

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 1 of 62

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Coming up on GDILIVE.COM](#)
- [5- Second-half surge lifts Wolves past Warriors; women dominate in home return](#)
- [6- Clay County Fatal Crash](#)
- [7- Today's Game Information](#)
- [8- SD SearchLight: One year of Donald Trump: Alarms sound over relentless expansion of presidential powers](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Open meetings laws need more help than the attorney general's bills offer](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: The 5 biggest legal fights in the first year of Trump's mass deportation push](#)
- [20- Weather Pages](#)
- [25- Daily Devotional](#)
- [26- Subscription Form](#)
- [27- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [28- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Saturday, Jan. 17, 2026

Boys Wrestling at Battler Invitational (Gettysburg), 10 a.m.

Boys Basketball: Dakota Valley at Groton: (BC-2, JVB-3:15, VB-4:30)

## Sunday, Jan. 18, 2026

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 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.



## Monday, Jan. 19, 2026

- School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.
- School Lunch: Oriental chicken, egg rolls.
- Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
- Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center, 1 p.m.
- 1st Grade BBB Practice, 4:30 p.m.
- 5th/6th Grade Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.
- 5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.
- Kindergarten BBB Practice, 6 p.m.
- MS Boys Wrestling at Redfield Invitational, 5:30 p.m.

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# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 2 of 62

# 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.**

## **Monumental Fossil Discovery**

Roughly 3,000 pounds of fossils and rock have been unearthed at Dinosaur National Monument, the National Park Service said yesterday. The discovery marks the first excavation in over 100 years at the national park straddling Utah and Colorado.

The fossil trove was accidentally discovered during a parking lot construction project near the Quarry Exhibit Hall, where visitors can see roughly 1,500 dinosaur bones encased in a rock face. Paleontologists believe the new fossils belong to a large long-necked dinosaur—most likely a Diplodocus. The extinct genus is thought to have had scales patterned in a range of dark colors, similar to those of modern reptiles and birds, according to a recent study analyzing fossilized skin samples from another site in Montana.

Dinosaur National Monument was established in 1915 to protect 80 acres around the Carnegie Quarry—a rock formation that yielded over 350 tons of fossils in the early 20th century. The park has since been expanded to include over 210,000 acres.

## **CIA director meets with Venezuela's acting president.**

Officials revealed yesterday that CIA Director John Ratcliffe met in Caracas Thursday with interim President Delcy Rodríguez. He is the most senior US official to visit Venezuela since the US captured former leader Nicolás Maduro two weeks ago. Rodríguez, who was vice president under Maduro, advocated for opening the state-run oil industry to more foreign investment in a nationwide address Thursday.

## **ICE detainee population reaches record high.**

Internal Homeland Security data reveals that the number of detainees in Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody facing deportation has reached a record high of roughly 73,000. The count is the highest in ICE's nearly 23-year history and marks a roughly 84% increase from the same time last year. Nearly 67,000 detainees were single adults, and another 6,000 were classified as family units.

## **Canada agrees to cut 100% tariffs on Chinese EVs.**

Canada will start by allowing up to 49,000 Chinese electric vehicles into the country at a 6.1% tariff rate, with the quota rising to 70,000 over five years. In exchange, China will lower tariffs on Canadian farm products—such as canola—from 84% to about 15%. The deal, struck during Prime Minister Mark Carney's visit to China this week, marks a divergence from US policy, which maintains 100% tariffs on Chinese EVs. Carney is the first Canadian prime minister to visit China since 2017.

## **OpenAI to introduce ads to ChatGPT in revenue push.**

The AI company will begin showing ads to users on ChatGPT's free plan and the lowest-cost subscription. CEO Sam Altman has previously called ads a last resort for OpenAI's business model; the company reportedly declared an internal emergency last month in response to the success of Google's Gemini chatbot. Ads are expected to be labeled, not affect responses, and avoid sensitive topics like politics.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 3 of 62

## **South Korean court sentences impeached president to five years in prison.**

The court found former president Yoon Suk Yeol guilty of abusing his power, obstructing justice, and falsifying documents. The verdict marks the first in a series of trials stemming from Yoon's actions during a December 2024 martial law crisis. Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty in a separate trial on charges of leading an insurrection. A verdict in that trial is expected next month.

## **World's best begin competing in the Australian Open tomorrow.**

The year's first of four Grand Slam tennis tournaments kicks off in Melbourne tomorrow. No.1 men's singles player Carlos Alcaraz has a chance to be the youngest man to win all four majors. Meanwhile, No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka seeks redemption after falling in last year's final to American Madison Keys, currently ranked No. 9.

## **Humankind(ness)**

Today, we're sharing a story from reader David K. in Queenstown, Maryland.

"My wife and I watch our granddaughter three days a week. Trash pickup comes on our second day. Our granddaughter excitedly rushes to the window, full of smiles, to wave 'hi' to the driver of the truck. He returns the wave with a toot of his horn.

"The pickup before Christmas, he pulls over, gets out of his truck, walks over to the now empty trash container, puts a box on top, then drives away. I retrieve the box, and to my delightful surprise, it is a toy trash truck for our granddaughter!"

