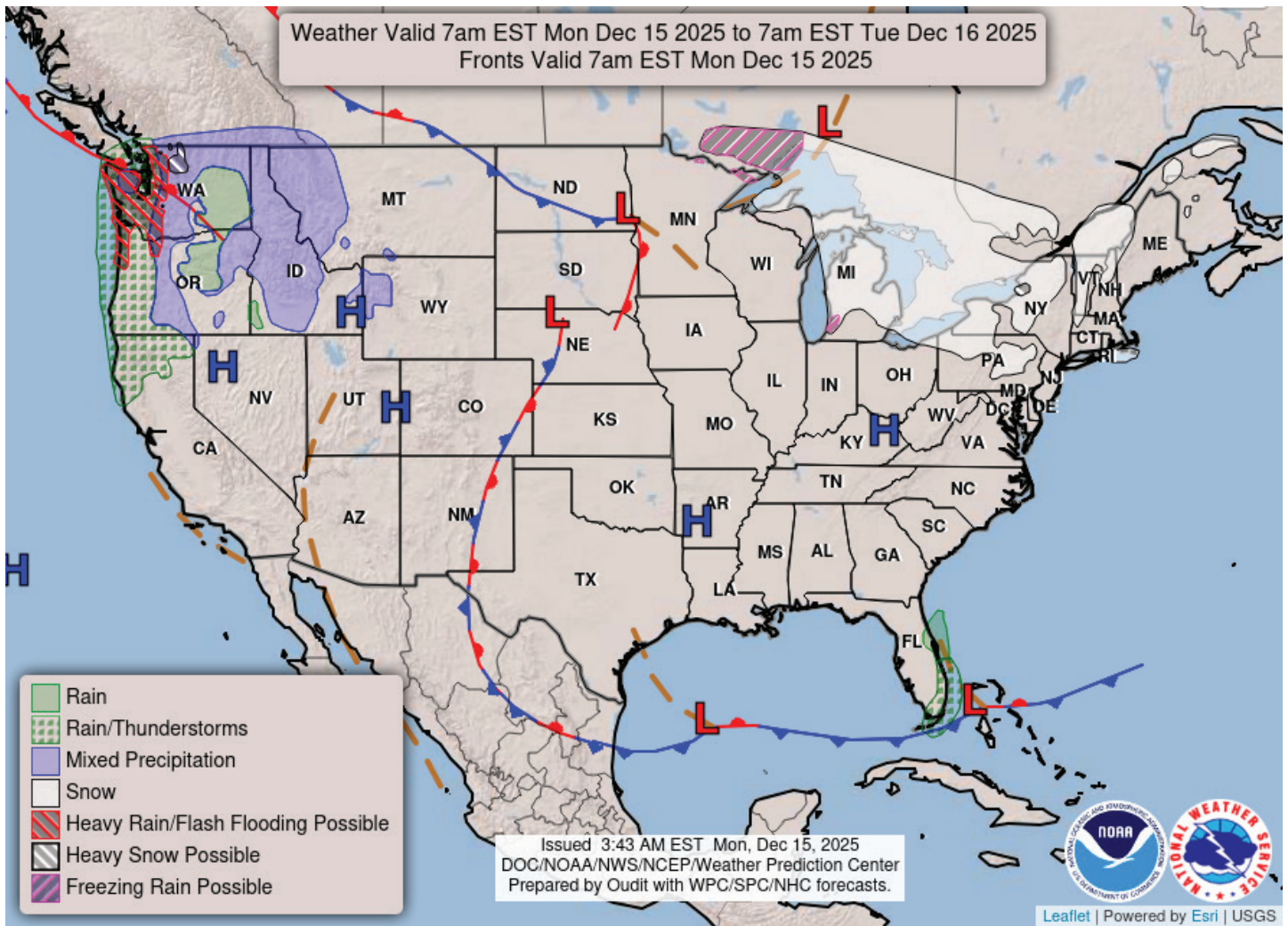
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.60

Average Precip to date: 21.50

Precip Year to Date: 25.41

Sunset Tonight: 4:49 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:05 am



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## Today in Weather History

December 15, 1983: A storm system impacted the region on the 14-15th with five inches of snow and high winds to produce blocked roads and numerous school closings on the 15th throughout most of the eastern third of South Dakota. No travel was advised from late afternoon on the 14th due to low visibility and blocked roads in Roberts and Brookings Counties. The conditions contributed some to several traffic accidents. Meanwhile, snow also spread across Minnesota on December 13th and diminished late on the 15th. Snow accumulations ranged from 1 to 2 inches in west central Minnesota to higher amounts over 10 inches to the east. Winds increased and temperatures began to fall on December 14th as an arctic cold front pushed through the state. The strongest winds occurred during the night of December 14th and into the morning of December 15th. Near-blizzard conditions developed in the southwest and west-central sections of Minnesota where the visibility was reported to be near zero with winds of 20 to 30 mph. The wind chill index dropped to 30 below to 60 below zero. Blowing and drifting snow conditions occurred to some degree throughout all of Minnesota. Snow drifts caused many roads to close. Drifting snow continued during the evening of December 15th as the winds and snowfall gradually diminished. This event, associated with an arctic cold front, was the beginning of what would become, and remains, the coldest stretch of December days on record across most of the area. For the next nine days, beginning on December 16th, Aberdeen did not warm above -6 degrees, enduring temperatures as low as -34 F and high temperatures as low as -15 F. Other stations around the region had very similar cold temperatures during the December 16th through December 24th period, with temperatures warming into single digits above zero on Christmas Day.

1839 — The first of triple storms hit Massachusetts Bay. The storm produced whole gales, and more than 20 inches of snow in interior New England. There was great loss of life at Gloucester MA. (David Ludlum)

1901 — An intense cold front swept across the eastern U.S. The cold front produced heavy rain in Louisiana, and heavy snow in the northeastern U.S. (David Ludlum)

1945 — A record December snowstorm buried Buffalo, NY, under 36.6 inches of snow, with unofficial totals south of the city ranging up to 70 inches. Travel was brought to a halt by the storm. (14th-17th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 — A major winter storm hit the Great Lakes Region, intensifying explosively as it crossed northern Illinois. High winds and heavy snow created blizzard conditions in southeastern Wisconsin. Winds gusted to 73 mph, and snowfall totals ranged up to 17 inches at LaFarge. The barometric pressure at Chicago IL dropped three quarters of an inch in six hours to 28.96 inches, a record low reading for December. Up to a foot of snow blanketed northern Illinois, and winds in the Chicago area gusted to 75 mph. O'Hare Airport in Chicago was closed for several hours, for only the fourth time in twenty years. High winds derailed train cars at Avon IN. Light winds and partly sunny skies were reported near the center of the storm, a feature typical of tropical storms. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — High pressure in the Pacific Northwest and low pressure in the southwestern U.S. combined to produced high winds from Utah to California. Winds gusting to 70 mph in the San Francisco area left nearly 300,000 residents without electricity. Winds in Utah gusted to 105 mph at Centerville. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

December 15, 1992: Cyclone John hit the sparsely populated northwest coast of Australia with winds gusting to 185 mph. John was the strongest cyclone to hit Australia in over 100 years.

2005 — Freezing rain and ice pellets fell throughout portions of the southeast U.S. The accumulation of ice caused about 683,000 utilities customers to lose power from northern Georgia northward through the western Carolinas. The power outages were the result of ice accretions of up to three-quarter inch in thickness. The ice storm was blamed for at least four deaths (Associated Press).

2010 — A winter storm swept across parts of the Southeast U.S., bringing a mixed bag of snow, sleet, and freezing rain, making for treacherous travel conditions. At least eight people were killed in Alabama, Mississippi, and North Carolina in weather-related traffic fatalities. Schools were forced to close and thousands of residents lost power in North Carolina and Virginia. The winter storm also impacted Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, West Virginia, Delaware, Maryland, and Washington D.C. (NCDC)



## Enjoying Life

**Lasting fulfillment comes only when we align ourselves with God's will.**

Ecclesiastes 2:1-23

Not only was King Solomon wise (1 Kings 3:12); he was also blessed with wealth beyond imagination and given the privilege of building God's temple. So we might expect he also experienced a deep sense of contentment.

In searching for that fulfillment, Solomon devoted himself to exploring all kinds of things. Ecclesiastes tells us that he indulged in the pleasures of the world, even dabbling in pursuits he recognized as folly to see if there was anything worthwhile in them. But the satisfaction Solomon sought evaded him, and he concluded that self-indulgence was without value.

To feel content, the king tried another avenue: personal achievement. He undertook great things, such as building houses, gardens, and parks for himself and carrying out an extensive irrigation project (Eccl. 2:4-6). The king had everything he could ever need to enjoy life, but in the end, he concluded it was all without meaning.

Solomon possessed the wisdom and resources to accomplish whatever he decided to do. Yet everything he pursued brought no lasting contentment. He concluded that the best course was to obey God (Ecclesiastes 12:13). True enjoyment comes only when we align ourselves with His will.

*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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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.12.25

10 50 55 58 59 5

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$80,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 25 Mins 36 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.13.25

20 26 27 32 46 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$9,540,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 40 Mins 35 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.14.25

8 23 32 33 34 15

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 55 Mins 35 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.13.25

2 11 20 23 25

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$127,000**

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 55 Mins 35 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.13.25

7 11 20 52 60 24

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 35 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

12.13.25

1 28 31 57 58 16

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$1,100,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 24 Mins 35 Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

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

### What to know about the attack on the Jewish festival in Australia that killed 15 people

SYDNEY (AP) — A father and son are suspected by officials to have killed 15 people on a popular Australian beach, shocking a country where gun violence is rare. The government on Monday, a day after the shootings, proposed tougher new gun laws amid criticism that officials didn't take seriously enough a string of antisemitic attacks.

Here's a look at what to know from the attack at Bondi Beach:

The suspects attacked a Jewish beachside gathering

Little is known about the suspects in the attack on Sydney's famous Bondi Beach, but there was widespread shock when officials said that the two men pictured firing weapons in social media videos were related.

The 50-year-old father, who was killed, arrived in Australia in 1998 on a student visa, authorities said, and was an Australian resident when he died. Officials wouldn't confirm what country he had migrated from.

His 24-year-old Australian-born son, who was shot and wounded, is being treated at a hospital

The target was a Hanukkah celebration where hundreds had gathered to celebrate the first day of the eight-day Jewish holiday. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called it an act of antisemitic terrorism.

Albanese said that Australia's main domestic spy agency, the Australian Security Intelligence Agency, had investigated the son for six months in 2019. The Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported that the agency had examined the son's ties to a Sydney-based Islamic State group cell. Albanese did not describe the associates, but said the spy agency was interested in them rather than the son.

The dead included a 10-year-old girl, a rabbi and a Holocaust survivor. Dozens of others were injured, some seriously.

Police said the father held a firearms license and that he was a member of a gun club, which suggests he was a target shooter.

Praise for a man who tried to help

One dramatic clip broadcast on Australian television showed a man appearing to tackle and disarm one of the gunmen, before pointing the man's weapon at him, then setting the gun on the ground.

The man was identified by Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke as Ahmed al Ahmed. The 42-year-old fruit shop owner and father of two was shot in the shoulder by the other gunman and survived.

Hate crimes targeting Jews in Australia are on the rise

A wave of antisemitic attacks have shocked and angered many in Australia over the last year.

Australia has 28 million people and about 117,000 Jews.

Antisemitic incidents, including assaults, vandalism, threats and intimidation, surged more than threefold in the country during the year after Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and Israel launched a war on Hamas in Gaza in response, the government's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism Jillian Segal reported in July.

Last year, there were antisemitic attacks in Sydney and Melbourne. Synagogues and cars have been torched, businesses and homes vandalized with graffiti, and Jews attacked in cities where 85% of the nation's Jewish population lives.

Albanese in August blamed Iran for two of the attacks and cut diplomatic ties to Tehran.

Israel urged Australia's government to address crimes targeting Jews. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he warned Australia's leaders months ago about the dangers of failing to take action against antisemitism. He claimed Australia's decision — in line with scores of other countries — to recognize a Palestinian state "pours fuel on the antisemitic fire."

This is the deadliest shooting in Australia in three decades

Australia has strict gun control laws.

Mass shootings are extremely rare. A 1996 massacre in the Tasmanian town of Port Arthur, where a lone gunman killed 35 people, prompted the government to drastically tighten gun laws, making it much more difficult to acquire firearms.

Significant mass shootings this century included two murder-suicides with death tolls of five people in 2014 and seven in 2018, in which gunmen killed their own families and themselves.

In 2022, six people were killed in a shootout between police and Christian extremists at a rural property in Queensland state.

The prime minister said he was pushing for tougher gun laws.

## **Australia to tighten gun laws after Bondi Beach Hanukkah massacre**

By CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY, ROD MCGUIRK and KRISTEN GELINEAU Associated Press SYDNEY (AP) — Australian federal and state government leaders on Monday agreed to immediately overhaul already-tough national gun control laws after a mass shooting targeted a Hanukkah celebration on Sydney's Bondi Beach, leaving at least 15 people dead.

The action would include renegotiating the landmark national firearms agreement that virtually banned rapid-fire rifles after a lone gunman killed 35 people in Tasmania in 1996, galvanizing the country into action, the nine leaders' said in a statement after an emergency meeting.

The violence erupted at the end of a summer day when thousands had flocked to Bondi Beach, an icon of Australia's cultural life. They included hundreds gathered for the "Chanukah by the Sea" event celebrating the start of the eight-day Hanukkah festival with food, face painting and a petting zoo.

At least 38 people are being treated in hospitals

At least 38 people, including two police officers, were being treated in hospitals after the massacre, when the two shooters fired on the beachfront festivities. Those killed included a 10-year-old girl, a rabbi and a Holocaust survivor.

None of the dead or wounded victims have been formally named by the authorities. Identities of those killed, who ranged in age from 10 to 87, began to emerge in news reports Monday.

Among them was Rabbi Eli Schlanger, assistant rabbi at Chabad of Bondi and an organizer of the family Hanukkah event that was targeted, according to Chabad, an Orthodox Jewish movement that runs outreach worldwide and sponsors events during major Jewish holidays.

Israel's Foreign Ministry confirmed the death of an Israeli citizen, but gave no further details. French President Emmanuel Macron said a French citizen, identified as Dan Elkayam, was among those killed.

Larisa Kleytman told reporters outside St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney that her husband, Alexander Kleytman, was among the dead. The couple were both Holocaust survivors, according to The Australian newspaper.

50-year-old shooter dead, his 24-year-old son remains in a coma

Police shot the father and son shooters. The 50-year-old father died at the scene. His 24-year-old son remained in a coma in hospital on Monday, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said.

Police won't reveal their names.

Albanese confirmed that Australia's main domestic spy agency, the Australian Security Intelligence Agency, had investigated the son for six months in 2019.

Australian Broadcasting Corp. reported that ASIO had examined the son's ties to a Sydney-based Islamic State group cell. Albanese did not describe the associates, but said ASIO was interested in them rather than the son.

