

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 1 of 73

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Coming up on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [4- Northern State drops road doubleheader at Wayne State](#)
- [5- GFP Commission Holds January Meeting](#)
- [6- DANR Announces \\$48.9 Million in Loans and Grants for Statewide Projects](#)
- [8- Name Released in Turner County Fatal Crash](#)
- [9- Krueger claims title; Decker places fourth at tournament](#)
- [10- IRS announces first day of 2026 filing season; online tools and resources help with tax filing](#)
- [12- School Board Agenda](#)
- [13- Kaiser announces run for Sheriff](#)
- [14- Fact Brief: Fact brief: Could a data center use equivalent of 50,000 homes of power?](#)
- [15- GDI Fitness Center Ad](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: New task force on police misconduct disclosure aims to prevent courtroom troubles](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: Thune, GOP senators at the border tout big hiring boost for immigration crack-down](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: Take it from Bill Janklow: State-funded preschool could slow South Dakota's prison growth](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: Custer State Park officials urge visitors to 'stay safe' as wind damage assessment, cleanup continue](#)
- [21- Weather Pages](#)
- [26- Daily Devotional](#)
- [27- Subscription Form](#)
- [28- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [29- News from the Associated Press](#)

Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026

Mixed Doubles Bowling Tournament at the Jungle, 1 p.m.

Cancelled: Groton Robotics Tourney, 8 a.m.

Boys Wrestling at Jesse James (Garretson) Tournament, 9:30 a.m.

Girls Wrestling at Mid-Dakota Monster (Lyman High School) Tournament, 10 a.m.

Basketball at Lennox: (Gym: BC-1, GC-2:15, Main Gym: JVGBB-1, JVBBB-2:15, VGBB-3:30, VBBB-5:00)

Sunday, Jan. 11, 2026

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9



a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.
Groton Soccer Association Clinics, GHS Arena, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
4th Grade BBB Practice, 1 p.m.
6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.
Dance Team Practice, 5 p.m.

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

© 2026 Groton Daily Independent

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 2 of 73

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.

ICE Shooting Scrutiny

Oregon's attorney general has opened an investigation into whether federal immigration agents exceeded their authority when they shot and wounded two people at a targeted traffic stop in Portland Thursday.

Federal officials claim the agents acted in self-defense after one of the wounded individuals allegedly weaponized their car. Authorities identified the wounded as Luis David Nico Moncada and Yorlenys Betzabeth Zambrano-Contreras, Venezuelan nationals who reportedly entered the US illegally. Federal officials allege both have ties to Tren de Aragua, though they have not publicly provided evidence supporting that claim. Moncada and Zambrano-Contreras are expected to be taken into FBI custody upon release from the hospital.

In Minneapolis, the Trump administration has barred state and local officials from assisting in a federal probe into the fatal shooting of US citizen Renee Nicole Good by an immigration agent Wednesday. Federal officials claim this officer also acted in self-defense, while state and local officials expressed skepticism.

Iran cuts off phone and internet access amid anti-government protests.

Iran imposed a communications blackout Thursday as the country's exiled crown prince called for continued protests. Civilians began taking to the streets Dec. 28 over Iran's ailing economy; the rial is currently trading at a record low of about 1.4M to \$1. Violence around the demonstrations has killed at least 62 people, including 48 protesters and 14 security personnel, according to an Iranian rights group.

US adds 50,000 jobs in December, capping worst hiring year since pandemic.

The US gained 50,000 nonfarm jobs last month, less than the 73,000 jobs economists projected. In all, the economy added an average of 49,000 jobs per month in 2025, compared to an average of 168,000 jobs per month in 2024. Last year was the worst year for job creation since 2009, excluding the 2020 pandemic year. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate fell to 4.4%, from 4.5% in November.

Russia uses powerful ballistic missile in major attack on Ukraine.

For only the second time in the nearly 4-year-old war, Russia attacked Ukraine overnight Thursday with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles, including an Oreshnik missile that can reportedly travel 10 times the speed of sound. Ukrainian officials said at least four people were killed and 25 were wounded in Kyiv. Russian officials said the attack was a response to an alleged Ukrainian drone strike on one of President Vladimir Putin's residences last month.

US to provide \$45M to support Thailand-Cambodia ceasefire.

A new ceasefire took hold Dec. 27 after a July truce unraveled in early December. The State Department yesterday pledged \$15M for displaced people and communities, \$10M to remove leftover munitions, and \$20M to combat scam operations and drug trafficking. China is also vying to assert influence, reportedly giving Cambodia \$2.8M in humanitarian aid and offering the same to Thailand.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 3 of 73

Elon Musk's Grok AI image generator faces deepfake backlash.

Three Democratic senators are urging Apple and Google to remove Elon Musk's Grok and social media platform X from their app stores, following a surge of Grok-generated explicit images depicting women and children without consent. X has since limited its in-app Grok chatbot to paying users and tightened image creation guardrails. As of this writing, the stand-alone Grok app reportedly still creates sexualized deepfakes.

Venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz raises over \$15B.

The haul represents over 18% of all venture capital dollars allocated in the US last year, according to fund cofounder Ben Horowitz. The firm, widely referred to as a16z, will funnel the money into new funds with focuses ranging from infrastructure to health. Fundraising for US venture capital firms dropped to \$66.1B last year, down 35% from 2024 and 70% from record levels in 2022.

Humankind(ness)

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Darlene G. in New York.

"Taking the [Long Island Rail Road] is something I do not do often, but when weather made it safer than driving, I rode it to be with my sick grandson. I realized I did not have my phone, and the connecting train was not scheduled. I shared my anxiety with a young man trying to get to his school, and he was so kind and helpful. After sharing my situation, he offered his phone and helped me navigate the train station to successfully transfer to my destination. He even sat next to me until we both arrived."



Coming Up on
GDILIVE.COM

Groton
Area
Tigers
Groton, SD

GDILIVE



A production of the

Groton Daily Independent

For more info: GDILIVE.COM



Sat., Jan. 10, 2026

**Rich Bosma and
Jeslyn Kosel**

Doubleheader at Lennox

Girls at 3:30 p.m., Boys at 5 p.m.

Northern State drops road doubleheader at Wayne State

WAYNE, Neb. — The Northern State University basketball teams wrapped up a challenging weekend road trip Friday night, as both the Wolves women and men fell to Wayne State in Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference action at Rice Auditorium.

The NSU women were unable to overcome an early deficit, falling 71–61 to the Wildcats despite another standout performance from Izzy Moore. Meanwhile, the Wolves men battled to the final minute before dropping an 86–79 decision in a tightly contested contest.

Women: Moore posts second straight double-double in 71–61 loss

Northern State suffered its seventh loss of the season as Wayne State controlled much of the first half and held off a third-quarter Wolves rally.

The Wildcats carried a 14-point halftime advantage before Northern State turned up the tempo after the break, pouring in 22 points in the third quarter to pull within striking distance. However, Wayne State answered down the stretch to secure the victory.

The Wolves finished the night shooting 36.4% from the field and launched a season-high 31 three-point attempts. NSU totaled 61 points, 33 rebounds, 15 assists, seven steals, and three blocks.

Izzy Moore recorded her second consecutive double-double, finishing with 21 points, 11 rebounds and six assists before fouling out late. Moore knocked down five three-pointers and went 6-for-15 from the floor.

Megan Counts added 18 points, while Taylor Tool chipped in 12 for Northern. Morgan Fiedler contributed seven points and four assists.

Wayne State was led by Kylah vanDonkersgoed, who poured in a game-high 31 points. Rachel Dahlen added 10, as the Wildcats shot 47.1% from the field.

The final score was Wayne State 71, Northern State 61. Northern now stands at 8-7 overall and 3-6 in the NSIC, while Wayne State is 7-8 overall and 2-7 in conference play.

Northern will next travel to Sioux Falls to face Augustana before returning home for matchups against Winona State and Concordia-St. Paul.

Men: Late push falls short in 86–79 loss

The Northern State men delivered a gritty effort but came up just short as Wayne State rallied late to earn an 86–79 victory.

The Wildcats narrowly out-scored the Wolves in each half, holding off Northern in the final minute after grabbing a 79–76 lead with under a minute remaining. NSU shot 40% from the floor, 33.3% from three-point range, and an impressive 90.9% from the free-throw line.

The Wolves dominated the glass, out-rebounding Wayne State 41–30, and knocked down 13 three-pointers. Northern also scored 34 bench points, 28 points in the paint and 18 second-chance points. However, 13 turnovers proved costly, as the Wildcats converted them into 24 points.

James Glenn led the Wolves with 18 points, including four three-pointers. Ty Rogers followed with 14 points, while Joshua Book posted 11 points, seven rebounds and five assists.

Off the bench, Marshawn Smith added 13 points, Nelson Reynolds scored 12 and Benjamin Bowen chipped in nine. Tobi Obiora led NSU on the boards with nine rebounds and added four assists.

The final score was Wayne State 86, Northern State 79. The Wolves are now 5-10 overall and 5-4 in NSIC play, while the Wildcats improved to 9-6 overall and 5-4 in conference action.

Northern returns to action Saturday afternoon with a 3:30 p.m. matchup against Augustana at the Elmen Center in Sioux Falls.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 5 of 73

GFP Commission Holds January Meeting

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission held their January Commission meeting at the Pierre Ramkota on January 8-9.

PROPOSALS

Iron Creek Lake No Wake Zone

The Commission proposed to create a "No Wake Zone" on Iron Creek Lake in Lawrence County. Iron Creek Lake is a 24 acre impoundment, and the no wake zone would help decrease shoreline erosion from wakes.

Lake Albert Waterfowl Refuge

The Commission proposed to remove refuge status from Lake Albert Waterfowl Refuge.

The Lake Albert Waterfowl Refuge is comprised of private property owned by eight landowners. The landowners formally requested that their property to be removed from the Waterfowl Refuge status and have provided signed consents to remove their property. By removing the refuge status, landowner control over hunting access on their property will be restored. Many of the landowners have had hunters asking to hunt their property, but due to the refuge status, they were unable to allow hunters to harvest waterfowl within the boundaries of the refuge.

Hunt for Habitat

The Commission proposed to modify the license packages available within the Hunt for Habitat raffle. The Hunt for Habitat raffle allows for up to ten big game licenses, and the package for 2026 would offer:

- 1 Custer State Park Trophy Bison;
- 1 Custer State Park Trophy Bison and Any White-tail Deer Package;
- 1 Any Deer (Statewide - excludes Custer State Park); and
- 3 Any Deer (Statewide - excludes Custer State Park) and Elk Package.

Public Comments Being Accepted

To hear the discussion on these proposals, audio from the meeting is available through South Dakota Public Broadcasting and will soon be available on the GFP website as part of the meeting archive.

To see these proposals in their entirety, visit gfp.sd.gov/commission/information.

To be included in the public record and to be considered by the Commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CT on March 1.

The next GFP Commission meeting will be held in Pierre, March 5-6.

DANR Announces \$48.9 Million in Loans and Grants for Statewide Projects

PIERRE, S.D. - Today, the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources (DANR) announced that the Board of Water and Natural Resources has approved \$48.9 million in statewide projects.

A total of \$36,958,000 in state loans, including \$425,000 in principal forgiveness, was authorized for drinking water and wastewater improvements. Additionally, \$7,648,000 was allocated through Emerging Contaminants for Small or Disadvantaged Communities grants, along with \$4,313,307.85 in additional American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) grant funding.

Funding was distributed through DANR's Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, Clean Water State Revolving Fund, Emerging Contaminants for Small or Disadvantaged Communities grant program, and ARPA funds to the following:

BDM Rural Water received an additional \$233,450 in ARPA grant funds to construct a new water treatment plant, install a water reservoir, install pipe to expand the water system and loop lines for added redundancy, and replace water meters. Previous funding for this project was approved in April of 2022 and June of 2024. The additional grant award brings the ARPA grant total for this project to \$5,501,878.

Clay Rural Water received an additional \$334,250 in ARPA grant funds to construct two ground storage reservoirs near the existing Greenfield reservoir and the Wakonda Water Treatment plant. A new booster station at the Greenfield reservoir and distribution line improvements to provide additional capacity and accommodate a Highway 46 construction project is also included. Previous funding for this project was approved in April of 2022 and June of 2024. The additional grant award brings the ARPA grant total for this project to \$7,778,060.

Mid-Dakota Rural Water System received an additional \$917,357.85 in ARPA grant funds to update the existing water system by installing an advanced metering infrastructure system, paralleling of pipe, addition of a new backwash recovery system, and additional membrane capacity. Previous funding for this project was approved in April of 2022 and June of 2024. The additional grant award brings the ARPA grant total for this project to \$21,615,489.85.

Mitchell received a \$3,930,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program loan to upgrade the clay sanitary and storm sewer on a portion of North Ohlman Street. The loan terms are 3.75% for 30 years.

Rapid City received a \$14,512,000 Drinking Water State Revolving loan to make improvements to an existing well and to construct two new wells. The loan terms are 4.00% for 30 years.

Shared Resources received an additional \$1,500,000 in ARPA grant funds for treatment plant, well field, distribution pipeline, and two storage tanks. Shared Resources is a joint effort between Minnehaha Community Water Corporation and the Big Sioux Community Water System. Previous funding for this project was approved in April of 2022, June of 2024, and May of 2025. The additional grant award brings the ARPA grant total for this project to \$50,942,148.

Sioux Falls received a \$7,648,000 Drinking Water Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities Grant to complete a third connection to the Lewis and Clark Regional Water System. This connection will allow the city to better utilize the available water supply and provide water to the downtown distribution zone where water capacity was reduced due to well shutdowns.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 7 of 73

Sioux Falls received a \$17,746,000 Clean Water State Revolving Fund Program loan to construct a new Southeast Basin sanitary force main and gravity trunk lines, lift stations, equalization basin and gravity extensions. The project will be conducted in phases, and this is for Phase I. The loan terms are 3.50% for 20 years.

South Lincoln Rural Water System received an additional \$328,250 in ARPA grant funds to make system wide improvements including installing an elevated water tank, a new pump station, and a new water treatment plant. This project addresses capacity issues in portions of the distribution system and increasing demands within the existing service area. Previous funding for this project was approved in April of 2022 and June of 2024. The additional grant award brings the ARPA grant total for this project to \$8,450,523.

South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources received an additional \$1,000,000 in ARPA grant dollars for its statewide Riparian Buffer Initiative (RBI). Previous funding for this project was approved in April of 2022 and June of 2024. The additional grant award brings the ARPA grant total for this project to \$7,000,000.

Toronto received a \$770,000 Drinking Water State Revolving loan with \$425,000 in principal forgiveness to relocate sections of an existing water main. This is to accommodate the Department of Transportation installing new storm sewers and highway surfacing. The loan terms are 3.50% for 30 years.

Additional Details:

The State of South Dakota and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency fund the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Programs, which provide low-interest loans for wastewater, stormwater, water conservation, nonpoint source projects, and public drinking water system projects. The programs are funded through a combination of federal appropriations, loan repayments, and bonds.

The board approved the funding at Thursday's meeting in Pierre.

Name Released in Turner County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash
Where: Third Street and Dewey Avenue in Chancellor, SD
When: 9:59 p.m., Monday, December 22, 2025

Driver 1: Clark Dana Erickson, 66-year-old male from Springfield, SD, fatal injuries
Vehicle 1: 2005 Jeep Renegade
Seat belt Used: No

Turner County, S.D.- A Springfield, SD man died Friday from injuries sustained in a December 22 crash in Chancellor, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates Clark Dana Erickson, the driver of a 2005 Jeep Renegade, was traveling on Third Street near Dewey Avenue in Chancellor, SD. The driver lost control of the vehicle and drove off the roadway to the east, struck a utility pole, side-swiped an RV, and came to rest in the front lawn of a residential property.

Erickson was taken to Avera McKennan Hospital in Sioux Falls with life-threatening injuries. He died from injuries sustained in the crash on January 2.

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

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

Krueger claims title; Decker places fourth at tournament

Groton Area's girls wrestling team saw strong individual performances at the Miller/Highmore-Harrold Tourney, led by a championship run from Liza Krueger and a hard-fought fourth-place finish from Grace-lynn Decker.

At 105 pounds, Krueger delivered a dominant performance on her way to the title. She opened the bracket with a quarterfinal bye before wasting little time in the semifinals, pinning Morah Swartzendruber of Miller/Highmore-Harrold in 1:16. In the championship match, Krueger secured a 3-1 decision over Kadee Frankfurth of Clark/Willow Lake to claim first place.

At 110 pounds, Decker battled through a challenging bracket. She began her day with an impressive major decision, defeating Cadence Johnson of Douglas/Rapid City Christian by a 9-0 margin in the quarterfinals. Decker then fell in the semifinals to Jaylynn Johnson of Kingsbury County by pin at 4:59, sending her to the consolation bracket.

Decker responded with resilience, pinning Luci Fuller of Ipswich in just 42 seconds in the consolation semifinals to advance to the third-place match. There, she came up short against Trinity Kurtenbach of Sioux Valley, who earned a fall at 0:53, placing Decker fourth overall.

Groton Area continues to gain momentum in its girls wrestling program, with Krueger's championship highlighting the team's continued growth on the mat.

IRS announces first day of 2026 filing season; online tools and resources help with tax filing

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service announced Monday, January 26, 2026, as the opening of the nation's 2026 filing season. This year, several new tax law provisions of the One, Big, Beautiful Bill become effective, which could impact federal taxes, credits and deductions.

Taxpayers have until Wednesday, April 15, 2026, to file their 2025 tax returns and pay any tax due. The IRS expects to receive about 164 million individual income tax returns this year, with most taxpayers filing electronically.

IRS.gov has online tools and resources taxpayers can use before, during and after filing their federal tax return. One, Big, Beautiful Provisions provides information that could help lower tax bills and potentially increase refund amounts.

"President Trump is committed to the taxpayers of this country and improving upon the successful tax filing season in 2025," said Acting IRS Commissioner Scott Bessent. "Prior to the passage of the One, Big, Beautiful Bill, which delivered working families tax cuts, Treasury and IRS were diligently preparing to update forms and processes for the benefit of hardworking Americans, and I am confident in our ability to deliver results and drive growth for businesses and consumers alike."

"The Internal Revenue Service is ready to help taxpayers meet their tax filing and payment obligations during the 2026 filing season," said IRS Chief Executive Officer Frank Bisignano. "As always, the IRS workforce remains vigilant and dedicated to their mission to serve the American taxpaying public. At the same time, IRS information systems have been updated to incorporate the new tax laws and are ready to efficiently and effectively process taxpayer returns during the filing season."

IRS Individual Online Account. Taxpayers can access their individual online account information, including balance due, payments made or scheduled, tax records and more.

New Schedule 1-A. Taxpayers will use the new Schedule 1-A to claim recently enacted tax deductions, such as no tax on tips, no tax on overtime, no tax on car loan interest and/or the enhanced deduction for seniors.

Enroll in a Trump Account. Parents, guardians and other authorized individuals can establish a new type of individual retirement account for their children. To learn more, visit trumpaccounts.gov.

Open a bank account. The IRS strongly encourages taxpayers to establish a bank account to receive their tax refunds via direct deposit, because the IRS is phasing out paper tax refund checks due to the executive order, Modernizing Payments To and From America's Bank Account.

Forms 1099-K and 1099-DA. Taxpayers should visit IRS.gov and learn what to do if they receive either of these forms. Form 1099-K, Payment Card and Third Party Network Transactions, is used to report payments received from credit cards, payments apps and online marketplaces. Form 1099-DA, Digital Assets, is used to report digital asset proceeds from broker transactions. Taxpayers must report all taxable income on their federal tax returns, even if they don't receive either form.

Where's My Refund? Refund status information is generally available around 24 hours after e-filing a current-year return, or four weeks after filing a paper return.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 11 of 73

Be aware of tax scams and fraud. Taxpayers can learn how to prevent, report and recover from tax scams and tax-related identity theft on IRS.gov.

Choose a tax preparer. Taxpayers should review IRS guidance for Choosing a Tax Professional, including tips on choosing a reputable preparer and how to avoid unethical preparers.

Taxpayer Assistance Centers. Taxpayers should make IRS.gov their first stop to get help. If taxpayers cannot resolve their issue online, they can get help by making an appointment to visit a Taxpayer Assistance Center.

IRS Free File and Fillable Forms. The IRS Free File program will begin accepting individual tax returns starting Friday, Jan. 9 for qualified taxpayers. Taxpayers comfortable preparing their own taxes can use IRS Free File Fillable Forms starting Jan. 26, regardless of income.

MilTax. Military members and some veterans can use the Department of Defense program, MilTax, for free return preparation and e-filing software.

IRS-certified volunteers. The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly programs offer no-cost, basic tax preparation to qualified individuals.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 12 of 73

GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting

January 12, 2026 – 7:00 PM – GHS Conference Room

AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approve of minutes of December 8, 2025 school board meeting as drafted.
2. Approve of December 2025 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approve of December 2025 District bills for payment.
4. Approve of December 2025 School Lunch Report.
5. Approve of December 2025 School Transportation Report.
6. Authorize the Business Manager to pay district bills up to \$75,000 in advance, using the custodial advance payment account to be approved by the board for reimbursement at the following regular board meeting.
7. Approve Open Enrollment #26-18.

OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Second reading and approval of recommended Job Description: Technology Coordinator
3. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

NEW BUSINESS:

1. HOSA Global Medical Squads Travel Request – Brittany Hubbart.
2. Adopt Supplemental Budget #FY26-2.
3. Adopt 2026-2027 School Calendar.
4. Approve resignation of Joshua Friez, Instrumental Music Teacher, effective December 19, 2025.
5. Approve resignation of Alexandria Homsombath, Administrative Assistant/SH Supervisor, effective January 5, 2025.
6. Approve resignation of Stacey Wellnitz, Paraprofessional, effective January 22, 2026.

ADJOURN

Kaiser announces run for Brown County Sheriff



Aberdeen, SD — With more than two decades of dedicated service in law enforcement, military leadership, and public service, Dan Kaiser announced his commitment to serve as Brown County Sheriff, bringing a proven record of leadership, accountability, and community-focused policing.

Currently serving on the administrative team at the Aberdeen Police Department, Dan Kaiser oversees officer hiring and mentoring, development, manages critical investigations involving crimes against children, and departmental policy development to ensure compliance, clarity, and professionalism.

His work emphasizes protecting the most vulnerable while strengthening public trust through transparency and effective operations.

In addition to his law enforcement career, Dan Kaiser brings valuable legislative and policy experience from his service as a South Dakota State Representative, where he served on the Judiciary, Transportation, Education, and Taxation Committees. This experience provides him with a strong understanding of the legal framework governing public safety agencies and the importance of interagency cooperation.

A tested U.S. Army Reserve Sergeant, Dan Kaiser completed overseas deployments to Iraq and Bosnia and was awarded multiple military honors, including the Army Commendation Medal. His military service instilled a leadership philosophy rooted in discipline, accountability, and service before self.

“As Sheriff, my number one priority is to Keep Brown County Safe. This means strengthening community trust while ensuring that our deputies operate with efficiency, professionalism, and integrity,” said Dan Kaiser. “I am committed to developing our personnel, embracing innovation, and working collaboratively with local, state, and federal partners to make Brown County the safest place in the world to live.”

With a career defined by service, mentorship, and results, Dan Kaiser stands ready to lead as Brown County Sheriff and advance a vision of effective public safety built on trust, accountability, and community partnership.



Fact brief: Could a data center use equivalent of 50,000 homes of power?

Yes

A data center that is inching closer to becoming a reality in northeastern Sioux Falls could use 50,000 homes' worth of power a year at its planned peak.

The Sioux Falls City Council on Tuesday voted unanimously to rezone the land for the Gemini Data Center. The City Council heard objections from dozens of residents who are worried about environmental impacts of the facility.