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 4 of 62



Coming Up on  
GDILIVE.COM

Groton  
Area  
Tigers  
Groton, SD

# GDILIVE



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*Groton Daily Independent*



For more info: [GDILIVE.COM](http://GDILIVE.COM)



**Sat., Jan. 17, 2026 - Dakota Valley  
Boys Basketball in Groton  
C at 2:00, JV at 3:15, Varsity at 4:30  
C and JV games sponsored by  
S & S Lumber of Groton**

Rich Bosma, Paul Kosel and Jeslyn Kosel

## Second-half surge lifts Wolves past Warriors; women dominate in home return

ABERDEEN, S.D. — A strong second-half rally powered the Northern State men's basketball team to an 84–80 victory over Winona State Friday night at Wachs Arena, while the Northern State women opened their return home with a commanding 69–47 win over the Warriors.

### **Men's basketball: Late push secures seventh conference win**

Trailing by six at halftime, the Wolves responded with a 47-point second half to secure their seventh NSIC victory of the season. Northern shot 57 percent from the field in both halves and placed four players in double figures in the win.

The contest featured 11 ties and 11 lead changes before Northern grabbed the lead midway through the second half and never relinquished it. The Wolves finished shooting 57.4 percent from the floor, hit ten three-pointers, and scored 40 points in the paint.

Joshua Book and Simon Akena led the way with 21 points apiece, combining to shoot 14-of-20 from the field and 7-of-10 from three-point range. Tobi Obiora added 14 points and six rebounds, while Marshawn Smith contributed 12 points and six boards. James Glenn dished out a team-high six assists, and Book added five assists to go with his scoring total.

Northern State improved to 7–4 in NSIC play and will host Concordia–St. Paul Saturday afternoon at Wachs Arena.

### **Women's basketball: Balanced attack overwhelms Winona State**

In the women's matchup, Northern State controlled play from the opening minutes, scoring six straight to start the game and never looking back in a 69–47 victory. The Wolves recorded a season-high 19 assists and shot nearly 52 percent from the field.

Taylor Tool led all scorers with 18 points on 61.5 percent shooting while adding four rebounds, four assists, and a block. Megan Counts delivered 13 points on perfect shooting from the field, including three three-pointers. Izzy Moore filled the stat sheet with eight points, nine rebounds, and six assists. Off the bench, Makenzie Carrier and Reagan Rus each added nine points, with Rus also collecting four assists.

Northern's defense held Winona State to 34 percent shooting and under 50 points, continuing its reputation as one of the NSIC's top defensive units.

The Northern State women will also host Concordia–St. Paul Saturday evening at Wachs Arena.

## Clay County Fatal Crash

What: Two vehicle fatal crash

Where: Intersection of SD 46 and SD 19, two miles south of Centerville, SD

When: 8:14 a.m., Friday, January 16, 2026

Driver 1: 20-year-old male from Harrisburg, SD, no injuries

Vehicle 1: 2025 Ram 3500

Seat belt Used: Yes

Driver 2: 35-year-old male from Vermillion, SD, fatal injuries

Vehicle 2: 2011 Subaru Legacy

Seat belt Used: Yes

Clay County, S.D.- One person died Friday morning in a two-vehicle crash two miles south of Centerville, SD.

The names of the persons involved have not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2025 Ram 3500 was traveling westbound on SD Highway 46 near the intersection of Highway 19. At the same time, the driver of a 2011 Subaru Legacy was traveling southbound on Highway 19, approaching the intersection at Highway 46. The Subaru entered the intersection and collided with the Ram. Both vehicles came to rest in the southwest ditch.

The driver of the Subaru sustained fatal injuries. The driver of the Ram was not injured.

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.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 7 of 62



## High School Boys' Basketball

Dakota Valley @ Groton Area  
Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026

### Game Times:

#### Main Court in Arena

- 2:00 PM CT → Boys C
- 3:15 PM CT → Boys JV
  - o *Halftime Entertainment: Fellowship of Christian Students Shooting Game*
- 4:30 PM CT → Boys Varsity
  - o *Halftime Entertainment: Sugar Babes and Sweet Sensations Dancers*

#### Ticket Takers - Report @ 1pm:

- Sue Fjeldheim
- Caitlyn Fischbach
- Janene Harry

Admin on Duty: Alexa Sperry

**Prior to the Varsity game, the National Anthem will be first, with Varsity Introductions/Lineups to follow.**

**LOCKER ROOMS:** Dakota Valley will use the last locker room down the JH hallway.

**TEAM BENCHES:** South Bench- Groton Area | North Bench- Dakota Valley

**ATHLETIC TRAINER:** There will be an athletic trainer on site.

AED – one is with the trainer, and one is also located near the ticket booth.