"He was examined on the basis of being associated with others and the assessment was made that there was no indication of any ongoing threat or threat of him engaging in violence," Albanese said.

Albanese had proposed new gun restrictions, including limiting the number of guns a licensed owner can obtain and reviewing existing licenses over time.

His proposals were announced after the authorities revealed that the older gunman had held a gun

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license for a decade and amassed his six guns legally.

"The government is prepared to take whatever action is necessary. Included in that is the need for tougher gun laws," Albanese said.

Australia has gun laws meant to prevent mass attacks

The horror at Australia's most popular beach was the deadliest shooting in almost three decades since the 1996 Port Arthur massacre. The removal of rapid-fire rifles has markedly reduced the death tolls from such acts of violence since then.

Albanese called the Bondi massacre an act of antisemitic terrorism that struck at the heart of the nation.

Government leaders on Monday proposed restricting gun ownership to Australian citizens, a measure that would have excluded the older gunman, who came to Australia in 1998 on a student visa and became a permanent resident after marrying a local woman. Officials wouldn't confirm what country he had migrated from.

His son, who doesn't have a gun license, is an Australian-born citizen.

The government leaders also proposed the "additional use of criminal intelligence" in deciding who was eligible for a gun license. That could mean the son's suspicious associates could disqualify the father from owning a gun.

Christopher Minns, premier of New South Wales where Sydney is the state capital, said his state's gun laws would change, but he could not yet detail how.

"It means introducing a bill to Parliament to — I mean to be really blunt — make it more difficult to get these horrifying weapons that have no practical use in our community," Minns said.

"If you're not a farmer, you're not involved in agriculture, why do you need these massive weapons that put the public in danger and make life dangerous and difficult for New South Wales Police?" Minns asked.

Jewish leaders lambast antisemitism measures

Meanwhile, the massacre provoked questions about whether Albanese and his government had done enough to curb rising antisemitism. Jewish leaders and the massacre's survivors expressed fear and fury as they questioned why the men hadn't been detected before they opened fire.

"There's been a heap of inaction," said Lawrence Stand, a Sydney man who raced to a bar mitzvah celebration in Bondi when the violence erupted to find his 12-year-old daughter.

"I think the federal government has made a number of missteps on antisemitism," Alex Ryvchin, spokesperson for the Australian Council of Executive Jewry, told reporters gathered on Monday near the site of the massacre. "I think when an attack such as what we saw yesterday takes place, the paramount and fundamental duty of government is the protection of its citizens, so there's been an immense failure."

On Monday, hundreds arrived near the scene to lay flowers at a growing pile of floral tributes. There were words of pride, too, for a man who was captured on video appearing to tackle and disarm one gunman, before pointing the man's weapon at him, then setting the gun on the ground.

The man was identified by Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke as Ahmed al Ahmed. The 42-year-old fruit shop owner and father of two was shot in the shoulder by the other gunman and survived.

Massacre followed a surge in antisemitic crimes

Australia, a country of 28 million people, is home to about 117,000 Jews, according to official figures. Over the past year, the country was rocked by antisemitic attacks in Sydney and Melbourne. Synagogues and cars were torched, businesses and homes graffitied and Jews attacked in those cities, where 85% of the nation's Jewish population lives.

The Australian government has enacted various measures to counter a surge in antisemitism since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and Israel launched a war on Hamas in Gaza in response.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that he warned Australia's leaders months ago about the dangers of failing to take action against antisemitism. He claimed Australia's decision, in line with scores of other countries, to recognize a Palestinian state "pours fuel on the antisemitic fire."

Albanese in August blamed Iran for two of the previous attacks and cut diplomatic ties to Tehran. Authorities have not suggested Iran was linked to Sunday's massacre.

## Former Hong Kong pro-democracy media mogul Jimmy Lai convicted in landmark national security trial

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Jimmy Lai, the pro-democracy former Hong Kong media mogul and outspoken critic of Beijing, was convicted in a landmark national security trial in the city's court on Monday, which could send him to prison for the rest of his life.

Three government-vetted judges found Lai, 78, guilty of conspiring with others to collude with foreign forces to endanger national security and conspiracy to publish seditious articles. He pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Lai was arrested in August 2020 under a Beijing-imposed national security law that was implemented following massive anti-government protests in 2019. Lai has spent five years in custody, much of it in solitary confinement, and appears to have grown more frail and thinner. He has also been convicted of several lesser offenses related to fraud allegations and his actions in 2019.

Lai's trial, conducted without a jury, has been closely monitored by the U.S., Britain, the European Union and political observers as a barometer of media freedom and judicial independence in the former British colony, which returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

Court said Lai spent years plotting against Beijing

Reading from an 855-page verdict, Judge Esther Toh said that Lai had extended a "constant invitation" to the U.S. to help bring down the Chinese government with the excuse of helping Hong Kongers.

Lai's lawyers admitted during the trial that he had called for sanctions before the law took effect, but insisted he dropped these calls to comply with the law.

But the judges ruled that Lai had never wavered in his intention to destabilize the ruling Chinese Communist Party, "continuing though in a less explicit way."

Toh said the court was satisfied that Lai was the mastermind of the conspiracies and that Lai's evidence was at times contradictory and unreliable. The judges ruled that the only reasonable inference from the evidence was that Lai's only intent, both before and after the security law, was to seek the downfall of the ruling Communist Party even at the sacrifice of the people of China and Hong Kong.

"This was the ultimate aim of the conspiracies and secessionist publications," they wrote.

Among the attendees were Lai's wife and son, and Hong Kong's Roman Catholic Cardinal Joseph Zen. Lai nodded to his family before being escorted out of the courtroom.

His verdict is also a test for Beijing's diplomatic ties. U.S. President Donald Trump said he has raised the case with China, and U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has said his government has made it a priority to secure the release of Lai, who is a British citizen.

Lai could face life in prison

The founder of the now-defunct pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily will be sentenced on a later day.

The collusion charge carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. Hearings were set to begin Jan. 12 for Lai and other defendants in the case to argue for a shorter sentence.

The Apple Daily, a vocal critic of the Hong Kong government and Beijing, was forced to shut in 2021 after police raided its newsroom and arrested its senior journalists, with authorities freezing its assets.

During Lai's 156-day trial, prosecutors accused him of conspiring with senior executives of Apple Daily and others to request foreign forces to impose sanctions or blockades and engage in other hostile activities against Hong Kong or China.

The prosecution also accused Lai of making such requests, highlighting his meetings with former U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in July 2019 at the height of the protests.

It also presented 161 publications, including Apple Daily articles, to the court as evidence, as well as social media posts and text messages.

Lai testified for 52 days in his own defense, arguing that he had not called for foreign sanctions after

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the sweeping security law was imposed in June 2020.

His legal team also argued for freedom of expression.

Health concerns raised during marathon trial

As the trial progressed, Lai's health appeared to be deteriorating.

Lai's lawyers in August told the court that he suffered from heart palpitations. After the verdict, lawyer, Robert Pang, said his client is in okay spirits as the legal team studies the verdict.

Before the verdict, his daughter Claire told The Associated Press that her father has become weaker and lost some of his nails and teeth. She also said he suffered from infections for months, along with constant back pain, diabetes, heart issues and high blood pressure.

"His spirit is strong but his body is failing," she said.

Hong Kong's government said no abnormalities were found during a medical examination that followed Lai's complaint of heart problems. It added this month that the medical services provided to him were adequate.

Hong Kong leader John Lee said Lai harmed the fundamental interests of the country, calling his intentions malicious.

Steve Li, chief superintendent of Hong Kong police's National Security Department, disputed claims of Lai's worsening health outside the court building.

"Lai's conviction is justice served," he told reporters.

UK and rights groups slam outcome, as China defends it

U.K. Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said on X that her country condemned the politically motivated prosecution that resulted in the guilty verdict, saying it would continue to call for his release.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said China expressed firm opposition to the vilification of the city's judiciary by "certain countries," urging them to respect the city's legal system.

Rights groups, including global media watchdog Reporters Without Borders and Amnesty International, criticized the verdict.

"It is not an individual who has been on trial — it is press freedom itself, and with this verdict that has been shattered," said Reporters Without Borders' director general Thibaut Bruttin.

But Hong Kong Secretary for Security Chris Tang said the verdict has nothing to do with press freedom.

Before sunrise, dozens of residents queued outside the court building to secure a courtroom seat.

Former Apple Daily employee Tammy Cheung arrived at 5 a.m., saying she wanted to know about Lai's condition after reports of his health.

She said she felt the process was being rushed since the verdict date was announced only last Friday, but added, "I'm relieved that this case can at least conclude soon."

## **Rob Reiner, son of a comedy giant who became one, too, dies at 78**

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

Rob Reiner, the son of a comedy giant who went on to become one, himself, as one of the preeminent filmmakers of his generation with movies such as "The Princess Bride," "When Harry Met Sally ..." and "This Is Spinal Tap," has died. He was 78.

Reiner and his wife, Michele Singer, were found dead Sunday at their home in the Brentwood neighborhood of Los Angeles. A law enforcement official briefed on the investigation confirmed that Reiner and Singer were the victims. The official could not publicly discuss details of the investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Authorities were investigating an "apparent homicide," said Capt. Mike Bland with the Los Angeles Police Department. The Los Angeles Fire Department said it responded to a medical aid request shortly after 3:30 p.m.

Reiner grew up thinking his father, Carl Reiner, didn't understand him or find him funny. But the younger Reiner would in many ways follow in his father's footsteps, working both in front and behind the camera, in comedies that stretched from broad sketch work to accomplished dramedies.

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"My father thought, 'Oh, my God, this poor kid is worried about being in the shadow of a famous father,'" Reiner said, recalling the temptation to change his name to "60 Minutes" in October. "And he says, 'What do you want to change your name to?' And I said, 'Carl.' I just wanted to be like him."

After starting out as a writer for "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour," Reiner's breakthrough came when he was, at age 23, cast in Norman Lear's "All in the Family" as Archie Bunker's liberal son-in-law, Michael "Meathead" Stivic. But by the 1980s, Reiner began as a feature film director, churning out some of the most beloved films of that, or any, era. His first film, the largely improvised 1984 cult classic "This Is Spinal Tap," remains the urtext mockumentary.

After the 1985 John Cusack summer comedy, "The Sure Thing," Reiner made "Stand By Me" (1986), "The Princess Bride" (1987) and "When Harry Met Sally ..." (1989), a four-year stretch that resulted in a trio of American classics, all of them among the most often quoted movies of the 20th century.

A legacy on and off screen

For the next four decades, Reiner, a warm and gregarious presence on screen and an outspoken liberal advocate off it, remained a constant fixture in Hollywood. The production company he co-founded, Castle Rock Entertainment, launched an enviable string of hits, including "Seinfeld" and "The Shawshank Redemption." By the turn of the century, its success rate had fallen considerably, but Reiner revived it earlier this decade. This fall, Reiner and Castle Rock released the long-in-coming sequel "Spinal Tap II: The End Continues."

All the while, Reiner was one of the film industry's most passionate Democrat activists, regularly hosting fundraisers and campaigning for liberal issues. He was co-founder of the American Foundation for Equal Rights, which challenged in court California's ban on same-sex marriage, Proposition 8. He also chaired the campaign for Prop 10, a California initiative to fund early childhood development services with a tax on tobacco products. Reiner was also a critic of President Donald Trump.

That ran in the family, too. Reiner's father opposed the Communist hunt of McCarthyism in the 1950s and his mother, Estelle Reiner, a singer and actor, protested the Vietnam War.

"If you're a nepo baby, doors will open," Reiner told the Guardian in 2024. "But you have to deliver. If you don't deliver, the door will close just as fast as it opened."

'All in the Family' to 'Stand By Me'

Robert Reiner was born in the Bronx on March 6, 1947. As a young man, he quickly set out to follow his father into entertainment. He studied at the University of California, Los Angeles film school and, in the 1960s, began appearing in small parts in various television shows.

But when Lear saw Reiner as a key cast member in "All in the Family," it came as a surprise to the elder Reiner.

"Norman says to my dad, 'You know, this kid is really funny.' And I think my dad said, 'What? That kid? That kid? He's sullen. He sits quiet. He doesn't, you know, he's not funny.' He didn't think I was anyway," Reiner told "60 Minutes."

On "All in the Family," Reiner served as a pivotal foil to Carroll O'Connor's bigoted, conservative Archie Bunker. Reiner was five times nominated for an Emmy for his performance on the show, winning in 1974 and 1978. In Lear, Reiner also found a mentor. He called him "a second father."

"It wasn't just that he hired me for 'All in the Family,'" Reiner told "American Masters" in 2005. "It was that I saw, in how he conducted his life, that there was room to be an activist as well. That you could use your celebrity, your good fortune, to help make some change."

Lear also helped launch Reiner as a filmmaker. He put \$7.5 million of his own money to help finance "Stand By Me," Reiner's adaptation of the Stephen King novella "The Body." The movie, about four boys who go looking for the dead body of a missing boy, became a coming-of-age classic, made breakthroughs of its young cast (particularly River Phoenix) and even earned the praise of King.

With his stock rising, Reiner devoted himself to adapting William Goldman's 1973's "The Princess Bride," a book Reiner had loved since his father gave him a copy as a gift. Everyone from François Truffaut to Robert Redford had considered adapting Goldman's book, but it ultimately fell to Reiner (from Goldman's own script) to capture the unique comic tone of "The Princess Bride." But only once he had Goldman's

blessing.

"At the door he greeted me and he said, 'This is my baby. I want this on my tombstone. This is my favorite thing I've ever written in my life. What are you going to do with it?'" Reiner recalled in a Television Academy interview. "And we sat down with him and started going through what I thought should be done with the film."

Though only a modest success in theaters, the movie — starring Cary Elwes, Mandy Patinkin, Wallace Shawn, André the Giant and Robin Wright — would grow in stature over the years, leading to countless impressions of Inigo Montoya's vow of revenge and the risky nature of land wars in Asia.

'When Harry Met Sally ...'

Reiner was married to Penny Marshall, the actor and filmmaker, for 10 years beginning in 1971. Like Reiner, Marshall experienced sitcom fame, with "Laverne & Shirley," but found a more lasting legacy behind the camera.

After their divorce, Reiner, at a lunch with Nora Ephron, suggested a comedy about dating. In writing what became "When Harry Met Sally ..." Ephron and Reiner charted a relationship between a man and a woman (played in the film by Billy Crystal and Meg Ryan) over the course of 12 years.

Along the way, the movie's ending changed, as did some of the film's indelible moments. The famous line, "I'll have what she's having," said after witnessing Ryan's fake orgasm at Katz's Delicatessen, was a suggestion by Crystal — delivered by none other than Reiner's mother, Estelle.

The movie's happy ending also had some real-life basis. Reiner met Singer, a photographer, on the set of "When Harry Met Sally ..." In 1989, they were wed. They had three children together: Nick, Jake and Romy.