Data centers have used significant amounts of power in other states. In 2023, 26% of the electricity supply of Virginia was used by data centers. For North Dakota, it was 15%.

The hyperscale data center would be constructed on 160 acres previously owned by Xcel Energy – with a nearby substation. For comparison, the entire Empire Mall complex in Sioux Falls, from 41st Street to 49th Street and between Interstate 29 and Louise Avenue, is about 150 acres.

What can \$20 get you?



for
Senior Citizens

or anyone using physical therapy
a gym membership at

15 N Main - Ste. 101

Open 24/7

GDI Living Fitness

Call/Text Paul at 605/397-7460

Call/Text Tina at 605/397-7285

for details



Annual Membership Rates

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

Month-to-Month Rates

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

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



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

New task force on police misconduct disclosure aims to prevent courtroom troubles

South Dakota lacks formal system for cataloging, reporting misbehavior

BY: JOHN HULT

Failure to disclose past misconduct by a law enforcement officer can be enough to overturn a criminal conviction, even if that misconduct was decades old and unrelated to the crime that drew the conviction.

Pennington County State's Attorney Lara Roetzel said that's why she asked South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley to convene a task force to standardize the collection, reporting and sharing of information about officer misconduct.

"My goal is that there would be somewhere that prosecutors and law enforcement agencies could go and share information," said Roetzel, who was named a member of the task force when Jackley announced its creation in a press release last month.

Details of past misbehavior are often referred to as "Giglio" or "Brady" evidence, named for the two U.S. Supreme Court cases that determined defendants have the right to know about any past dishonesty or ethical lapses by the witnesses against them.

Under those decisions, potentially damning but undisclosed evidence can upend a conviction even if a prosecutor wasn't aware the evidence existed beforehand.

In an era when police officers regularly move from place to place, Roetzel said, it's important for prosecutors to be able to keep tabs on which officers have misconduct in their personal histories. There's no guarantee an officer's previous employer will pass along information.

Other states also struggle with disclosure, according to a 2022 Minnesota Law Review article.

Some agencies in some jurisdictions disclose all manner of police misconduct, wrote Rachel Moran, a law professor at the University of St. Thomas School of Law. Other agencies may only share and maintain information about dishonesty.

Misconduct lists across the U.S., she wrote, "vary widely and are almost completely unregulated."

The issue is a significant concern for South Dakota, Roetzel said, which has welcomed a host of officers moving in from out of state in recent years.

"I saw several situations where an officer would move to another jurisdiction, and I felt like I needed to make a call" to the prosecutor in the officer's jurisdiction, Roetzel said.

Attorney general: Disclosure is 'foundation of our credibility'

Attorney General Jackley sits on the Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training Commission, which reviews applications for reciprocity by out-of-state officers and considers requests for reinstatement from officers who've gotten into trouble and want a second chance.

The commission also acts as a jury when an officer accused of misconduct decides to push back against the allegations to avoid sanction.

The Giglio implications of an officer's behavior are especially important considerations for the commission, Jackley said. Criminal behavior, unethical conduct, and allegations of racism or sexism could all impact an officer's reliability on the witness stand, Jackley said, but dishonest conduct such as lying in a police report or search warrant application can be the most damning at a trial.

Honesty and disclosure of all the facts, he said, "is the foundation of our credibility in the courtroom."

Jackley and Roetzel both said the task force's creation wasn't prompted by an overturned conviction,

but is preemptive. Every member comes from law enforcement, Jackley said, because "it's the obligation of law enforcement to disclose."

Jackley's press release on the task force said the group will review the U.S. Supreme Court decisions on disclosure and the further decisions that refined what does or doesn't constitute evidence of misconduct. After that, the group will "make recommendations on how South Dakota law enforcement agencies can comply with the intent and spirit of the decisions.

Misdeeds or allegations of misdeeds that may not be enough to threaten an officer's certification may nonetheless qualify as evidence that must be disclosed to a defense lawyer, he said.

Jackley said something like a database of misconduct is a possibility, but the first step will be for the group to find a "framework" for what needs to be disclosed and when.

Jackley is running for Congress as a Republican, and is not seeking reelection as the state's attorney general. He said the decision to create the commission was meant in part to "finish strong" as attorney general by working to improve the justice system for years to come.

Protecting law enforcement

Deuel County Sheriff Cory Borg will serve as board president for the South Dakota Sheriff's Association for 2026. He'll serve as the county sheriff representative on the new Giglio task force, alongside other working officer representatives from the Highway Patrol and Vermillion Police Department.

Borg, who's served as sheriff since 2018, has five deputies to patrol his county, which includes the cities of Clear Lake, Toronto and Brandt. He's never had to report any misconduct from those deputies, he said, but wouldn't hesitate to do so.

The public sets a high ethical bar for officers and should, he said, since officers serve as public servants. A "bad apple" officer who grabs headlines or tanks a criminal case with dishonesty damages the public's perception of the field.

"Nobody hates a bad officer as much as a good officer," Borg said.

Back in Pennington County, Roetzel said she hopes the task force isn't viewed as a group that's out to get police. Attending to ethical issues on the front end, she said, shows people that the state respects the rule of law and those who seek to uphold it.

"This is not anti-law enforcement," she said. "We want to protect law enforcement."

The group will hold an organizational meeting later this month, according to Jackley's office, after which its remaining meeting dates will be set.

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Thune, GOP senators at the border tout big hiring boost for immigration crackdown

South Dakota's Rounds also attends, says southern border has undergone 'a remarkable transformation'

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — Senate Majority Leader John Thune, joined at the U.S.-Mexico border Friday by a handful of other Republican senators, highlighted the president's signature tax cuts and spending package passed last year that provided billions for immigration enforcement.

The press conference in McAllen, Texas, came after a federal immigration officer shot and killed a woman in Minneapolis on Wednesday, and two people were shot by Border Patrol agents late Thursday in Portland, Oregon.

Thune, a South Dakota Republican, touted how the tax cuts and spending package signed into law last

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 18 of 73

summer also provided "for additional reinforcements," such as the hiring of more Border Patrol and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

On Jan. 3, ICE announced it hired 12,000 new officers, more than doubling its force from 10,000 agents to 22,000. Thousands more are set to be hired.

The GOP-passed bill also included \$4.1 billion for Customs and Border Protection to hire 5,000 customs officers and 3,000 Border Patrol agents over the next four years.

Thune said because migration at the southern border has slowed, the time has come for President Donald Trump to shift his focus to immigration reform. CBP data from November, the most recent available, shows total apprehensions at the southwest border slowed to 7,350 that month.

"I think President Trump is probably the president best equipped to lead the effort to reform immigration law in his country in a way that it creates, again, those better paying jobs, opportunities for people who come to the country legally," Thune said. "We are a nation of immigrants, but we're also a nation of laws, and we have to make sure we're enforcing our laws, and that's where it starts."

The Trump administration has continued with its aggressive mass deportation efforts throughout the interior of the country and has moved to revoke the legal status of more than 1.5 million immigrants since taking office last January.

Thune added that the GOP bill, known as the One Big Beautiful Bill, also provided billions for border security.

"As a result of the passage of the One Big, Beautiful bill ... we got more resources down here, not only for physical infrastructure, for the wall, but for also that virtual infrastructure, for technology and counter drone technology, all those sorts of things that make it possible for the Border Patrol to do their job," he said.

Thune was joined by Whip John Barrasso of Wyoming and Sens. John Cornyn of Texas, Ashley Moody of Florida, Jon Husted of Ohio, Mike Rounds of South Dakota and Pete Ricketts of Nebraska.

Rounds said that under the Trump administration the southern border has undergone "a remarkable transformation."

"There is no such thing as a country that can be a superpower, or, for that matter, be free if they can't defend their own borders," Rounds said.

Cornyn also highlighted how the bill will reimburse, up to \$13.5 billion, those border states who have spent money on immigration enforcement. He said of that money, Texas will get \$11 billion.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.

COMMENTARY

Take it from Bill Janklow: State-funded preschool could slow South Dakota's prison growth

by Lee Strubinger

"Do we spend the money when they're so young so they have the chance to become good productive citizens, or do we spend it on them in juvenile correction facilities or adult prisons? I am convinced from all the research that one way or the other, we will spend the money."

The above quote comes from a 1999 letter by South Dakota Gov. Bill Janklow to a Belle Fourche resident. Earlier that year, during his State of the State speech, Janklow announced his administration would study whether to recommend state funding for preschool.

Today, South Dakota is one of six states without a state-funded preschool program. The state's prison population has grown by 56% since 1999, and in 2025, the Prison Policy Initiative reported that South Dakota incarcerates women at a rate higher than any other state or country.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 19 of 73

This trend stuffed the state's correctional facilities, leading to overcrowding that state officials could no longer ignore. For the past five years, the state has pooled surplus COVID-19 stimulus dollars and other revenue to fund two new prisons: a women's prison in Rapid City, and a men's prison in Sioux Falls. The combined price tag is nearly \$750 million.

Since 1999, lawmakers have tried to slow the growth of the prison population — including with the legislative adoption of a 2013 criminal justice reform package that shifted the state's focus more toward parole for nonviolent offenders.

Those efforts continue today with a state task force looking closer at ways to rehabilitate people in prison and prevent them from committing more crimes after their release.

One approach the state has yet to try is a state-funded preschool program.

According to a study in Chicago, children who attended preschool had a 25% reduced rate of felony arrests as adults.

At the end of fiscal year 2025, there were 350 people incarcerated in South Dakota's prison system who were 24 or younger. The average cost per offender per day was \$93.26. Had the state committed funding to preschool when Janklow considered it in 1999, that number could be more like 262 — a reduction of 88 inmates and a savings of just under \$3 million annually. That's money that could be used elsewhere.

The savings would grow with time. One of the many reasons Rapid City took steps to become an early learner community in the early 2010s was to reduce interactions with law enforcement.

Preschool can be part of the solution to the state's prison population problem. Molding minds at a young age also comes with other benefits, including increased school readiness, better K-12 performance and graduation rates, and better health.

In 1999, Janklow estimated 12,000 children would benefit from state-sponsored preschool. Looking at average enrollment for each K-12 grade in South Dakota schools, it's likely that number would be the same today. Since 90% of brain development occurs in the first five years, early childhood development is one of the best investments societies can make. For every dollar invested in preschool, the return is anywhere from 7% to 20%.

Since 2023, the John T. Vucurevich Foundation has invested nearly \$6 million in early learning initiatives in Rapid City — from child care assistance to afterschool programs.

We encourage our leaders to look at the state's incarceration issue upstream. Because, as Janklow wrote in his 1999 letter, "our children's good beginnings are our good future."

"In my opinion, we can't wait any longer."

Lee Strubinger is the research and reporting director for the John T. Vucurevich Foundation in Rapid City, which assists nonprofit organizations in supporting low-income residents. A former national award-winning journalist, he spent nine years covering the Legislature for South Dakota Public Broadcasting. He holds a master's degree in public affairs reporting from the University of Illinois-Springfield.

Custer State Park officials urge visitors to 'stay safe' as wind damage assessment, cleanup continue

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

Custer State Park's main highways and trails are open to visitors after last month's high-speed winds swept through western South Dakota, but officials are warning visitors to stay aware of their surroundings.

Cleanup crews have been working to remove fallen trees and repair damages to park facilities, but there are still cracked trees that may be cause for concern, according to Matt Snyder, a parks regional supervisor for western South Dakota.

Though the park is open, Snyder is encouraging visitors to "be cognizant."

"Be looking up ahead, up above you and see what's going on. If you hear the winds blowing or something like that, I'd probably stay off the trails that day," Snyder said. "But, if you do find yourself out there, just

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 20 of 73

be looking above your head and see what's going on, and just stay safe."

A western South Dakota windstorm last month damaged Custer State Park's campgrounds, trees, park facilities and power systems.

Wind gusts were as high as 101 miles per hour between Dec. 17 and 18, according to the National Weather Service. The storm downed thousands of mature trees, tore through facilities and campgrounds and left Custer State Park without power for nearly a week.

The park lost one camping cabin to the storm, Snyder said, which is the most substantial damage. Other damage can be fixed.

"From a structural standpoint, everything's going to be fine," he said. "It's just a matter of getting the repairs done."

Snyder said 65 workers from across state departments including Transportation, Wildland Fire and an inmate crew helped to cut through some of the fallen trees last week, especially those blocking roadways and hiking trails.

Gov. Larry Rhoden announced Wednesday he's asked the federal government for help to repair public property across the region. Park leaders are still working through the Office of Emergency Management to determine the final cost of repairs at Custer State Park.

Park officials said lodges and cabins have been minimally impacted, without any serious impacts on guests. They plan to have damaged facilities open and ready for visitors again in April.

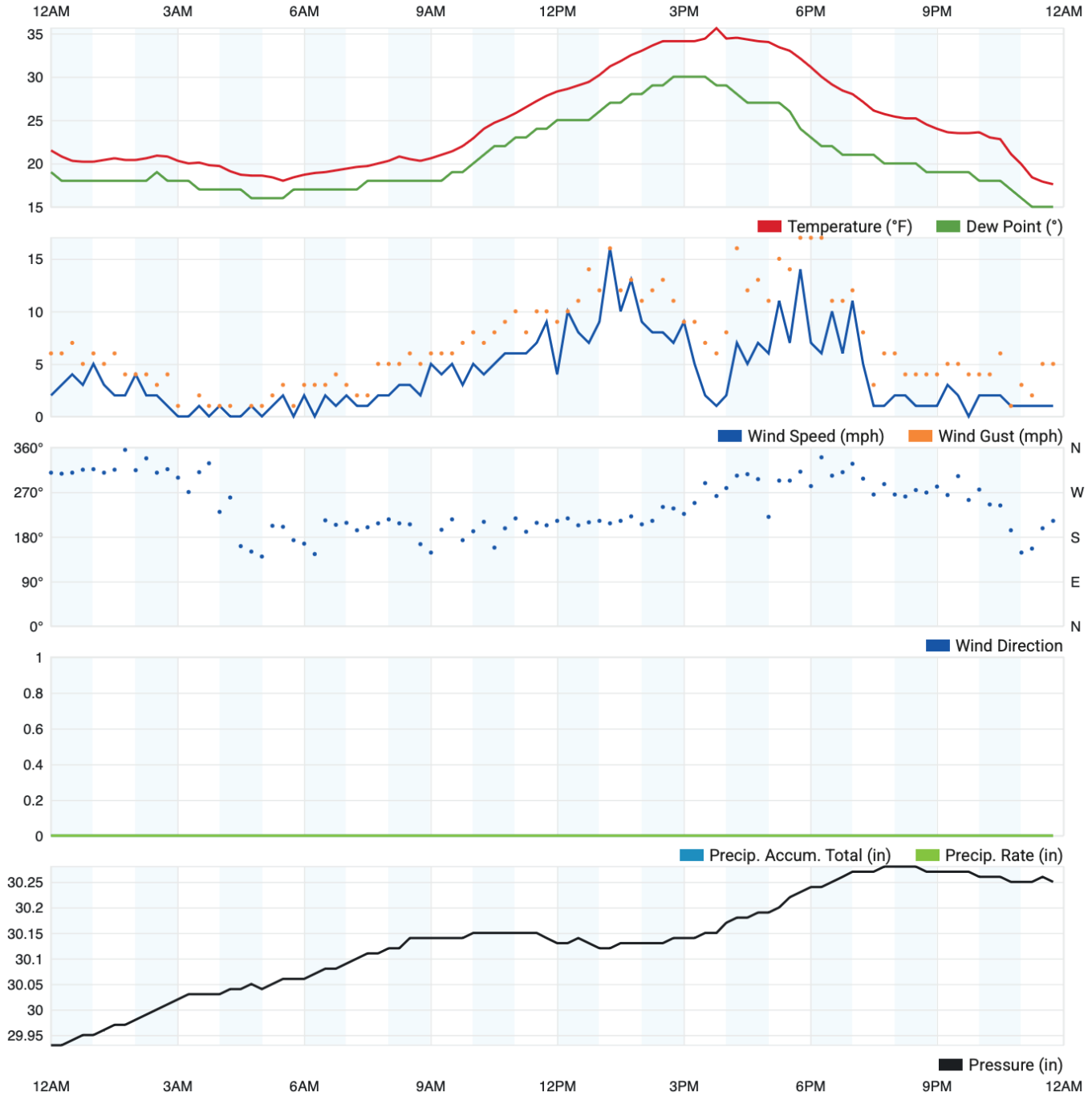
Meghan O'Brien is the audio reporter for South Dakota Searchlight where she covers the state government and its impact on South Dakotans. She's previously reported in Nebraska with a focus on health care and rural communities across the state.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 21 of 73

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

January 9, 2026



Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 22 of 73

Today

Tonight

Sunday

Sunday Night

Monday



High: 23 °F ↓↓

Sunny



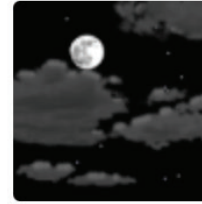
Low: 9 °F

Mostly Clear



High: 38 °F

Mostly Sunny



Low: 25 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 43 °F

Partly Sunny



Snow Chances Today

January 10, 2026
4:24 AM CST

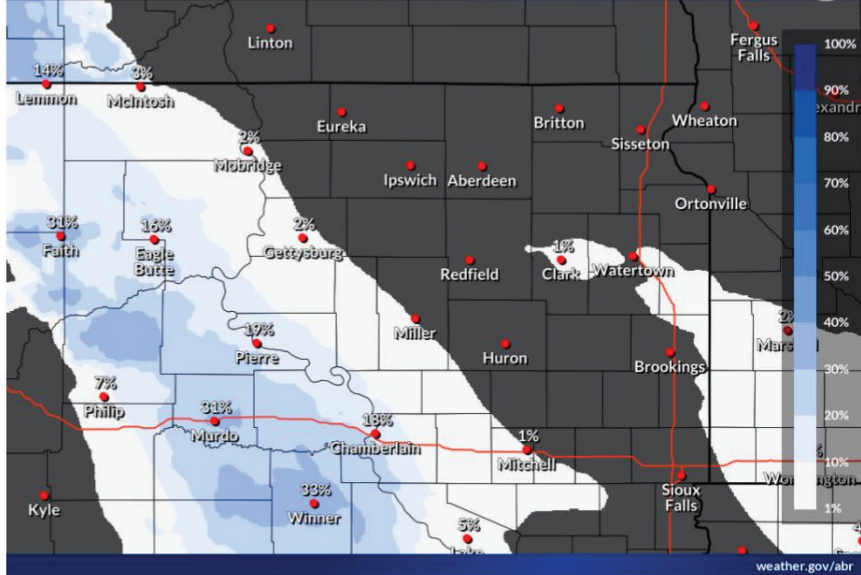
Up to an inch of snowfall possible along I-90!

- Light snow is expected across portions of western and southern South Dakota through this (Saturday) evening.
- Where snow is expected, northwest winds could gust up to 25 mph, which could result in mainly ground-level drifting snow. Out over northeast South Dakota into west central Minnesota, gusts up to 35 mph are expected.

Percent Chance of 1" Snowfall or More

Valid 12 AM Sat Jan 10, 2026 through 12 AM Sun Jan 11, 2026

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD
Issued Jan 10, 2026 1:15 AM CST



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

There is a 30-60% chance of snow today, mainly across central and south central South Dakota. The probability of more than 1 inch is currently around 20-40% in south central South Dakota, lower in surrounding areas.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 23 of 73



Plenty Of Wind In The 7-Day Forecast

January 10, 2026
4:37 AM CST

Focus is on Tuesday night and then again Friday/Friday night for the strongest wind gusts

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast & Direction (mph)

	1/10 Sat	1/11 Sun	1/12 Mon	1/13 Tue	1/14 Wed	1/15 Thu	1/16 Fri	1/17 Sat
Aberdeen	28↘	22↗	24↗	35↘	24↘	33↗	39↘	24↘
Britton	29↘	29↗	25↗	35↘	25↘	33↗	39↘	25↘
Chamberlain	29↘	21↗	23↗	37↘	25↘	35↗	41↘	24↘
Clark	32↘	24↗	24↗	37↘	28↘	33↗	40↘	26↘
Eagle Butte	22↘	30↗	33↗	43↘	31↘	44↘	46↘	30↘
Eureka	28↘	24↗	30↗	40↘	28↘	39↗	43↘	26↘
Gettysburg	28↘	25↗	29↗	39↘	29↘	39↗	44↘	28↘
McIntosh	22↘	32↗	35↗	45↘	29↘	47↘	48↘	29↘
Milbank	31↘	23↗	25↗	35↘	25↘	29↗	36↘	23↘
Miller	30↘	25↗	29↗	39↘	26↘	37↗	43↘	26↘
Mobridge	23↘	24↗	29↗	37↘	25↘	37↗	40↘	25↘
Murdo	23↘	28↗	28↗	43↘	29↘	41↗	46↘	29↘
Pierre	22↘	23↗	25↗	36↘	23↘	37↗	40↘	24↘
Redfield	31↘	21↗	25↗	39↘	28↘	36↗	43↘	25↘
Sisseton	33↘	26↗	28↗	36↘	25↘	32↗	37↘	24↘
Watertown	32↘	26↗	26↗	37↘	26↘	32↗	37↘	24↘
Webster	31↘	28↗	26↗	35↘	26↘	33↗	38↘	25↘
Wheaton	31↘	18↑	21↗	32↘	25↘	28↗	33↘	24↘

- Lots of gusty winds expected during this 7-day stretch. The **Tuesday/Tuesday night** and **Thursday night/Friday** timeframes are being monitored right now for being the periods of potentially strongest wind gusts.
- During each of these periods of potentially strong wind gusts, light snow chances are in the forecast, meaning there is currently a low probability of drifting/blowing snow and lowered visibility during these timeframes.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Lots of gusty winds expected during this 7-day stretch. The Tuesday/Tuesday night and Thursday night/Friday timeframes are being monitored right now for being the periods of potentially strongest wind gusts. During each of these periods of potentially strong wind gusts, light snow chances are in the forecast, meaning there is currently a low probability of drifting/blowing snow and lowered visibility during these timeframes.