**ADMISSION & SPECTATORS:** Adults: \$5.00 Students: \$4.00.

**CONCESSIONS:** Will be available

**JV/Varsity Officials:** Eric Donat, Adam Holt, Spencer Aberle

**C Officials:** Shaun Wanner, Travis Kurth (JV), Kristi Zoellner

**C/JV/V Scoreboard:** Kristen Swartz

**C Scorebook:** Krissi Zak

**JV/V Official Book:** Kristi Zoellner

**C/JV/V Shot Clock Operator:** Sean Schuring

**Announcer:** Mike Imrie

**National Anthem:** Recording

**Livestream:** [www.GDlive.com](http://www.GDlive.com) or [Groton High School | High School Sports | Home | Hudl](http://Groton High School | High School Sports | Home | Hudl)  
([fan.hudl.com/usa/sd/groton/organization/12097/groton-high-school](http://fan.hudl.com/usa/sd/groton/organization/12097/groton-high-school))

**Thank you,**

Alexa Sperry, Athletic Director

[Alexa.Sperry@k12.sd.us](mailto:Alexa.Sperry@k12.sd.us) / 605-380-7887



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### One year of Donald Trump: Alarms sound over relentless expansion of presidential powers

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY AND JACOB FISCHLER

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump promised during his bid for another White House term that he would be a dictator only on “day one.”

Before a town hall audience in Iowa in December 2023, Fox News host Sean Hannity asked Trump, “Under no circumstances, you are promising America tonight, you would never abuse power as retribution against anybody?”

“Except for day one,” Trump responded, seconds later adding, “I want to close the border and I want to drill, drill, drill.”

But a year since his inauguration, Trump has acted on some of his most extreme campaign hyperbole, and then some.

A limited history of Trump’s expansion of presidential powers includes:

The unilateral capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and deadly U.S. military strikes on suspected drug-running boats off that nation’s coast, as well as a threat to acquire Greenland.

The targeting of Democratic-led cities with federal immigration agents — most recently Minneapolis — and National Guard troops.

The threat to cut congressionally approved funding from institutions, including universities, that do not align with the administration’s ideology.

The prosecution of political opponents and attacks on the free press.

Those actions and others, coupled with a cooperative GOP Congress, have created an unprecedented shift away from the United States’ democratic tradition and founding principles that establish a system of checks and balances, States Newsroom was told in extensive interviews over recent months.

Many congressional Democrats — and nearly half of Americans, in a recent poll — believe Trump has gone too far in his expansion of presidential power. Historians, political scientists and legal experts have sounded the alarm, with some saying the United States has reached authoritarianism, even as Trump has shown no signs of slowing down.

Experts interviewed agreed that the United States finds itself in a “troubled moment,” as William Howell, dean of the School of Government and Policy at Johns Hopkins University, put it.

“We’ve never seen a presidency that represents such an enduring threat to the health and well-being of our democracy as we do today,” said Howell, who recently co-authored the book “Trajectory of Power: The Rise of the Strongman Presidency.”

#### Experts wary

Ilya Somin, professor of law at George Mason University’s Antonin Scalia Law School and constitutional studies expert with the libertarian Cato Institute, said “I don’t know that it is likely that we’re going to slide into authoritarianism, but the very fact that the issue has to be raised is itself already bad.”

“My hope, and to some extent my expectation, is that a combination of legal and political action will stop these abuses, or at least curb them, and to some extent, it has already. But, you know, how well the system withstands it remains to be seen,” Somin told States Newsroom.

Others painted a more dire picture by pointing to the lack of such checks from the other branches of government.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 9 of 62

Retired Army Col. David Graham, a senior fellow at the Georgetown Law Center's Center on National Security, said Congress' inability to block Trump's military action in Venezuela shows that the president is operating with "unbridled" power.

"This unbridled presidential authority represents what I consider to be a clear and present danger to the national security of the United States and to the global security of the international community," Graham said.

The Cato Institute's Patrick Eddington offered: "It is absolutely noteworthy the speed and systematic nature (with) which Trump has been successful in literally gutting and reshaping to his will the domestic instruments of coercive power."

"I speak here about the departments of Justice and Homeland Security, in particular, but also successful in reshaping the military, the military leadership and the entire institution, to make it essentially as subservient as possible," Eddington, the think tank's senior fellow in homeland security and civil liberties, and former senior policy adviser for Rep. Rush Holt, D-N.J., told States Newsroom.

## **Doubts growing among Americans**

Pollsters also find voters are increasingly wary of Trump's governing style.

A recent Quinnipiac University poll found 70% believed the president needed authorization from Congress to go to war. The same day the poll was released, Jan. 14, the Republican-controlled U.S. Senate rejected a measure to require Trump to obtain permission before further operations in Venezuela.

Bright Line Watch, a quarterly survey of the health of American democracy, has shown a decline in both expert and public opinion of how U.S. democracy has fared since Trump's inauguration. The poll, conducted since 2017, surveys roughly 700 political science faculty at U.S. universities and 2,750 members of the general public.

A Pew Research Center survey of 3,455 adults released in late September found 7 in 10 Americans believe Trump is trying to exert more presidential power than previous administrations. And overall, 49% of those surveyed said that Trump's use of power compared to presidents past is bad for the country — though responses notably split along partisan lines.

In response to an interview request for this story, White House spokesperson Liz Huston provided a one-sentence on-the-record written statement.

"President Trump is making America greater than ever before for all Americans," she wrote.

Throughout its first year, the Trump White House has trumpeted its many policy victories, including conducting mass deportations, raising money through tariffs, extending tax cuts, cutting some federal spending and exerting influence over elite universities.