Reiner's subsequent films included another King adaptation, "Misery" (1990) and a pair of Aaron Sorkin-penned dramas: the military courtroom tale "A Few Good Men" (1992) and 1995's "The American President."

By the late '90s, Reiner's films (1996's "Ghosts of Mississippi," 2007's "The Bucket List") no longer had the same success rate. But he remained a frequent actor, often memorably enlivening films like "Sleepless in Seattle" (1993) and "The Wolf of Wall Street" (2013). In 2023, he directed the documentary "Albert Brooks: Defending My Life."

In an interview earlier this year with Seth Rogen, Reiner suggested everything in his career boiled down to one thing.

"All I've ever done is say, 'Is this something that is an extension of me?' For 'Stand by Me,' I didn't know if it was going to be successful or not. All I thought was, 'I like this because I know what it feels like.'"

## Authorities say they will release person of interest detained in Brown University shooting

By KIMBERLEE KRUESI, AMANDA SWINHART and HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. (AP) — A person of interest detained after a Brown University shooting that killed two students and injured nine will be released after law enforcement authorities determined there was no basis to keep the individual in custody, officials said Sunday night.

The disclosure, made at a hastily convened late night news conference, represents a dramatic setback in an investigation into killings that set off hours of chaos on the Ivy League campus and unravels progress that authorities thought they had made earlier in the day when they detained a man at a Rhode Island hotel in connection with the attack.

No current suspect in deadly shooting

The release of the lone person of interest leaves law enforcement without any known suspect, with officials pledging to redouble efforts in the investigation by canvassing for video surveillance that could help pinpoint the killer's identity.

"We have a murderer out there," said Attorney General Peter Neronha, while Providence Mayor Brett Smiley acknowledged that "the news is likely to cause fresh anxiety for our community."

Despite an enhanced police presence at Brown, officials are not recommending another shelter-in-place order like the one that followed the Saturday afternoon shooting, when hundreds of officers searched

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for the shooter and urged students and staff to shelter in place. The lockdown, which stretched into the night, was lifted early Sunday, but authorities had not yet released information about a potential motive.

On Sunday morning, officials took into custody a person of interest at a Hampton Inn hotel in Coventry, Rhode Island, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from Providence. Two people familiar with the matter identified that individual as a 24-year-old man from Wisconsin, though authorities never released the individual's name.

"I've been around long enough to know that sometimes you head in one direction and then you have to regroup and go in another and that's exactly what has happened over the last 24 hours or so," Neronha said.

He said that "certainly there was some degree of evidence that pointed to the individual" who'd been taken into custody but "that evidence needed to be corroborated and confirmed. And over the last 24 hours leading into just very, very recently, that evidence now points in a different direction."

Shooting occurred during busy period on campus

The shooting occurred during one of the busiest moments of the academic calendar, as final exams were underway. Brown canceled all remaining classes, exams, papers and projects for the semester and told students they could leave campus, underscoring the scale of the disruption and the gravity of the attack.

As police scoured the area for the shooter, many students remained barricaded in rooms while others hid behind furniture and bookshelves. One video showed students in a library shaking and wincing as they heard loud bangs just before police entered the room to clear the building.

University President Christina Paxson teared up while describing her conversations with students both on campus and in the hospital.

"They are amazing and they're supporting each other," she said at a news conference. "There's just a lot of gratitude."

The gunman opened fire inside a classroom in the engineering building, firing more than 40 rounds from a 9 mm handgun, a law enforcement official told AP. Two handguns were recovered when the person of interest was taken into custody and authorities also found two loaded 30-round magazines, the official said. One of the firearms was equipped with a laser sight that projects a dot to aid in targeting, said the official, who was not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly and spoke to AP on the condition of anonymity.

One student of the nine wounded students had been released from the hospital, said Paxson. Seven others were in critical but stable condition, and one was in critical condition.

Durham Academy, a private K-12 school in Durham, North Carolina, confirmed that a recent graduate, Kendall Turner, was critically wounded. The school said her parents were with her.

"Our school community is rallying around Kendall, her classmates, and her loved ones, and we will continue to offer our full support in the days ahead," the school said.

Community comes together to remember victims

On Sunday evening, city leaders, residents and others gathered at a park to honor the victims. The event originally was scheduled as a Christmas tree and Hanukkah menorah lighting.

"For those who know at least bit of the Hanukkah story, it is quite clear that if we can come together as a community to shine a little bit of light tonight, there's nothing better that we can be doing," Mayor Brett Smiley said at a news conference earlier in the day.

Smiley said he visited some wounded students and was inspired by their courage, hope and gratitude. One told him that active shooting drills done in high school proved helpful.

"The resilience that these survivors showed and shared with me, is frankly pretty overwhelming," he said.

Exams were underway when the shooting began

Investigators were not immediately sure how the shooter got inside the first-floor classroom at the Barus & Holley building, a seven-story complex that houses the School of Engineering and physics department. The building includes more than 100 laboratories, dozens of classrooms and offices, according to the university's website.

Engineering design exams were underway. Outer doors of the building were unlocked but rooms being

used for final exams required badge access, Smiley said.

Emma Ferraro, a chemical engineering student, was in the lobby working on a final project when she heard loud pops. Once she realized they were gunshots, she darted for the door and into a nearby building where she waited for hours.

Surveillance video released by police showed a suspect, dressed in black, walking from the scene.

Former 'Survivor' contestant left the building just before shooting

Eva Erickson, a doctoral candidate who was the runner-up earlier this year on the CBS reality competition show "Survivor," said she left her lab in the engineering building 15 minutes before shots rang out.

The engineering and thermal science student shared candid moments on "Survivor" as the show's first openly autistic contestant. She was locked down in the campus gym following the shooting and shared on social media that the only other member of her lab who was present was safely evacuated.

Brown senior biochemistry student Alex Bruce was working on a final research project in his dorm across the street from the building when he heard sirens outside.

"I'm just in here shaking," he said, watching through the window as officers surrounded his dorm.

Brown, the seventh-oldest higher education institution in the U.S., is one of the nation's most prestigious colleges, with roughly 7,300 undergraduates and more than 3,000 graduate students.

## Landslide win for Kast gives Chile its most right-wing president in decades

By ISABEL DEBRE and NAYARA BATSCHKE Associated Press

SANTIAGO, Chile (AP) — Chile's ultra-conservative former lawmaker José Antonio Kast secured a stunning victory in the presidential election Sunday, defeating the candidate of the center-left governing coalition and setting the stage for the country's most right-wing government in 35 years of democracy.

Kast won 58.2% of the votes as Chileans overwhelmingly embraced his pledge to crack down on increased crime, deport hundreds of thousands of immigrants without legal status and revive the sluggish economy of one of Latin America's most stable and prosperous nations. Kast's supporters erupted into cheers in the street as results trickled in, shouting his name and honking horns.

His challenger, communist candidate Jeannette Jara, clinched 41.8% of the vote.

"Chile needs order — order in the streets, in the state, in the priorities that have been lost," Kast belted in a lengthy victory speech that included his tough-on-crime talking points but lacked his usual vitriol. When his supporters interrupted him to boo Jara, he cut them off and snapped, "Respect!" — an about-face from his persona on the campaign trail.

Kast hailed his decisive margin of victory on Sunday, saying it provided him with a "broad mandate" that was also "a tremendous responsibility."

"We are inviting you on a journey to recover values for a proper and healthy life," he said. "It won't be easy. It requires everyone's commitment."

Speaking at a public square in Chile's capital of Santiago, Jara, who served as labor minister in the center-left government of President Gabriel Boric, encouraged her supporters not to be deterred by the outcome.

"It is in defeat that we learn the most," Jara said shortly after calling Kast to concede the election and congratulate him on his successful campaign.

A regional trend gains traction

Chileans are not alone in their demand for radical change.

Kast's election represents the latest in a string of votes that have turfed out incumbent governments across Latin America, vaulting right-wing leaders to power from Argentina to Bolivia as U.S. President Donald Trump looks to assert American dominance in the Western Hemisphere, in many cases punishing rivals and rewarding allies.

Argentina's President Javier Milei, a radical libertarian closely aligned with Trump, was first to congratulate Kast on his victory.

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"The left recedes," he wrote on social media with a map of all the South American countries that had recently veered to the right.

The Trump administration was also quick to praise Kast. "Under his leadership, we are confident Chile will advance shared priorities to include strengthening public security, ending illegal immigration and revitalizing our commercial relationship," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said.

A highly polarized election

The victory for Kast signaled a new era for Chile, representing the first radical right-wing president since the country returned to democracy in 1990, following the bloody dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet. Centrist parties on the right and the left have largely alternated power in the decades since.

On the surface, the two candidates in this tense presidential runoff could not have been more different, fundamentally disagreeing on weighty matters of the economy, social issues and the very purpose of government.

A lifelong member of Chile's Communist Party who pioneered popular social welfare measures in Boric's government and hails from a working-class family that protested against Pinochet's 1973-1990 military dictatorship, Jara was a dramatic foil to her rival.

Kast, in contrast, is a devout Catholic and father of nine whose German-born father was a registered member of Adolf Hitler's Nazi party and whose brother served as a minister in the dictatorship.

Kast's moral conservatism, including fierce opposition to same-sex marriage and abortion without exception, has drawn parallels to Brazil's now-incarcerated ex-President Jair Bolsonaro and was rejected by many in the increasingly socially liberal country during his past two failed presidential bids.

But throughout Boric's tenure, fears about uncontrolled illegal migration and unprecedented organized crime roiled the country, dominating this election and fueling support for a hard-line approach to insecurity.

Today his supporters run the gamut, including business people enthused about his free-market instincts, middle-class families scared of venturing out at night for fear of carjackings and extreme right-wing activists who glorify the military dictatorship.

Among those attending Kast's victory speech late Sunday were young Chileans raising framed photos of Pinochet.

Kast will be under pressure to deliver on promises

Voters elected Kast to cure the double plague of organized crime, which he blames on clandestine migration, and an economic slump.

To address the former, Kast says he'll draw inspiration from El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele, whose notorious 40,000-capacity mega-jail he toured last year. He wants to build more maximum-security prisons in Chile and implement harsh measures in detention centers like severing gang members' contact with the outside world.

He proposes expanding the powers of the army and police and boosting protections for officers who use force.

On the issue of migration, he has mirrored Trump in his calls for deportations of hundreds of thousands of immigrants who entered Chile illegally and the construction of a massive barrier on the country's northern border complete with 3-meter (9.8-feet) -deep ditches.

On the economy, he vows to slash \$6 billion in spending over just 18 months by shrinking the public payroll and dismantling ministries but without eliminating social benefits — something economists criticize as unrealistic.

By reducing corporate taxes and cutting red tape, he says he'll take the nation back to the golden age of rapid economic growth that made Chile the poster child of Latin America in the 1990s.

At rallies, his fans cheer wildly at these promises for a "mano dura" crackdown, or iron fist, to restore order to a country that long saw itself as an oasis in a turbulent region.

But it's less clear whether his agenda will command support on the street and in Congress once the implications sink in.

Kast's Republican Party lacks a majority in both houses of Congress, meaning that to get things done, he'll need to negotiate with traditional center-right forces that could bristle at those proposals.

If Kast plays his cards right and makes political compromises, said Chilean political analyst Patricio Navia, he might be able to avoid the fate of Boric, who stormed to power in 2021 on radical ambitions to overhaul Chile's market-led economy and will leave office on March 11 having largely failed to implement his hard-left program.

"If he governs as a moderate right-wing president, he'll find support," Navia said. "But can Kast control his radical instincts? That's the big question."

## **Mahomes tears ACL as Chargers eliminate Chiefs from playoff contention with 16-13 victory**

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) — The final images of the Kansas City Chiefs' postseason pursuit were Patrick Mahomes getting helped to the locker room with what turned out to be a torn ACL in his left knee, a white towel draped over his head, and backup quarterback Gardner Minshew throwing an interception to Derwin James that gave the Los Angeles Chargers a win over one of their biggest rivals.

It all happened in the final two minutes of their 16-13 victory Sunday.

Justin Herbert, playing through a broken left hand, had helped the Chargers take the lead with a second-half rally, but Kansas City got the ball back with one more chance. Mahomes was sprinting toward the sideline and throwing the ball away when he was spun to the ground by defensive lineman Da'Shawn Hand, leaving the two-time MVP grabbing at his left knee.

"It didn't look good," Chiefs coach Andy Reid acknowledged afterward.

Later, the Chiefs released an update, saying: "An MRI has confirmed that Chiefs QB Patrick Mahomes sustained a torn ACL in his left knee in today's game. Patrick and the club are currently exploring surgical options."

On social media, Mahomes said: "Don't know why this had to happen. And not going to lie it's hurts. But all we can do now is Trust in God and attack every single day over and over again."

Minshew took over and completed three straight passes, giving Chiefs fans hope on a day that began with wind chills near zero and their playoff chances about the same. But with 20 seconds to go, Minshew unloaded a pass for Travis Kelce, and James — his longtime divisional foil — leaped up to pick it off, allowing Los Angeles (10-4) to begin celebrating a second straight 10-win season.

Perhaps soon, a second straight postseason appearance.

"It's a ball team. This is a ball team," Chargers coach Jim Harbaugh said. "Starting to think this is my favorite ball team that I've ever been on. I've been on a lot of teams, none better than this team. It's a ball team. A real ball team. Love these guys."

"We know what that team has done the last eight, nine years," James added. "Coming into Arrowhead Stadium and getting a win, it means a lot for our team, because we're 5-0 in our division."

Minshew will quarterback the Chiefs through the final three games of the season. One of them is a primetime showdown with the Denver Broncos on Christmas night.

"I'll do whatever the coaches ask of me," Minshew said, "and we'll go try to win some games."

The Chiefs (6-8) already are guaranteed to be watching the playoffs on TV for the first time since 2014, and Kelce was in no mood to talk about it. Just as he's done after several losses this season, the star tight end refused to answer questions from reporters.

"Sorry guys, it's not the time," Kelce said.

The Chargers had beaten the Chiefs in their opener in Brazil, ultimately setting each club on its season-long trajectory.

Los Angeles arrived for the rematch Sunday trying to extend the momentum built in last week's win over the Super Bowl champion Eagles. The Chiefs showed up knowing a loss, coupled with the wrong results elsewhere, would eliminate them completely.

The Chiefs played appropriately inspired for most of the first half.

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They moved swiftly downfield with Mahomes darting in from 12 yards out for a touchdown on their opening drive. They added a field goal later in the first half, and another by Harrison Butker gave them a 13-3 lead with 38 seconds left before the break.

That's when the Chargers started playing like a playoff-bound team. And the Chiefs like one that should be sitting at home.

Herbert completed three passes in five plays to cover 60 yards, and KeAndre Lambert-Smith's first career TD catch got the Chargers within a field goal. Cameron Dicker knotted the game on their opening possession of the second half, then he gave them the lead when he drilled a 49-yarder on a cold, windy day at Arrowhead Stadium with 2:40 to go in the third quarter.