Groton Daily Independent

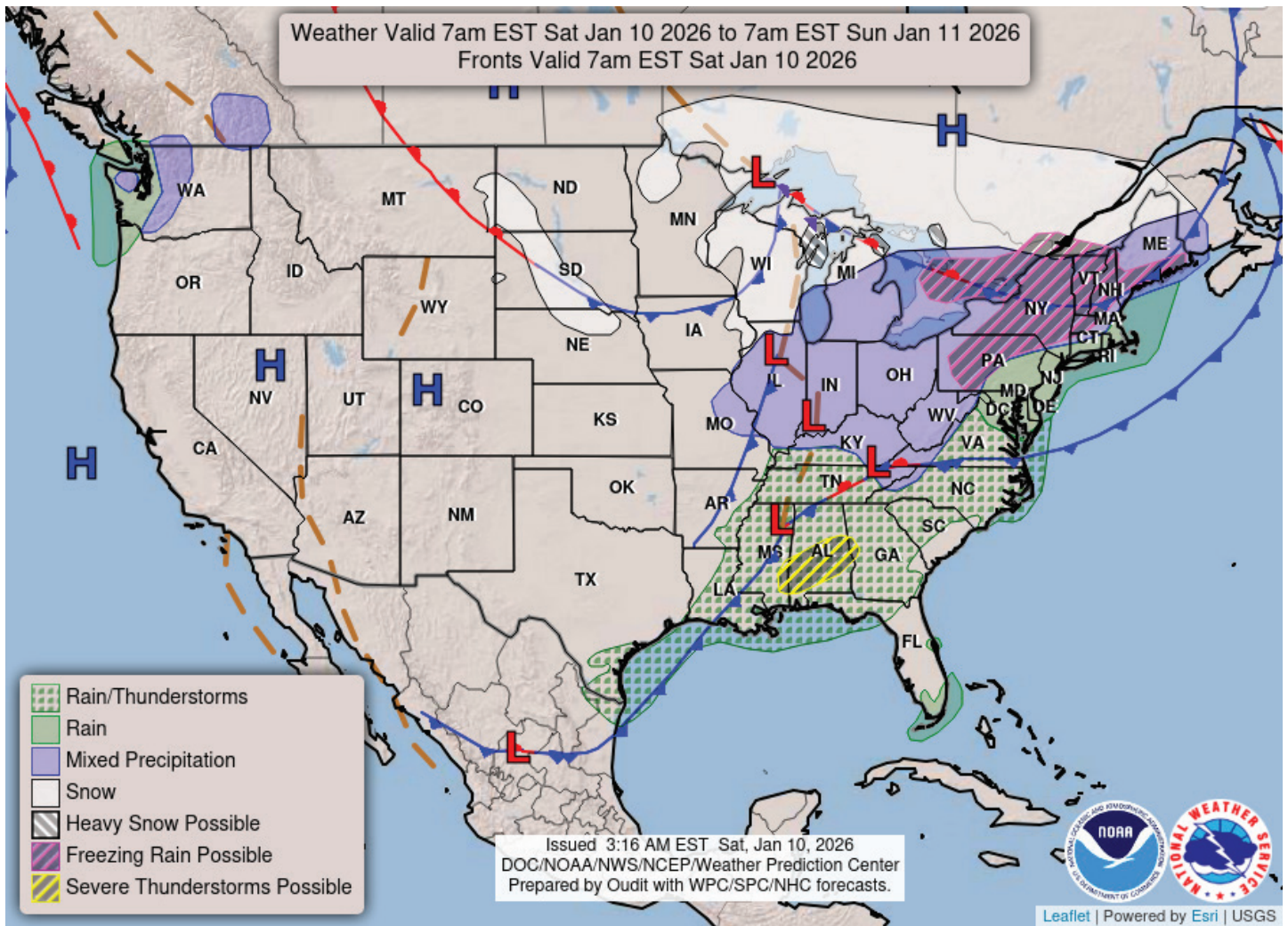
Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 24 of 73

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 36 °F at 3:47 PM
Low Temp: 18 °F at 5:30 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 6:05 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 56 in 2012
Record Low: -30 in 1978
Average High: 23
Average Low: 2
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.21
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.21
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:08 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:10 am



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 25 of 73

Today in Weather History

January 10, 1911: The temperature at Rapid City, South Dakota, plunged 47 degrees in just fifteen minutes. At 7 AM, the temperature was 55 degrees. Fifteen minutes later, it was 4 degrees below zero.

January 10, 1975: An intense area of low pressure moved from eastern Iowa through eastern Minnesota. The storm center set many low-pressure records as it moved across eastern Minnesota. New snow of 3 to 6 inches across much of Minnesota began to blow and drift on the morning of the 10th and then developed into a full-blown blizzard with heavy snowfall developing. The blizzard continued through the 11th with winds of 30 to 50 mph with gusts of 60 to 80 mph. Drifts up to 20 feet high in west-central Minnesota paralyzed the area. Snowfall amounts from 1 to 2 feet occurred. Numerous roads were closed due to drifting and low visibility. Numerous sustained power outages occurred, particularly in rural sections. Thousands of people were stranded, with 168 people trapped in a train in Willmar. Wind chills ranged from 50 below to 80 below the storm. Extensive losses to life and property occurred. There were 35 deaths during the storm and many injuries. Tens of thousands of livestock and poultry losses also occurred, with 140 farm buildings damaged or destroyed. Losses to livestock and property were over 20 million. It took 11 days to clear some areas.

In South Dakota, snow began to fall on the 10th in the afternoon, and then the winds increased and reached blizzard conditions by evening. These severe blizzard conditions continued through the 11th and the morning of the 12th. Wind chills fell to 50 below to 70 below zero. Many cars stalled on roads due to poor visibility, icy roads, and blowing and drifting snow. Eight people lost their lives. Thousands of livestock and poultry were lost. During the blizzard, a 2000 foot radio and TV antenna just east of Sioux Falls collapsed.

January 10, 2000: High winds gusting to over 60 mph caused some spotty damage across central and north-central South Dakota. Near Mobridge, the high winds blew a semi-tractor-trailer off the road and tipped it over while heading westbound on Highway 12. The semi-tractor-trailer sustained quite a bit of damage as a result. The high winds also damaged the windmill at the museum in Mobridge, breaking off the tail and bending several blades. Some high wind reports include; 56 mph at McLaughlin, 58 mph at Onida and Mobridge, and 63 mph at Pierre.

1800: According to David Ludlum, Savannah, Georgia, received a foot and a half of snow and ten inches blanketed Charleston, SC. It was the heaviest snowfall of record for the immediate Coastal Plain of the southeastern U.S.

1949: Snow was reported in San Diego, California, for the first time since 1882. The snow was noted on some of the beaches in parts of the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

1973: A powerful F5 tornado struck San Justo, a town in the province of Santa Fe, Argentina, on January 10, 1973. At least 63 people were reported dead, and 350 were reported injured as it cut a 300-yard wide swath through the town.

1975 — The "Storm of the Century" hit Minnesota. A severe blizzard moved northward across the state producing up to two feet of snow. High winds drove wind chill readings to 80 degrees below zero, and at Duluth MN the barometric pressure dipped to 28.55 inches. The storm, which claimed 35 lives, occurred on the 102nd anniversary of the infamous "Pioneer Blizzard" in Minnesota. (David Ludlum)

1982: Bitterly cold weather was found across Illinois. Of the 109 weather reporting stations in the state, 48 of those reported lows of 20 degrees below zero or colder. Some of the most frigid temperatures included 27 below zero at Rockford, 26 below zero at Chicago, and 25 below zero at Kankakee and Peoria. The Freezer Bowl was played between the Cincinnati Bengals and the San Deigo Chargers in bitterly cold wind chills. The air temperature was -9 °F, but the wind chill, factoring in a sustained wind of 27 mph, was -37 °F.

1987 — Bitter cold air invaded the Rocky Mountain Region, with subzero readings reported as far south as Gallop NM. Pocatello ID reported a record low reading of 14 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary)

2001 — Storms dumped more than seven inches of rain on parts of southern California, including Los Angeles, where nearly four inches of rain fell. The heavy rains caused mudslides and road closures along much of California's central coast and up to three feet of snow was deposited in some coastal mountain areas. (NCDC)

Uncontrolled Weakness

Our flaws can wreck our life or drive us into a deeper, more intimate relationship with the Lord.

Judges 14:1-20: 1 Then Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines.

2 So he came back and told his father and mother, "I saw a woman in Timnah, one of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife."

3 Then his father and his mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your relatives, or among all our people, that you go to take a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" But Samson said to his father, "Get her for me, for she looks good to me."

4 However, his father and mother did not know that it was of the LORD, for He was seeking an occasion against the Philistines. Now at that time the Philistines were ruling over Israel.

5 Then Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother, and came as far as the vineyards of Timnah; and behold, a young lion came roaring toward him.

6 The Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, so that he tore him as one tears a young goat though he had nothing in his hand; but he did not tell his father or mother what he had done.

7 So he went down and talked to the woman; and she looked good to Samson.

8 When he returned later to take her, he turned aside to look at the carcass of the lion; and behold, a swarm of bees and honey were in the body of the lion.

9 So he scraped the honey into his hands and went on, eating as he went. When he came to his father and mother, he gave some to them and they ate it; but he did not tell them that he had scraped the honey out of the body of the lion.

10 Then his father went down to the woman; and Samson made a feast there, for the young men customarily did this.

11 When they saw him, they brought thirty companions to be with him.

12 Then Samson said to them, "Let me now propound a riddle to you; if you will indeed tell it to me within the seven days of the feast, and find it out, then I will give you thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes.

13 "But if you are unable to tell me, then you shall give me thirty linen wraps and thirty changes of clothes." And they said to him, "Propound your riddle, that we may hear it."

14 So he said to them, "Out of the eater came something to eat, And out of the strong came something sweet." But they could not tell the riddle in three days.

15 Then it came about on the fourth day that they said to Samson's wife, "Entice your husband, so that he will tell us the riddle, or we will burn you and your father's house with fire. Have you invited us to impoverish us? Is this not so?"

16 Samson's wife wept before him and said, "You only hate me, and you do not love me; you have propounded a riddle to the sons of my people, and have not told it to me." And he said to her, "Behold, I have not told it to my father or mother; so should I tell you?"

17 However she wept before him seven days while their feast lasted. And on the seventh day he told her because she pressed him so hard. She then told the riddle to the sons of her people.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 27 of 73

18 So the men of the city said to him on the seventh day before the sun went down, ``What is sweeter than honey? And what is stronger than a lion?" And he said to them, ``If you had not plowed with my heifer, You would not have found out my riddle."

19 Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon him mightily, and he went down to Ashkelon and killed thirty of them and took their spoil and gave the changes of clothes to those who told the riddle. And his anger burned, and he went up to his father's house.

20 But Samson's wife was given to his companion who had been his friend.

The book of Judges tells of Samson, a man so powerful he could kill a lion with his bare hands (14:5-6). He possessed physical strength unequalled by any human being. But this could not compensate for an inner weakness.

All of us have such areas of fallibility. God wants these imperfections to teach us how dependent we are upon Him. Addressing them according to the Lord's wisdom and guidance will drive us into a deeper, more intimate relationship with Him.

Samson's issue was lust. Although he was raised by devout parents and had a clear calling in life, he gave in to his desires. Despite Nazirite laws, Samson pursued first one Philistine woman (v. 2) and later another, named Delilah (Judges 16:4). Even though Delilah's motives were blatantly treacherous, he gave himself over—heart, mind, and spirit—to her and sinned.

Before he died, Samson lost everything: his strength, eyesight, and honor. The man who once led his country mightily became a slave to his enemies until God empowered him one final time (Judges 16:25-30).

A proclivity for a certain sin can ruin our life—or it can drive us to utter dependence on God. What a blessing to know He will always help us when we rely on Him for guidance.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 28 of 73

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

- All prices listed include 6.2% Sales Tax
- Black & White \$52.00/year
 - Colored \$80.00/year
 - Colored \$49.00/6 months
 - E-Weekly* \$35.00/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City _____
State, Zip Code _____
E-mail _____
Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent
P.O. Box 34
Groton, SD 57445-0034
or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent www.397news.com Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$16.00
- 3 Months..... \$28.00
- 6 Months..... \$38.00
- 9 Months..... \$52.00
- 12 Months..... \$60.00

Name: _____
Mailing Address: _____
City _____
State, Zip Code _____
Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____
Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

Pay with Venmo: @paperpaul Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 29 of 73



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.09.26

12 30 36 42 47 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$215,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.07.26

3 18 25 45 50 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$12,370,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 34 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.09.26

19 24 40 42 44 5

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 49 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.07.26

3 16 20 32 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$180,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 49 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.07.26

28 41 50 61 68 5

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 18 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
01.07.26

15 28 57 58 63 23

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$124,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 18 Mins 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 30 of 73

News from the **AP** Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Alcester-Hudson 47, Canistota 35
Bridgewater-Emery 64, James Valley Christian School 34
Centerville 61, Burke 26
Colman-Egan 50, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 41
DeSmet 73, Arlington 38
Elkton-Lake Benton 67, Florence-Henry 48
Faulkton 49, Hitchcock-Tulare 45
Flandreau 59, Tri-Valley 37
Great Plains Lutheran 50, Britton-Hecla 46
Herreid-Selby 58, Langford 47
Irene-Wakonda 58, Gayville-Volin High School 57
Kadoka 40, Lemmon High School 32
Lead-Deadwood 71, New Underwood 51
Little Wound 72, Dupree 65
Marty 53, Crazy Horse 51
McCook Central-Montrose 67, Beresford 37
Mitchell 69, Yankton 53
Moorcroft, Wyo. 62, Edgemont 19
Sioux Falls Lincoln 78, Rapid City Central 52
Sioux Falls Lutheran 69, Canton 53
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 84, Rapid City Stevens 50
Sioux Valley 93, Lakota Tech 27
Sturgis Brown High School 75, Rapid City Christian 67
Timber Lake 57, Philip 27
Wall 70, Jones County 28
Watertown 69, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 52
Wessington Springs 66, Ethan 55
West Central 58, Wynot, Neb. 45
Winnebago, Neb. 69, St. Francis Indian 49

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

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Roncalli 37, Sisseton 28
Alcester-Hudson 59, Canistota 58
Canton 46, Sioux Falls Lutheran 14
Centerville 77, Burke 29
Dupree 53, Little Wound 42
Elkton-Lake Benton 62, Florence-Henry 45
Emery 55, James Valley Christian School 23
Ethan 58, Wessington Springs 21
Gayville-Volin High School 52, Irene-Wakonda 28
Great Plains Lutheran 46, Britton-Hecla 29
Highmore-Harrold 57, Sully Buttes 26
Langford 53, Herreid-Selby 52

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 31 of 73

McCook Central-Montrose 78, Beresford 66
Mitchell 55, Yankton 36
Moorcroft, Wyo. 38, Edgemont 34
New Underwood 41, Lead-Deadwood 26
Philip 45, Timber Lake 38
Rapid City Central 52, Sioux Falls Lincoln 26
Rapid City Christian 55, Sturgis Brown High School 43
Rapid City Stevens 59, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 35
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 56, Watertown 26
Tri-Valley 43, Flandreau 23
Wall 52, Jones County 43
Winnebago, Neb. 61, St. Francis Indian 38

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

Moving mountains: Blasting and clawing toward a safer US 385 in South Dakota's central Black Hills

By BART PFANKUCH/South Dakota News Watch South Dakota News Watch

Kristen Kilcoin has experienced the good and the bad of the nearly three-year project to rebuild and widen a long stretch of U.S. 385, the only major north-south highway through the central Black Hills.

As the owner and operator of Three Forks Campground, located at the intersection of U.S. highways 385 and 16 just south of Hill City, Kilcoin has seen a slight reduction in patrons during the past two tourism seasons.

"Some tourists were afraid to use the road because it was hit-or-miss whether it would be closed or if they would hit delays from a pilot car," she said.

And yet, Kilcoin sees clear upsides to the construction and its anticipated results.

In an unexpected windfall, her campground and RV park is hosting several U.S. 385 construction workers who are providing a significant off-season revenue boost. She also is encouraged by the look and feel of the sections of the highway that have already been completed.

"It's going to be really nice, and safer for people driving it," she said. "There's a couple places where you don't even recognize it is the same road."

Adding space to increase safety

The \$72 million highway rebuild that began in 2024 will widen and enhance safety on a 15-mile stretch of the narrow, winding two-lane highway that flows amid scenic lakes, rock walls and dramatic ridge lines but which also has a high rate of crashes and fatalities.

Construction will include widening of road shoulders, smoothing out of sharp curves, adding turn lanes and softening off-road slopes to make the road safer. The construction route runs from Sheridan Lake on the south to the Pennington-Lawrence county line on the north.

Making room for wider lanes has required the use of dynamite blasts and removal of jagged rocks and huge boulders by giant construction excavators.

The highway forms a critical transportation pipeline through the Black Hills, running from Lead-Deadwood on the north to the Nebraska state line on the south.

Along the way, it provides access to Hill City, Custer and Hot Springs and is a popular drive for Sturgis Motorcycle Rally attendees. It enables access to Mount Rushmore National Memorial, Crazy Horse Memorial and Custer State Park. And it helps fuel a regional tourism industry that brought nearly \$2 billion in revenue to South Dakota in 2024.

Seeking to cut accidents by 50%

The overall crash rate on the stretch of highway being rebuilt is more than double the state average, according to DOT data.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 32 of 73

In the five-year period from 2018-2022, 187 crashes were reported, with four fatalities and 57 injuries. A third of those wrecks and most of the deaths occurred when motorists left the roadway, which in spots has almost no shoulder space while closely abutting rock walls or rimming atop significant drop-offs.

The DOT's goal is to cut the crash rate on the segment of highway by 50%, largely by eliminating tight curves, expanding sight lines for motorists or expanding shoulders from 2 to 8 feet, which has a proven success rate in reducing run-off wrecks.

The project is well into its second major phase and now includes a full road closure south of Pactola Reservoir, the final of five closures that require motorists to make a 40-mile detour through Rapid City.

Many Black Hills businesses have reported slower sales during the project that will reach full completion in 2027. The project has also created transportation challenges for area residents, schools and emergency services, though many locals are aware of work-around routes that enable them to avoid the long delays of the posted detours.

On schedule and on budget (so far)

The construction project has required major planning, coordination and resources of the South Dakota Department of Transportation and a wide range of local and regional agencies.

To date, the work being done by Oftedal Construction of Miles City, Montana, has run smoothly with no major delays or injuries to workers reported, said Tim Wicks, the DOT engineer overseeing the project.

"As of now, we are on schedule and very happy with the progress," Wicks told News Watch. "We've had some additional costs that often happen with these kinds of projects, but nothing major."

Wicks said motorists who want to see how the highway will look when complete can drive the section north of Pactola Reservoir to the Lawrence County line, where lanes are widened, shoulders expanded and the pavement is resurfaced.

"The shoulders are wider and the slopes are gentler in case you do run off the road," Wicks said. "We're not going to stop every accident, but you'll have a better chance to avoid it or it will become much less severe."

Removal of rock ridges a big challenge

The most challenging and labor-intensive part of the construction project has been removing giant boulders and slashing away rocky ridges to make way for a wider road surface, Wicks said.

On a recent day in January, a large excavator could be seen using its clawed bucket to chip away at a vertical rock wall on the west side of the highway north of Sheridan Lake.

At the same time, dump trucks carried away rocks and boulders while trucks with two side-dump trailers added fill dirt to build up the road and shoulder surfaces.

Chopping down a Black Hills ridge must begin at the top because starting at the bottom would create a rocky avalanche risk, Wicks said.

In a process known as "pioneering," workers clear trees and rocks to build a path to the top of the ridges where construction equipment and dynamite blasts are used to remove rock and form edges.

"You don't just fly up there and land on the top," he said "You have to build a road to get there."

After that, ground-level excavators can then safely chip away at the edges to create space.

"Otherwise, you would undermine the surface and it would all land on top of you," Wicks said.

2026 goal: Open for Sturgis rally traffic

One big goal for 2026 is to have the road fully open to traffic during the annual Sturgis rally in early August.

As reported by News Watch, U.S. 385 was open during the 2024 rally, but the construction project left the road surface uneven and gravelly in spots, which increased the risk of cycles to slide down.

Wicks said the road surfaces will be smooth and the speed limit should be the typical 55 mph during the 2026 rally.

"That's still weather-dependent, and issues do pop up. But it should be completely free-flowing traffic during the rally," Wicks said.

The bulk of the road construction and rebuilding should be completed in 2026, with only some final road surfacing to be completed in 2027, Wicks said.

"It's all being done for safety," he said.

This story was originally published by South Dakota News Watch and distributed through a partnership with The Associated Press.

Russia uses its new ballistic missile in a major attack on Ukraine and a warning to West

By SAMYA KULLAB and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia bombarded Ukraine with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles in a large-scale overnight attack, officials said Friday, killing at least four people in the capital. For only the second time in the nearly 4-year-old war, it used a powerful, new hypersonic missile that struck western Ukraine in a clear warning to Kyiv's NATO allies.

The intense barrage and the launch of the nuclear-capable Oreshnik missile came days after Ukraine and its allies reported major progress toward agreeing on how to defend the country from further Moscow aggression if a U.S.-led peace deal is struck.

Europe's leaders condemned the attack as "escalatory and unacceptable," and the European Union's top foreign policy envoy said Russian President Vladimir Putin's reply to diplomacy was "more missiles and destruction."

The attack also coincides with a new chill in relations between Moscow and Washington after Russia condemned the U.S. seizure of an oil tanker in the North Atlantic. It comes as U.S. President Donald Trump signaled he is on board with a hard-hitting sanctions package meant to economically cripple Moscow, which has given no public signal it is willing to budge from its maximalist demands on Ukraine.

Kyiv apartment buildings left without heat

Ukrainian officials said four people were killed and at least 25 wounded in Kyiv as apartment buildings were struck overnight.

Those killed included an emergency medical aid worker, according to Kyiv City Military Administration head Tymur Tkachenko. Four doctors and one police officer were injured while responding to the attacks, authorities said.

About half of snowy Kyiv's apartment buildings — nearly 6,000 — were left without heat amid daytime temperatures of about minus 8 degrees Celsius (17.6 Fahrenheit), Mayor Vitali Klitschko said. Water supplies also were disrupted.

Municipal services restored power and heat to public facilities, including hospitals and maternity wards, using portable boiler units, he said.

The attack damaged the Qatari Embassy in Kyiv, according to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who noted that Qatar has played a key role in mediating the exchange of prisoners of war.

He called for a "clear response" from the international community, particularly from the U.S., which he said Russia takes seriously.

Moscow says attack was retaliation

Ukraine's Security Service said it identified debris from the Oreshnik missile in the Lviv region in the country's west. It was fired from Russia's Kapustin Yar test range near the Caspian Sea in southwestern Russia and targeted civilian infrastructure, investigators said.

"I heard a loud, shocking explosion, and it's normal at this time of the war to hear these things here," said Lviv resident Kristofer Chokhovich, who said he was an American. "I just want everyone in the world to know that Ukraine is strong and we don't care how many missiles you send."

Another resident, Ulyana Fedun, described the attack as "very unpleasant" but not scary because "we've been living in this state for four years."

Russia's Defense Ministry said the attack was a retaliation to what Moscow claimed was a Ukrainian drone strike on one of Putin's residences last month. Both Trump and Ukraine rejected the Russian claim.

Moscow didn't say where the Oreshnik hit, but Russian media and military bloggers said it targeted an

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 34 of 73

underground natural gas storage facility in the Lviv region. Western military aid flows to Ukraine from a supply hub in Poland just across the border.

Putin has previously said the Oreshnik streaks to its target at Mach 10, "like a meteorite," and is immune to any missile defense system. Several of them used in a conventional strike could be as devastating as a nuclear attack, according to Putin, who has warned the West that Russia could use it against allies of Kyiv that allow it to strike inside Russia with longer-range missiles.

Ukrainian intelligence says the missile has six warheads, each carrying six submunitions.

Russia first used the Oreshnik missile on the Ukrainian city of Dnipro in November 2024. Analysts say it gives Russia a new element of psychological warfare, unnerving Ukrainians and intimidating Western countries that aid Ukraine.

Ukraine seeks international support

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said Ukraine would be initiating international action in response to the use of the missile, including an urgent meeting of the U.N. Security Council and a meeting of the Ukraine-NATO Council.

The Security Council scheduled a Monday afternoon meeting on Ukraine.

"Such a strike close to EU and NATO border is a grave threat to the security on the European continent and a test for the transatlantic community. We demand strong responses to Russia's reckless actions," he said in a post on X.

Ukraine's request for an emergency meeting of the Security Council has been conveyed to the council, and six of the 15 members have called for a meeting on Monday, but no date has been set yet, a U.N. diplomat said, speaking on condition of anonymity because discussions have been private.

Pope Leo XIV, speaking at the Vatican, urged the international community to keep pushing for peace and end the suffering in Ukraine.

"Faced with this tragic situation, the Holy See strongly reiterates the pressing need for an immediate ceasefire, and for dialogue motivated by a sincere search for ways leading to peace," the pontiff told ambassadors to the Vatican from around the world.

The leaders of Britain, France and Germany said they spoke about the attack and deemed it "escalatory and unacceptable."

EU foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, said the Oreshnik launch was "meant as a warning to Europe and to the U.S."