## **Deploying the National Guard**

Throughout 2025, until the Supreme Court disallowed the practice days before New Year's, Trump sent National Guard troops to a handful of cities led by elected Democrats.

Depending on the city — Los Angeles; Washington, D.C.; Chicago; Portland, Oregon; Memphis, Tennessee; and New Orleans — he rationalized the deployments as either to control crime or protect immigration operations and federal property.

His critics, though, say those were pretexts meant to get Americans used to seeing military forces in U.S. cities, potentially to be deployed during the next federal elections.

"It's really designed to lay the groundwork to normalize a militarization, essentially, of American civic life, as a prelude to using federal troops and National Guard troops, probably specifically for so-called election integrity operations," Eddington said.

The deployments themselves, especially in California, Illinois and Oregon, where Democratic governors who usually control the state national guards vociferously objected to federal troops patrolling their cities, seemed to violate a founding U.S. principle against the military acting as a police force.

The Supreme Court eventually ruled that the Chicago deployment violated the Posse Comitatus Act, a

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 10 of 62

19th-century law forbidding military forces from civilian law enforcement.

Trump's use of military forces domestically is out of step with precedent, at least of the last 50 years, Elizabeth Goitein, senior director of the Liberty and National Security Program at the Brennan Center for Justice, said.

"The last nine presidents, not counting Trump I, we saw exactly two deployments to quell civil unrest or enforce the law," she said. "Nine presidencies. Under President Trump, it's happened five times in the last four months. So this is not normal," said Goitein, who previously worked as counsel to former Sen. Russ Feingold, D-Wis.

Oregon Democratic U.S. Sen. Jeff Merkley told States Newsroom the deployments marked one of the criteria of authoritarianism.

"In order to anchor a strong-man state, you have to have the ability to put troops in the street," he said.

## All night on the Senate floor

Congressional Democrats, and in a few cases Republicans, have also protested Trump's reach.

Days after nationwide "No Kings" day protests filled the streets on Oct. 18, Merkley led fellow Senate Democrats in an all-nighter on the Senate floor, speaking against what they described as Trump's slide into authoritarianism.

In mid-December, Merkley introduced a resolution "denouncing the horrors of authoritarianism."

Merkley has emerged as perhaps the leading Democrat focusing on Trump's authoritarian tendencies. He's made several closed-door presentations to his colleagues on the subject that includes urging them to look beyond the daily drumbeat of Trump news, he said.

"It's one issue after another in this flood-the-zone undertaking, and it's easy to see the issue of the day and miss the big picture," Merkley said in a Jan. 8 interview with States Newsroom. "And the big picture is a systematic implementation of an authoritarian strategy to create a strong-man state."

Merkley has branded Trump's actions as authoritarianism, but said that is actually "weaker" language to describe it.

"The stronger language is fascism," he said.

Speaking the day after an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer shot and killed a woman in Minneapolis, Merkley said the agency's mode of operating under Trump, as well as the deportation of hundreds to a notorious mega-prison in El Salvador, were fascism in action.

"And when you see people with their faces covered, with no identifier of what military unit or police unit they belong to, it just says like, 'Police.' That's fascism. Grabbing people off the street without due process, preventing them from talking to a lawyer, shipping them overseas. That's fascism," he said.

Congressional Republicans who control the Senate and the House have paved a smooth path for Trump's agenda.

Despite a notable rebuke of Trump, in which a handful of Senate Republicans joined Democrats to advance legislation to curtail Trump's unilateral military actions in Venezuela, the chamber eventually opted not to rein in the executive.

Republican Sens. Todd Young of Indiana, Josh Hawley of Missouri, Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska split with their party in the Jan. 8 procedural vote to act as a check on the administration's use of military forces — as did Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky, the measure's co-sponsor with Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia.

Trump swiftly responded on Truth Social that the five "should never be elected to office again."

The pressure campaign worked. In a followup vote less than a week later, Young and Hawley flipped and voted to block the measure.

Five days prior to the procedural vote, U.S. special forces apprehended Maduro and his wife from their bedroom in the Venezuela capital of Caracas.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 11 of 62

## Extra-judicial Caribbean killings

In the months leading up to the operation, the Trump administration amassed roughly 15,000 troops and personnel, according to a figure cited in a U.S. Southern Command press article, and nearly a dozen warships in the region, including the largest U.S. aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford, according to numerous media reports on the buildup. U.S. Southern Command declined to confirm specifics on "force posture."

Since September, U.S. warplanes have targeted numerous small boats off the coast of the South American country, killing more than 115 alleged "narco-terrorists" by the end of 2025, according to the U.S. Southern Command.

By using the military, instead of police, to kill, instead of capture, suspected drug traffickers, Trump was subverting the rule of law, critics across the political spectrum said.

Rep. Adam Smith, ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, said, "Basically what the president has decided is that we are now going to have the death penalty for drug traffickers."

"But further, not only are we gonna have the death penalty, but Trump is going to be judge, jury and executioner. ... That, again, is a massive expansion of presidential power," Smith, a Washington state Democrat, told C-SPAN's Washington Journal Dec. 19.