The Chiefs tried to answer down the stretch, despite a rash of injuries that had left them with a patchwork offensive line. But just like so often this season, a promising drive went haywire in the red zone. Tyquan Thornton's spectacular catch was immediately forgotten when Mahomes' pass was picked off by Daiyan Henley on a jump ball thrown to Kareem Hunt at the goal line.

Mahomes, who had just 189 yards passing, would ultimately end the game in the Kansas City locker room.

The Chargers would end the Chiefs' postseason hopes with one more interception.

"I thought it was really cool that we were able to close out a one-score game like that, how many times we've played them and had one-score games," Herbert said. "For the defense to come out there with the turnovers and stops, it was awesome to see."

Sent packing

Thornton landed in the concussion protocol after his late 20-yard reception following a vicious hit by cornerback Tony Jefferson, who helped to trigger a mild midfield scuffle. Jefferson was ejected, and Henley and James had to push him toward the tunnel.

Injuries

Chargers: WR Quentin Johnson (groin) was inactive. S R.J. Mickens left with a shoulder injury.

Chiefs: CB Trent McDuffie (knee) was inactive. Thornton (concussion protocol) and RT Jaylon Moore (knee) left and did not return.

Up next

Chargers: At Dallas next Sunday.

Chiefs: At Tennessee next Sunday.

## Father and son gunmen kill at least 15 people in attack on Hanukkah event at Sydney's Bondi Beach

By KRISTEN GELINEAU, CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-McLAY and ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

SYDNEY (AP) — Two gunmen opened fire during a Hanukkah celebration on Sydney's Bondi beach, killing 15 people, including a child, officials said Monday, in what Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called an act of antisemitic terrorism that struck at the heart of the nation. The shooters were father and son, authorities said.

The massacre at one of Australia's most popular beaches followed a wave of antisemitic attacks that have roiled the country over the past year, although the authorities didn't suggest those and the shooting Sunday were connected. It was the deadliest shooting in almost three decades in a country with strict gun control laws.

One gunman, a 50-year-old man, was fatally shot by police. The other shooter, his 24-year-old son, was wounded and was being treated at a hospital, said Mal Lanyon, New South Wales police commissioner.

Police said one gunman was known to security services, but Lanyon said authorities had no indication of a planned attack.

Those killed were aged between 10- and 87-years-old, New South Wales Premier Chris Minns told reporters. At least 42 others were being treated at hospitals on Monday morning, several of them in a critical condition.

"What we saw yesterday was an act of pure evil, an act of antisemitism, an act of terrorism on our shores

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in an iconic Australian location, Bondi Beach, that is associated with joy, associated with families gathering, associated with celebrations," Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Monday.

"It is forever tarnished by what has occurred."

The shooting targeted a Jewish celebration

The violence erupted at the end of a summer day when thousands had flocked to Bondi Beach, an icon of Australia's cultural life. They included hundreds gathered for the Chanukah by the Sea event celebrating the start of the eight-day Hanukkah festival.

The festivities included face painting and a petting zoo. Then mayhem erupted.

Chabad, an Orthodox Jewish movement that runs outreach worldwide and sponsors events during major Jewish holidays, identified one of the dead as Rabbi Eli Schlanger, assistant rabbi at Chabad of Bondi and an organizer of the event.

Israel's Foreign Ministry confirmed the death of an Israeli citizen, but gave no further details. French President Emmanuel Macron announced a French citizen, identified as Dan Elkayam, was among those killed.

None of the victims have been publicly named by Australian authorities. The gunmen haven't been officially named either.

But stories of the victims began to emerge in local news outlets on Monday. Larisa Kleytman told reporters outside St Vincent's Hospital that her husband, Alexander Kleytman was among the dead, according to The Australian newspaper.

The couple were both Holocaust survivors.

Police said emergency services were called at about 6:45 p.m., responding to reports of shots being fired. Video by onlookers showed people in bathing suits running from the water as shots rang out.

Separate footage showed two men in black shirts firing with long guns from a footbridge leading to the beach. One dramatic clip broadcast on Australian television showed a man appearing to tackle and disarm one gunman, before pointing the man's weapon at him, then setting the gun on the ground.

Minns called the man, identified by relatives to Australian media as fruit shop owner Ahmed al Ahmed, a "genuine hero."

Witnesses fled and hid as shots rang out

Arsen Ostrovsky, a lawyer attending the Hanukkah ceremony with his wife and daughters, was grazed in the head by a bullet. Ostrovsky said he moved from Israel to Australia two weeks ago to work for a Jewish advocacy group.

"What I saw today was pure evil, just an absolute bloodbath. Bodies strewn everywhere," he told The Associated Press in an email from the hospital. "I never thought would be possible here in Australia."

Lachlan Moran, 32, from Melbourne, told the AP he was waiting for his family when he heard shots.

"I sprinted as quickly as I could," Moran said. He said he heard shooting off and on for about five minutes. "Everyone just dropped all their possessions and everything and were running and people were crying and it was just horrible."

Antisemitic attacks have roiled Australia

Albanese vowed the violence would be met with "a moment of national unity where Australians across the board will embrace their fellow Australians of Jewish faith." Some of his political opponents and Israel's government accused him of not having done enough to prevent such a horror.

Australia, a country of 28 million people, is home to about 117,000 Jews, according to official figures. Antisemitic incidents, including assaults, vandalism, threats and intimidation, surged more than threefold in the country during the year after Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, and Israel launched a war on Hamas in Gaza in response, the government's Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism Jillian Segal reported in July.

Last year, the country was rocked by antisemitic attacks in Sydney and Melbourne. Synagogues and cars were torched, businesses and homes graffitied and Jews attacked in those cities, where 85% of the nation's Jewish population lives.

Albanese in August blamed Iran for two of the attacks and cut diplomatic ties to Tehran.

Israel urged Australia's government to address crimes targeting Jews. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he warned Australia's leaders months ago about the dangers of failing to take action against antisemitism. He claimed Australia's decision — in line with scores of other countries — to recognize a Palestinian state "pours fuel on the antisemitic fire."

"Your government did nothing to stop the spread of antisemitism in Australia ... and the result is the horrific attacks on Jews we saw today," Netanyahu said.

Police will investigate what happened

Authorities were not looking for anyone else in connection with the massacre, said Lanyon. Police pledged a "thorough" investigation, he added.

Further inquiries are likely to be announced.

Two improvised explosive devices were found at the scene. Bomb disposal experts rendered them safe.

Lanyon described them as "rudimentary" devices that would have been detonated by a wick rather than a phone or electronically.

Shooting deaths in Australia are rare

Minns said there would "almost certainly" be gun law changes after the massacre. The 50-year-old gunman who was shot dead was found to have six firearms when law enforcement raided the property where he'd been staying, police said.

Questions about how he was able to acquire them gathered pace on Monday, in part because mass shootings in Australia are extremely rare. A 1996 massacre in the Tasmanian town of Port Arthur, where a lone gunman killed 35 people, prompted the government to drastically tighten gun laws, making it much more difficult to acquire firearms.

Significant mass shootings this century included two murder-suicides with death tolls of five people in 2014 and seven in 2018, in which gunmen killed their own families and themselves.

In 2022, six people were killed in a shootout between police and Christian extremists at a rural property in Queensland state.

World leaders express shock and grief

After the massacre, messages flooded in from leaders around the world.

King Charles III said he and Queen Camilla were "appalled and saddened by the most dreadful antisemitic terrorist attack." United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres said on X he was horrified, and his "heart is with the Jewish community worldwide."

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a post on X: "The United States strongly condemns the terrorist attack in Australia targeting a Jewish celebration. Antisemitism has no place in this world."

## **Zelenskyy offers to drop NATO bid for security guarantees but rejects US push to cede territory**

By STEFANIE DAZIO and CLAUDIA CIOBANU Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Sunday voiced readiness to drop his country's bid to join NATO in exchange for Western security guarantees, but rejected the U.S. push for ceding territory to Russia as he held talks with U.S. envoys on ending the war.

Zelenskyy sat down with U.S. President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner. The Ukrainian leader posted pictures of the negotiating table with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz sitting next to him facing the U.S. delegation.

Responding to journalists' questions in audio clips on a WhatsApp group chat before the talks, Zelenskyy said that since the U.S. and some European nations had rejected Ukraine's push to join NATO, Kyiv expects the West to offer a set of guarantees similar to those offered to the alliance members.

"These security guarantees are an opportunity to prevent another wave of Russian aggression," he said. "And this is already a compromise on our part."

Russian President Vladimir Putin has cast Ukraine's bid to join NATO as a major threat to Moscow's

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security and a reason for launching the full-scale invasion in February 2022. The Kremlin has demanded that Ukraine renounce the bid for the alliance membership as part of any prospective peace settlement.

Zelenskyy emphasized that any security assurances would need to be legally binding and supported by the U.S. Congress, adding that he expected an update from his team following a meeting between Ukrainian and U.S. military officials in Stuttgart, Germany.

The U.S. government said in a social media post on Witkoff's account after the five-hour meeting that "a lot of progress was made."

Washington has tried for months to navigate the demands of each side as Trump presses for a swift end to Russia's war and grows increasingly exasperated by delays. The search for possible compromises has run into major obstacles, including control of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region, which is mostly occupied by Russian forces.

Tough obstacles remain

Putin wants Ukraine to withdraw its forces from the part of the Donetsk region still under its control among the key conditions for peace, a demand rejected by Kyiv.

Zelenskyy said that the U.S. had floated an idea for Ukraine to withdraw from the Donetsk and create a demilitarized free economic zone there, a proposal he rejected as unworkable.

"I do not consider this fair, because who will manage this economic zone?" he said. "If we are talking about some buffer zone along the line of contact, if we are talking about some economic zone and we believe that only a police mission should be there and troops should withdraw, then the question is very simple. If Ukrainian troops withdraw 5–10 kilometers, for example, then why do Russian troops not withdraw deeper into the occupied territories by the same distance?"

Zelenskyy described the issue as "very sensitive" and insisted on a freeze along the line of contact, saying that "today a fair possible option is we stand where we stand."

Putin's foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov told the business daily Kommersant that Russian police and national guard would stay in parts of the Donetsk region even if they become a demilitarized zone under a prospective peace plan.

Ushakov warned that a search for compromise could take a long time, noting that the U.S. proposals that took into account Russian demands had been "worsened" by alterations proposed by Ukraine and its European allies.

Speaking to Russian state TV in remarks broadcast Sunday, Ushakov said that "the contribution of Ukrainians and Europeans to these documents is unlikely to be constructive," warning that Moscow will "have very strong objections."

Ushakov added that the territorial issue was actively discussed in Moscow when Witkoff and Kushner met with Putin earlier this month. "The Americans know and understand our position," he said.

Zelenskyy said he spoke with French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday just before the talks with Trump's envoys, thanking him on X for his support and adding that "we are coordinating closely and working together for the sake of our shared security."

Macron vowed on X that "France is, and will remain, at Ukraine's side to build a robust and lasting peace — one that can guarantee Ukraine's security and sovereignty, and that of Europe, over the long term."

Merz, who has spearheaded European efforts to support Ukraine alongside Macron and U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer, said Saturday that "the decades of the 'Pax Americana' are largely over for us in Europe and for us in Germany as well."

He warned that Putin's aim is "a fundamental change to the borders in Europe, the restoration of the old Soviet Union within its borders."

"If Ukraine falls, he won't stop," Merz warned on Saturday during a party conference in Munich.

Putin has denied plans to restore the Soviet Union or attack any European allies.

Russia and Ukraine exchange aerial attacks

Ukraine's air force said that Russia overnight launched ballistic missiles and 138 attack drones at Ukraine. The air force said 110 had been intercepted or downed, but missile and drone hits were recorded at six locations.

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Zelenskyy said Sunday that hundreds of thousands of families were still without power in the south, east and northeast regions and work was continuing to restore electricity, heat and water to multiple regions following a large-scale attack the previous night.

The Ukrainian president said that in the past week, Russia had launched over 1,500 strike drones, nearly 900 guided aerial bombs and 46 missiles of various types at Ukraine.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that air defenses downed 235 Ukrainian drones late Saturday and early Sunday.

In the Belgorod region, a drone injured a man and set his house ablaze in the village of Yasnye Zori, regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

Ukrainian drones struck an oil depot in Uryupinsk in the Volgograd region, triggering a fire, according to regional Gov. Andrei Bocharov.

In the Krasnodar region, the Ukrainian drones attacked the town of Afipsky, where an oil refinery is located. Authorities said that explosions shattered windows in residential buildings, but didn't report any damage to the refinery.

## Weekend storm drops heavy snow around Northeast as Pacific Northwest braces for more rain

By The Associated Press undefined

A weekend storm sent temperatures plunging well below zero in the Midwest and dumped heavy snow on parts of the Northeast on Sunday, creating many airport delays and slick roads as the Pacific Northwest braced for more rain after days of flooding and mudslides.

The storm began Saturday and brought up to several inches of snow in the New York-New Jersey metro area, the region's first significant snowfall of the season. Light snow fell over parts of New England. The storm was expected to weaken by Sunday night, followed by arctic conditions with overnight windchill temperatures at or plummeting below zero degrees (-18 Celsius).

Crews and contractors were out plowing and treating roads in New Jersey, where the state Department of Transportation advised people to avoid unnecessary travel. Salt spreaders and plows worked overnight to clear snow from roads and bike lanes, the New York City Department of Sanitation posted online. Pennsylvania temporarily reduced speed limits on interstates to 45 mph (72 kph).

There were over 1,000 flights delayed and more than 100 cancellations at U.S. airports due to the weather, according to the flight tracking site FlightAware.

Meanwhile, a blast of arctic air swept south from Canada and into parts of the northern U.S. The National Weather Service in Chanhassen, Minnesota, said Sunday was the coldest morning of the season so far. It was -10 degrees (-23 C) at Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport, with temperatures as low as -22 (-30 C) in some communities.

In the Pacific Northwest, which has seen catastrophic flooding that has forced thousands of people to evacuate, more rain and wind was expected in the region as early as late Sunday, forecasters said.

## 'Zootopia 2' reclaims No. 1 spot at box office, grosses \$1B worldwide

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — "Zootopia 2" regained the No. 1 spot at the domestic box office with \$26.3 million in its third weekend of release, according to studio estimates Sunday, as The Walt Disney Co. animated sequel became the year's second film to gross \$1 billion worldwide.

With "Avatar: Fire and Ash" arriving Friday, it was a relatively quiet weekend in theaters. There were no major new releases, leaving holdovers "Zootopia 2" and "Five Nights at Freddy's 2" to duke it out for the top spot.

The edge went to "Zootopia 2," which has quickly amassed \$1.14 billion in global ticket sales thanks

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significantly to its enormous success in China. There, it's grossed \$502.4 million, making "Zootopia 2" the biggest Hollywood hit in the country in years.

The only other 2025 Hollywood title to surpass \$1 billion worldwide was Disney's "Lilo & Stitch" (\$1.04 billion). The highest grossing movie of the year, though, is the Chinese blockbuster "Ne Zha 2," which collected nearly \$2 billion just in China.