"Putin doesn't want peace, Russia's reply to diplomacy is more missiles and destruction," Kallas wrote on social media.

Attacks hit Kyiv apartment blocks

Several districts in Kyiv were hit in the overnight attack, according to Tkachenko, the city's military administration chief. In the Desnyanskyi district, a drone crashed onto the roof of a multistory building and the first two floors of another residential building were damaged.

In the Dnipro district, parts of a drone damaged a multistory building and a fire broke out.

Dmytro Karpenko's windows were shattered in the attack on Kyiv. When he saw that his neighbor's house was burning, he rushed to help him.

"What Russia is doing, of course, shows that they do not want peace. But people really want peace, people are suffering, people are dying," the 45-year old said.

Protests in Iran near the 2-week mark as authorities intensify crackdown on demonstrators

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Protests sweeping across Iran neared the two-week mark Saturday, with the country's government acknowledging the ongoing demonstrations despite an intensifying crackdown and as the Islamic Republic remains cut off from the rest of the world.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 35 of 73

With the internet down in Iran and phone lines cut off, gauging the demonstrations from abroad has grown more difficult. But the death toll in the protests has grown to at least 65 people killed and over 2,300 others detained, according to the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency. Iranian state TV is reporting on security force casualties while portraying control over the nation.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has signaled a coming clampdown, despite U.S. warnings.

"The United States supports the brave people of Iran," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio wrote Saturday on the social platform X. The State Department separately warned: "Do not play games with President Trump. When he says he'll do something, he means it."

State TV split-screen highlights Iran's challenge

Saturday marks the start of the work week in Iran, but many schools and universities reportedly held online classes, Iranian state TV reported. Internal Iranian government websites are believed to be functioning.

State TV repeatedly played a driving, martial orchestral arrangement from the "Epic of Khorramshahr" by Iranian composer Majid Entezami, while showing pro-government demonstrations. The song, aired repeatedly during the 12-day war launched by Israel, honors Iran's 1982 liberation of the city of Khorramshahr during the Iran-Iraq war. It has been used in videos of protesting women cutting away their hair to protest the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini as well.

"Field reports indicate that peace prevailed in most cities of the country at night," a state TV anchor reported. "After a number of armed terrorists attacked public places and set fire to people's private property last night, there was no news of any gathering or chaos in Tehran and most provinces last night."

That was directly contradicted by an online video verified by The Associated Press that showed demonstrations in northern Tehran's Saadat Abad area, with what appeared to be thousands on the street.

"Death to Khamenei!" a man chanted.

The semiofficial Fars news agency, believed to be close to Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and one of the few media outlets able to publish to the outside world, released surveillance camera footage of what it said came from demonstrations in Isfahan. In it, a protester appeared to fire a long gun, while others set fires and threw gasoline bombs at what appeared to be a government compound.

The Young Journalists' Club, associated with state TV, reported that protesters killed three members of the Guard's all-volunteer Basij force in the city of Gachsaran. It also reported a security official was stabbed to death in Hamadan province, a police officer killed in the port city of Bandar Abbas and another in Gilan, as well as one person slain in Mashhad.

State television also aired footage of a funeral service attended by hundreds in Qom, a Shiite seminary city just south of Tehran.

More weekend demonstrations planned

Iran's theocracy cut off the nation from the internet and international telephone calls on Thursday, though it allowed some state-owned and semiofficial media to publish. Qatar's state-funded Al Jazeera news network reported live from Iran, but they appeared to be the only major foreign outlet able to work.

Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, who called for protests Thursday and Friday, asked in his latest message for demonstrators to take to the streets Saturday and Sunday. He urged protesters to carry Iran's old lion-and-sun flag and other national symbols used during the time of the shah to "claim public spaces as your own."

Pahlavi's support of and from Israel has drawn criticism in the past — particularly after the 12-day war. Demonstrators have shouted in support of the shah in some protests, but it isn't clear whether that's support for Pahlavi himself or a desire to return to a time before the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The demonstrations began Dec. 28 over the collapse of the Iranian rial currency, which trades at over 1.4 million to \$1, as the country's economy is squeezed by international sanctions in part levied over its nuclear program. The protests intensified and grew into calls directly challenging Iran's theocracy.

Greenland's party leaders firmly reject Trump's push for US control of the island

NUUK, Greenland (AP) — Greenland's party leaders have rejected President Donald Trump's repeated calls for the U.S. to take control of the island, saying that Greenland's future must be decided by its people.

"We don't want to be Americans, we don't want to be Danes, we want to be Greenlanders," Greenland Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen and four party leaders said in a statement Friday night.

Trump said again on Friday that he would like to make a deal to acquire Greenland, a semiautonomous region that's part of NATO ally Denmark, "the easy way." He said that if the U.S. doesn't own it, then Russia or China will take it over, and the U.S. does not want them as neighbors.

"If we don't do it the easy way, we're going to do it the hard way," Trump said, without explaining what that entailed. The White House said it is considering a range of options, including using military force, to acquire the island.

Greenland's party leaders reiterated that "Greenland's future must be decided by the Greenlandic people."

"As Greenlandic party leaders, we would like to emphasize once again our wish that the United States' contempt for our country ends," the statement said.

Officials from Denmark, Greenland and the United States met Thursday in Washington and will meet again next week to discuss the renewed push by the White House for the control of the island.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that an American takeover of Greenland would mark the end of NATO.

The party leaders' statement said that "the work on Greenland's future takes place in dialogue with the Greenlandic people and is prepared on the basis of international laws."

"No other country can interfere in this," they said. "We must decide the future of our country ourselves, without pressure for quick decision, delay or interference from other countries."

The statement was signed by Nielsen, Pele Broberg, Múte B. Egede, Aleqa Hammond and Aqqalu C. Jerimiassen.

While Greenland is the largest island in the world, it has a population of around 57,000 and doesn't have its own military. Defense is provided by Denmark, whose military is dwarfed by that of the U.S.

It's unclear how the remaining NATO members would respond if the U.S. decided to forcibly take control of the island or if they would come to Denmark's aid.

VR headsets are 'hope machines' inside California prisons, offering escape and practical experience

By HAVEN DALEY and CHRISTOPHER WEBER Associated Press

CHOWCHILLA, Calif. (AP) — Jacob Smith has been in prison for two decades but he and other inmates are still taking regular trips to far-flung, exotic locales. No passport required, just a virtual reality headset.

"I went to Thailand, man!" Smith recalled with a grin, describing the first time he strapped on a VR device and was transported to the lush landscapes and bustling markets of Southeast Asia.

A Los Angeles-based nonprofit is bringing the technology to California prisons with the goal of providing inmates a brief escape and, more importantly, exposure to real world scenarios that will prepare them to reenter society.

During a weeklong program last month, incarcerated men at Valley State Prison near Fresno sat on metal folding chairs in a common area. They shuffled in their seats as they were outfitted with the headsets that resemble opaque goggles. Their necks contorted slightly and smiles spread across their faces as the high-definition videos started and their journeys commenced.

Some saw the sights on the other side of the globe, including Bangkok, while others experienced more practical scenes, such as job interviews. The men sit across virtual desks from virtual interviewers who are both easygoing and hard-nosed to give them the tools for finding employment once they're released.

"For a lot of us, the workforce has changed and things are different with the application process," said

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 37 of 73

Smith, who is eligible for parole in 2031 and now volunteers helping his fellow inmates navigate the VR experience. "It's a nerve wracking experience going to sit in front of somebody and telling them why I'm good for the job."

Afterward, volunteers help the inmates process the emotions or traumas that bubbled up during their experiences. Sabra Williams, founder of the nonprofit Creative Acts, calls the VR devices a "hope machine."

The program stems from a prison arts project that Williams ran that incorporated theater, music, poetry, dance and painting. Watching incarcerated people become engaged in artistic pursuits made her wonder about other ways to "bring the outside world inside."

She heard from people who had left prison lamenting that technology had passed them by. They felt confounded by simple things like pumping gas, checking out at a supermarket, or going to the ATM.

"And what I hear from them is that it made them feel like they didn't belong, and that they only belong in prison," she said.

First Williams' group dug for footage on YouTube to recreate everyday activities. Soon they were creating their own videos focusing on travel, constructive scenarios, civic engagement, conflict resolution, art, and even meditation "to blow their minds and also educate their minds."

Such technology could have an important role to play in rehabilitation and, especially, reintegration into society, said Nancy La Vigne, the dean of Rutgers-Newark School of Criminal Justice in New Jersey. She envisions people who haven't been in the real world for a long time using VR to act out navigating the DMV or figuring out how to take a city bus.

Another benefit could be a calming effect on stressed out inmates. La Vigne points to research published by the American Psychological Association that found that incarcerated people who viewed short nature videos showed reduced levels of aggression and were subject to fewer discipline reports.

But with a hefty price tag and limited access, La Vigne worries about the "practical realities," such as unintended consequences that stem from those who might be left out of the VR experience.

"You can't just hand them out or sell them at commissary," La Vigne said.

A former inmate, Richard Richard, first used a VR headset about six years ago when the program was launched and since his release has become a volunteer for Creative Acts. He said he's impressed by how far the technology has advanced. He loves watching his fellow inmates use the devices for the first time and then progress as they deal with trauma and emotional issues.

"You may physically be here, but mentally, spiritually you can actually transcend this environment," he said.

The group conducts the program, using 100 Oculus headsets donated by Meta, both in general population and in solitary confinement. Youth offenders are also eligible. It currently runs three times a year at four California prisons, and Williams hopes to expand it throughout the state and across the country.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation didn't immediately respond this week to inquiries about plans to expand the program. But in announcing the introduction of VR at the California Men's Colony prison in San Luis Obispo County last August, the department said the usage has the potential "to heal trauma, regulate emotional response, and prepare for a safe, successful reentry into society."

The introductory two-minute trip to Thailand is often emotional for many inmates, some of whom had "never been off their block, let alone out the country," Williams said.

"And so many times people would take off the headsets and they'd be crying," she said. "Because they'd be like, 'I never knew the world was so beautiful.'"

Iran's exiled crown prince rises as a figure in protests, decades after leaving his homeland

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — He has been in exile for nearly 50 years. His father, Iran's shah, was so widely hated that millions took to the streets in 1979, forcing him from power. Nevertheless, Iran's Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi is trying to position himself as a player in his country's future.

Pahlavi successfully spurred protesters onto the streets Thursday night in a massive escalation of the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 38 of 73

protests sweeping Iran. Initially sparked by the Islamic Republic's ailing economy, the demonstrations have become a serious challenge to its theocracy, battered by years of nationwide protests and a 12-day war in June launched by Israel that saw the U.S. bomb nuclear enrichment sites.

What is unknown is how much real support the 65-year-old Pahlavi, who is in exile in the U.S., has in his homeland. Do protesters want a return of the Peacock Throne, as his father's reign was known? Or are the protesters just looking for anything that is not Iran's Shiite theocracy?

Pahlavi issued calls, rebroadcast by Farsi-language satellite news channels and websites abroad, for Iranians to return to the streets Friday night, which they did. He has called for further demonstrations this weekend.

"Over the past decade, Iran's protest movement and dissident community have been increasingly nationalist in tone and tenor," said Behnam Ben Taleblu, an Iran expert with the Washington-based Foundation for Defense of Democracies, which faces sanctions from Tehran.

"The more the Islamic Republic has failed, the more it has emboldened its antithesis," Taleblu said. "The success of the crown prince and his team has been in drawing a sharp contrast between the normalcy of what was and the promise of what could be, versus the nightmare and present predicament that is the reality for so many Iranians."

Pahlavi's profile rose again during U.S. President Donald Trump's first term. Still, Trump and other world leaders have been hesitant to embrace him, given the many cautionary tales in the Middle East and elsewhere of Western governments putting their faith in exiles long estranged from their homelands.

Iranian state media, which for years mocked Pahlavi as being out of touch and corrupt, blamed "monarchist terrorist elements" for the demonstrations Thursday night during which vehicles were burned and police kiosks attacked.

Born into luxury

Born Oct. 31, 1960, Pahlavi lived in a gilded world of luxury as the crown prince to Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi.

Mohammed Reza had inherited the throne from his own father, an army officer who seized power with support from the British. Mohammed Reza's rule was cemented by a 1953 CIA-backed coup, and he cooperated closely with the Americans, who sold the autocratic ruler billions of dollars of weapons and spied on the Soviet Union from Iran.

The young Pahlavi was schooled at the eponymous Reza Pahlavi School, set up within the walls of Niaravan Palace in northern Tehran. A biographer of his father noted the crown prince once played rock music in the palace during a New Year's Eve visit to Tehran by then-U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

But the fall of the Peacock Throne loomed.

While successfully riding rising oil prices in the 1970s, deep economic inequality set in during the shah's rule and his feared SAVAK intelligence agency became notorious for the torture of dissidents.

Millions across the country participated in protests against the shah, uniting secular leftists, labor unions, professionals, students and Muslim clergy. As the crisis reached a fever pitch, the shah was doomed by his inability to act and poor decisions while secretly fighting terminal cancer.

In 1978, Crown Prince Reza left his homeland for flight school at a U.S. air base in Texas. A year later, his father fled Iran during the onset of what became known as the Islamic Revolution. Shiite clerics squeezed out other anti-shah factions, establishing a new theocratic government that executed thousands after the revolution and to this day remains one of the world's top executioners.

After his father's death, a royal court in exile announced that Reza Pahlavi assumed the role of the shah on Oct. 31, 1980, his 20th birthday.

"I can understand and sympathize with your sufferings and your inner torment," Pahlavi said, addressing Iranians in a speech at the time. "I shed the tears which you must hide. Yet there is, I am sure, light beyond the darkness. Deep in your hearts, you may be confident that this nightmare, like others in our history, will pass."

Years in exile

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 39 of 73

But what followed has been nearly five decades in exile.

Pahlavi attempted to gain influence abroad. In 1986, The Washington Post reported that the CIA supplied the prince's allies "a miniaturized television transmitter for an 11-minute clandestine broadcast" to Iran by Pahlavi that pirated the signal of two stations in the Islamic Republic.

"I will return and together we will pave the way for the nation's happiness and prosperity through freedom," Pahlavi reportedly said in the broadcast.

That did not happen. Pahlavi largely lived abroad in the United States in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C., while his mother, the Shahbanu Farah Pahlavi, lived in Paris.

Circles of diehard Iranian monarchists in exile have long touted dreams of the Pahlavi dynasty returning to power. But Pahlavi has been hampered in gaining wider appeal by a number of factors: bitter memories of his father's rule; the perception that he and his family are out of touch with their homeland; and repression inside Iran that aims to silence any opposition sentiment.

At the same time, younger generations in Iran born decades after the shah's rule ended have grown up under a different experience; social restrictions and brutal suppression by the Islamic Republic and economic turmoil under international sanctions, corruption and mismanagement.

Pahlavi has sought to have a voice through social media videos, and Farsi-language news channels such as Iran International have highlighted his calls for protests. The channel also aired QR codes that led to information for security force members within Iran who want to cooperate with him.

Mahmood Enayat, the general manager of Iran International's owner Volant Media, said the channel ran Pahlavi's ad and others "on a pro bono basis" as "part of our mission to support Iran's civil society."

In interviews in recent years, Pahlavi has raised the idea of a constitutional monarchy, perhaps with an elected rather than a hereditary ruler. But he has also said it is up to Iranians to choose.

"This regime is simply irreformable because the nature of it, its DNA, is such that it cannot," Pahlavi told The Associated Press in 2017. "People have given up with the idea of reform and they think there has to be fundamental change. Now, how this change can occur is the big question."

He has also faced criticism for his support of and from Israel, particularly after the June war. Pahlavi traveled to Israel in 2023 and met Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a longtime hawk on Iran whose criticism of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal fueled Trump's decision to withdraw America from the accord. Netanyahu also oversaw the 12-day war with Iran.

"My focus right now is on liberating Iran, and I will find any means that I can, without compromising the national interests and independence, with anyone who is willing to give us a hand, whether it is the U.S. or the Saudis or the Israelis or whomever it is," he said in 2017.

Filipino rescuers detect 'signs of life' in garbage avalanche that killed 4 and left dozens missing

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Rescuers detected signs of life in an avalanche of garbage that killed at least four workers and left more than 30 others missing Thursday in a central Philippines landfill and plan to intensify search efforts, an official said Saturday.

Twelve workers have been rescued with injuries from the huge mound of garbage that collapsed among the low-slung buildings of a waste management facility in the village of Binaliw in Cebu City, authorities said.

Dozens of rescuers including police, firefighters and disaster-response personnel have raced against time to find more survivors in dangerous conditions in the rubble of twisted tin roofs, iron bars and combustible heaps of garbage and debris.

"Authorities confirmed the presence of detected signs of life in specific areas, requiring continued careful excavation and the deployment of a more advanced 50-ton crane, which is enroute with police escort," Cebu City Mayor Nestor Archival said in a statement.

"Safety of responders remains paramount due to hazards such as unstable debris and acetylene risks, prompting adjustments to the security perimeter and controlled access," Archival said.

The four dead, including an engineer and a female office worker, were all employees of the landfill and waste management facility with a staff of 110, according to the mayor and police.

The initial list of victims on Friday included two dead and 36 missing, which increased Saturday to four dead, according to Archival, who did not provide an updated number of people missing.

The cause of the collapse of the mountain of garbage remains unclear, but a survivor told The Associated Press on Friday that it happened in an instant without any warning despite fairly good weather at the time.

Jaylord Antigua, a 31-year-old office worker at the landfill, said the wall of garbage cascaded down and destroyed the administrative office he was in. He extricated himself with bruises on his face and arms by crawling in darkness in the rubble and debris.

"I saw a light and crawled toward it in a hurry, because I feared there will be more landslides," Antigua said. "It was traumatic. I feared that it was my end, so this is my second life."

It is unclear how the accident would affect garbage disposal in the landfill in Cebu, a bustling port city of nearly a million people that serves as a regional hub for trade, commerce and tourism.

Preparations "are also underway to manage the looming garbage collection issue," Archival said in his statement without further details.

Such landfills and open dumpsites have long been a source of safety and health concerns throughout the Philippines, especially in areas close to poor communities where many residents scavenge for junk and leftover food in the garbage heaps.

In July 2000, a huge garbage mound in a shantytown in suburban Quezon City, part of metropolitan Manila, collapsed and ignited a fire after days of stormy weather.

The disaster left more than 200 people dead and many more missing, damaged scores of shanties and prompted a law requiring the closure of illegal dump sites nationwide, as well as improved and more sustainable waste management by authorities.

National championship game will be a homecoming for Indiana QB Fernando Mendoza

By MAURA CAREY AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Indiana is headed to the national championship game for the first time in program history. For Hoosiers quarterback Fernando Mendoza, that means a chance to end a fairytale season in the place where his story first began.

It's been a historic season for Indiana, and Mendoza is largely to credit. Indiana won its first Big Ten title since 1967, beat Ohio State for the first time since 1988, earned the No. 1 seed in the College Football Playoff, won its first Rose Bowl, and in December, Mendoza became the program's first Heisman Trophy winner.

After a five touchdown performance and 56-22 rout of Oregon in the Peach Bowl, there's now just one item left on the checklist for Mendoza and the Hoosiers — and that's beating Miami on its home turf in the championship game.

It will be a homecoming for the quarterback, who grew up in Miami and attended Christopher Columbus High School, roughly 30 minutes south of Hard Rock Stadium.

"I've actually not played in Hard Rock before, but I've been to a lot of games there," Mendoza said. "It's a very full circle moment. If you open Google Maps and put my address to the University of Miami campus, it's under a mile away."

Mendoza said he often biked and walked over, played rec basketball and spent the offseason training on campus, but the Miami and Mendoza connections don't end there. Mendoza's dad was a high school teammate of with Hurricanes coach Mario Cristobal.

The Heisman winner is familiar with the Hurricanes. He played for two years at California, including the program's inaugural season in the ACC in 2024, before transferring to Indiana in 2025. He faced his hometown team once, in October 2024, and threw for 285 yards, two touchdowns and an interception in

a 39-38 loss.

He's looking forward to a rematch.

"They did switch defensive coordinators and last year was a very different offensive scheme as well," Mendoza said. "It was a tight game. Cam Ward, who ended up being the No. 1 overall pick. That game came down to the wire... We lost that one by one point. It was heartbreaking, so just looking for the opportunity to play them again."

Mendoza has performed well under bright lights, and the Peach Bowl was no exception. He finished the game completing 17 of 20 passes for 177 yards and five touchdowns. He added 28 rushing yards on six carries and had a passer rating of 241.8.

Protests against ICE planned across US after shootings in Minneapolis and Portland, Oregon

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Protests against immigration enforcement are planned for cities and towns across the country on Saturday after one federal officer fatally shot a woman in Minneapolis and another shot and wounded two people in Portland, Oregon.

The demonstrations come as the U.S. Department of Homeland Security pushes forward in the Twin Cities with what it calls its biggest-ever immigration enforcement operation. President Donald Trump's administration has said both shootings were acts of self-defense against drivers who "weaponized" their vehicles to attack officers.

Indivisible, a social movement organization that formed to resist the Trump administration, said hundreds of protests were scheduled in Texas, Kansas, New Mexico, Ohio, Florida and other states. Many were dubbed "ICE Out for Good" using the acronym for the agency Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Indivisible and its local chapters organized protests in all 50 states last year.

In Minneapolis, a coalition of migrant rights groups called for a demonstration at Powderhorn Park, a large green space about half a mile from where 37-year-old Renee Good was shot in a residential neighborhood on Wednesday. They said the rally and march would celebrate Good's life and call for an "end to deadly terror on our streets."

Protests held in the neighborhood so far have been peaceful, in contrast to the violence that hit Minneapolis in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd in 2020. Near the airport, some confrontations erupted on Thursday and Friday between smaller groups of protesters and agents guarding the federal building used as a base for the Twin Cities crackdown.

The Trump administration has been surging thousands of federal officers to Minnesota under a sweeping new crackdown tied in part to allegations of fraud involving Somali residents. More than 2,000 officers were taking part.

Some officers moved in after abruptly pulling out of Louisiana, where they were part of another operation that started last month and was expected to last until February.

How the US could take over Greenland and the potential challenges

By EMMA BURROWS and BEN FINLEY Associated Press

U.S. President Donald Trump wants to own Greenland. He has repeatedly said the United States must take control of the strategically located and mineral-rich island, which is a semiautonomous region that's part of NATO ally Denmark.

Officials from Denmark, Greenland and the United States met Thursday in Washington and will meet again next week to discuss a renewed push by the White House, which is considering a range of options, including using military force, to acquire the island.

Trump said Friday he is going to do "something on Greenland, whether they like it or not."

If it's not done "the easy way, we're going to do it the hard way," he said without elaborating what that

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 42 of 73

could entail. In an interview Thursday, he told The New York Times that he wants to own Greenland because "ownership gives you things and elements that you can't get from just signing a document."

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has warned that an American takeover of Greenland would mark the end of NATO, and Greenlanders say they don't want to become part of the U.S.

This is a look at some of the ways the U.S. could take control of Greenland and the potential challenges. Military action could alter global relations

Trump and his officials have indicated they want to control Greenland to enhance American security and explore business and mining deals. But Imran Bayoumi, an associate director at the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security, said the sudden focus on Greenland is also the result of decades of neglect by several U.S. presidents towards Washington's position in the Arctic.

The current fixation is partly down to "the realization we need to increase our presence in the Arctic, and we don't yet have the right strategy or vision to do so," he said.

If the U.S. took control of Greenland by force, it would plunge NATO into a crisis, possibly an existential one.

While Greenland is the largest island in the world, it has a population of around 57,000 and doesn't have its own military. Defense is provided by Denmark, whose military is dwarfed by that of the U.S.

It's unclear how the remaining members of NATO would respond if the U.S. decided to forcibly take control of the island or if they would come to Denmark's aid.