Graham, a former staff judge advocate for U.S. Southern Command, said the alleged drug-running boats should have been treated as suspected criminals, not as enemy combatants akin to terrorist groups like al-Qaida. The alleged drug organizations involved did not constitute an "armed attack on the U.S. government," he said.

But the Trump administration wrongly expanded the definition of enemy combatants to include alleged drug organizations, rather than as alleged criminals, to circumvent laws governing police powers, he said.

"If there exists no non-international armed conflict, and thus no applicable law of armed conflict, no unlawful combatants, no lawful targets, the U.S. personnel conducting these strikes. ... are simply engaged in extrajudicial killings," he said.

Perhaps most troubling, Graham said, Trump told New York Times reporters in a Jan. 7 interview he did not "need" international law, and that the only restraint on his use of the U.S. military was his "own morality."

Venezuela is not the only country on Trump's radar. The president told reporters as recently as Jan. 11 that the U.S. is going to take over Greenland "one way or the other."

Trump first mentioned buying Greenland, a territory of NATO ally Denmark, during his first term. Now, in his second, the president has not ruled out the idea of taking the massive Arctic island by force.

## Quashing dissent

Soon after Trump took the oath of office for the second time, he trained his focus on any dissent. Universities, media outlets and law firms were quickly in his crosshairs.

The president demanded that in return for federal funding, access to government buildings and contracts, the institutions adhere to principles in line with the administration's vision for America.

The administration froze billions of federal research and grant dollars for Harvard University unless it changed its admissions and hiring policies, among other demands. The university won a First Amendment lawsuit against the administration in Massachusetts federal district court Sept. 3.

Much of the funding was restored, according to Harvard Magazine, but the Trump administration appealed the decision in mid-December, again putting the nearly \$2.2 billion in jeopardy.

Other higher education institutions settled with Trump's White House, including Columbia, which agreed to pay \$200 million over three years to get its federal funding reinstated.

"Universities that Trump considers to be liberal in their views are being punished. Journalists and media companies that don't toe the line (and) that are critical of Trump are being punished, directly or indirectly," Goitein said.

"Everywhere you look, you are seeing the targeting of people and institutions based on perceptions that they are politically opposed to the president," Goitein said.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 12 of 62

In late September, Trump signed a memo directing law enforcement to prepare a national strategy to investigate "domestic terrorists" who are animated by "anti-fascism" as well as "anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, and anti-Christianity."

## Attacks on the free press

The president has also homed in on news and entertainment media that don't align with his vision. The Associated Press and the White House remain tangled up in court over press access after the wire service refused to use "Gulf of America" in its reports without noting that Trump had ordered a renaming of the Gulf of Mexico. The AP, a leader in editorial style, issued the same guidance for other news outlets. In response, the administration curtailed the AP's access to press events in the Oval Office and on Air Force One.

The Pentagon has also placed stipulations on press access. In October, dozens of reporters walked out of the building after Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth gave journalists an ultimatum: either sign a pledge to only publish approved material or lose their press badges.

Trump also requested Congress yank previously appropriated funds for public broadcasting stations around the country, including affiliates of National Public Radio and Public Broadcasting Service, which the administration said "fueled partisanship and left-wing propaganda." House and Senate lawmakers voted mostly along party lines to nix the funding in July.

Trump has also been exerting influence over network television, both news and entertainment operations. In September, Federal Communications Commission Chair Brendan Carr threatened to revoke Disney-owned ABC's affiliate licenses unless they pulled "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" from the air after the late-night host made comments about the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk.

Disney and ABC adhered to Carr's demand but reinstated Kimmel a week later following public outcry. ABC News settled with the then president-elect in December 2024 for a \$15 million charitable contribution to his future presidential library, and \$1 million for legal fees. Trump had sued the network for defamation following a misstatement by "This Week" host George Stephanopoulos regarding a civil suit finding.

In July, CBS' parent company, Paramount, paid Trump \$16 million after he sued over an edit in a "60 Minutes" interview with then-Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris.

## Trump and his enemies

Trump's latest target among his political foes is Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell. The president has publicly pummeled Powell with threats to fire him if he did not rapidly lower interest rates.

Powell learned Jan. 9 upon receiving a federal grand jury summons that the Department of Justice is probing whether he lied to Congress in June about renovation costs to the agency's District of Columbia headquarters.

Trump's investigation of the Fed chair drew swift criticism as an overreach into independent monetary policy decisions meant to stabilize the economy.

Numerous former Fed chairs and White House economic officials who served under both parties issued a statement calling the investigation "an unprecedented attempt to use prosecutorial attacks to undermine that independence."

The investigation revelation even roused Senate Republicans to question Trump's actions. Retiring Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., said in a statement he will oppose Trump's forthcoming nominations to the Federal Reserve board of governors, including the Fed chair vacancy when Powell's term expires.

"If there were any remaining doubt whether advisers within the Trump Administration are actively pushing to end the independence of the Federal Reserve, there should now be none," wrote Tillis, who sits on the Senate Banking Committee.

Murkowski chalked up the investigation as "nothing more than an attempt at coercion."

Even Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., told numerous reporterson Capitol Hill Jan. 12 that the allegations against Powell "better be real and they better be serious."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 13 of 62

Trump had already exerted his influence over the central bank when he fired Board Governor Lisa Cook, appointed to the panel by President Joe Biden in 2023.