In its second weekend of release, the Universal Pictures and Blumhouse Productions sequel "Five Nights at Freddy's 2" collected \$15.4 million, a brutal drop of 70% from its above-expectations debut. Still, with a domestic total of \$95.5 million, the \$36 million production is a big win for Blumhouse, adding another horror franchise to its portfolio.

The weekend's most notable new release was James L. Brook's "Ella McCay," his first directed film in 15 years. "Ella McCay" earned a scant \$2.1 million from 2,500 locations, making it one of the year's worst wide releases.

But box-office expectations weren't high coming in from "Ella McCay," a comic drama about a 34-year-old woman (newcomer Emma Mackey) who becomes governor of her home state. Reviews (22% "fresh" on Rotten Tomatoes) were poor, and the kind of award-winning comic dramas movies that Brooks ("Terms of Endearment," "Broadcast News") has long specialized in today seldom find large audiences in theaters. "Ella McCay," featuring a supporting cast including Jamie Lee Curtis, Ayo Edebiri and Woody Harrelson, cost \$35 million to make.

With overall ticket sales on the year running close to even with last year's disappointing grosses, according to Comscore data, Hollywood will be hoping the coming holiday corridor, traditionally the busiest moviegoing period of the year, ends 2025 on a high note. Movies on tap include "Avatar: Fire and Ash," "The SpongeBob Movie: Search for SquarePants," "Marty Supreme," "Anaconda" and "Song Sung Blue."

Top 10 movies by domestic box office

With final domestic figures being released Monday, this list factors in the estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Comscore:

1. "Zootopia 2," \$26.3 million.
2. "Five Nights at Freddy's 2," \$19.5 million.
3. "Wicked: For Good," \$8.6 million.
4. "Dhurandhar," \$3.5 million.
5. "Now You See Me: Now You Don't," \$2.4 million.
6. "Jujutsu Kaisen: Execution," \$2.1 million.
7. "Ella McCay," \$ 2.1 million.
8. "Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas" (2000), \$1.9 million.
9. "Eternity," \$1.8 million.
10. "Hamnet," \$1.5 million.

## Hassett says Federal Reserve can reject Trump's views if he is chair

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A leading candidate to be President Donald Trump's choice for Federal Reserve chair said that he would present the president's views to Fed officials for their consideration but they could reject them if they chose when making decisions on interest rates.

Kevin Hassett, in an interview Sunday on CBS News' "Face the Nation," said he would continue to speak with Trump if he becomes the Fed chair. But when asked if Trump's opinions on interest rates would have "equal weighting" with members of the Fed's interest-rate setting committee, Hassett replied, "No, he would have no weight."

"His opinion matters if it's good, if it's based on data," Hassett continued. "And then if you go to the committee and you say, well, the president made this argument and that's a really sound argument, I think, what do you think? If they reject it, then they'll vote in a different way."

Hassett's comments come as Trump is reportedly in final interviews with potential replacements for the Fed's current chair, Jerome Powell. Trump has emphasized that he expects whomever he nominates to lead the Fed will sharply lower the central bank's key rate, which currently stands at about 3.6%. Trump has said it should be cut to 1% or lower, a view almost no economist shares. Trump's outspokenness has raised concerns about the Fed's independence from day-to-day politics under any chair he appoints.

Until Trump's first election in 2016, presidents of both parties for several decades had avoided commenting publicly on Fed decisions, and usually refrained from doing so privately as well. Economists generally believe that a politically independent Fed is better at combating inflation, because it can take unpopular steps to keep prices down, such as raise interest rates.

On Friday, however, Trump said that he "certainly should have a role in talking to whoever the head of the Fed is" about rates.

"I've done great. I've made a lot of money, I'm very successful," he said. "I think my voice should be heard."

The Wall Street Journal reported Friday that Kevin Warsh, a fellow at the right-leaning Hoover Institution and former Fed governor, is Trump's current favorite to replace Powell, whose term ends next May. But Trump has previously hinted that he would pick Hassett.

"I think the two Kevins are great," Trump told the Journal.

Hassett, for his part, on Sunday said that "in the end, the job of the Fed is to be independent."

"In the end, it's a committee that votes," he said. "And I'd be happy to talk to the president every day until both of us are dead because it's so much fun."

## **Nobel laureate Ales Bialiatski describes Belarus prison ordeal in first interview after release**

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

VILNIUS, Lithuania (AP) — Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski arrived for an interview with The Associated Press on Sunday in the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, direct from a dentist appointment.

The 63-year-old veteran human rights advocate — looking pale, visibly tired and emaciated — was experiencing a return to daily life after more than four years behind bars in Belarus. He was suddenly released on Saturday.

Medical assistance in the penal colony where he served his 10-year sentence was very limited, he said in his first sit-down interview after release. There was only one option of treating dental problems behind bars — pulling teeth out, he said.

Bialiatski recalled how in the early hours of Saturday he was in an overcrowded prison cell in the Penal Colony no. 9 in eastern Belarus when suddenly he was ordered to pack his things. Blindfolded, he was driven somewhere: "They put a blindfold over my eyes. I was looking occasionally where we were headed, but only understood that we're heading toward west."

In Vilnius, he hugged his wife for the first time in years.

"When I crossed the border, it was as if I emerged from the bottom of the sea and onto the surface of the water. You have lots of air, sun, and back there you were in a completely different situation — under pressure," he told the AP.

Bialiatski was one of 123 prisoners released by Belarus in exchange for the U.S. lifting sanctions imposed on the Belarusian potash sector, crucial for the country's economy.

A close ally of Russia, Belarus has faced Western isolation and sanctions for years. Its authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko has ruled the nation of 9.5 million with an iron fist for more than three decades, and the country has been repeatedly sanctioned by the West for its crackdown on human rights and for allowing Moscow to use its territory in the 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

In an effort at a rapprochement with the West, Belarus has released hundreds of prisoners since July 2024. Arrest, Nobel Peace Prize and the prison ordeal

Bialiatski won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022, while in jail awaiting trial, along with the prominent Russian

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rights group Memorial and Ukraine's Center for Civil Liberties.

His arrest in 2021 came as part of a large-scale crackdown on dissent that Lukashenko had unleashed in response to mass protests that engulfed the country after a 2020 presidential election. That vote handed Lukashenko his sixth term in office and was denounced by the opposition and the West as rigged. Tens of thousands of people were arrested in the aftermath, with many brutally beaten, and hundreds of thousands have fled abroad.

Bialiatski was convicted of smuggling and financing actions that violated the public order — charges widely denounced as politically motivated — and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

The veteran advocate, who founded Belarus' oldest and most prominent human rights group, Viasna, was imprisoned at a penal colony in Gorki in a facility notorious for beatings and hard labor.

He told AP that he wasn't beaten behind bars — his status as a Nobel Peace Prize laureate protected him from physical violence, he said.

But he said he went through much of what all political prisoners in Belarus go through: solitary confinement, arbitrary punishment for minor infractions — “for not shaving, for not marching the way you're supposed to, for cleaning poorly” — not being able to see your loved ones, rarely receiving letters.

“We can definitely talk about inhumane treatment, about creating conditions that violate your integrity and some kind of human dignity,” he said.

Just like other political prisoners, Bialiatski was designated as having “extremist tendencies” and forced to carry a yellow label in the colony. His wife was barred from visiting him behind bars, and he was often deprived of care packages with medications that were sent to him.

“I now need to deal with my health, because during these 4 1/2 years I received minimal medical assistance. You need to understand that medical care in Belarusian prisons is very limited,” he said.

Crackdown on dissent in Belarus continues

Bialiatski is concerned about two of his Viasna colleagues, Marfa Rabkova and Valiantsin Stefanovic, who remain imprisoned, and about all 1,110 political prisoners still behind bars, according to Viasna.

“Despite the fact that prisoners are being freed right now, new people regularly end up behind bars. Some kind of schizophrenia is taking place: with one hand, the authorities release Belarusian political prisoners, and with the other they take in more prisoners to trade, to maintain this abnormal situation in Belarus,” he said.

In the Penal Colony No. 9, where Bialiatski was serving his sentence, some 20 other political prisoners were imprisoned, too, he said: “Workers, students, even one serviceman — very different people, which shows how widespread the desire for democracy and human rights is among the Belarusian people,” he said.

The advocate vows to continue to fight for the release of all political prisoners, adding: “There is no point in freeing old ones if you're taking in new ones.”

He intends to use his status as a Nobel Peace Prize laureate — of which he learned in prison and couldn't initially believe it — to help Belarusians “who chose freedom.”

“This prize was given not to me as a person, but to me as a representative of the Belarusian civil society, of the millions of Belarusians who expressed will and desire for democracy, for freedom, for human rights, for changing this stale situation in Belarus,” he told AP.

“And it was a signal to the Belarusian authorities, too, that it's time to change something in the life of the Belarusians.”

Bialiatski intends to keep working with Viasna. The group has relocated to Vilnius from Belarus amid the crackdown, but remained the leading organization in monitoring human rights abuses and helping those facing repressions.

Bialiatski admits that the possibilities to do anything within the country “have decreased sharply.” “The majority of civil society activists are either in prison, or were forced to emigrate, leave Belarus after prison,” he said.

“The situation is difficult, but I hope for international solidarity, for the pressure on the Belarusian regime, which has to continue, because the Belarusian authorities hear only these arguments — arguments

from a position of strength.”

Russia’s war in Ukraine affects Belarus

Having supported Russia’s war in Ukraine, the Belarusian authorities now use it as an additional pretext to intensify the crackdown on dissent domestically, Bialiatski says.

Belarus has not declared martial law, but it effectively has it in place, he says: “People land in prison for, say, photographs of non-Belarusian military equipment.”

The Belarusian government has agreed to host Russian tactical nuclear weapons, and the country’s political and economical dependence on Moscow makes it a hostage to the Kremlin’s plans and expansionist ideas, in which “Belarus was destined for a tragic fate.”

“It is, of course, very important for Belarus that the war ends. And it is also clear that this end must not come at the expense of Ukraine, because the situation with democracy, human rights, and the development of Belarus depends greatly on how things unfold in Ukraine itself,” Bialiatski said.

Other released prisoners speak out in Ukraine

Four other released dissidents on Sunday spoke to reporters in Ukraine, where the majority of those freed by Belarus — 114 people in total — were taken the day before. They expressed gratitude to Ukraine for taking them in and providing them with assistance at a time when a war was raging.

Addressing reporters in the city of Chernihiv, Viktor Babaryka, Maria Kolesnikova, Alexander Feduta and Uladzimir Labkovich echoed Bialiatski’s statement and said that they didn’t know where they were being taken and only realized that it was Ukraine upon arrival.

## **Attacker who killed US troops in Syria was a recent recruit to security forces, official says**

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A man who carried out an attack in Syria that killed three U.S. citizens had joined Syria’s internal security forces as a base security guard two months earlier and was recently reassigned amid suspicions that he might be affiliated with the Islamic State group, a Syrian official told The Associated Press Sunday.

The attack Saturday in the Syrian desert near the historic city of Palmyra killed two U.S. service members and one American civilian and wounded three others. It also wounded three members of the Syrian security forces who clashed with the gunman, interior ministry spokesperson Nour al-Din al-Baba said.

Al-Baba said that Syria’s new authorities had faced shortages in security personnel and had to recruit rapidly after the unexpected success of a rebel offensive last year that intended to capture the northern city of Aleppo but ended up overthrowing the government of former President Bashar Assad.

“We were shocked that in 11 days we took all of Syria and that put a huge responsibility in front of us from the security and administration sides,” he said.

The attacker was among 5,000 members who recently joined a new division in the internal security forces formed in the desert region known as the Badiya, one of the places where remnants of the Islamic State extremist group have remained active.

Attacker had raised suspicions

Al-Baba said the internal security forces’ leadership had recently become suspicious that there was an infiltrator leaking information to IS and began evaluating all members in the Badiya area.

The probe raised suspicions last week about the man who later carried out the attack, but officials decided to continue monitoring him for a few days to try to determine if he was an active member of IS and to identify the network he was communicating with if so, al-Baba said. He did not name the attacker.

At the same time, as a “precautionary measure,” he said, the man was reassigned to guard equipment at the base at a location where he would be farther from the leadership and from any patrols by U.S.-led coalition forces.

On Saturday, the man stormed a meeting between U.S. and Syrian security officials who were having

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lunch together and opened fire after clashing with Syrian guards, al-Baba said. The attacker was shot and killed at the scene.

Al-Baba acknowledged that the incident was "a major security breach" but said that in the year since Assad's fall "there have been many more successes than failures" by security forces.

In the wake of the shooting, he said, the Syrian army and internal security forces "launched wide-ranging sweeps of the Badiya region" and broke up a number of alleged IS cells. The interior ministry said in a statement later that five suspects were arrested in the city of Palmyra.

A delicate partnership

The incident comes at a delicate time as the U.S. military is expanding its cooperation with Syrian security forces.

The U.S. has had forces on the ground in Syria for over a decade, with a stated mission of fighting IS, with about 900 troops present there today.

Before Assad's ouster, Washington had no diplomatic relations with Damascus and the U.S. military did not work directly with the Syrian army. Its main partner at the time was the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in the country's northeast.

That has changed over the past year. Ties have warmed between the administrations of U.S. President Donald Trump and Syrian interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, the former leader of an Islamist insurgent group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham that used to be listed by Washington as a terrorist organization.

In November, al-Sharaa became the first Syrian president to visit Washington since the country's independence in 1946. During his visit, Syria announced its entry into the global coalition against the Islamic State, joining 89 other countries that have committed to combating the group.

U.S. officials have vowed retaliation against IS for the attack but have not publicly commented on the fact that the shooter was a member of the Syrian security forces.

Critics of the new Syrian authorities have pointed to Saturday's attack as evidence that the security forces are deeply infiltrated by IS and are an unreliable partner.

Mouaz Moustafa, executive director of the Syrian Emergency Task Force, an advocacy group that seeks to build closer relations between Washington and Damascus, said that is unfair.

Despite both having Islamist roots, HTS and IS were enemies and often clashed over the past decade.

Among former members of HTS and allied groups, Moustafa, said, "It's a fact that even those who carry the most fundamentalist of beliefs, the most conservative within the fighters, have a vehement hatred of ISIS."

"The coalition between the United States and Syria is the most important partnership in the global fight against ISIS because only Syria has the expertise and experience to deal with this," he said.

Later Sunday, Syria's state-run news agency SANA reported that four members of the internal security forces were killed and a fifth was wounded after gunmen opened fire on them in the city of Maarat al-Numan in Idlib province.

It was not immediately clear who the gunmen were or whether the attack was linked to the Saturday's shooting.

## JetBlue flight near Venezuela avoids 'midair collision' with US Air Force tanker

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A JetBlue flight from the small Caribbean nation of Curaçao halted its ascent to avoid colliding with a U.S. Air Force refueling tanker on Friday, and the pilot blamed the military plane for crossing his path.