"If the United States chooses to attack another NATO country militarily, then everything stops," Frederiksen has said.

Trump said he needs control of the island to guarantee American security, citing the threat from Russian and Chinese ships in the region, but "it's not true" said Lin Mortensgaard, an expert on the international politics of the Arctic at the Danish Institute for International Studies, or DIIS.

While there are probably Russian submarines — as there are across the Arctic region — there are no surface vessels, Mortensgaard said. China has research vessels in the Central Arctic Ocean, and while the Chinese and Russian militaries have done joint military exercises in the Arctic, they have taken place closer to Alaska, she said.

Bayoumi, of the Atlantic Council, said he doubted Trump would take control of Greenland by force because it's unpopular with both Democratic and Republican lawmakers, and would likely "fundamentally alter" U.S. relationships with allies worldwide.

The U.S. already has access to Greenland under a 1951 defense agreement, and Denmark and Greenland would be "quite happy" to accommodate a beefed up American military presence, Mortensgaard said.

For that reason, "blowing up the NATO alliance" for something Trump has already, doesn't make sense, said Ulrik Pram Gad, an expert on Greenland at DIIS.

Bilateral agreements may assist effort

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio told a select group of U.S. lawmakers this week that it was the Republican administration's intention to eventually purchase Greenland, as opposed to using military force. Danish and Greenlandic officials have previously said the island isn't for sale.

It's not clear how much buying the island could cost, or if the U.S. would be buying it from Denmark or Greenland.

Washington also could boost its military presence in Greenland "through cooperation and diplomacy," without taking it over, Bayoumi said.

One option could be for the U.S. to get a veto over security decisions made by the Greenlandic government, as it has in islands in the Pacific Ocean, Gad said.

Palau, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands have a Compact of Free Association, or COFA, with the U.S.

That would give Washington the right to operate military bases and make decisions about the islands' security in exchange for U.S. security guarantees and around \$7 billion of yearly economic assistance, according to the Congressional Research Service.

It's not clear how much that would improve upon Washington's current security strategy. The U.S. already

operates the remote Pituffik Space Base in northwestern Greenland, and can bring as many troops as it wants under existing agreements.

Influence operations expected to fail

Greenlandic politician Aaja Chemnitz told The Associated Press that Greenlanders want more rights, including independence, but don't want to become part of the U.S.

Gad suggested influence operations to persuade Greenlanders to join the U.S. would likely fail. He said that is because the community on the island is small and the language is "inaccessible."

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen summoned the top U.S. official in Denmark in August to complain that "foreign actors" were seeking to influence the country's future. Danish media reported that at least three people with connections to Trump carried out covert influence operations in Greenland.

Even if the U.S. managed to take control of Greenland, it would likely come with a large bill, Gad said. That's because Greenlanders currently have Danish citizenship and access to the Danish welfare system, including free health care and schooling.

To match that, "Trump would have to build a welfare state for Greenlanders that he doesn't want for his own citizens," Gad said.

Disagreement unlikely to be resolved

Since 1945, the American military presence in Greenland has decreased from thousands of soldiers over 17 bases and installations to 200 at the remote Pituffik Space Base in the northwest of the island, Rasmussen said last year. The base supports missile warning, missile defense and space surveillance operations for the U.S. and NATO.

U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance told Fox News on Thursday that Denmark has neglected its missile defense obligations in Greenland, but Mortensgaard said that it makes "little sense to criticize Denmark," because the main reason why the U.S. operates the Pituffik base in the north of the island is to provide early detection of missiles.

The best outcome for Denmark would be to update the defense agreement, which allows the U.S. to have a military presence on the island and have Trump sign it with a "gold-plated signature," Gad said.

But he suggested that's unlikely because Greenland is "handy" to the U.S. president.

When Trump wants to change the news agenda — including distracting from domestic political problems — "he can just say the word 'Greenland' and this starts all over again," Gad said.

New video of fatal Minnesota ICE shooting, from officer's perspective, brings fresh scrutiny

By REBECCA SANTANA, TIM SULLIVAN and GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A Minnesota prosecutor on Friday called on the public to share with investigators any recordings and evidence connected to the fatal shooting of Renee Good as a new video emerged showing the final moments of her encounter with an immigration officer.

The Minneapolis killing and a separate shooting in Portland, Oregon, a day later by the Border Patrol have set off protests in multiple cities and denunciations of immigration enforcement tactics by the U.S. government. The Trump administration has defended the officer who shot Good in her car, saying he was protecting himself and fellow agents.

The reaction to the shooting has largely been focused on witness cellphone video of the encounter. A new, 47-second video that was published online by a Minnesota-based conservative news site, Alpha News, and later reposted on social media by the Department of Homeland Security shows the shooting from the perspective of ICE officer Jonathan Ross, who fired the shots.

Sirens blaring in the background, he approaches and circles Good's vehicle in the middle of the road while apparently filming on his cellphone. At the same time, Good's wife also was recording the encounter and can be seen walking around the vehicle and approaching the officer. A series of exchanges occurred:

"That's fine, I'm not mad at you," Good says as the officer passes by her door. She has one hand on

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 44 of 73

the steering wheel and the other outside the open driver side window.

"U.S. citizen, former f---ing veteran," says her wife, standing outside the passenger side of the SUV holding up her phone. "You wanna come at us, you wanna come at us, I say go get yourself some lunch big boy."

Other officers are approaching the driver's side of the car at about the same time and one says: "Get out of the car, get out of the f---ing car." Ross is now at the front driver side of the vehicle. Good reverses briefly, then turns the steering wheel toward the passenger side as she drives ahead and Ross opens fire.

The camera becomes unsteady and points toward the sky and then returns to the street view showing Good's SUV careening away.

"F---ing b---," someone at the scene says.

A crashing sound is heard as Good's vehicle smashes into others parked on the street.

Federal agencies have encouraged officers to document encounters in which people may attempt to interfere with enforcement actions, but policing experts have cautioned that recording on a handheld device can complicate already volatile situations by occupying an officer's hands and narrowing focus at moments when rapid decision-making is required.

Under an ICE policy directive, officers and agents are expected to activate body-worn cameras at the start of enforcement activities and to record throughout interactions, and footage must be kept for review in serious incidents such as deaths or use-of-force cases. The Department of Homeland Security has not responded to questions about whether the officer who opened fire or any of the others who were on the scene were wearing body cameras.

Homeland Security says video shows self-defense

Vice President JD Vance and Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said in posts on X that the new video backs their contention that the officer fired in self-defense.

"Many of you have been told this law enforcement officer wasn't hit by a car, wasn't being harassed, and murdered an innocent woman," Vance said. "The reality is that his life was endangered and he fired in self defense."

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey has said any self-defense argument is "garbage."

Policing experts said the video didn't change their thoughts on the use-of-force but did raise additional questions about the officer's training.

"Now that we can see he's holding a gun in one hand and a cellphone in the other filming, I want to see the officer training that permits that," said Geoff Alpert, a criminology professor at the University of South Carolina.

The video demonstrates that the officers didn't perceive Good to be a threat, said John P. Gross, a professor at the University of Wisconsin Law School who has written extensively about officers shooting at moving vehicles.

"If you are an officer who views this woman as a threat, you don't have one hand on a cellphone. You don't walk around this supposed weapon, casually filming," Gross said.

Ross, 43, is an Iraq War veteran who has served in the Border Patrol and ICE for nearly two decades. He was injured last year when he was dragged by a driver fleeing an immigration arrest.

Attempts to reach Ross at phone numbers and email addresses associated with him were not successful. Prosecutor asks for video and evidence

Meanwhile, Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty said that although her office has collaborated effectively with the FBI in past cases, she is concerned by the Trump administration's decision to bar state and local agencies from playing any role in the investigation into Good's killing.

She also said the officer who shot Good in the head does not have complete legal immunity, as Vance declared.

"We do have jurisdiction to make this decision with what happened in this case," Moriarty said at a news conference. "It does not matter that it was a federal law enforcement agent."

Moriarty said her office would post a link for the public to submit footage of the shooting, even though she acknowledged that she wasn't sure what legal outcome submissions might produce.

Good's wife, Becca Good, released a statement to Minnesota Public Radio on Friday saying, "kindness

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 45 of 73

radiated out of her.”

“On Wednesday, January 7th, we stopped to support our neighbors. We had whistles. They had guns,” Becca Good said.

“I am now left to raise our son and to continue teaching him, as Renee believed, that there are people building a better world for him,” she wrote.

The reaction to Good’s shooting was immediate in the city where police killed George Floyd in 2020, with hundreds of protesters converging on the shooting scene and the school district canceling classes for the rest of the week as a precaution and offering an online option through Feb. 12.

On Friday, protesters were outside a federal facility serving as a hub for the immigration crackdown that began Tuesday in Minneapolis and St. Paul. That evening, hundreds protested and marched outside two hotels in downtown Minneapolis where immigration enforcement agents were supposed to be staying. Some people were seen breaking or spray painting windows and state law enforcement officers wearing helmets and holding batons ordered the remaining group of fewer than 100 people to leave late Friday.

Shooting in Portland

The Portland shooting happened outside a hospital Thursday. A federal border officer shot and wounded a man and woman in a vehicle, identified by the Department of Homeland Security as Venezuela nationals Luis David Nico Moncada and Yorlenys Betzabeth Zambrano-Contreras. Police said they were in stable condition Friday after surgery, with DHS saying Nico Moncada was taken into FBI custody.

DHS defended the actions of its officers in Portland, saying the shooting occurred after the driver with alleged gang ties tried to “weaponize” his vehicle to hit them. It said no officers were injured.

Portland Police Chief Bob Day confirmed that the two people shot had “some nexus” to Tren de Aragua, a Venezuelan gang. Day said they came to the attention of police during an investigation of a July shooting believed to have been carried out by gang members, but they were not identified as suspects.

The chief said any gang affiliation did not necessarily justify the shooting by U.S. Border Patrol. The Oregon Department of Justice said it would investigate.

On Friday evening, hundreds of protesters marched to the ICE building in Portland.

The biggest crackdown yet

The Minneapolis shooting happened on the second day of the immigration crackdown in the Twin Cities, which Homeland Security said is the biggest immigration enforcement operation ever. More than 2,000 officers are taking part and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said they have made more than 1,500 arrests.

The government is also shifting immigration officers to Minneapolis from sweeps in Louisiana, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press. This represents a pivot, as the Louisiana crackdown that began in December had been expected to last into February.

Good’s death — at least the fifth tied to immigration sweeps since President Donald Trump took office — has resonated far beyond Minneapolis. More protests are planned for this weekend, according to Indivisible, a group formed to resist the Trump administration.

Actor Timothy Busfield accused of child sex abuse in New Mexico

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

Authorities in New Mexico issued an arrest warrant Friday for director and Emmy Award-winning actor Timothy Busfield to face a child sex abuse charge.

An investigator with the Albuquerque Police Department filed a criminal complaint in support of the charge, which says a child reported that Busfield touched him inappropriately. The acts allegedly occurred on the set of “The Cleaning Lady,” a TV series Busfield directed and acted in.

The child said the first incident happened when he was 7 years old and Busfield touched him three or four times. Busfield allegedly touched him five or six times on another occasion when he was 8.

The child’s mother reported to Child Protective Services that the abuse occurred between November 2022 and spring 2024, the complaint said.

Busfield's attorney and agent did not immediately respond to email messages seeking comment late Friday. The arrest warrant, which was signed by a judge, said the charge is for two counts of criminal sexual contact of a minor.

According to the complaint, the child, which it identifies only by his initials, has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety. A social worker documented him saying he has had nightmares about Busfield touching him and woken up scared.

The child was reportedly afraid to tell anyone because Busfield was the director and he feared he would get mad at him.

The investigation began in November 2024, when the investigator responded to a call from a doctor at the University of New Mexico Hospital. The child's parents had gone there at the recommendation of a law firm, the complaint said.

"The Cleaning Lady" aired for four seasons on Fox, ending in 2025. It starred Elodie Yung as a Cambodian doctor who comes to the United States to get medical treatment for her son, witnesses a mob killing and ends up becoming a cleaner for organized crime.

The show was produced by Warner Bros., which according to the complaint conducted its own investigation into the abuse allegations but was unable to corroborate them.

Busfield is known for appearances in "The West Wing," "Field of Dreams" and "Thirtysomething," the latter of which won him an Emmy for outstanding supporting actor in a drama series in 1991.

He is married to actor Melissa Gilbert; there was no immediate response to an email sent to her publicist.

Trump administration can't block child care money for 5 Democratic-led states for now, judge says

By GEOFF MULVIHILL and HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

A federal judge ruled Friday that President Donald Trump's administration cannot block federal money for child care subsidies and other programs aimed at supporting low-income families with children from flowing to five Democratic-led states for now.

The states of California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota and New York argued that a policy announced Tuesday to freeze billions of dollars in funds for three grant programs is having an immediate impact on them and creating "operational chaos." In court filings and a hearing earlier Friday, the states contended that the government did not have a legal reason for withholding the money from them.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said it was pausing the funding because it had "reason to believe" the states were granting benefits to people in the country illegally, though it did not provide evidence or explain why it was targeting those states and not others.

U.S. District Judge Arun Subramanian, who was nominated to the bench by President Joe Biden, did not rule on the legality of the funding freeze but said the five states met a legal threshold "to protect the status quo" for at least 14 days while arguments are made in court.

Health department officials did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The affected programs are the Child Care and Development Fund, which subsidizes child care for 1.3 million children from low-income families; the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, which provides cash assistance and job training; and the Social Services Block Grant, a smaller fund that provides money for a variety of programs.

The five states say they receive a total of more than \$10 billion a year from the programs.

New York Attorney General Letitia James, who is leading the lawsuit, called the ruling a "critical victory for families whose lives have been upended by this administration's cruelty."

The government had requested reams of data from the five states, including the names and Social Security numbers of everyone who received benefits from some of the programs since 2022.

The states argue that the effort is unconstitutional and is intended to go after Trump's political adversaries rather than to stamp out fraud in government programs — something the states say they already do.

Jessica Ranucci, a lawyer in James' office, said during the Friday hearing that at least four of the states

had already had money delayed after requesting it. She said that if the states can't get child care funds, there will be immediate uncertainty for providers and families who rely on the programs.

A lawyer for the federal government, Kamika Shaw, said it was her understanding that the money had not stopped flowing to states.

The other 45 states face a new requirement to check attendance at child care centers and submit "strong justification for the use of funds" that aligns with the program's purpose.

At about the same time the judge stopped the freeze on the child care subsidies, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins announced that the administration would freeze about \$130 million a year in funding from her agency to Minnesota.

Rollins said the state's inability to stop fraud schemes led to the decision. Seventy-eight people have been charged since 2022 — and 57 convicted — after federal prosecutors said the Minnesota nonprofit group Feeding Our Future stole \$250 million from a program meant to feed children in need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz's office did not immediately have a comment Friday evening. The state's attorney general, Keith Ellison, said he'd fight the new freeze of funds in court.

In a letter to Walz that Rollins shared on social media, she suggested the state could restore its access to the funding by providing justification for how it spent federal dollars over the past year. All the state's future transactions involving money from the agency will require the same justification, she said.

Walz and Minnesota have become a main target of the administration in Trump's second term.

Last month the president called the state's Somali population "garbage" in the wake of the Feeding Our Futures investigation and other fraud cases involving Somali defendants.

And this week the administration launched the largest immigration enforcement operation in history in Minneapolis, leading to a fatal shooting of a woman by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent.

Washington National Opera bows out of Kennedy Center

By LOU KESTEN and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Washington National Opera announced Friday that it will move performances away from the Kennedy Center in another high-profile departure following President Donald Trump's take-over of the U.S. capital's leading performing arts venue.

The opera said it will seek to end its affiliation with the Kennedy Center through an "amicable transition" and will return to operating independently. It cited financial constraints imposed after Trump fired the Kennedy Center's board and installed allies to oversee it.

The opera will reduce its spring season and move performances to other venues "to ensure fiscal prudence and fulfill its obligations for a balanced budget," the opera said in a statement.

The statement did not mention Trump or the decision by the Kennedy Center's new board to add the president's name to the venue. Though Congress still formally calls it the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the building's exterior and website now refer to it as the Trump Kennedy Center.

Ric Grenell, a Trump aide serving as the Center's interim executive director, said the venue has spent millions to support the Washington National Opera but it continues to operate at a deficit.

Parting ways will provide "the flexibility and funds to bring in operas from around the world and across the U.S.," Grenell wrote on X.

Artists ranging from "Hamilton" creator Lin-Manuel Miranda to rock star Peter Wolf have called off events at the Kennedy Center since Trump ousted the previous leadership early last year and arranged for himself to head the board of trustees. The December rebranding as the Trump Kennedy Center led to a new wave of cancellations.

Opera officials said the Center's new business model requires productions to be fully funded in advance, which it said is "incompatible with opera operations." Ticket sales cover only a fraction of production costs, and opera companies rely on grants and donations to make up the difference but can't secure them years in advance, when they're planning productions.

The business model also doesn't accommodate the opera's model practice of using revenue from popular

works to subsidize lower-grossing, lesser-known works, the opera said.

"I have been proud to be affiliated with a national monument to the human spirit, a place that has long served as an inviting home for our ever-growing family of artists and opera lovers," said Francesca Zambello, the Washington National Opera's artistic director for the past 14 years.

She vowed to continue offering a variety of shows, "from monumental classics to more contemporary works."

Late Friday, WNO productions of "Treemonisha," "The Crucible" and "West Side Story" were still listed on the Kennedy Center website.

What to know as Trump targets child care and social service funding to 5 states led by Democrats

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

President Donald Trump's administration has told states that it is restricting some social safety net funds that cover services including child care subsidies, cash assistance and job training for low-income families with children.

The administration says the moves are designed to root out fraud as a result of reported problems, but five Democratic-led states are a special focus of its attention, and some of their leaders say children are being harmed for political reasons.

Those five states challenged the freeze in court, and a federal judge on Friday halted it for at least two weeks.

Here's a rundown of where the federal government is trying to withhold money and what's known about the impact.

The administration says it is holding up funds while inspecting fraud allegations

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services said Tuesday that it had frozen money for California, Colorado, Illinois, Minnesota and New York in the Child Care and Development Fund, which subsidizes child care for 1.3 million children from low-income families; the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program, which provides cash assistance and job training; and the Social Services Block Grant.

The states say in their lawsuit that they receive a total of more than \$10 billion a year for the programs.

New York officials say the money supports homeless shelters, adoption, child welfare investigations and other services — and the losses could create a budget hole of hundreds of millions this month.

Letters to the states said that the government "has reason to believe" each state "is illicitly providing illegal aliens" with benefits. They did not spell out reasons for the suspicions — or say why other states did not receive similar notices.

U.S. District Judge Arun Subramanian, who was nominated to the bench by President Joe Biden, did not rule on the legality of the funding freeze but said the five states met a legal threshold "to protect the status quo" for at least 14 days while arguments are made in court.

The administration told states to provide the names, Social Security numbers and other personally identifying details of the programs' beneficiaries since at least 2022, plus information about subcontractors and program providers dating back to 2019. For the child care program, the government requested attendance records but without personal information for the children or their families.

The Trump administration has pushed to collect and use similar information on beneficiaries of other government programs.

Ruth Friedman, a senior fellow at The Century Foundation who oversaw child care programs for the Biden administration, said on a call with reporters this week that some of the information could be a challenge to assemble because the federal government does not now require it.

Every state has at least some new hurdles to access child care money

The 45 other states also face a new requirement: To get distributions of their allotted child care funds through an online system, they must first verify enrollment and attendance at child care centers and submit "a strong justification for the use of funds that aligns with" the purpose of the program.

The administration told the states that it is "implementing strategies and program controls to identify fraud and ensure program integrity." Similar "defend the spend" policies apply to some other federal money as a result of changes made last year by Trump's Department of Government Efficiency. It was briefly required for the day care dollars last year, but the government reversed course.

Friedman said it's not clear exactly how much evidence the administration wants states to enter to receive funds.

Elliot Haspel, a senior fellow at Capita, a think tank that focuses on family issues, said even if states eventually get the money, delays could result in layoffs or closures at child care centers — and that would hurt families that pay the full cost for care as well as those who receive subsidies.

"You can create chaos very quickly," he said, "and the harm may roll on the longer it happens."

Minnesota has been told to provide information more urgently

Focus intensified around the federal government's child care subsidy program after a pro-Trump influencer posted a video last month claiming that day care centers operated by Somali residents in Minneapolis had committed up to \$100 million in fraud.

Conservative news and commentary outlets had already been amplifying earlier social service fraud allegations that involved Somali defendants. Seventy-eight people have been charged since 2022 — and 57 convicted — after federal prosecutors said the nonprofit group Feeding Our Future stole \$250 million from a program meant to feed children in need during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minnesota officials told child care providers that their federal money is on hold, and that the administration told them to hand over records on child care providers, state oversight efforts and program finances by Friday.

In Tuesday's letter notifying Minnesota that the social service block grants will be on hold, the administration asserted: "Your office has not demonstrated that the state has effective mechanisms in place to prevent fraud."

Gov. Tim Walz has defended his state's response and said his state is taking aggressive action to prevent further fraud.

Also Friday, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins announced that the administration would freeze about \$130 million a year in funding from her agency to Minnesota, again citing the state's inability to stop fraud schemes. Walz's office did not immediately have a comment.

US intercepts fifth sanctioned tanker as it exerts control over Venezuelan oil distribution

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN, AAMER MADHANI and MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. forces boarded another oil tanker in the Caribbean Sea on Friday, the U.S. military said, as the Trump administration targets sanctioned tankers traveling to and from Venezuela as part of a broader effort to take control of the South American country's oil.

The predawn raid was carried out by Marines and Navy sailors launched from the aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford, part of the extensive force the U.S. has built up in the Caribbean in recent months, according to U.S. Southern Command, which declared "there is no safe haven for criminals" as it announced the seizure of the tanker called the Olina. The Coast Guard then took control of the vessel, officials said.

Southern Command and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem both posted unclassified footage on social media Friday morning of a U.S. helicopter landing on the vessel and U.S. personnel conducting a search of the deck and tossing what appeared to be an explosive device in front of a door leading to inside the ship.

In her post, Noem said the ship was "another 'ghost fleet' tanker ship suspected of carrying embargoed oil" and it had departed Venezuela "attempting to evade U.S. forces."

The Olina is the fifth tanker that has been seized by U.S. forces as part of the effort by President Donald Trump's administration to control the production, refining and global distribution of Venezuela's oil products

following the U.S. ouster of President Nicolás Maduro in a surprise nighttime raid.

In a post on his social media network later in the day, Trump said the seizure was conducted “in coordination with the Interim Authorities of Venezuela” but offered no elaboration.

The White House did not immediately respond to requests for more details.

Venezuela’s government acknowledged in a statement that it was working with U.S. authorities to return the tanker, “which set sail without payment or authorization from the Venezuelan authorities,” to the South American nation.

“Thanks to this first successful joint operation, the ship is sailing back to Venezuelan waters for its protection and relevant actions,” according to the statement.

Samir Madani, co-founder of TankerTrackers.com, said his organization used satellite imagery and surface-level photos to document that at least 16 tankers left the Venezuelan coast in contravention of the quarantine U.S. forces have set up to block sanctioned ships from conducting trade. The Olina was among that flotilla.

U.S. government records show that the Olina was sanctioned for moving Russian oil under its prior name, Minerva M, and flagged in Panama.

While records show the Olina is now flying the flag of Timor-Leste, it is listed in the international shipping registry as having a false flag, meaning the registration it is claiming is not valid. In July, the owner and manager of the ship on its registration was changed to a company in Hong Kong.