Trump hit setbacks in lower federal courts after Cook sued and retained her position. The U.S. Supreme Court will hear arguments on Jan. 21 on the question of the president's power to fire independent agency appointees without cause.

The justices heard a similar argument Dec. 8 over Trump's firing of Federal Trade Commission appointee Rebecca Slaughter.

The president has so far hit roadblocks in his other attempts to prosecute political opponents, including former FBI Director James Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James.

A federal judge in Virginia dismissed Trump's cases against Comey and James after finding U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi illegally appointed former special assistant and personal lawyer to the president, Lindsey Halligan, as interim U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Halligan secured a two-count indictment against the former FBI chief for allegedly lying to Congress over a leak to the press about the bureau's investigation into whether Russia played a role in Trump's first presidential campaign. Comey pleaded not guilty.

The indictment followed the departure of Halligan's predecessor, Erik Seibert, the acting U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, who declined to seek charges against Comey.

Halligan also secured an indictment against James, alleging bank fraud and that she lied to a financial institution to receive better loan terms. James also pleaded not guilty.

James successfully prosecuted a massive fraud case in 2024 against Trump, his family and the Trump Organization, for falsely inflating asset values.

In one particularly high-profile post on his own social media platform, Trump directly appealed to Bondi to prosecute Comey and James.

"Pam: I have reviewed over 30 statements and posts saying that, essentially, 'same old story as last time, all talk, no action. Nothing is being done. What about Comey, Adam 'Shifty' Schiff, Leticia??? They're all guilty as hell, but nothing is going to be done,'" Trump wrote on Truth Social.

He continued further down in the post: "We can't delay any longer, it's killing our reputation and credibility. They impeached me twice, and indicted me (5 times!), OVER NOTHING. JUSTICE MUST BE SERVED, NOW!!!"

Eddington described Trump's actions as a "revenge tour" and said the president is "utilizing the coercive power of government, and in this particular case the Department of Justice, to go after his political enemies."

Then, the administration on Jan. 5 attempted to downgrade the military retirement rank and pay of Sen. Mark Kelly, an Arizona Democrat and retired Navy captain.

Trump and Hegseth singled out Kelly after he and five fellow Democratic lawmakers, all veterans, published a video encouraging U.S. troops to refuse "illegal orders."

In a barrage of Truth Social posts on the morning of Nov. 20, Trump wrote, "Their words cannot be allowed to stand. SEDITIOUS BEHAVIOR FROM TRAITORS!!! LOCK THEM UP??? President DJT"

"SEDITIOUS BEHAVIOR, punishable by DEATH!," he added a couple of hours later.

The president reposted several messages from Truth Social users, including one with the handle @P78 who wrote, "HANG THEM GEORGE WASHINGTON WOULD !!"

The lawmakers published the video as the U.S. was nearly three months into its campaign of striking small boats off the coast of Venezuela.

## Alien Enemies Act

The president has also reached back as far as the late 18th century to invoke laws meant for extraordinary circumstances.

In March, Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 to bolster his mass deportation campaign and deport more than 100 Venezuelans, without due process, to a notorious mega-prison in El Salvador.

The wartime law, which had only been invoked during the War of 1812 and both world wars, gives the

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 14 of 62

president power to deport people from nations with which the U.S. is at war.

Even when a federal judge issued an emergency order that the flights carrying men deported under the law turn back to the U.S., the Trump administration did not comply. As of Jan. 13, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said it was unlikely the men could be retrieved due to the chaotic situation in Venezuela, which the Trump administration caused.

The Venezuelan nationals, ages 14 and up, many of whom the administration accused without evidence of being gang members, were incarcerated for months before being released to their home country in a prisoner exchange.

A federal appeals court has blocked Trump, for now, from using the law to quickly expel Venezuelan nationals. A full hearing is pending.

## Trump renaming

Trump is also facing headwinds from Democrats and advocates for affixing his name to federal buildings and his face to this year's national parks annual pass.

Senate Democrats Chris Van Hollen and Angela Alsobrooks of Maryland joined independent Bernie Sanders of Vermont Jan. 13 to introduce what they're calling the "SERVE Act," short for "Stop Executive Renaming for Vanity and Ego Act."

The lawmakers unveiled the bill less than a month after Trump announced his name would now appear on the John F. Kennedy Memorial Center for the Performing Arts. Trump was elected chair of the cultural center after he installed new board members early in his second term.

Sanders said in a statement that Trump aimed "to create the myth of the 'Great Leader' by naming public buildings after himself — something that dictators have done throughout history."

Rep. Joyce Beatty, D-Ohio, sued Trump in federal court on Dec. 22, alleging only Congress has the power to rename federal buildings.

A public lands group has also challenged Trump in federal court, alleging he broke the Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act when he replaced a national contest-winning photo of Glacier National Park with his image next to George Washington on the U.S. residents' annual National Parks and Federal Recreation Lands Pass.

## 'The best job ever'

Nearly a year after he took office, Trump again sat down with Hannity.