"We almost had a midair collision up here," the JetBlue pilot said, according to a recording of his conversation with air traffic control. "They passed directly in our flight path. ... They don't have their transponder turned on, it's outrageous."

The incident involved JetBlue Flight 1112 from Curaçao, which is just off the coast of Venezuela, en route

to New York City's JFK airport. It comes as the U.S. military has stepped up its drug interdiction activities in the Caribbean and is also seeking to increase pressure on Venezuela's government.

"We just had traffic pass directly in front of us within 5 miles of us — maybe 2 or 3 miles — but it was an air-to air-refueler from the United States Air Force and he was at our altitude," the pilot said. "We had to stop our climb." The pilot said the Air Force plane then headed into Venezuelan air space.

Derek Dombrowski, a spokesman for JetBlue, said Sunday: "We have reported this incident to federal authorities and will participate in any investigation." He added, "Our crewmembers are trained on proper procedures for various flight situations, and we appreciate our crew for promptly reporting this situation to our leadership team."

The Pentagon referred The Associated Press to the Air Force for comment. The Air Force didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Federal Aviation Administration last month issued a warning to U.S. aircraft urging them to "exercise caution" when in Venezuelan airspace, "due to the worsening security situation and heightened military activity in or around Venezuela."

According to the air traffic recording, the controller responded to the pilot, "It has been outrageous with the unidentified aircraft within our air."

## Hamis confirms the death of a top commander in Gaza after Israeli strike

JERUSALEM (AP) — Hamas on Sunday confirmed the death of a top commander in Gaza, a day after Israel said it had killed Raed Saad in a strike outside Gaza City.

The Hamas statement described Saad as the commander of its military manufacturing unit. Israel had described him as an architect of the Oct. 7, 2023, attack that sparked the war in Gaza, and asserted that he had been "engaged in rebuilding the terrorist organization" in a violation of the ceasefire that took effect two months ago.

Israel said it killed Saad after an explosive device detonated and wounded two soldiers in the territory's south.

Hamas also said it had named a new commander but did not give details, adding that it had the right to "respond to the occupation's aggression."

The strike on Saturday west of Gaza City killed four people, according to an Associated Press journalist who saw their bodies arrive at Shifa Hospital. Another three were wounded, according to Al-Awda hospital. Hamas in its initial statement described the vehicle struck as a civilian one.

Israel and Hamas have repeatedly accused each other of truce violations.

Israeli airstrikes and shootings in Gaza have killed at least 391 Palestinians since the ceasefire took hold, according to Palestinian health officials.

Israel has said recent strikes are in retaliation for militant attacks against its soldiers, and that troops have fired on Palestinians who approached the "Yellow Line" between the Israeli-controlled majority of Gaza and the rest of the territory.

On Sunday, Israel's military said it had killed a "terrorist" who crossed the line and approached troops in northern Gaza.

Israel has demanded that Palestinian militants return the remains of the final hostage, Ran Gvili, from Gaza and called it a condition of moving to the second and more complicated phase of the ceasefire. That lays out a vision for ending Hamas' rule and seeing the rebuilding of a demilitarized Gaza under international supervision.

The initial Hamas-led 2023 attack on southern Israel killed around 1,200 people and took 251 hostages. Almost all hostages or their remains have been returned in ceasefires or other deals.

Israel's two-year campaign in Gaza has killed more than 70,660 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.

## Egypt reveals restored colossal statues of pharaoh in Luxor

BY SAMY MAGDY AND AHMED HATEM Associated Press

LUXOR, Egypt (AP) — Egypt on Sunday revealed the revamp of two colossal statues of a prominent pharaoh in the southern city of Luxor, the latest in the government's archaeological events that aim at drawing more tourists to the country.

The giant alabaster statues, known as the Colossi of Memnon, were reassembled in a renovation project that lasted about two decades. They represent Amenhotep III, who ruled ancient Egypt about 3,400 years ago.

"Today we are celebrating, actually, the finishing and the erecting of these two colossal statues," Mohamed Ismail, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, told The Associated Press ahead of the ceremony.

Attempts to revive a prestigious temple

Ismail said the colossi are of great significance to Luxor, a city known for its ancient temples and other antiquities. They're also an attempt to "revive how this funerary temple of king Amenhotep III looked like a long time ago," Ismail said.

Amenhotep III, one of the most prominent pharaohs, ruled during the 500 years of the New Kingdom, which was the most prosperous time for ancient Egypt. The pharaoh, whose mummy is showcased at a Cairo museum, ruled between 1390–1353 BC, a peaceful period known for its prosperity and great construction, including his mortuary temple, where the Colossi of Memnon are located, and another temple, Soleb, in Nubia.

The colossi were toppled by a strong earthquake in about 1200 BC that also destroyed Amenhotep III's funerary temple, said Mohamed Ismail, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities.

They were fragmented and partly quarried away, with their pedestals dispersed. Some of their blocks were reused in the Karnak temple, but archaeologists brought them back to rebuild the colossi, according to the Antiquities Ministry.

In late 1990s, an Egyptian German mission, chaired by German Egyptologist Hourig Sourouzian, began working in the temple area, including the assembly and renovation of the colossi.

"This project has in mind ... to save the last remains of a once-prestigious temple," she said.

A Pharaoh facing the rising sun

The statues show Amenhotep III seated with hands resting on his thighs, with their faces looking eastward toward the Nile and the rising sun. They wear the nemes headdress surmounted by the double crowns and the pleated royal kilt, which symbolizes the pharaoh's divine rule.

Two other small statues on the pharaoh's feet depict his wife, Tiye.

The colossi — 14.5 meters (48 feet) and 13.6 meters (45 feet) respectively — preside over the entrance of the king's temple on the western bank of the Nile. The 35-hectare (86-acre) complex is believed to be the largest and richest temple in Egypt and is usually compared to the temple of Karnak, also in Luxor.

The colossi were hewn in Egyptian alabaster from the quarries of Hatnub, in Middle Egypt. They were fixed on large pedestals with inscriptions showing the name of the temple, as well as the quarry.

Unlike other monumental sculptures of ancient Egypt, the colossi were partly compiled with pieces sculpted separately, which were fixed into each statue's main monolithic alabaster core, the ministry said.

Eye on tourism

Sunday's unveiling in Luxor came just six weeks after the inauguration of the long-delayed Grand Egyptian Museum, the centerpiece of the government's bid to boost the country's tourism industry and bring cash into the troubled economy. The mega project is located near the famed Giza Pyramids and the Sphinx.

The tourism sector, which depends heavily on Egypt's rich pharaonic artifacts, has suffered during years of political turmoil and violence following the 2011 uprising. In recent years, the sector has started to recover after the coronavirus pandemic and amid Russia's war on Ukraine — both countries are major

sources of tourists visiting Egypt.

"This site is going to be a point of interest for years to come," said Tourism and Antiquities Minister Sherif Fathy, who attended the unveiling ceremony. "There are always new things happening in Luxor."

A record number of about 15.7 million tourists visited Egypt in 2024, contributing about 8% of the country's GDP, according to official figures.

Fathy, the minister, has said about 18 million tourists are expected to visit the country this year, with authorities hoping for 30 million visitors annually by 2032.

## As gerrymandering battles sweep country, supporters say partisan dominance is 'fair'

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

When Indiana adopted new U.S. House districts four years ago, Republican legislative leaders lauded them as "fair maps" that reflected the state's communities.

But when Gov. Mike Braun recently tried to redraw the lines to help Republicans gain more power, he implored lawmakers to "vote for fair maps."

What changed? The definition of "fair."

As states undertake mid-decade redistricting instigated by President Donald Trump, Republicans and Democrats are using a tit-for-tat definition of fairness to justify districts that split communities in an attempt to send politically lopsided delegations to Congress. It is fair, they argue, because other states have done the same. And it is necessary, they claim, to maintain a partisan balance in the House of Representatives that resembles the national political divide.

This new vision for drawing congressional maps is creating a winner-take-all scenario that treats the House, traditionally a more diverse patchwork of politicians, like the Senate, where members reflect a state's majority party. The result could be reduced power for minority communities, less attention to certain issues and fewer distinct voices heard in Washington.

Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky fears that unconstrained gerrymandering would put the United States on a perilous path, if Democrats in states such as Texas and Republicans in states like California feel shut out of electoral politics. "I think that it's going to lead to more civil tension and possibly more violence in our country," he said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press."

Although Indiana state senators rejected a new map backed by Trump and Braun that could have helped Republicans win all nine of the state's congressional seats, districts have already been redrawn in Texas, California, Missouri, North Carolina and Ohio. Other states could consider changes before the 2026 midterms that will determine control of Congress.

"It's a fundamental undermining of a key democratic condition," said Wayne Fields, a retired English professor from Washington University in St. Louis who is an expert on political rhetoric.

"The House is supposed to represent the people," Fields added. "We gain an awful lot by having particular parts of the population heard."

Redistricting is diluting community representation

Under the Constitution, the Senate has two members from each state. The House has 435 seats divided among states based on population, with each state guaranteed at least one representative. In the current Congress, California has the most at 52, followed by Texas with 38.

Because senators are elected statewide, they are almost always political pairs of one party or another. Pennsylvania and Wisconsin are the only states now with both a Democrat and Republican in the Senate. Maine and Vermont each have one independent and one senator affiliated with a political party.

By contrast, most states elect a mixture of Democrats and Republicans to the House. That is because House districts, with an average of 761,000 residents, based on the 2020 census, are more likely to reflect the varying partisan preferences of urban or rural voters, as well as different racial, ethnic and economic groups.

This year's redistricting is diminishing those locally unique districts.

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In California, voters in several rural counties that backed Trump were separated from similar rural areas and attached to a reshaped congressional district containing liberal coastal communities. In Missouri, Democratic-leaning voters in Kansas City were split from one main congressional district into three, with each revised district stretching deep into rural Republican areas.

Some residents complained their voices are getting drowned out. But Govs. Gavin Newsom, D-Calif., and Mike Kehoe, R-Mo., defended the gerrymandering as a means of countering other states and amplifying the voices of those aligned with the state's majority.

All is 'fair' in redistricting

Indiana's delegation in the U.S. House consists of seven Republicans and two Democrats — one representing Indianapolis and the other a suburban Chicago district in the state's northwestern corner.

Dueling definitions of fairness were on display at the Indiana Capitol as lawmakers considered a Trump-backed redistricting plan that would have split Indianapolis among four Republican-leaning districts and merged the Chicago suburbs with rural Republican areas. Opponents walked the halls in protest, carrying signs such as "I stand for fair maps!"

Ethan Hatcher, a talk radio host who said he votes for Republicans and Libertarians, denounced the redistricting plan as "a blatant power grab" that "compromises the principles of our Founding Fathers" by fracturing Democratic strongholds to dilute the voices of urban voters.

"It's a calculated assault on fair representation," Hatcher told a state Senate committee.

But others asserted it would be fair for Indiana Republicans to hold all of those House seats, because Trump won the "solidly Republican state" by nearly three-fifths of the vote.

"Our current 7-2 congressional delegation doesn't fully capture that strength," resident Tracy Kissel said at a committee hearing. "We can create fairer, more competitive districts that align with how Hoosiers vote."

When senators defeated a map designed to deliver a 9-0 congressional delegation for Republicans, Braun bemoaned that they had missed an "opportunity to protect Hoosiers with fair maps."

Disrupting an equilibrium

By some national measurements, the U.S. House already is politically fair. The 220-215 majority that Republicans won over Democrats in the 2024 elections almost perfectly aligns with the share of the vote the two parties received in districts across the country, according to an Associated Press analysis.

But that overall balance belies an imbalance that exists in many states. Even before this year's redistricting, the number of states with congressional districts tilted toward one party or another was higher than at any point in at least a decade, the AP analysis found.

The partisan divisions have contributed to a "cutthroat political environment" that "drives the parties to extreme measures," said Kent Syler, a political science professor at Middle Tennessee State University. He noted that Republicans hold 88% of congressional seats in Tennessee, and Democrats have an equivalent in Maryland.

"Fairer redistricting would give people more of a feeling that they have a voice," Syler said.

Rebekah Caruthers, who leads the Fair Elections Center, a nonprofit voting rights group, said there should be compact districts that allow communities of interest to elect the representatives of their choice, regardless of how that affects the national political balance. Gerrymandering districts to be dominated by a single party results in "an unfair disenfranchisement" of some voters, she said.

"Ultimately, this isn't going to be good for democracy," Caruthers said. "We need some type of détente."

## Like many holiday traditions, lighting candles and fireplaces is best done in moderation

By CHEYANNE MUMPHREY Associated Press

The warm spices in gingerbread, the woody aroma of pine and fir trees, and the fruity tang of mulled wine are smells synonymous with the holiday season. Many people enjoy lighting candles, incense and fireplaces in their homes to evoke the moods associated with these festive fragrances.

Burning scented products may create a cozy ambiance, and in the case of fireplaces, provide light and

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heat, but some experts want people to consider how doing so contributes to the quality of the air indoors. All flames release chemicals that may cause allergy-like symptoms or contribute to long-term respiratory problems if they are inhaled in sufficient quantities.

However, people don't have to stop sitting by the hearth or get rid of products like perfumed candles and essential oil diffusers, said Dr. Meredith McCormack, director of the pulmonary and critical care medicine division at John Hopkins University's medical school. Instead, she recommends taking precautions to control the pollutants in their homes.

"Clean air is fragrance free," said McCormack, who has studied air quality and lung health for more than 20 years. "If having seasonal scents is part of your tradition or evokes feelings of nostalgia, maybe think about it in moderation."

## What to know about indoor air quality

People in the Northern Hemisphere tend to spend more time indoors during the end-of-year holidays, when temperatures are colder. Indoor air can be significantly more polluted than outdoor air because pollutants get trapped inside and concentrated without proper ventilation or filtration, according to the American Lung Association.

For example, active fireplaces and gas appliances release tiny airborne particles that can get into the lungs and chemicals like nitrogen dioxide, a major component of smog, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Cleaning products, air fresheners and candles also emit air pollutants at varying concentrations.

The risk fragrances and other air pollutants may pose to respiratory health depends on the source, the length and intensity of a person's exposure, and individual health, McCormack said.

It is also important to note that some pollutants have no smell, so unscented products still can affect indoor air quality, experts say.

## Some people are more vulnerable

Polluted air affects everyone but not equally. Children, older adults, minority populations and people of low socioeconomic status are more likely to be affected by poor air quality because of either physiological vulnerabilities or higher exposure, according to the environmental agency.

Children are more susceptible to air pollution because of their lung size, which means they get a greater dose of exposure relative to their body size, McCormack said. Pollutants inside the home also pose a greater hazard to people with heart or lung conditions, including asthma, she said.

Signs of respiratory irritation include coughing, shortness of breath, headaches, a runny nose and sneezing. Experts advise stopping use of pollutant-releasing products or immediately ventilating rooms if symptoms occur.

"The more risk factors you have, the more harmful air pollution or poor air quality indoors can be," McCormack said.