According to ship tracking databases, the Olina last transmitted its location in November in the Caribbean, north of the Venezuelan coast. Since then, however, the ship has been running dark with its location beacon turned off.

While Noem and the military framed the seizure as part of an effort to enforce the law, other officials in the Trump administration have made clear they see it as a way to generate cash as they seek to rebuild Venezuela’s battered oil industry and restore its economy.

In an early morning social media post, Trump said the U.S. and Venezuela “are working well together, especially as it pertains to rebuilding, in a much bigger, better, and more modern form, their oil and gas infrastructure.”

The administration said it expects to sell 30 million to 50 million barrels of sanctioned Venezuelan oil, with the proceeds to go to both the U.S. and Venezuelan people. But the president expects the arrangement to continue indefinitely. He met Friday with executives from oil companies to discuss his goal of investing \$100 billion in Venezuela to repair and upgrade its oil production and distribution.

Vice President JD Vance told Fox News this week that the U.S. can “control” Venezuela’s “purse strings” by dictating where its oil can be sold.

Madani estimated that the Olina is loaded with 707,000 barrels of oil, which at the current market price of about \$60 a barrel would be worth more than \$42 million.

Iran supreme leader signals upcoming crackdown on protesters ‘ruining their own streets’ for Trump

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Protests in Iran raged Friday night in the Islamic Republic, online videos purported to show, despite a threat from the country’s theocracy to crack down on demonstrators after shutting down the internet and cutting telephone lines off to the world.

At least 65 people have been killed in the protests that began in late December over Iran’s ailing economy and have morphed into the most significant challenge to the government in years.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei dismissed U.S. President Donald Trump as having hands “stained with the blood of Iranians” as his supporters shouted “Death to America!” in footage aired by Iranian state television. State media later referred to the demonstrators as “terrorists,” setting the stage for a violent crackdown as in other protests in recent years, despite Trump’s pledge to back peaceful protesters with force if necessary.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 51 of 73

Protesters are "ruining their own streets ... in order to please the president of the United States," the 86-year-old Khamenei said to a crowd at his compound in Tehran. "Because he said that he would come to their aid. He should pay attention to the state of his own country instead."

Iran's judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni-Ejei separately vowed that punishment for protesters "will be decisive, maximum and without any legal leniency."

Late Friday, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron issued a joint statement condemning reported deadly violence against the protesters, and urged Iran to allow its citizens to express themselves without fear of reprisal.

Iranian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi called on more Western governments to denounce Iran's theocracy, saying it "has made cruelty a governing method."

"Some still insist on romantic myths about this regime, treating it as a defender of the oppressed abroad," Ebadi said in a statement. "But a government that shoots peaceful protesters ... at home cannot claim moral authority anywhere."

Trump has repeatedly pledged to strike Iran if protesters are killed, a threat that has taken on greater significance after the U.S. military raid that seized Venezuela's former President Nicolás Maduro. The president suggested Friday any possible American strike wouldn't "mean boots on the ground but that means hitting them very, very hard where it hurts."

"Iran's in big trouble," Trump said. "It looks to me that the people are taking over certain cities that nobody thought were really possible just a few weeks ago."

He added: "I tell the Iranian leaders you better not start shooting because we'll start shooting too."

Internet cut off

Despite Iran's theocracy cutting off the nation from the internet and international telephone calls, short online videos shared by activists purported to show protesters chanting against Iran's government around bonfires as debris littered the streets in the capital, Tehran, and other areas into Friday morning. The demonstrations restarted Friday night, but it wasn't possible to immediately assess whether they continued at the same strength. The demonstrations happened even after security services warned families to keep their children home.

One online video showed a fire in the street near in the Saadat Abad area of northern Tehran, with what appeared to be thousands on the street.

"Death to Khamenei!" a man chanted.

The protests also represented the first test of whether the Iranian public could be swayed by Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, whose fatally ill father fled Iran just before the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution. Pahlavi, who called for the protests Thursday night, similarly called for demonstrations at 8 p.m. Friday.

Demonstrations have included cries in support of the shah, something that could bring a death sentence in the past but now underlines the anger fueling the protests that began over Iran's ailing economy.

So far, violence around the demonstrations has killed at least 65 people while more than 2,300 others have been detained, said the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency.

"What turned the tide of the protests was former Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi's calls for Iranians to take to the streets at 8 p.m. on Thursday and Friday," said Holly Dagres, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "Per social media posts, it became clear that Iranians had delivered and were taking the call seriously to protest in order to oust the Islamic Republic."

"This is exactly why the internet was shut down: to prevent the world from seeing the protests. Unfortunately, it also likely provided cover for security forces to kill protesters."

Thursday night protests preceded internet shutdown

When the clock struck 8 p.m. Thursday, neighborhoods across Tehran erupted in chanting, witnesses said. The chants included "Death to the dictator!" and "Death to the Islamic Republic!" Others praised the shah, shouting: "This is the last battle! Pahlavi will return!" Thousands could be seen on the streets before all communication to Iran cut out.

On Friday, Pahlavi called on Trump to help the protesters, saying Khamenei "wants to use this blackout

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 52 of 73

to murder these young heroes.”

“You have proven and I know you are a man of peace and a man of your word,” he said in a statement. “Please be prepared to intervene to help the people of Iran.”

Pahlavi had said he would offer further plans depending on the response to his call. His support of and from Israel has drawn criticism in the past — particularly after the 12-day war Israel waged on Iran in June. Demonstrators have shouted in support of the shah in some demonstrations, but it isn’t clear whether that’s support for Pahlavi himself or a desire to return to a time before the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The internet cut also appears to have taken many of Iran’s state-run and semiofficial news agencies offline.

State TV claimed the protests Thursday night were violent and caused casualties, but did not offer nationwide figures. It said the protests saw “people’s private cars, motorcycles, public places such as the metro, fire trucks and buses set on fire.” State TV later reported that violence overnight killed six people in Hamedan, some 280 kilometers (175 miles) southwest of Tehran, and two security force members in Qom, 125 kilometers (75 miles) south of the capital.

Protests also were reported Friday in Zahedan in Iran’s restive southwestern Sistan and Baluchestan province. State TV aired footage of pro-government forces on motorcycles Friday night in Tehran.

Rare copy of the comic book that introduced the world to Superman sells for \$15 million

By BRUCE SHIPKOWSKI Associated Press

A rare copy of the comic book that introduced the world to Superman and also was once stolen from the home of actor Nicolas Cage has been sold for a record \$15 million.

The private deal for “Action Comics No. 1” was announced Friday. It eclipses the previous record price for a comic book, set last November when a copy of “Superman No. 1” was at sold at auction for \$9.12 million.

The Action Comics sale was negotiated by Manhattan-based Metropolis Collectibles/Comic Connect, which said the comic book’s owner and the buyer wished to remain anonymous.

The comic — which sold for 10 cents when it came out in 1938 — was an anthology of tales about mostly now little-known characters. But over a few panels, it told the origin story of Superman’s birth on a dying planet, his journey to Earth and his decision as an adult to “turn his titanic strength into channels that would benefit mankind.”

Its publication marked the beginning of the superhero genre. About 100 copies of Action Comics No. 1 are known to exist, according to Metropolis Collectibles/Comic Connect President Vincent Zurzolo.

“This is among the Holy Grail of comic books. Without Superman and his popularity, there would be no Batman or other superhero comic book legends,” Zurzolo said. “It’s importance in the comic book community shows with his deal, as it obliterates the previous record,” Zurzolo said.

The comic book was stolen from Cage’s Los Angeles home in 2000 but was recovered in 2011 when it was found by a man who had purchased the contents of an old storage locker in southern California. It eventually was returned to Cage, who had bought it in 1996 for \$150,000. Six months after it was returned to him, he sold it at auction for \$2.2 million.

Stephen Fishler, CEO of Metropolis Collectibles/Comic Connect, said the theft eventually played a big role in boosting the comic’s value.

“During that 11-year period (it was missing), it skyrocketed in value,” Fishler said “The thief made Nicolas Cage a lot of money by stealing it.”

Fishler compared it to the theft of Mona Lisa, which was stolen from the Louvre museum in Paris in 1911.

“It was kept under the thief’s bed for two years,” Fishler noted. “The recovery of the painting made the Mona Lisa go from being just a great Da Vinci painting to a world icon — and that’s what Action No. 1 is — an icon of American pop culture.”

Minneapolis schools offer remote learning as tensions rise over federal immigration enforcement

By REBECCA SANTANA, STEVE KARNOWSKI and BIANCA VÁZQUEZ TONESS Associated Press
MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Minneapolis school system will offer families the option of remote learning for a month, officials said Friday, responding to concerns that children might feel unsafe venturing out in a city where tensions are high over federal immigration enforcement.

Under the temporary plan, teachers will simultaneously deliver lessons from their classrooms to students in the classroom and at home, similar to the way many did during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Immigration enforcement in cities across the U.S. has led to dips in attendance, parents and educators say. Advocates in other cities facing federal interventions have sought remote learning options, particularly for immigrant families that might feel vulnerable, but Minneapolis appears to be one of the few districts to reintroduce the option of virtual learning.

"This meets a really important need for our students who are not able to come to school right now," a Minneapolis school administrator wrote in an email to their staff late Thursday.

Administrators' emails to staff indicate the decision to offer remote learning wasn't a quick one. They refer to long meetings with input from school principals and the teachers union, acknowledging the planning and coordination required to deliver virtual school. In light of the devastating academic and emotional impact remote learning had during the pandemic, some also see it as a last resort.

A desire to keep students engaged in school appeared to prevail.

"This will keep them safe and help them keep up with their work," the school administrator explained in one of the emails obtained by The Associated Press. "It will also allow them to be counted present, so we don't have a ton of dropouts next week."

Schools see remote learning as a way to help in stressful times

That Minneapolis, a district of nearly 30,000 students, would willingly offer remote learning again suggests a new level of fear after an onslaught of federal attention and conflict. There's been President Donald Trump's verbal attacks on the Somali community living there, a pledge to send 2,000 federal immigration agents and a federal agent's deadly shooting of Renee Good, a mother of three and a U.S. citizen, on Wednesday.

On the same day as the shooting, immigration enforcement agents detained someone outside the city's Roosevelt High School around dismissal time, which led to altercations with bystanders. The Minneapolis Federation of Educators said agents deployed tear gas and detained an educator before releasing them.

"We will not tolerate ICE inhibiting our city's youth from their constitutional right to attend school safely or inhibiting educators from doing their job," the union said.

Federal officials said agents had been pursuing a U.S. citizen who rammed a Border Patrol vehicle before a 5-mile (8-kilometer) chase that ended outside the school. Border Patrol Cmdr. Gregory Bovino, who has been in Minneapolis this week, said on social media that protesters assaulted agents and there were four total arrests.

It used to be that school campuses were no-go zones for immigration arrests, but Trump dismissed that guidance early in his second term.

"The way ICE has escalated in our community has made it so that there are people who feel unsafe coming to and from school," said Natasha Dockter, first vice president of the local union representing Minneapolis public school teachers. "We've, you know, heard concerns from our members, from families, and wanted to advocate that there is an option for remote learning."

Boisey Corvah, a 15-year-old sophomore at South High School, said students have been sharing videos from social media of the shooting and the episode at Roosevelt High. He said he worries especially about his friends who are Latino — because of possible encounters with immigration enforcement, and the crackdown's effects for their mental health.

"They're probably going to have to go straight home, you know. They won't be able to hang out with their friends," he said.

Other districts have considered offering virtual options

This fall, Chicago school board members called for a remote option during a federal intervention there, but Chicago Public Schools has resisted offering it. New York state last year allowed districts to offer virtual schooling to students afraid of Trump's immigration crackdown, but it's not clear how many districts took advantage of it.

One concern some school districts have raised is they are normally prohibited from asking families about their immigration status. If the school offers virtual learning for students worried about immigration enforcement, it could unintentionally identify that someone in their home is here illegally.

To get around this problem, advocates have urged districts to offer the option to everyone, not just students from immigrant homes.

"We are hoping and recommending for districts to have flexible options for all of their students. Learning doesn't necessarily have to happen in the classroom," said Viridiana Carrizales, chief executive officer of ImmSchools, a Texas-based group that consults with school districts on their policies for immigrant students.

Carrizales said she's working with districts in New Jersey, New York and Texas on trying to help worried parents who are keeping children home from school and even withdrawing them.

The conversations have become more urgent in the past few weeks, she said, because school districts are losing students.

Some districts that already had ongoing virtual programs have seen an uptick in demand since Trump returned to office. In the Portland, Oregon, suburb of Hillsboro, the school district has opened enrollment slots at its online academy, district spokesperson Beth Graser said.

In a statement Thursday, the Minnesota Department of Education said districts and charter schools can provide remote options for enrolled students.

"Plans for online instruction need to consider how the needs of all students can be met, including students with disabilities and students learning English," Commissioner Willie Jett said.

Minneapolis public schools were closed Thursday and Friday because of the tumult, but the district directed teachers to report to their school building to receive more details from administrators about the online instruction option. The virtual option will be available until Feb. 12, the district said.

Trump promises oil executives 'total safety' if they invest in Venezuela after Maduro ouster

By JOSH BOAK and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday called on oil executives to rush back into Venezuela as the White House tries to quickly secure \$100 billion in investments to fix the country's neglected infrastructure and fully tap into its expansive reserves of petroleum.

Since the U.S. military raid to capture former Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro on Saturday, Trump has quickly pivoted to portraying the move as an economic opportunity for the U.S. He has seized tankers carrying Venezuelan oil, has said the U.S. is taking over the sales of 30 million to 50 million barrels of previously sanctioned Venezuelan crude, and plans to control sales worldwide indefinitely.

At the White House meeting, major oil companies said they were interested in the opportunity but expressed caution given their past experience in the country. "If we look at the commercial constructs and frameworks in place today in Venezuela, today it's un-investable," said Darren Woods, CEO of ExxonMobil, the largest U.S. oil company.

Trump used the meeting to publicly assure executives that they need not be skeptical, even though the South American country has a history of state asset seizures, ongoing U.S. sanctions and decades of political uncertainty.

"You have total safety," Trump told the executives. "You're dealing with us directly and not dealing with Venezuela at all. We don't want you to deal with Venezuela."

Trump added: "Our giant oil companies will be spending at least \$100 billion of their money, not the government's money. They don't need government money. But they need government protection."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 55 of 73

The president said the security guarantee would come from working with Venezuelan leaders and their people, instead of deploying U.S. forces. He also said the companies would "bring over some security."

Trump urges Big Oil to take the plunge

The meeting came on a day when U.S. forces seized their fifth tanker over the past month that has been linked to Venezuelan oil, an action reflecting the determination of the U.S. to fully control the exporting, refining and production of Venezuelan petroleum.

It's part of a broader push by Trump to keep gasoline prices low. The incursion in Venezuela melds Trump's assertive use of presidential powers with an optical spectacle meant to convince Americans that he can bring down energy prices at a time when many voters are concerned about the cost of living.

Trump played up the potential for major oil companies to strike big, while acknowledging that the executives were sharp people who were in the business of taking risk, a nod to the reality that he's asking for investments in Venezuela at a moment when the country is teetering and economic collapse is not out of the question.

ExxonMobil CEO Woods said his company would send a team to assess the situation, and noted its assets had been seized there — twice — in the past. "Significant changes have to be made to those commercial frameworks, the legal system, there has to be durable investment protections and there has to be change to the hydrocarbon laws in the country," Woods said.

Other companies represented at the meeting included Chevron, which still operates in Venezuela, as well as ConocoPhillips, Halliburton, Valero, Marathon, Shell, Singapore-based Trafigura, Italy-based Eni and Spain-based Repsol.

Venezuela's oil production has slumped below 1 million barrels a day. Trump, however, expressed confidence that Big Oil is ready to take the plunge.

"You know, these are not babies," Trump said of the oil industry executives. "These are people that drill oil in some pretty rough places. I can say a couple of those places make Venezuela look like a picnic."

After the meeting, Energy Secretary Chris Wright told reporters that the companies showed "tremendous interest," adding that Chevron made a specific pledge. Wright said it could take eight to 12 years for daily production in Venezuela to triple to 3 million barrels a day.

Trump suggests China and Russia also want Venezuelan oil

The president also offered a new rationale for ousting Maduro and demanding the U.S. maintain oversight of the Venezuelan oil industry, saying, "One thing I think everyone has to know is that if we didn't do this, China or Russia would have done it."

Tyson Slocum, director of the consumer advocacy group Public Citizen's energy program, criticized the gathering and called the U.S. military's removal of Maduro "violent imperialism." Slocum added that Trump's goal appears to be to "hand billionaires control over Venezuela's oil."

The White House has been seeking to show it has a stable relationship with Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodríguez. While Rodríguez has publicly denounced Trump and the ouster of Maduro, the U.S. president has said that to date Venezuela's interim leader has been cooperating behind the scenes.

Meanwhile, the United States and Venezuelan governments said Friday they were exploring the possibility of restoring diplomatic relations between the two countries. A small team of U.S. diplomats and diplomatic security officials traveled to Venezuela on Friday to make a preliminary assessment about the potential reopening of the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, the State Department said in a statement.

Trump to meet Machado next week — and Colombia's Petro next month

Trump also announced Friday he'd meet next week, either Tuesday or Wednesday, with Maria Corina Machado, the leader of Venezuela's opposition party. Trump has declined to back Machado, even as the U.S. and most observers determined her opposition movement defeated Maduro in Venezuela's last election. Trump said following Maduro's ouster that Machado "doesn't have the support within, or the respect within, the country" to lead.

Trump earlier said he would meet Colombian President Gustavo Petro in early February. Trump had made vague threats to take similar action against Petro after the capture of Maduro, describing the Colombian leader as a "sick man who likes making cocaine and selling it to the United States"

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 56 of 73

Trump abruptly changed his tone Wednesday about his Colombian counterpart after a friendly phone call in which he invited Petro to visit the White House.

The seeming détente between Petro, a leftist, and Trump, a conservative, appears to reflect that their shared interests override their deep differences.

For Colombia, the U.S. remains key to the military's fight against leftist guerrillas and drug traffickers. Washington has provided Bogotá with roughly \$14 billion in the last two decades.

For the U.S., Colombia, the world's biggest cocaine producer, remains the cornerstone of its counternarcotics strategy abroad, providing crucial intelligence used to interdict drugs in the Caribbean.

Fractures are starting to show in Trump's GOP at the start of this election year

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — For House Republicans, the political year started with a pep rally of sorts as President Donald Trump gathered them at Washington's Kennedy Center for a stemwinder of a speech. But by the time lawmakers had completed their first week of work this midterm election year, fractures in the party were already showing.

From pushback to Trump's self-described "Donroe doctrine" of aggression in the Western Hemisphere to breaks in party unity over health care, Republican lawmakers are displaying signs of independence from Trump after spending much of the last year acquiescing to his practically every demand. It showed a new dynamic in the GOP as Republicans embark on difficult campaign to keep control of both the House and Senate.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, speaking at the U.S.-Mexico border Friday with a group of Republican Senate candidates, said that Republicans were "going to be focused like a laser" on issues of affordability and pointed to legislation in the works on housing and health care.

Thune's border trip and talk of affordability were a nod back to some of the core themes of Trump's presidential campaign. But the focus in Washington of late has instead been dominated by Trump's military operation to capture Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, his threats to use military force to take control of Greenland, the release of case files on Jeffrey Epstein and a debate over extending subsidies for insurance offered under the Affordable Care Act — an issue where Republicans have long struggled to find unity.

Recent shootings by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers in several U.S. cities, including one that killed a woman in Minneapolis, have also raised new questions about Republicans' hard-line immigration agenda and shifted attention away from Trump's handling of the border, which they see as a political success.

Even so, Trump still has plenty of command over most of the party. That was demonstrated this week by a pair of unsuccessful House veto override votes in which most GOP members stuck with the president despite previously voting for the low-profile bills.

Rep. Thomas Massie, a Kentucky Republican who has been one of the few Republicans to consistently defy Trump, said that "there was some bully pulpit intimidation going on" from the president that caused the veto overrides to fail.

Still, Democrats are making the case that Trump is becoming distracted from the needs of Americans, especially after the attack on Venezuela.

"He's lurching towards another endless, expensive war, all the while American families here are struggling with skyrocketing costs," said Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer.

Venezuela war powers vote draws GOP support

To prove their point, Democrats are forcing votes on war powers resolutions that would stop Trump from attacking Venezuela without congressional approval. Such measures are rarely successful, but a procedural vote on the legislation drew support from five Republicans Thursday, setting up a final vote next week. House Democrats are also pushing forward a similar resolution.

The GOP senators who voted for the legislation tried to defuse the conflict with Trump by arguing their

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 57 of 73

positions were in line with his own campaign promises to scale back U.S. commitments overseas.

"A drawn-out campaign in Venezuela involving the American military, even if unintended, would be the opposite of President Trump's goal of ending foreign entanglements," Sen. Todd Young, an Indiana Republican who voted for the war powers resolution, said in a lengthy statement explaining his vote.

Trump reacted with fury. The president promptly called for the five Republicans, which included Maine Sen. Susan Collins, who is up for reelection this year, to "never be elected to office again."

Republicans are already dealing with retirements from several lawmakers who had uneasy relationships with Trump, and there was worry that such clashes could complicate their campaign picture even more.

"If Susan isn't the senator from Maine, we're going to end up with a Democrat," said Sen. Bernie Moreno, an Ohio Republican. "That would be 10 times worse. But I do appreciate that President Trump is absolutely pissed off."

GOP pushes back on Trump's Greenland plans

Trump's desire to possess Greenland and his administration's decision not to rule out military force also met significant resistance from GOP lawmakers this week.

Sen. Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican who is retiring after crossing Trump last summer, took to the Senate floor to proclaim that he was "sick of stupid." He specifically criticized White House deputy chief of policy Stephen Miller, who made comments that Greenland should be part of the U.S.

"I want good advice for this president, because I want this president to have a good legacy," Tillis added. "And this nonsense on what's going on with Greenland is a distraction from the good work he's doing, and the amateurs who said it was a good idea should lose their jobs."

Other Republicans, including Thune and Senate Armed Services Committee chair Sen. Roger Wicker, also gently pushed back on military threats against Denmark, which is a NATO ally of the U.S.

After meeting with the Danish ambassador, Wicker said it was Denmark's right not to sell Greenland.

"I'm troubled by Greenland. I'm troubled by some of the things he does. I don't get it," said Nebraska Rep. Don Bacon, another retiring Republican. "I do feel like Congress should be more independent and should provide checks and balances here."

Bacon added that Trump still had the ability to "bully" his Republican colleagues, but that Trump's threats had "stiffened my spine."

Health care votes expose divisions

During Trump's speech at the Kennedy Center on Tuesday, he urged Republicans to own the issue of health care. Yet when the House voted Thursday on a Democratic proposal to extend expired health care subsidies for Affordable Care Act health plans, 17 Republicans broke with party leadership to help pass the bill.

"People recognize the challenge here, which is to address health care affordability," said Rep. Mike Lawler, a New York Republican who voted for the proposal.

He still criticized the Affordable Care Act, a hallmark piece of legislation for Democrats, yet the health care debate unfolding in Congress is one that Democrats feel confident making a central campaign issue.

"In this first, full week of the new year, House Democrats — every single one of us joined by 17 Republicans — have partnered in a bipartisan way to protect the health care of the American people," said House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries following the vote.

Jan. 6 plaque coming out of storage

On the fifth anniversary of the attack on the Capitol, Trump told House Republicans that he had told his supporters to go "peacefully and patriotically" to confront Congress from certifying the 2020 presidential election. The White House also unveiled a website that portrayed the Jan. 6 attack as a "witch hunt" against him by Democrats and some Republicans in Congress.