In the Jan. 8 interview — the same day the administration sent more federal agents to Minneapolis in the face of intense protests and a day after the president said his own morality was the only restraint on his power — the Fox News host asked whether Republicans will win the upcoming midterm elections.

"I think we've done a great job," Trump said. "Maybe the best job ever in the first year."

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

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

## COMMENTARY

### Open meetings laws need more help than the attorney general's bills offer

by Dana Hess

There are a few different tactics for passing legislation. One is to pick a change in the law that's not likely to draw too many detractors. Another is to take a big swing at a change in the law that's certain to be opposed and will likely need to be offered to legislators during a few sessions so they can learn more about the issue.

With open meetings laws, South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley has chosen the first course of action. He has offered three bills that will make slight, but needed, changes.

Those bills include a clarification that an agenda must include items to be considered during an official meeting; a revision for the requirements for executive session; and a requirement that a state open meeting agenda must be posted on the state website 72 hours before the meeting is scheduled to start.

Those bills aren't likely to elicit too much of a howl from lawmakers. No one can blame Jackley for reaching for some low-hanging fruit. However, while the attorney general is noted for being tough on crime, he has yet to try to put any teeth in the laws governing the punishment of open meetings violators. The problem is that as well-intentioned as Jackley's bills are, they don't approach what South Dakota really needs to fix its open meetings problems.

On one end, there will be an effort this year to bring light to the public, letting them know when meetings will be held and what will be on the agenda. Still dwelling in the dark is the fact that there is a lack of accountability whenever the boards of local governments — city council, school board, county commission — go into a closed or executive session. By law they are allowed to meet behind closed doors to discuss personnel matters or student expulsion, consult with an attorney or negotiate contracts.

The problem is that once the public has been sent away, there's no way to know if the local board is following the rules. There have been cases of elected officials using that time away from the public to discuss locally controversial issues that don't fit within the limits allowed by law. Some boards use the fact that their lawyer is in the room to claim that they are "consulting" on legal matters while they discuss how to handle volatile issues.

Other states have recognized this loophole and adopted specific rules for when the local commission can shut the door and consult with its attorney. The law in Arizona says such a consultation in a closed meeting is allowed for the "discussion or consultation with the attorneys of the public body in order to consider its position and instruct its attorneys regarding the public body's position regarding contracts that are the subject of negotiations, in pending or contemplated litigation or in settlement discussions conducted in order to avoid or resolve litigation."

Unless an elected official comes forward to say that she believes the executive session she just sat through broke the law, there's no way of knowing what goes on behind closed doors. One idea that's been floating around South Dakota open government circles is having each executive session recorded. When a question arises about whether or not the board followed the law, the recording would be reviewed privately by a judge to determine if there were any violations.

So far, no one in the Legislature or state government wants to take on those fights. Many see the Legislature, top-heavy with Republicans, as a roadblock to significant change. That's odd, because Republicans should be the first ones calling for greater transparency in government.

These are the same lawmakers clamoring for more transparency in state credit card use after discovering the spendthrift ways of former Gov. Kristi Noem. It stands to reason that greater transparency in the workings of local governments would also be good for taxpayers.

Some lawmakers have said that cutting the budgets of counties and school districts would ease some of the complaints they're hearing about high property taxes. They should welcome a means for keeping an eye on those tax dollars by ensuring that there's a way to figure out what local officials are up to in executive session.

The state's open meetings law has its share of violations. To his credit, Jackley resurrected the Open Meetings Commission that had gone dormant for four years. Last November, that commission found local boards had violated the open meetings law in 10 of 12 cases.

Some violations are just a misinterpretation of the law. Others are blatant attempts to keep public business out of public view. To strengthen that law, the state needs leaders who aren't content to just reach for low-hanging fruit.

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

## The 5 biggest legal fights in the first year of Trump's mass deportation push

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — The first year of President Donald Trump's return to the White House was defined by clashes with the judiciary branch, as the president and his administration pushed forward with an aggressive immigration agenda.

In the past year, the Trump administration has aimed to drastically change immigration policy in the United States, including by stripping millions of immigrants of their legal status and attempting to redefine the constitutional right of birthright citizenship.

The moves have often run directly against the judiciary branch.

Federal judges briefly stalled the Trump administration's plans to deploy the National Guard in Portland, Oregon, for immigration enforcement. They also blocked the invocation of an archaic wartime law to expel immigrants from the country — a move that raised concerns, all the way up to the Supreme Court, about skirting the due process rights of immigrants.

In response, the president for the last year frequently battled with federal judges, such as in June, when the Justice Department sued all judges in federal court in Maryland over a two-day pause in deportations to ensure due process rights for immigrants.

Trump also fixated on certain judges that put his policies on hold, such as the District of Columbia's Chief Judge James Emanuel Boasberg.

Boasberg blocked the Trump administration from deporting certain immigrants under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798 and ordered the return of deportation flights that, despite his restraining order, still landed at a brutal prison in El Salvador.

Trump's singling out of Boasberg in late March, and calling for his impeachment, prompted a rare rebuke from conservative Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts.

But the Supreme Court has often handed wins to the Trump administration on numerous emergency appeals. The high court allowed for deportations of immigrants to countries they have no ties to, referred to as third-country removals, and allowed the use of race in immigration enforcement in Los Angeles.