## Practical precautions to take

Ellen Wilkove burns candles with scents like vanilla and cinnamon when she does yoga, writes or when she is showering at her home in New Jersey. Her teenage daughter, on the other hand, likes more seasonally scented candles like gingerbread.

"The candle has a calming presence. They are also very symbolic and used in rituals and many religions," she said.

Wilkove said she leans toward candles made with soy-based waxes instead of petroleum-based paraffin. Experts note that all lit candles give off air pollutants regardless of what they are made of.

Buying products with fewer ingredients, opening windows if the temperatures allow, and using air purifiers with HEPA filters are ways to reduce exposure to any pollutants from indoor fireplaces, appliances and candle displays, McCormack said. She also recommends switching on kitchen exhaust fans before starting a gas-powered stovetop and using the back burners so the vent can more easily suck up pollutants.

Setting polite boundaries with guests who smoke cigarettes or other tobacco products is also a good idea, she said.

"Small improvements in air quality can have measurable health benefits," McCormack said. "Similarly to

if we exercise and eat a little better, we can be healthier.”

Rachael Lewis-Abbott, a member of the Indoor Air Quality Association, an organization for professionals who identify and address air quality problems, said people don't usually notice what they are breathing in until problems like gas leaks or mold develop.

“It is out of sight, out of mind,” she said.

## **Iraq's election result ratified by Supreme Federal Court as premiership remains up for grabs**

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and STELLA MARTANY Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — The result of last month's parliamentary elections in Iraq was ratified by the Supreme Federal Court on Sunday, confirming that the party of caretaker prime minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani won the largest number of seats — but not enough to assure him a second term.

The court confirmed that the voting process met all constitutional and legal requirements and had no irregularities affecting its validity.

The Independent High Electoral Commission submitted the final results of the legislative elections to the Supreme Federal Court on Monday for official certification after resolving 853 complaints submitted regarding the election results.

Al-Sudani's Reconstruction and Development Coalition won 46 seats in the 329-seat parliament. However, in past elections in Iraq, the bloc taking the largest number of seats has often been unable to impose its preferred candidate.

The coalition led by former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki won 29 seats, the Sadiqoun Bloc, which is led by the leader of the Asaib Ahl al-Haq militia, Qais al-Khazali, won 28 seats, and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, led by Masoud Barzani, one of the two main Kurdish parties in the country, won 27 seats.

The Taqaddum (Progress) party of ousted former Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi also won 27 seats, setting the stage for a contest over the speaker's role.

By convention, the prime minister of Iraq is always Shiite, the president a Kurd, and the parliament speaker Sunni.

Overall, Shiite alliances and lists secured 187 seats, Sunni groups 77 seats, Kurdish groups 56 seats, in addition to 9 seats reserved for members of minority groups.

Al-Sudani came to power in 2022 with the backing of the Coordination Framework, a coalition of Iran-backed Shiite parties, but it is not clear whether the coalition will align behind him a second time.

With no single bloc able to form a government alone, political leaders have launched negotiations to build a ruling coalition.

## **Mass shootings are rare in Australia. Here is a look at some previous attacks**

SYDNEY (AP) — At least 11 people were killed Sunday in a shooting attack during a Jewish holiday celebration at Sydney's Bondi Beach, police said.

Mass shootings are rare in Australia, where gun ownership has been tightly controlled since a massacre in 1996.

Here is a timeline of some recent shootings.

April 28, 1996

Gunman Martin Bryant killed 35 people and wounded 23 in a rampage at the Port Arthur tourist precinct in the state of Tasmania.

In the wake of the attack, the federal and state governments agreed to ban semiautomatic and pump-action shotguns and rifles. A gun buyback scheme saw more than 700,000 firearms surrendered.

In the decade before the massacre, there had been 11 mass shootings with at least four dead victims. There were none in the decade that followed.

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Sept. 8, 2014

A farmer shot his wife and three children near Lockhart in New South Wales state before killing himself.

Dec. 16, 2014

Three people died when police stormed the Lindt Café in Sydney, where an Iranian-born self-styled cleric had taken 18 people hostage. The dead included hostage-taker Man Monis, shot by police, a hostage hit by fragments of a police bullet, and one who was shot by Monis.

May 11, 2018

A farmer killed six family members before turning a gun on himself in Western Australia state.

June 4, 2019

A man who was out on parole fatally shot four men and wounded a woman in the northern Australian city of Darwin.

Dec. 12, 2022

Six people died in a gunbattle at a rural property in Wieambilla, Queensland state. Two police officers were shot and killed by extremist Christian conspiracy theorists; the three shooters and one of their neighbors were shot dead by police.

Dec. 14, 2025

Gunmen opened fire during a Hanukkah ceremony at Bondi Beach, killing at least 11 in what authorities called a terrorist attack targeting the Jewish community.

## From hoops to oysters: Inside the unexpected second acts of WNBA stars

By CLAIRE SAVAGE and BRITTANY PETERSON Associated Press

After seven days of wind, the morning is finally calm enough on New York's East Moriches Bay for Sue Wicks to jetty her boat to check on her oysters. Hundreds of cages pop out at odd angles from their lines, and a few float away.

The retired WNBA star and Hall of Famer admits that the aquaculture farm she started at age 50 can be anxiety-inducing and compares it to her time playing basketball.

"Some days you're like, 'Why am I doing this?' You're injured, you're hurt, you are losing, things are going bad. And then the next day you go back and do it again because you love it," she said.

Wicks, 59, has worked as a commentator, college basketball coach and at a fitness start-up since retiring from the WNBA in 2002, and says she feels lucky to again find a career "that works for my soul." But the reality is that even a successful run as one of the world's best basketball players didn't earn her enough to fully retire.

Although the WNBA is bringing in more than ever from sponsors and ticket sales, many players still find themselves financially unsteady when the final whistle blows.

"The choice is what they do as their second career, not whether they have a second career," said Risa Isard, director of research and insights at women's sports marketing platform Parity. Since "women athletes get paid a fraction of what men do while they're playing," Isard said their next acts tend to look more like traditional career paths rather than managing substantial investment portfolios.

The average NBA salary is around \$11.9 million, according to data reviewed by The Associated Press. That's nearly 100 times what the WNBA says is the average salary of \$120,000 for its players — although major differences in league size, age, profit margins and media contracts account for part of that gap.

For 2009 second overall draft pick and 2015 WNBA All-Star Marissa Coleman, the main difference between post-playing careers between WNBA and NBA players is that "most NBA guys are sitting on tens, sometimes hundreds of million dollars." And for those who are financially savvy, working after the game is "more so curing boredom versus a necessity."

"Most women athletes across the board have to find a career after basketball out of necessity," Coleman said.

All this is happening against a backdrop of unresolved questions about the future of WNBA player com-

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pensation. Tensions have run high in the ongoing labor battle between the WNBA and the players' union, although it is unclear how far apart the sides are in terms of compensation. Both parties agreed on Nov. 30 to an extension of the current collective bargaining agreement to Jan. 9 while negotiations continue.

A major sticking point has been revenue sharing: As the WNBA booms, players are looking for a larger share in that growth. They currently earn a significantly smaller fraction of the league's revenue compared with NBA players.

When former Minnesota Lynx forward Devereaux Peters transitioned from basketball to real estate development in 2019, she said the hardest lesson was learning that working hard in her new career may not be enough to yield results quickly, or at all. After a tough game during her playing days, she could "go in the gym and shoot and work on my shot. And you're going to see a result if you're putting in the work."

"That is not necessarily true in the real world," said the 36-year-old. "You can put in a ton of work and do a lot right and not get anywhere."

The shift away from basketball also came as a financial shock: "That transition was a little bit difficult in that I had to cut back significantly," she said. "There was a lot of learning very quickly" given the "big gap in what I was making then and what I make now."

For the last six years, Peters has shepherded an affordable housing project in South Bend, Indiana — home to her alma mater, Notre Dame. Red tape, politics, and myriad other logistical challenges have made the project "the hardest thing I've ever done in my life," Peters said.

But she says it's also the best: "Helping people that truly, genuinely need it" makes it all worth it. Her affordable apartment building is slated to break ground next month, and open its doors in August 2027.

For 38-year-old Coleman, the next phase of her career also unfolded far outside the paint. Alongside former teammate Alana Beard, Coleman franchised a Mellow Mushroom — a psychedelic-themed pizza chain — in Roanoke, Virginia. She also chaired a campaign to legalize sports betting in Maryland, and now leads strategy and growth for the VIP team at fantasy sports platform Underdog, with the aim of carving space for more women and people of color to access the industry.

"I knew from a very early age entrepreneurship and business were something that I was really, really passionate about," Coleman said.

She added that she feels grateful to her parents for emphasizing the importance of education and long-term career planning. Thanks to their wisdom, she made sure to seek out mentors and explore industries that interested her throughout her basketball career.

"I knew I didn't want to be one of those players that retired, and it was like, 'Oh gosh, what now?'" Coleman said.

Many former athletes land in sports-related roles, such as coaching or sports broadcasting. But not all are surefooted in finding their next calling.

Jayne Appel Marinelli, SVP of player relations for the league's union and a former center for the San Antonio Stars, counsels players on their post-basketball career path. She explained the transition remains challenging for many, even with the WNBA and union's joint tuition assistance and internship program, and semester-long opportunity with Harvard Business School, which Coleman completed.

The players' union has worked to further expand opportunities by adding player internship slots to licensee contracts, partnering with universities and more, according to Appel Marinelli. Athletes "sometimes need help recognizing that the skills that they have built are so easily transferable over to any role that they're going to take on next," she said.

That kind of support didn't exist for Wicks' generation at the league's inception in 1997. There "was no stability in women's sports," she said. "Our victory was, we got our next paycheck, and that the lights were on and that the bus was waiting there still."

Back then, "my dream was that the league would exist," Wicks said. Almost 30 years later, her new dream is that players "are compensated in a way that gives them freedom to do what they want in life."

Despite her own post-WNBA success, Peters says players could use more guidance to help them understand how to plan, save and prepare for the future.

"The general lifespan of a basketball player is not long," she said. "You have to be prepared to not be here tomorrow or the next year."

## **New Zealand skier Alice Robinson wins World Cup super-G; Lindsey Vonn 4th**

ST. MORITZ, Switzerland (AP) — New Zealand's Alice Robinson was already leading the Olympic season's giant slalom standings. Now she's a threat in super-G, too.

Robinson won a World Cup super-G on Sunday for her first career victory in the discipline — which also made her the first Kiwi to claim a win in the speed event.

Robinson finished 0.08 seconds ahead of Romane Miradoli of France and 0.19 ahead of Sofia Goggia of Italy.

"Crazy. I was not expecting this today," Robinson said. "I always felt like I was holding back in super-G a bit but not a part of me was scared today. I just wanted to go for it."

The 41-year-old American standout Lindsey Vonn finished fourth, 0.27 behind. In a downhill on Friday, Vonn became the oldest winner in the circuit's history. Vonn then finished second in another downhill on Saturday.

"I'm a little bit disappointed in myself that I didn't push hard enough," Vonn said. "I was too conservative in some sections."

Mikaela Shiffrin, the holder of a record 104 World Cup victories, missed the final gate but did not fall.

Shiffrin hadn't entered a speed race since crashing in a downhill in Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, nearly two years ago. She's also still recovering her form after another crash in a giant slalom in Killington, Vermont, last season left her with a deep puncture wound on the right side of her abdomen.

Emma Aicher, the German skier who won Saturday's downhill, lost control coming over a jump early in her run and fell. But she got right back up and appeared uninjured.

U.S. Ski Team coach Alex Hoedlmoser set a tricky course that caught out several other racers, too — despite clear and sunny skies providing perfect conditions.

Robinson has won two of the four giant slaloms this season but had never finished better than fourth in a super-G.

Now she's a two-discipline threat for the Milan Cortina Olympics. Women's Alpine skiing at the Feb. 6-22 Winter Games will be held in Cortina.

All six of Robinson's previous World Cup victories came in giant slalom.

Robinson moved up from third to second in the overall standings and is now within 64 points of Shiffrin.

The circuit now shifts to France for a night slalom in Courchevel on Tuesday and then more speed racing in Val d'Isere next weekend.

## **Haruki Murakami honored with awards and a jazzy tribute in New York**

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Haruki Murakami was in town last week to hear his words set to music and his praises literally sung.

The 76-year-old Tokyo resident and perennial Nobel Prize candidate received a pair of honors in Manhattan for his long career as a storyteller, translator, critic and essayist. On Tuesday night, the Center for Fiction presented him its Lifetime of Excellence in Fiction Award, previously given to Nobel laureates Toni Morrison and Kazuo Ishiguro among others. Two days later, the Japan Society co-hosted a jazzy tribute at The Town Hall, "Murakami Mixtape," and awarded him its annual prize for "luminous individuals (including Yoko Ono and Caroline Kennedy ) who have brought the U.S. and Japan closer together."

Murakami fans know him for such novels as "Kafka on the Shore" and "The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle," and for his themes of identity, isolation and memory. But they also pick up on his non-literary passions,

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from beer and baseball to running and jazz. Praising him requires more work than it does for your average high-achieving writer.

At the Center for Fiction gala, held at the downtown Cipriani 25 Broadway, longtime Murakami admirer Patti Smith introduced the author with the ballad "Wing" and its lofty refrain, "And if there's one thing/I could do for you/You'd be a wing/In heaven blue." She then shared memories of first learning about him, holding up an old copy of his debut novel, "Hear the Wind Sing," and reading its opening sentence: "There's no such thing as perfect writing, just like there's no such thing as perfect despair."

Smith said, "I was hooked, immediately."

The Town Hall "Mixtape" was a sold-out, bilingual evening of music, readings and reflections, framed by Murakami's opening and closing remarks and presided over by the prize-winning jazz pianist Jason Moran, translator-publisher Motoyuki Shibata and author-scholar Roland Nozomu Kelts. "Murakami Mixtape" was entertainment for the casual fan — author tributes don't often include a makeshift bar on stage — and educational even for the specialist, featuring Murakami works little known to English-language readers.

Kelts (reading in English) and Shibata (reading in Japanese) selected fiction and nonfiction passages for Moran and his accompanists to weave through and around. They read from the surreal "Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World" and the memoir "What I Talk About When I Talk About Running." But they also highlighted such rarities as the short story "The 1963/1982 Girl from Ipanema," in which the narrator shares a drink with the bossa nova muse, and an old essay about New York before Murakami had ever seen it.

"Does New York City really exist?" Murakami wondered. "I don't believe, one hundred percent, the existence of the city. Ninety-nine percent, I would say. In other words, if someone came up to me and said, 'You know, there's actually no such thing as New York City,' I wouldn't be that surprised."

Kelts remembered asking Murakami about some of his favorite international stops, and how his choices, including Boston and Stockholm, were home to used jazz stores worthy of repeated visits. Murakami's affair with jazz began in his teens, in 1963, when Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers were on tour in Japan. It was rekindled at The Town Hall when Moran brought out the last surviving member of that band, 88-year-old bassist Reggie Workman, who joined the other musicians for a jam on "Ugetsu" (the title track of a live Blakey album) and capped it with a searching solo.