But the Senate, which Republicans control, this week agreed to display a plaque honoring the police who defended the Capitol — a cause that has become a point of contention with Trump as president. The plaque had been kept in storage rather than being displayed because House Speaker Mike Johnson had said the memorial did not comply with the law.

It was Tillis again who pushed the issue on the Republican side. He said it was important to honor the

police and staff who risked their own lives and safety that day.

Democrats who joined in the effort said they were alarmed by the White House's attempt to recast the narrative.

"It's so important we be honest with the American people about what happened," said Sen. Jeff Merkley, an Oregon Democrat.

Judge to temporarily block effort to end protections for relatives of citizens, green card holders

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — A federal judge said Friday that she expects to temporarily block efforts by the Trump administration to end a program that offered temporary legal protections for more than 10,000 family members of citizens and green card holders.

U.S. District Judge Indira Talwani said at a hearing that she planned to issue a temporary restraining order but did not say when it would be issued. This case is part of a broader effort by the administration to end temporary legal protection for numerous groups and comes just over a week since another judge ruled that hundreds of people from South Sudan may live and work in the United States legally.

"The government, having invited people to apply, is now laying traps between those people and getting the green card," Justin Cox, an attorney who works with Justice Action Center and who argued the case for the plaintiffs, said. "That is incredibly inequitable."

This case involved a program called Family Reunification Parole, or FRP, and impacts people from Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti and Honduras. Most of them are set to lose their legal protections, which were put in place during the Biden administration, by Jan. 14. The Department of Homeland Security terminated protections late last year.

The case involves five plaintiffs but lawyers are seeking to have any ruling cover everyone that is part of the program.

"Although in a temporary status, these parolees did not come temporarily; they came to get a jump-start on their new lives in the United States, typically bringing immediate family members with them," plaintiffs wrote in their motion. "Since they arrived, FRP parolees have gotten employment authorization documents, jobs, and enrolled their kids in school."

The government, in its brief and in court, argued Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem has the authority to terminate any parole program and gave adequate notice by publishing the termination in the federal registry. It also argued that the program's termination was necessary on national security grounds because the people had not been properly vetted. It also said resources to maintain this program would be better used in other immigration programs.

"Parole can be terminated at any time," Katie Rose Talley, a lawyer for the government told the court. "That is what is being done. There is nothing unlawful about that."

Talwani conceded that the government can end the program but she took issue with the way it was done.

The government argued that just announcing in the federal registry that it was ending the program was sufficient. But Talwani demanded the government show how it has alerted people through a written notice — a letter or email — that the program was ending.

"I understand why plaintiffs feel like they came here and made all these plans and were going to be here for a very long time," Talwani said. "I have a group of people who are trying to follow the law. I am saying to you that, we as Americans, the United States needs to."

Lower courts have largely supported keeping temporary protections for many groups. But in May, the Supreme Court cleared the way for the Trump administration to strip temporary legal protections from hundreds of thousands of immigrants for now, pushing the total number of people who could be newly exposed to deportation to nearly 1 million.

The justices lifted a lower-court order that kept humanitarian parole protections in place for more than 500,000 migrants from four countries: Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela. The decision came after

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 59 of 73

the court allowed the administration to revoke temporary legal status from about 350,000 Venezuelan migrants in another case.

The court did not explain its reasoning in the brief order, as is typical on its emergency docket. Two justices publicly dissented.

Wall Street rises to records after the unemployment rate improves

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks hit records Friday following a mixed report on the U.S. job market, one that may delay another cut to interest rates by the Federal Reserve but does not slam the door on it.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.6% and topped its prior all-time high set earlier in the week. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 237 points, or 0.5%, and likewise set a record, while the Nasdaq composite led the market with a 0.8% gain.

The moves came after the U.S. Labor Department said employers hired fewer workers during December than economists expected, though the unemployment rate improved and was better than expected. It reinforced how the U.S. job market may be in a “low-hire, low-fire” state and may hopefully avoid a recession.

On Wall Street, power company *Vistra* soared 10.5% to help lead the market after signing a 20-year deal to provide electricity from three of its nuclear plants to *Meta Platforms*. Big Tech companies have been signing a string of such deals to electrify the data centers powering their moves into artificial-intelligence technology.

Oklo jumped 7.9% after saying it also signed a deal with *Meta Platforms* that will help it secure nuclear fuel and advance its project to build a facility in Pike County, Ohio.

Homebuilders and other companies involved in the housing market were strong in their first trading after President Donald Trump announced a plan to lower mortgage rates. Trump on late Thursday called for the purchase of \$200 billion in mortgage bonds, similar to how the Fed in the past has bought bonds backed by mortgages to bring down mortgage rates.

Builders *FirstSource*, a supplier of building products, jumped 12% for one of the biggest gains in the S&P 500 along with *Vistra*. Among homebuilders, *Lennar* rallied 8.9%, *D.R. Horton* climbed 7.8% and *PulteGroup* rose 7.3%.

They helped offset a 2.7% drop for *General Motors*. The auto giant said it will take a \$6 billion hit to its results for the last three months of 2025 related to its pullback from electric vehicles. That’s on top of the \$1.6 billion in charges GM took in the prior quarter. Fewer tax incentives and easier fuel-emission regulations have been eating into demand for EVs.

WD-40 tumbled 6.6% after reporting a weaker profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Chief Financial Officer Sara Hyzer said the soft numbers were primarily because of timing issues, not weaker demand from end customers, and the company stood by its financial forecasts for the upcoming year.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 44.82 points to 6,966.28. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 237.96 to 49,504.07, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 191.33 to 23,671.35.

In the bond market, Treasury yields were mixed.

Friday’s improvement in the unemployment rate was enough to get traders to ratchet back expectations for a cut to interest rates at the Fed’s next meeting, which is scheduled for later this month. Traders are now forecasting just a 5% chance of that, down from 11% a day before, according to data from CME Group.

But traders nevertheless still largely expect the Fed to cut rates at least twice this upcoming year.

Whether they’re correct carries high stakes for financial markets. Lower interest rates can goose the economy and push up prices for investments, though they can also worsen inflation at the same time. And inflation has stubbornly remained above the Fed’s 2% target.

“Until the data provide a clearer direction, a divided Fed is likely to stay that way,” according to Ellen Zentner, chief economic strategist for Morgan Stanley Wealth Management. “Lower rates are likely coming this year, but the markets may have to be patient.”

The yield on the 10-year Treasury eased to 4.16% from 4.19% late Thursday. It tends to track expecta-

tions for longer-term economic growth and inflation.

The two-year Treasury yield, which more closely tracks forecasts for what the Fed will do with short-term interest rates in the near term, rose to 3.53% from 3.49%.

A separate report released Friday morning suggested sentiment among U.S. consumers is strengthening, particularly among lower-income households. Perhaps more importantly for the Fed, the preliminary report from the University of Michigan also said expectations for inflation in the coming 12 months may be at their lowest level in a year. That could give it more freedom to cut interest rates.

Hopes for both lower interest rates and a solid economy have helped other areas of the stock market climb recently, wresting leadership away from the Big Tech and AI stocks that dominated the market for years. The smaller stocks in the Russell 2000, for example, climbed 4.6% this week, much more than the 1.6% rise of the S&P 500.

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

The French CAC 40 climbed 1.4%, and Japan's Nikkei 225 jumped 1.6% for two of the world's bigger gains.

Wife of Minnesota woman killed in ICE shooting: 'We had whistles. They had guns'

By MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The wife of Renee Good, the woman shot and killed in her car by a federal immigration agent in Minneapolis, says the couple had stopped to support their neighbors on the day of the shooting and described the mother of three as leaving a legacy of kindness.

"We had whistles. They had guns," Becca Good said in a written statement Friday that was provided to Minnesota Public Radio.

The statement was her first public comment about the death of Renee Good, 37, who was killed Wednesday after three Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers surrounded her Honda Pilot SUV on a snowy street a few blocks from the couple's home. Video taken by bystanders show an officer approaching the SUV stopped across the middle of the road, demanding the driver open the door and grabbing the handle.

The vehicle begins to pull forward and a different ICE officer standing in front of it pulls his weapon and immediately fires at least two shots at close range, jumping back as the vehicle moves toward him.

Trump administration officials have painted Renee Good as a domestic terrorist who tried to run over an officer with her vehicle. State and local officials in Minneapolis, as well as protesters, have rejected that characterization.

Becca Good has not responded to calls and messages from The Associated Press. Her statement provided no further detail about the day of the shooting and instead focused on memorializing her wife.

The couple had only recently moved to Minneapolis and were raising Renee Good's 6-year-old son from a previous marriage.

Becca said Renee was a Christian who "knew that all religions teach the same essential truth: we are here to love each other, care for each other, and keep each other safe and whole."

She thanked the people all across America and the world who had reached out in support of their family.

"Renee sparkled. She literally sparkled," Becca Good wrote. "I mean, she didn't wear glitter but I swear she had sparkles coming out of her pores. All the time. You might think it was just my love talking but her family said the same thing. Renee was made of sunshine."

Far from the worst-of-the-worst criminals President Donald Trump said his immigration crackdown would target, Good was a U.S. citizen born in Colorado who apparently was never charged with anything beyond a single traffic ticket.

In social media accounts, she described herself as a "poet and writer and wife and mom." She said she was currently "experiencing Minneapolis," displaying a pride emoji on her Instagram account. A profile picture posted to Pinterest shows her smiling and holding a young child against her cheek, along with posts about tattoos, hairstyles and home decorating.

Her ex-husband, who asked not to be named out of concern for the safety of the two now-teenage children he had with Renee Good while they were married, told the AP on Wednesday that he had never known her to participate in a protest of any kind.

Becca Good said the couple, who had previously lived in Kansas City, Missouri, had settled in Minneapolis after an "extended road trip." She said people they encountered in the Twin Cities had provided a strong sense that "they were looking out for each other."

"We were raising our son to believe that no matter where you come from or what you look like, all of us deserve compassion and kindness," Becca wrote. "I am now left to raise our son and to continue teaching him, as Renee believed, that there are people building a better world for him. That the people who did this had fear and anger in their hearts, and we need to show them a better way."

Sluggish hiring closes out a frustrating year for job seekers though unemployment slips to 4.4%

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sluggish December hiring concluded a year of weak employment gains that have frustrated job seekers even though layoffs and unemployment remained low.

Employers added just 50,000 jobs last month, nearly unchanged from a downwardly revised figure of 56,000 in November, the Labor Department said Friday. The unemployment rate slipped to 4.4%, its first decline since June, from 4.5% in November, a figure also revised lower.

The data suggests a reluctance by businesses to add workers even as economic growth has picked up. Many companies hired aggressively after the pandemic and no longer need to fill more jobs. Others have held back due to widespread uncertainty caused by President Donald Trump's shifting tariff policies, elevated inflation, and the spread of artificial intelligence, which could alter or even replace some jobs.

Still, economists were encouraged by the lower unemployment rate, which had risen in the previous four straight reports. Weakening employment raised alarms at the Federal Reserve, which cut its key interest rate three times last year.

"The labor market looks to have stabilized, but at a slower pace of employment growth," Blerina Uruci, chief economist at T. Rowe Price, said. "There is no urgency for the Fed to cut rates further, for now."

Some Federal Reserve officials are concerned that inflation hasn't improved since 2024 and remains above their target of 2% annual growth. They support keeping rates where they are to combat inflation. Others, however, have grown worried that hiring has nearly ground to a halt and have supported lowering borrowing costs to spur spending and growth.

November's job gain was revised slightly lower, from 64,000 to 56,000, while October's now shows a much steeper drop, with a loss of 173,000 positions, down from previous estimates of a 105,000 decline. The government revises the jobs figures as it receives more survey responses from businesses.

Nearly all the jobs added in December were in the health care and restaurant and hotel industries. Health care added 38,500 jobs, while restaurants and hotels gained 47,000. Governments — mostly at the state and local level — added 13,000.

Manufacturing, construction and retail companies all shed jobs. Retailers cut 25,000 positions, a sign that holiday hiring has been weaker than previous years. Manufacturers have shed jobs every month since April, when Trump announced sweeping tariffs intended to boost manufacturing.

Wall Street and Washington are looking closely at Friday's report as it's the first clean reading on the labor market in three months. The government didn't issue a report in October because of the six-week government shutdown, and November's data was distorted by the closure, which lasted until Nov. 12.

Job gains have been subdued all year, particularly after April's "liberation day" tariff announcement by Trump. The economy gained just 584,000 jobs in 2025, sharply lower than that more than 2 million added in 2024. It's the smallest annual gain since the COVID-19 pandemic decimated the job market in 2020. Outside of recessions, it's the smallest annual increase since 2003.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 62 of 73

Still, Trump boasted on social media late Thursday that since January, all the new jobs have been in the private sector, while government jobs have declined. Yet his figures included December's jobs numbers as well as revisions to previous months, which the White House receives Thursday afternoon, before the figures are publicly released.

Trump's post on Truth Social said that 654,000 jobs were added by businesses since January, while government jobs declined 181,000, so it wouldn't have been immediately clear that the post had new information from December. But new jobs data are generally closely guarded since they can move financial markets.

The hiring slowdown reflects more than just a reluctance by companies to add jobs. With an aging population and a sharp drop in immigration, the economy doesn't need to create as many jobs as it has in the past to keep the unemployment rate steady. As a result, a gain of 50,000 jobs is not as clear a sign of weakness as it would have been in previous years.

And layoffs are still low, a sign firms aren't rapidly cutting jobs, as typically happens in a recession. The "low-hire, low-fire" job market does mean workers have some job security, though it's become harder to find new work.

Ernesto Castro, 44, has applied for hundreds of jobs since leaving his last in May. Yet the Los Angeles resident has had just three initial interviews, and only one follow-up, after which he heard nothing.

With nearly a decade of experience providing customer support for software companies, Castro expected to find a new job pretty quickly as in the past.

"It's been awful," he said.

He worries that more companies are turning to artificial intelligence to help clients learn to use new software. He hears ads from tech companies that urge companies to slash workers like him in favor of AI. His contacts in the industry say that employees are increasingly reluctant to switch jobs amid all the uncertainty, which means fewer open jobs for others.

He is now looking into starting his own software company, and is also exploring project management roles.

Subdued hiring underscores a key conundrum surrounding the economy as it enters 2026: Growth has picked up to healthy levels, yet hiring has weakened noticeably.

Tariff uncertainty has caused some firms to postpone adding jobs.

Steve Heckerth, CEO of Renewables, Inc., said that tariffs have forced him to put off hiring in recent months. Renewables is a startup company based in Santa Rosa, California that has developed a prototype for a small electric tractor for use mostly on farms. It already has several hundred advance orders.

Heckerth said he has had to delay adding workers to build the tractors as new duties have shifted costs for parts and components overseas. He had looked at axles and transmissions from India, until they were hit earlier this year with a 50% tariff. Many electronic components are from China, which has faced an array of often-shifting duties.

"It's delayed us at least six months, the tariffs, just not knowing what our input prices are going to be," Heckerth said.

Most economists expect hiring will accelerate this year amid solid growth, and Trump's tax cut legislation is expected to produce large tax refunds this spring. Yet economists acknowledge there are other possibilities: Weak job gains could drag down future growth. Or the economy could keep expanding at a healthy clip, while automation and the spread of artificial intelligence reduces the need for more jobs.

Productivity, or output per hour worked, a measure of worker efficiency, has improved in the past three years and jumped nearly 5% in the July-September quarter. That means companies can produce more without adding jobs. Over time, it should also boost worker pay.

Even with such sluggish job gains, the economy has continued to expand, with growth reaching a 4.3% annual rate in last year's July-September quarter, the best in two years. Strong consumer spending helped drive the gain. The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta forecasts that growth could slow to a still-solid 2.7% in the final three months of last year.

Luigi Mangione's federal death penalty trial could start before the end of the year

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Luigi Mangione's federal death penalty trial in the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson could begin before the end of the year, a judge said Friday while weighing a defense bid to bar the government from making it a capital case.

U.S. District Judge Margaret Garnett said she expects Mangione's trial to begin in December — or possibly January 2027, as federal prosecutors suggested — if the death penalty is still on the table. If not, she said, Mangione could stand trial in October.

Either way, Garnett said, she expects jury selection to begin around Sept. 8. No trial date has been scheduled in Mangione's parallel state murder case. Prosecutors previously said they anticipated the state trial to be first.

Garnett said she would issue a written schedule after looking at her calendar and reviewing notes of conversations she's had with the court's jury coordinator.

The judge said she would rule at a later date on the defense's requests to prevent prosecutors from seeking the death penalty, throw out some charges and exclude certain evidence. Another pretrial conference is scheduled for Jan. 30.

Mangione's lawyers contend that authorities prejudiced his case by turning his December 2024 arrest into a "Marvel movie" spectacle and by publicly declaring their desire to see him executed even before he was formally indicted.

At the same time, they are asking Garnett to throw out two of the four charges against him, including the murder by firearm charge that has enabled the government to seek the death penalty. They argue that it is legally flawed.

Federal prosecutors say Mangione's lawyers are wrong on both fronts, countering that the murder charge is legally sufficient and that "pretrial publicity, even when intense" is hardly a constitutional crisis. Any concerns about public perceptions can be alleviated by carefully questioning prospective jurors about their knowledge of the case, prosecutors wrote in a court filing.

Mangione has pleaded not guilty to federal and state murder charges, which carry the possibility of life in prison.

Friday's hearing was Mangione's first trip to Manhattan federal court since his April 25 arraignment.

A cause célèbre for people upset with the health insurance industry, Mangione again drew supporters to the courthouse. Some wore green clothing and carried signs such as "Free Luigi" and "No Death For Luigi Mangione."

Mangione, wearing a beige jail uniform, was attentive but didn't speak once during the nearly three-hour proceeding. After entering the courtroom, he greeted his lead attorneys, Karen Friedman Agnifilo and Marc Agnifilo, with handshakes. He nodded along while reading documents, sometimes sipping from a plastic water bottle.

In addition to the death penalty issue, Garnett is weighing a defense request — similar to one in his state case — to bar the government from using certain items found in a backpack during his arrest. The defense argues that the search was illegal because police had not yet obtained a warrant.

Those items include a gun that police said matched the one used to kill Thompson and a notebook in which Mangione purportedly described his intent to "wack" a health insurance executive.

Garnett said she is not inclined to hold a separate hearing on the evidence issue like one last month that took three weeks in Mangione's state murder case. The judge in that case said he won't rule until May.

Prosecutors contend police were justified in searching the backpack to make sure there were no dangerous items and that the gun, notebook and other evidence would have eventually been found anyway.

Thompson, 50, was killed Dec. 4, 2024, as he walked to a Manhattan hotel for UnitedHealth Group's annual investor conference. Surveillance video showed a masked gunman shooting him from behind. Police say "delay," "deny" and "depose" were written on the ammunition, mimicking a phrase used to describe

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 64 of 73

how insurers avoid paying claims.

Mangione, 27, the Ivy League-educated scion of a wealthy Maryland family, was arrested five days later at a McDonald's in Altoona, Pennsylvania, about 230 miles (about 370 kilometers) west of Manhattan.

He's already had success paring down his state case. In September, a judge threw out state terrorism charges against him.

U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi announced last year that she was directing federal prosecutors to seek the death penalty, declaring that capital punishment was warranted for a "premeditated, cold-blooded assassination that shocked America."

Mangione's lawyers argue that Bondi's announcement, which she followed with Instagram posts and a TV appearance, showed the decision was "based on politics, not merit." Her remarks tainted the grand jury process that resulted in his indictment a few weeks later, they said.

Some flu measures decline, but it's not clear this severe season has peaked

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. flu infections showed signs of a slight decline last week, but health officials say it is not clear that this severe flu season has peaked.

New government data posted Friday — for flu activity through last week — showed declines in medical office visits due to flu-like illness and in the number of states reporting high flu activity.

However, some measures show this season is already surpassing the flu epidemic of last winter, one of the harshest in recent history. And experts believe there is more suffering ahead.

"This is going to be a long, hard flu season," New York State Health Commissioner Dr. James McDonald said, in a statement Friday.

One type of flu virus, called A H3N2, historically has caused the most hospitalizations and deaths in older people. So far this season, that is the type most frequently reported. Even more concerning, more than 91% of the H3N2 infections analyzed were a new version — known as the subclade K variant — that differs from the strain in this year's flu shots.

The last flu season saw the highest overall flu hospitalization rate since the H1N1 flu pandemic 15 years ago. And child flu deaths reached 289, the worst recorded for any U.S. flu season this century — including that H1N1 "swine flu" pandemic of 2009-2010.

So far this season, there have been at least 15 million flu illnesses and 180,000 hospitalizations, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates. It also estimates there have been 7,400 deaths, including the deaths of at least 17 children.

Last week, 44 states reported high flu activity, down slightly from the week before. However, flu deaths and hospitalizations rose.

Determining exactly how flu season is going can be particularly tricky around the holidays. Schools are closed, and many people are traveling. Some people may be less likely to see a doctor, deciding to just suffer at home. Others may be more likely to go.

Also, some seasons see a surge in cases, then a decline, and then a second surge.

For years, federal health officials joined doctors' groups in recommending that everyone 6 months and older get an annual influenza vaccine. The shots may not prevent all symptoms but can prevent many infections from becoming severe, experts say.

But federal health officials on Monday announced they will no longer recommend flu vaccinations for U.S. children, saying it is a decision parents and patients should make in consultation with their doctors.

"I can't begin to express how concerned we are about the future health of the children in this country, who already have been unnecessarily dying from the flu — a vaccine preventable disease," said Michele Sflakosky, executive director of an advocacy organization called Families Fighting Flu.

"Now, with added confusion for parents and health care providers about childhood vaccines, I fear that

flu seasons to come could be even more deadly for our youngest and most vulnerable," she said in a statement.

Flu is just one of a group of viruses that tend to strike more often in the winter. Hospitalizations from COVID-19 and RSV, or respiratory syncytial virus, also have been rising in recent weeks — though were not diagnosed nearly as often as flu infections, according to other federal data.

Swiss bar owner put in pre-trial detention over the fatal fire at an Alpine resort

MARTIGNY, Switzerland (AP) — Switzerland held a national day of mourning on Friday for the 40 people who died in an Alpine bar fire during a New Year's Eve celebration, as prosecutors requested one of the managers to be placed in pre-trial detention.

Valais region's chief prosecutor Beatrice Pilloud said in a statement the detention of the man was needed to avoid a "risk of flight." The man's wife and co-manager will remain free under judicial supervision, the statement said.

A Swiss business register lists French couple Jacques and Jessica Moretti as the owners of Le Constellation bar, in the Alpine resort of Crans-Montana, where a fire broke out less than two hours after midnight on Jan. 1. As well as the fatalities, 116 people were injured, many of them seriously.

Local media reported that Moretti was being held in custody pending the court's decision after the couple were questioned by prosecutors in Sion on Friday morning.

Swiss authorities have opened a criminal investigation into the owners, who are suspected of involuntary homicide, involuntary bodily harm and involuntarily causing a fire.

A memorial service and a minute's silence marked Friday's national homage, while church bells across Switzerland rang out for five minutes, beginning at 2 p.m.. Across the country, people gathered to light candles, put down flowers for the victims and followed the national ceremony that was livestreamed on public television.

Speaking at the memorial ceremony in Martigny, Swiss President Guy Parmelin said that "the memory of that terrible night illuminates the faces of the 156 victims, their happy days, their carefree spirit."

He added: "Our country is appalled by this tragedy. It bows before the memory of those who are no longer with us. It stands by the bedside of those who are about to embark on a long road to recovery."

Investigators have said they believe sparkling candles atop Champagne bottles ignited the fire when they came too close to the ceiling. Authorities are looking into whether soundproofing material on the ceiling conformed with regulations and whether the candles were permitted for use in the bar. Fire safety inspections hadn't been carried out since 2019.

The severity of burns made it difficult to identify some victims, requiring families to supply authorities with DNA samples. Police have said many of the victims were in their teens to mid-20s.

An autopsy has been ordered for five of the six Italian victims and has been delegated to the prosecutors' offices in Milan, Bologna, and Genoa, where the bodies of the victims have been returned.

"What happened is not a disaster: It's the result of too many people who didn't do their job or who thought they were making easy money," Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni said during a press conference on Friday. "Those responsible must be identified and prosecuted."

Meloni said the State Attorney General's Office has contacted the Swiss Attorney General to follow the investigation. She also confirmed that the Rome Prosecutor's Office has started a separate probe.

"The families have my word that they will not be left alone while they seek justice," she added.

The Paris prosecutor's office Monday announced that it was opening a probe to assist the Swiss investigation and make it easier for families of French victims to communicate with Swiss investigators. Nine French citizens were killed, the youngest of them aged 14, and 23 others were injured.

As Trump promises Venezuelan renaissance, locals struggle with crumbling economy

By REGINA GARCIA CANO and MATT SEDENSKY Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — At the White House, President Donald Trump vows American intervention in Venezuela will pour billions of dollars into the country's infrastructure, revive its once-thriving oil industry and eventually deliver a new age of prosperity to the Latin American nation.

Here at a sprawling street market in the capital, though, utility worker Ana Calderón simply wishes she could afford the ingredients to make a pot of soup.

"Food is incredibly expensive," says Calderón, noting rapidly rising prices that have celery selling for twice as much as just a few weeks ago and a kilogram (2 pounds) of meat going for more than \$10, or 25 times the country's monthly minimum wage. "Everything is so expensive."

Venezuelans digesting news of the United States' brazen capture of former President Nicolás Maduro are hearing grandiose promises of future economic prowess even as they live through the crippling economic realities of today.

"They know that the outlook has significantly changed but they don't see it yet on the ground. What they're seeing is repression. They're seeing a lot of confusion," says Luisa Palacios, a Venezuelan-born economist and former oil executive who is a research scholar at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University. "People are hopeful and expecting that things are going to change but that doesn't mean that things are going to change right now."

Whatever hope exists over the possibility of U.S. involvement improving Venezuela's economy is paired with the crushing daily truths most here live. People typically work two, three or more jobs just to survive, and still cupboards and refrigerators are nearly bare. Children go to bed early to avoid the pang of hunger; parents choose between filling a prescription and buying groceries. An estimated eight in 10 people live in poverty.

It has led millions to flee the country for elsewhere.

Those who remain are concentrated in Venezuela's cities, including its capital, Caracas, where the street market in the Catia neighborhood once was so busy that shoppers bumped into one another and dodged oncoming traffic. But as prices have climbed in recent days, locals have increasingly stayed away from the market stalls, reducing the chaos to a relative hush.

Neila Roa, carrying her 5-month-old baby, sells packs of cigarettes to passersby, having to monitor daily fluctuations in currency to adjust the price.

"Inflation and more inflation and devaluation," Roa says. "It's out of control."

Roa could not believe the news of Maduro's capture. Now, she wonders what will come of it. She thinks it would take "a miracle" to fix Venezuela's economy.

"What we don't know is whether the change is for better or for worse," she says. "We're in a state of uncertainty. We have to see how good it can be, and how much it can contribute to our lives."

Trump has said the U.S. will distribute some of the proceeds from the sale of Venezuelan oil back to its population. But that commitment so far largely appears to be focused on America's interests in extracting more oil from Venezuela, selling more U.S.-made goods to the country and repairing the electricity grid.

The White House is hosting a meeting Friday with U.S. oil company executives to discuss Venezuela, which the Trump administration has been pressuring to open its vast-but-struggling oil industry more widely to American investment and know-how. In an interview with The New York Times, Trump acknowledged that reviving the country's oil industry would take years.

"The oil will take a while," he said.

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves. The country's economy depends on them.

Maduro's predecessor, the fiery Hugo Chávez, elected in 1998, expanded social services, including housing and education, thanks to the country's oil bonanza, which generated revenues estimated at some \$981 billion between 1999 and 2011 as crude prices soared. But corruption, a decline in oil production and economic policies led to a crisis that became evident in 2012.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 67 of 73

Chávez appointed Maduro as his successor before dying of cancer in 2013. The country's political, social and economic crisis, entangled with plummeting oil production and prices, marked the entirety of Maduro's presidency. Millions were pushed into poverty. The middle class virtually disappeared. And more than 7.7 million people left their homeland.

Albert Williams, an economist at Nova Southeastern University, says returning the energy sector to its heyday would have a dramatic spillover effect in a country in which oil is the dominant industry, sparking the opening of restaurants, stores and other businesses. What's unknown, he says, is whether such a revitalization happens, how long it would take and how a government built by Maduro will adjust to the change in power.

"That's the billion-dollar question," Williams says. "But if you improve the oil industry, you improve the country."

The International Monetary Fund estimates Venezuela's inflation rate is a staggering 682%, the highest of any country for which it has data. That has sent the cost of food beyond what many can afford.

Many public sector workers survive on roughly \$160 per month, while the average private sector employee earned about \$237 last year. Venezuela's monthly minimum wage of 130 bolivars, or \$0.40, has not increased since 2022, putting it well below the United Nations' measure of extreme poverty of \$2.15 a day.

The currency crisis led Maduro to declare an "economic emergency" in April.

Usha Haley, a Wichita State University economist who studies emerging markets, says for those hurting the most, there is no immediate sign of change.

"Short-term, most Venezuelans will probably not feel any economic relief," she says. "A single oil sale will not fix the country's rampant inflation and currency collapse. Jobs, prices, and exchange rates will probably not shift quickly."

In a country that has seen as much strife as Venezuela has in recent years, locals are accustomed to doing what they have to in order to get through the day, so much so that many utter the same expression "Resolver," they say in Spanish, or "figure it out," shorthand for the jury-rigged nature of life here, in which every transaction, from boarding a bus to buying a child's medicine, involves a delicate calculation.

Here at the market, the smell of fish, fresh onions and car exhaust combine. Calderon, making her way through, faces freshly skyrocketing prices, saying "the difference is huge," as the country's official currency has rapidly declined against its unofficial one, the U.S. dollar.

Unable to afford all the ingredients for her soup, she left with a bunch of celery but no meat.

Russia just used its new hypersonic missile again in Ukraine. Here's what to know about the Oreshnik

By The Associated Press undefined

Russia said Friday it used its latest missile against Ukraine for a second time in the nearly 4-year-old war, a forceful signal to Kyiv and its Western allies as U.S.-led peace talks have entered a new and crucial stage.

The hypersonic Oreshnik intermediate range ballistic missile hit Ukraine's western Lviv region late Thursday night, although officials there did not mention any casualties. The area is near a military base in neighboring Poland, a NATO member, that serves as a key hub for ferrying Western military supplies to Kyiv.

Some Moscow commentators said the attack was a warning to European leaders against proposals to deploy their troops to Ukraine as part of a prospective peace deal. Russia has said it won't accept such a deployment and would view those forces as legitimate targets.

A look at the weapon and why Russia used it now:

What's known about the Oreshnik

Russia first used the multiple-warhead Oreshnik on the Ukrainian city of Dnipro in November 2024.

President Vladimir Putin said the Oreshnik, which means "hazelnut tree" in Russian, streaks at 10 times the speed of sound, or Mach 10, "like a meteorite," and was immune to any missile defense system.

He said the weapon is so powerful that several such missiles -- even fitted with conventional warheads -- could be as devastating as a nuclear strike. He said it's capable of destroying underground bunkers

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 68 of 73

“three, four or more floors down.”

The Russian military said the Oreshnik can carry nuclear or conventional warheads and can reach any European target.

The Pentagon said the Oreshnik was an experimental type of intermediate-range ballistic missile, or IRBM, based on Russia’s RS-26 Rubezh intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM. Intermediate-range missiles can fly between 500 to 5,500 kilometers (310 to 3,400 miles). Such weapons were banned under a Soviet-era treaty that Washington and Moscow abandoned in 2019.

When Russia first used the Oreshnik, Ukraine’s military said the missile had six independently targetable warheads, each carrying six submunitions.

Russian military bloggers said the submunitions released by each warhead apparently were unarmed but had high kinetic energy estimated to deliver a destructive force equivalent to tons of explosives.

Since the start of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russia has used swarms of cheap slow-flying drones and an assortment of other missiles, but none had the range and power of Oreshnik.

Deployed to Belarus

Russia’s Defense Ministry said last month the Oreshnik had been deployed to Belarus and entered active service. It didn’t specify how many missiles were sent to the key ally of Moscow and whether they were fitted with nuclear warheads, but Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said that up to 10 Oreshnik systems will be stationed there.

Russia previously has stationed tactical nuclear weapons inside Belarus, whose territory it used to launch the invasion of Ukraine.

In 2024, Putin released a revised nuclear doctrine that placed Belarus under Russia’s atomic umbrella. The document significantly lowered the threshold for the possible use of nuclear weapons, declaring that any nation’s conventional attack on Russia that is supported by a nuclear power will be considered a joint attack on the country. The threat was clearly aimed at discouraging the West from allowing Ukraine to strike Russia with longer-range weapons.

Unlike Russia’s other shorter-range conventional weapons, the Oreshnik is able to launch a powerful, conventional strike anywhere in Europe, giving the Kremlin a new instrument of escalation without tapping its nuclear arsenal. There will be no way to know whether the missile is carrying a nuclear or a conventional warhead before it hits the target.

Russia’s message by using the Oreshnik

When Russia first used the Oreshnik, Putin described it as a response to Ukraine’s Western allies allowing it to use their longer-range weapons to strike Russian territory.

Its latest strike comes as the U.S.-led efforts to end the war in Ukraine have entered a pivotal stage and appears to underline Putin’s intention to negotiate from a position of strength as his troops make slow but steady territorial gains.

Some Russian military bloggers noted that the strike in Lviv, not far from the Polish border, was a message intended for Kyiv’s allies. Those members of the “coalition of the willing” have proposed sending their troops to Ukraine as part of security guarantees once a peace deal is reached.

Russia has said it won’t accept any European forces in Ukraine, seeing them as legitimate targets.

“For the first time, NATO command has been shown a strategic weapons strike virtually on its border,” said military expert Valery Shiryayev. “This action is intended to demonstrate the determination of Russia’s military and political leadership to use such weapons with nuclear warheads if necessary.”

The attack comes less than a week after the U.S. capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, a Russian ally. The Russian Foreign Ministry denounced the U.S. action as an act of aggression and sharply criticized Wednesday’s U.S. seizure of a Russia-flagged tanker.

Takeaways from AP reporting on Trump administration cuts affecting US water systems

By TAMMY WEBBER, MICHAEL PHILLIS and M.K. WILDEMAN Associated Press

Scores of communities around the United States have aging and decrepit wastewater systems that can put residents' health and homes at risk.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and former President Joe Biden's administration promised hundreds of millions of dollars to address the problem, but much of that has been undone in President Donald Trump's return to office.

Some of the Trump administration's cuts have come as he has targeted diversity, equity and inclusion. Advocates say that will likely widen inequality, as many of the worst wastewater systems are in poor communities.

Here are key takeaways from The Associated Press' reporting on the issue:

Systems wither when communities can't afford maintenance

At least 17 million Americans are served by the roughly 1,000 wastewater systems nationwide in serious violation of federal pollution limits when they discharge to local waterways. And at least 2.7 million are served by the most troubled — wastewater systems concentrated in rural areas that have consistently and repeatedly violated clean water rules and whose customers earn, on average, nearly \$12,000 less per household than the U.S. average.

At the same time, flooding and water quality needs over the next two decades have ballooned to at least \$630 billion, according to federal data reviewed by the AP.

Some communities have struggled as residents and industry have moved away, leaving a smaller population that simply doesn't have the money to maintain their system. And some rural areas don't have sewers or functioning septic systems at all. About 2.2 million Americans don't have adequate indoor plumbing, according to the EPA.

The result can be misery.

For example, the majority Black town of Shaw, Mississippi, has lost 40% of its population and most of its businesses, and now can't afford necessary sewer upgrades. Sewers can back up into homes during heavy rains. A 2023 study found that 38% of children tested were infected with intestinal parasites like hookworm, and 80% had high levels of intestinal inflammation.

What the Trump administration has done

The Trump administration eliminated the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice office, which worked to address the problem of pollution typically falling harder on poor and minority communities. The administration also killed grants for infrastructure and climate adaptation, many of them earmarked for those underserved communities.

For example, that included \$14 million to install septic systems in majority-Black Alabama counties where many residents must pipe sewage from their homes onto their own property because it has nowhere else to go. Another example was a \$20 million grant where almost half the money was going to address aging sewer lines in historically Black neighborhoods in Thomasville, Georgia. When the EPA canceled that grant, the agency said it didn't align with administration priorities.

In a statement, the EPA said the Biden administration focus on a "radical agenda" that included environmental justice was contrary to its core mission of protecting human health and the environment.

Catherine Coleman Flowers, founder of the Center for Rural Enterprise and Environmental Justice, said attacking grant money because it carries a DEI label is missing how severe the wastewater problems are in some places. She said those problems are a "health and dignity" issue.

What communities can do now

There are still major sources of financing. In November, the EPA announced \$6.5 billion for wastewater and drinking water projects through a loan program, plus another \$550 million that would be handed to states. There's a smaller U.S. Department of Agriculture program that supports these needs, too.

But the poorest places will have a harder time getting any of that money, said Sri Vedachalam, a water

and climate expert at the consulting firm Corvias Infrastructure Solutions. Many struggling communities lack the money, staffing or expertise to conduct needed studies and engineering reports and fill out extensive applications, experts said.

The Trump administration also canceled tens of millions in funding to centers that provided help, creating another hurdle, advocates say. The EPA says it still funds technical support to rural, small and tribal communities.

Poor communities threatened by aging sewers see crucial aid slashed under Trump

By TAMMY WEBBER, MICHAEL PHILLIS and M.K. WILDEMAN Associated Press

CAHOKIA HEIGHTS, Ill. (AP) — Yvette Lyles thought of the modest brick ranch home as a Christmas present for her family. It was close to a state park where she and her kids could picnic, fish and enjoy the outdoors. A place to make memories.

But she soon learned her southern Illinois community had a big problem: Recurring floods from heavy rains sent untreated sewage into streets, yards and homes where they buckled floors, cracked walls and destroyed belongings. The first time it happened after they moved in, her family was trapped inside for days.

"I had to turn my back so my children wouldn't see me cry," Lyles said.

Cahokia Heights, a mostly Black city where about one-third live in poverty, is among scores of communities nationwide with aging and decrepit wastewater systems that can put people and their homes at risk. Exposure to untreated sewage, which can enter homes by backing up through plumbing or via floods after rainwater overwhelms sewer systems, can cause illness. Such problems are often in rural areas or declining cities without the money or expertise to fix problems on their own.

Now, hundreds of millions in grants and loans promised by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and former President Joe Biden's administration to address racial and economic disparities have been canceled or targeted for elimination under President Donald Trump.

The Trump administration eliminated the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice office as part of its war on diversity, equity and inclusion, along with grants to hundreds of projects for infrastructure and climate adaptation in underserved communities.

That included \$14 million to install septic systems in majority-Black Alabama counties where many residents must pipe sewage from their homes onto their own property because it has nowhere else to go. In Thomasville, Georgia, the EPA canceled a \$20 million grant, almost half to address aging sewer lines in historically Black neighborhoods. The agency said it didn't align with administration priorities.

The Trump administration also has proposed deep cuts to state revolving loan funds for drinking and wastewater projects. The Biden-era infrastructure bill allocated nearly \$50 billion to those funds, with almost half meant for disadvantaged communities.

Congress is considering a compromise bill that rejects the deepest cuts, but would allow lawmakers to direct about half the money to pet projects, rather than allowing states to allocate it.

"Since day one, the Trump EPA has been crystal clear that the Biden-Harris Administration shouldn't have forced their radical agenda of wasteful DEI programs and 'environmental justice' preferencing on the EPA's core mission of protecting human health and the environment," the agency told The Associated Press in a written statement.

Advocates, though, say some of the worst health and environment problems are in long-overlooked minority communities, including many that lost funding.

"The mischaracterization of it as DEI really masks how severe this problem is in the United States," said Catherine Coleman Flowers, who founded the Center for Rural Enterprise and Environmental Justice and helped bring attention to the plight of people in Lowndes County, Alabama.

"It's an infrastructure issue," she said. "It's health and dignity."

Decades of decline

When it rains hard, sewage sometimes backs up in Patricia Johnson's toilet and bathtub in her modest

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 71 of 73

Cahokia Heights home, a problem that's gotten worse over the years. Mosquitoes breed in the standing water and high grass outside.

"It is just bad," Johnson said. "I am just sad because I have never experienced water being such a problem as it is out here."

Sewer overflows have long been a problem in this city near St. Louis. A 2024 settlement with the U.S. Justice Department requires the city to invest an estimated \$30 million in upgrades, and officials told a court they've worked to divert floodwater and made other repairs.

The city wouldn't comment, but records show at least \$41 million in mostly state and federal funds have been spent or sought for upgrades, with the city's engineering firm saying tens of millions more are needed. The city said in a recent court filing that finding money is more difficult under Trump.

That includes hoped-for funding from a Federal Emergency Management Agency infrastructure program — which a federal judge recently ruled was unlawfully ended by the Trump administration — to address flooding in Cahokia Heights and other St. Clair County communities. What's more, the city lost \$1.1 million the House had appropriated for a sewer project last year. The Trump administration now says that FEMA program is under review.

At least 17 million Americans are served by the roughly 1,000 wastewater systems nationwide in serious violation of federal pollution limits when they discharge to local waterways. And at least 2.7 million are served by the most troubled — wastewater systems concentrated in rural areas that have consistently and repeatedly violated clean water rules and whose customers earn, on average, nearly \$12,000 less per household than the U.S. average.

At the same time, flooding and water quality needs over the next two decades have ballooned to at least \$630 billion, according to federal data reviewed by the AP.

Some of those places are stuck with oversized systems they can't afford to maintain as residents and industry have moved away. And some rural areas have neither sewers nor functioning septic systems, with an estimated 2.2 million Americans lacking adequate indoor plumbing, according to the EPA.

The dire conditions can threaten residents' health.

In Shaw, Mississippi — a poor, majority Black town where sewers back up into homes during heavy rains — a 2023 study found that 38% of a small sample of children tested were infected with intestinal parasites like hookworms and 80% had high levels of intestinal inflammation.

In Lowndes County, some residents were sickened by hookworms linked to raw sewage. And Lyles, the Cahokia Heights mom, who is among those who joined a lawsuit over the flooding, said she was infected with *H. pylori*, a common bacteria that can cause gut inflammation, which she believes came from sewage exposure. She said her doctor thought she must have traveled to a different country.

There is a misperception that such conditions aren't common in the U.S. anymore, said Theresa Gildner, a human biologist at Washington University in St. Louis.

That's why the need for help is urgent and the struggle to get it so frustrating, advocates say.

Funding from the COVID-era American Rescue Plan Act will make some sewer upgrades in Shaw, where 50 years ago Black residents won a federal civil rights lawsuit seeking the same services as white residents, including sewers. But much more work is needed and the city of fewer than 1,500 can't afford it, said state Rep. Otis Anthony.

Shaw has lost more than 40% of its population and most of its businesses. Brick is chipping from one- and two-story buildings and painted-over plywood covers many shop windows.

"You have abject poverty," Anthony said.

Progress in peril

Some conservatives don't believe the federal government should help fund such projects at all, or that minority and underserved communities should receive special consideration.

Instead, poor places need policies that grow the local economy so they can invest in infrastructure improvements, said Jack Spencer, a senior research fellow for energy and environmental policy with the conservative Heritage Foundation.

"I think that's up to state and local populations to decide how they prioritize their resources," said Spencer.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 72 of 73

There still are major sources of financing. In November, the EPA announced \$6.5 billion for wastewater and drinking water projects through a loan program, plus another \$550 million that would be handed to states. There's a smaller U.S. Department of Agriculture program that supports these needs, too.

But the poorest places will have a harder time getting any of that money, said Sri Vedachalam, a water and climate expert at the infrastructure consulting firm Corvias Infrastructure Solutions. Many struggling communities lack the money, staffing or expertise to conduct needed studies and engineering reports and fill out extensive applications, experts said.

The Trump administration also canceled tens of millions in funding to centers that provided help, creating another hurdle, advocates say. The EPA says it still funds technical support to rural, small and tribal communities.

"If we're telling communities, 'You need to pull yourself up by your bootstraps or figure this out for yourself,' OK," said Rebecca Lewison, executive director at the Center for Energy and Environmental Justice in California, which lost \$8 million from a Biden-era grant to help struggling communities. "But to be able to do that, you need assistance."

Many communities are at a loss about what happens now.

In Alabama, Sherry Bradley said she reworded any material describing a project to install specially engineered septic systems in Lowndes and two other rural counties, trying to stay under the radar as Trump began cutting grants.

"Environmental justice,' we took that out. We took out 'poverty,'" said Bradley, executive director of the nonprofit Black Belt Unincorporated Wastewater Program, which already had received \$8 million for the project. Also deleted: "African American," "climate change," "disadvantaged" and "Gulf of Mexico."

But the grant was canceled anyway, leaving hundreds of residents in limbo and reliant on the same pipes that carry sewage to ravines, ditches and yards. Money from earlier grants helped install 160 systems in Lowndes County and will pay for about 30 more, Bradley said.

State health officials say 600 have asked for help.

Bradley said people are constantly asking when it will be their turn to get a septic system.

"When I look at their faces, I see that they've lost hope and that's not a good feeling," said Bradley, choking back tears. "We are the forgotten ones."

Today in History: January 10 "The Catch" sends 49ers to Super Bowl

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Jan. 10, the 10th day of 2026. There are 355 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 10, 1982, San Francisco 49ers receiver Dwight Clark caught a touchdown pass from Joe Montana with 58 seconds left in the NFC Championship Game; one of the most famous plays in NFL history, "The Catch" led the 49ers to a 28-27 victory over the Dallas Cowboys and a berth in Super Bowl XVI, where they defeated the Cincinnati Bengals for their first Super Bowl victory.

Also on this date:

In 1776, Thomas Paine anonymously published his influential pamphlet, "Common Sense," which argued for American independence from British rule.

In 1860, the Pemberton Mill in Lawrence, Massachusetts, collapsed and caught fire, killing as many as 145 people.

In 1861, Florida became the third state to secede from the Union prior to the Civil War.

In 1863, the London Underground was born when the Metropolitan Railway, the world's first underground passenger railway, opened to the public with service between Paddington and Farringdon Street.

In 1920, the League of Nations was established as the Treaty of Versailles (vehr-SY) went into effect.

In 1946, the United Nations convened its first General Assembly session in London with 51 nations represented. The proceedings defined the scope and purpose of the world body.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, January 10, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 220 ~ 73 of 73

In 2013, a series of bomb blasts in Pakistan killed more than 100 people, including dozens who died in a sectarian attack in the southwest city of Quetta. Hundreds of others were injured.

In 2017, President Barack Obama delivered his farewell address in Chicago, in which the two-term Democrat urged national unity and highlighted achievements of his presidency including the Affordable Care Act. Republican Donald Trump took office days later after a 2016 election in which Trump defeated Democrat Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Today's birthdays: Olympic decathlon gold medalist Bill Toomey is 87. Singer Rod Stewart is 81. Rock singer-musician Donald Fagen (Steely Dan) is 78. Singer Pat Benatar is 73. Hall of Fame racing driver and team owner Bobby Rahal is 73. Actor-comedian Jemaine Clement is 52. Actor Sarah Shahi is 46. Business owner Jared Kushner is 45. Actor and singer René Rapp is 26.