Murakami appeared briefly at the end to read a portion in Japanese from "Kafka on the Shore," and explained that he might have been a musician instead of a writer, but he couldn't bear to rehearse every day. At the start of the evening, Murakami shared some impressions of New York once he did arrive, in 1991. His comments were read in English by Japan Society President & CEO Joshua Walker.

"Back then was the height of Japan bashing," Murakami said. "You could find events, where, for a dollar, they hand you a hammer and let you take a whack at a Japanese car."

On Dec. 7, 1991, the 50th anniversary of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Murakami was advised to stay at home "just in case there was any trouble." The author began to feel more welcome after Japan's economy fell into a decades-long slump, the threat to the U.S. apparently diminished. But he continued to feel isolated by his native country's "cultural" deficit.

"You often hear that Japan has no real face, no identity. I almost never came across contemporary Japanese fiction in American bookstores. As a Japanese writer, I couldn't help but feel a real sense of crisis," he said.

"And now I see young Japanese writers venturing abroad, earning recognition, their books being picked up by readers as a matter of course, in music, film, anime and more. The advances have been remarkable. Economically, people talk about Japan's three last decades, but culturally, I think it's fair to say that Japan's face has finally emerged."

## Hong Kong's biggest pro-democracy party votes to disband after more than 30 years of activism

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong's biggest pro-democracy party voted Sunday to dissolve after more than 30 years of activism, marking the end of an era of the Chinese semiautonomous city's once-diverse political landscape.

Democratic Party chairperson Lo Kin-hei said the political environment was "one important point" among the factors they considered, and about 97% of members' ballots were in support of its liquidation. He said it is the best way forward for its members.

"Yet as the times have shifted, we now, with deep regret, must bring this chapter to a close," he said.

Party veterans had earlier told The Associated Press that some members were warned of consequences if the party didn't shut down.

Its demise reflects the dwindling freedoms promised to the former British colony when it returned to China's rule in 1997.

### Arrests and shutdowns during Beijing's crackdown

China imposed a national security law in June 2020, following massive anti-government protests the year before, saying it was necessary for the city's stability. Under the law, many leading activists, including the Democratic Party's former chairs Albert Ho and Wu Chi-wai and other former lawmakers, were arrested.

Jimmy Lai, founder of the pro-democracy Apple Daily newspaper, was also charged under the law. Lai will hear his verdict on Monday. Apple Daily was one of the vocal independent outlets shut down over the past five years.

Dozens of civil society groups have also closed, including the second-largest pro-democracy party, Civic Party and a group that organized annual vigils commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown.

In June, the League of Social Democrats, which had remained active in holding tiny street protests in recent years, announced its closure, citing immense political pressure.

### A moderate opposition party filled with political stars

The Democratic Party, founded in 1994, was a moderate opposition party that pushed for universal suffrage in electing the city's leader for decades. Prominent party members include Martin Lee, nicknamed the city's "father of democracy," Ho, former leader of the group that organized Tiananmen vigils, and journalist-turned-activist Emily Lau.

It once held multiple legislative seats and amassed dozens of directly elected district councillors who helped residents with issues in their households and municipal matters. Some of its former members joined the government as senior officials.

Its willingness to negotiate with Beijing led to its proposal being included in a 2010 political reform package — a move that drew harsh criticism from some members and other democracy advocates who wanted more sweeping changes.

As new pro-democracy groups grew, the party's influence declined. But when the 2019 protests swept Hong Kong, the party's activism won widespread support again.

During Beijing's crackdown, the Democratic Party has turned into more like a pressure group. Electoral overhauls that were designed to ensure only "patriots" administer the city effectively shut out all pro-democracy politicians in the legislature and district councils.

The party pressed on by holding news conferences on livelihood issues. It even submitted opinions on a homegrown national security legislation before it was enacted in March 2024.

Earlier this year, the party decided to set up a task force to look into the procedures involved in dissolving itself, and its leadership secured members' mandate to move closer to this goal.

### Regression of freedoms

Former chairperson Yeung Sum in Sunday's news conference said the party's disbandment indicated the regression of Hong Kong from being a free and liberal society. He said the route to implementing democracy

after the 1997 handover wasn't a total failure, saying the city had just gone halfway through that path. Yeung said if one day, there could be a review of the "one country, two systems" principle, which Beijing uses to govern Hong Kong, and it could move back toward being more open, the city would have a better future.

"Now, it's a low point, but we haven't lost all hope," he said.

On whether Hong Kong will still have a democracy movement, Lo said it depends on every Hong Konger, highlighting that universal suffrage is promised under the city's mini-constitution.

"If Hong Kong people believe that democracy is the way to go, I believe that they will keep on striving for democracy."

## Arctic air mass pushes to the U.S. South; Midwest also bracing for dangerous wind chills

By MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

MONROE, Wash. (AP) — A blast of arctic air swept south from Canada and spread into parts of the northern U.S. on Saturday, while residents of the Pacific Northwest braced for possible mudslides and levee failures from floodwaters that are expected to be slow to recede.

The catastrophic flooding forced thousands of people to evacuate, including Eddie Wicks and his wife, who live amid sunflowers and Christmas trees on a Washington state farm next to the Snoqualmie River. As they moved their two donkeys to higher ground and their eight goats to their outdoor kitchen, the water began to rise much quicker than anything they had experienced before.

As the water engulfed their home Thursday afternoon, deputies from the King County Sheriff's Office marine rescue dive unit were able to rescue them and their dog, taking them on a boat the half-mile (800 meters) across their field, which had been transformed into a lake. The rescue was captured on video.

The danger is not over in the Pacific Northwest

Another round of rain and wind is in store for the region as early as late Sunday, forecasters said.

"Bottom line at this point in time is we're not done despite the sunny conditions that we have across western Washington at this point," said Reid Wolcott, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Seattle.

"There is yet more still to come in terms of in terms of wind, in terms of rain, in terms in terms of flooding," he said. "And Washingtonians need to be prepared for additional impacts, additional flooding, tree damage, power outages, etc."

High winds expected at the end of the weekend and into the first part of week are a concern because the ground is extremely saturated, putting trees at risk of toppling, he said.

Resident 'starting over' after home is flooded

In Burlington, a farming community about an hour north of Seattle, the receding floodwaters allowed residents to assess damage and clean up their homes.

Friends and relatives helped empty Argentina Dominguez's home, filling trailers with soaked furniture, ripping carpet and mopping muddy floors.

"I know it's materialistic stuff, but they were our stuff. It's really hard. But we're gonna try our best to like get through it all," Dominguez said. "We're just trying to get everything off the floor so we can start over."

Flood cleanup to be challenging and costly, governor says

In Snohomish County, Washington, north of Seattle, emergency officials on Saturday led federal, state and local officials on a tour of the devastation.

"It's obvious that thousands and thousands of Washingtonians and communities all across our state are in the process of digging out, and that's going to be a challenging process," Gov. Bob Ferguson said.

"It's going to be expensive," he said. "It's going to be time consuming, and it's going to be potentially dangerous at times. So I think we're seeing here in Monroe is what we're going to be seeing all across the state, and that's what's got our focus right now."

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Big cities like Chicago, Minneapolis hit by arctic air

As the Pacific Northwest begins to recover from the deluge, a separate weather system already brought dangerous wind-chill values — the combination of cold air temperatures and wind — to parts of the Upper Midwest.

Shortly before noon Saturday, it was minus 12 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 24 degrees Celsius) in Grand Forks, North Dakota, where the wind-chill value meant that it felt like minus 33 F (minus 36 C), the National Weather Service said.

For big cities like Minneapolis and Chicago, the coldest temperatures were expected late Saturday night into Sunday morning. In the Minneapolis area, low temperatures were expected to drop to around minus 15 F (minus 26 C), by early Sunday morning. Lows in the Chicago area are projected to be around 1 F (minus 17 C) by early Sunday, the weather service said.

The Arctic air mass was expected to continue pushing south and east over the weekend, expanding into Southern states by Sunday.

The National Weather Service on Saturday issued cold weather advisories that stretched as far south as the Alabama state capital city of Montgomery, where temperatures late Sunday night into Monday morning were expected to plummet to around 22 F (minus 6 C). To the east, lows in Savannah, Georgia, were expected to drop to around 24 F (minus 4 C) during the same time period.

Mudslides, levee failures threaten the Pacific Northwest

The cold weather freezing much of the country came as residents in the Pacific Northwest endure more misery after several days of flooding. Thousands of people have been forced to evacuate towns in the region as an unusually strong atmospheric river dumped a foot (30 centimeters) or more of rain in parts of western and central Washington over several days and swelled rivers, inundating communities and prompting dramatic rescues from rooftops and vehicles.

Many animals were also evacuated as waters raged over horse pastures, barns and farmland. At the peak of evacuations, roughly 170 horses, 140 chickens and 90 goats saved from the floodwaters were being cared for at a county park north of Seattle, said Kara Underwood, division manager of Snohomish County Parks. Most of those animals were still at the park on Saturday, she said.

The record floodwaters slowly receded, but authorities warned that waters will remain high for days, and that there was still danger from potential levee failures or mudslides. There was also the threat of more rain forecast for Sunday. Officials conducted dozens of water rescues as debris and mudslides closed highways and raging torrents washed out roads and bridges.

## What to know about the US military's role in Syria after deadly IS attack

By ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — The death of two U.S. service members and one American civilian in an attack in Syria by an alleged member of the Islamic State group has drawn new attention to the presence of American forces in the country.

Saturday's attack was the first with fatalities since the fall of Syrian President Bashar Assad a year ago.

The United States has had troops on the ground in Syria for over a decade, with a stated mission of fighting IS. While not part of its official mission, the U.S. presence has also been seen as a means to hinder the flow of Iranian and Iran-backed fighters and weapons into Syria from neighboring Iraq.

The number of U.S. troops in the country has fluctuated and currently stands at around 900. They are mainly posted in the Kurdish-controlled northeast and at the al-Tanf base in the southeastern desert near the borders with Iraq and Jordan.

Here's the back story and present situation of the U.S. military force in Syria:

What U.S. forces are doing in Syria

In 2011, mass protests in Syria against the Assad government were met by a brutal crackdown and spiraled into a civil war that lasted nearly 14 years before he was ousted in December 2024.

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Wary of getting bogged down in another costly and politically unpopular war in the Middle East after its experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, Washington sent support to rebel groups but at first avoided direct military intervention.

That changed after the rise of the IS, which carried out sporadic attacks in the U.S. and Europe, while in Iraq and Syria, it seized territory that was at one point half the size of the United Kingdom. In the areas the group controlled, it was notorious for its brutality against religious minorities, as well as Muslims whom it considered to be apostates.

In 2014, the administration of then-U.S. President Barack Obama launched an air campaign against IS in Iraq and Syria. The following year, the first U.S. ground troops entered Syria, where they partnered with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in the country's northeast.

By 2019, IS had lost control of all the territory it once held, but sleeper cells have continued to launch attacks.

The US military and Syrian forces

Before Assad's ouster, Washington had no diplomatic relations with Damascus and the U.S. military did not work directly with the Syrian army.

That has changed over the past year. Ties have warmed between the administrations of U.S. President Donald Trump and Syrian interim President Ahmad al-Sharaa, the former leader of an Islamist insurgent group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham that used to be listed by Washington as a terrorist organization.

In November, al-Sharaa became the first Syrian president to visit Washington since the country's independence in 1946. During his visit, Syria announced its entry into the global coalition against the Islamic State, joining 89 other countries that have committed to combating the group.

While the entry into the coalition signals a move toward greater coordination between the Syrian and U.S. militaries, the Syrian security forces have not officially joined Operation Inherent Resolve, the U.S.-led military mission against IS in Iraq and Syria, which has for years partnered with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces in northeast Syria.

The future US footprint in Syria

The number of U.S. troops posted in Syria has changed over the years.

Trump tried to withdraw all forces from Syria during his first term, but he met opposition from the Pentagon because it was seen as abandoning Washington's Kurdish allies, leaving them open to a Turkish offensive.

Turkey considers the SDF a terrorist organization because of its association with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, which has waged a long-running insurgency in Turkey.

The number of U.S. troops increased to more than 2,000 after the Oct. 7, 2023, attack by Hamas in Israel, as Iranian-backed militants targeted American troops and interests in the region in response to Israel's bombardment of Gaza.

The force has since been drawn back down to around 900, but Trump has given no indication that he is planning a full withdrawal in the near future.

After Saturday's attack, U.S. envoy to Syria Tom Barrack posted on X: "A limited number of U.S. forces remain deployed in Syria solely to finish the job of defeating ISIS once and for all."

The U.S. presence "empowers capable local Syrian partners to take the fight to these terrorists on the ground, ensuring that American forces do not have to engage in another costly, large-scale war in the Middle East," he said, adding, "We will not waver in this mission until ISIS is utterly destroyed."

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## Today in History: December 15, the Bill of Rights takes effect

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, Dec. 15, the 349th day of 2025. There are 16 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Dec. 15, 1791, the Bill of Rights, the first 10 amendments to the U.S. Constitution, went into effect following ratification by Virginia.

Also on this date:

In 1890, Hunkpapa Lakota Chief Sitting Bull and 11 other tribe members were killed in Grand River, South Dakota, during a confrontation with Indian agency police.

In 1939, the Civil War motion picture epic "Gone with the Wind," starring Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable, had its world premiere in Atlanta.

In 1944, a single-engine plane carrying bandleader Glenn Miller, a major in the U.S. Army Air Forces, disappeared over the English Channel while en route to Paris.

In 1967, the Silver Bridge between Gallipolis (gal-ih-puh-LEES'), Ohio, and Point Pleasant, West Virginia, collapsed into the Ohio River, killing 46 people.

In 2011, the flag used by U.S. forces in Iraq was lowered in a Baghdad airport ceremony, marking the formal end of the American military mission in that country. The war left 110,000 Iraqis and 4,500 Americans dead.

In 2013, Nelson Mandela was laid to rest in a state funeral, ending a 10-day mourning period for South Africa's first Black president. Mandela died on Dec. 5 of that year at the age of 95.

In 2016, a federal jury in Charleston, South Carolina, convicted Dylann Roof of the racist killings of nine Black church members who had welcomed him into their Bible study gathering. The following year he would become the first person in the U.S. sentenced to death for a federal hate crime, a sentence upheld in 2021.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Cindy Birdsong (The Supremes) is 86. Rock musician Dave Clark (The Dave Clark Five) is 86. Baseball Hall of Fame manager Jim Leyland is 81. Actor Don Johnson is 76. Film and theater director Julie Taymor is 73. Democratic Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia is 71. Rock musician Paul Simonon (The Clash) is 70. Actor and filmmaker Lee Jung-jae is 53. Actor Adam Brody is 46. Actor Michelle Dockery is 44. Actor Charlie Cox is 43. Actor Camilla Luddington is 42. Rock musician and actor Alana Haim is 34. Actor Maude Apatow (AP'-ih-tow) is 28.