The president has found himself at odds with a range of groups in response to his harsh immigration policy.

A group of Quakers sued the Department of Homeland Security after officials removed a so-called sensitive locations policy that limited immigration enforcement in places of worship.

The Trump administration also faced backlash in its attempt to quickly deport Guatemalan children in the middle of the night, where a Trump nominated judge said the Department of Justice's arguments for the move "crumbled like a house of cards."

Out of the dozens of lawsuits against the Trump administration, here are the five most significant court cases related to the president's immigration policies:

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 17 of 62

## Alien Enemies Act

Last March, two deportation planes carrying immigrants removed under an 18th-century wartime law were ordered to return to the U.S. by Boasberg, chief judge for the District Court for the District of Columbia.

But the planes still landed in El Salvador, and 137 Venezuelan men were sent to a brutal prison known as CECOT after Trump invoked the Alien Enemies Act of 1798. The wartime law would apply to any Venezuelan national 14 and older who was suspected of being a member of the Tren de Aragua gang.

Boasberg then spent months probing whether Trump officials defied his order to turn the planes around. Last month, he concluded that the deportations were illegal and carried out in defiance of his order.

The 137 Venezuelan men were eventually released from CECOT last summer through a prisoner exchange. Boasberg determined that even though the men are no longer imprisoned, they still need to be afforded their due process rights and he ordered the Trump administration to propose a way to afford those due process rights.

In the latest major development, last month he directed the administration to create a plan on how to do that, such as providing some form of video interview before an immigration judge.

The Trump administration has argued because of the U.S. military operations to extract Venezuela's president from the country, the situation is fluid, and they cannot provide a timeline for complying with Boasberg's order from last month.

The Justice Department's most recent filing, from Jan. 12, objects to the court's order to facilitate remote due process hearings, and "given the current political instability in Venezuela, there is a serious risk of intentional interference with remote proceedings."

Secretary of State Marco Rubio also submitted a Jan. 12 declaration to the court, saying that "introducing the matter of the disposition of the 137 class members into these discussions at this time would risk material damage to U.S. foreign policy interests in Venezuela."

He added that the U.S. does not know where the 137 Venezuelan men are.

"Given the passage of time, the U.S. government does not know—nor does it have any way of knowing—the whereabouts of class members, including whether anyone has departed Venezuela or whether the regime subsequently took anyone back into custody," Rubio said.

## Kilmar Abrego Garcia

The wrongful deportation of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, a Salvadoran immigrant and longtime Maryland man, cast a national spotlight on the president's aggressive immigration crackdown.

Abrego Garcia's case has highlighted the Trump administration's appetite for mass deportations. The case started last March in the District Court of the District of Maryland, after Trump officials mistakenly removed Abrego Garcia to El Salvador, despite removal protections placed by an immigration judge in 2019 because it was likely Abrego Garcia would face violence if returned to his home country.

But in March, Abrego Garcia was placed on a plane, along with Venezuelans removed under the Alien Enemies Act, to the brutal El Salvador mega-prison known as CECOT.

Federal Judge Paula Xinis ordered the Trump administration to facilitate his return, but the Trump administration took the issue all the way to the Supreme Court, arguing that it could not force another government to comply with the U.S.

The Supreme Court sided with Abrego Garcia, but stopped short of ordering his return.

Abrego Garcia was brought back to the U.S. several months later to face a criminal indictment in Tennessee over allegations of human smuggling. He has pleaded not guilty to those charges, and another federal judge has found cause that the Justice Department brought the indictment in a vindictive move against Abrego Garcia.

Since his return, Abrego Garcia has detailed psychological and physical torture he experienced at CECOT. The Trump administration has also tried to remove him to a country to which he has no ties because of the 2019 removal protections.

Trump officials re-detained Abrego Garcia and have tried to remove him to the African nations of Eswatini, Ghana, Uganda and Liberia, despite Costa Rica's willingness to accept Abrego Garcia as a refugee

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 18 of 62

and his willingness to go.

For that reason, Xinis ordered Abrego Garcia's release from an ICE facility in Pennsylvania and barred the Trump administration from re-detaining him.

She is currently overseeing Abrego Garcia's challenge to his detention on the grounds that the Trump administration is using his imprisonment as punishment rather than for the purpose of removal.

A Jan. 14 hearing was the most recent development in Abrego Garcia's case.

There, Xinis briefly conferred with his lawyers and Department of Justice attorneys regarding the timing of a final order of removal for Abrego Garcia was issued — the question was whether it was in 2019 or January 2025.

The timing of the order of removal could determine whether the Trump administration can re-detain Abrego Garcia for removal. Xinis in December ordered Abrego Garcia's release, because she determined the Trump administration was unlawfully detaining him and said ICE failed repeatedly to show a final order of removal existed.

Xinis said she plans to make a final decision in Abrego Garcia's case by Feb. 12.

## Birthright Citizenship

One of Trump's first executive orders he signed on Inauguration Day was ending the constitutional right to birthright citizenship.

Under birthright citizenship, all children born in the United States are considered citizens, regardless of their parents' legal status. There is a small carve-out for the children born of diplomats.

If birthright citizenship were to be eliminated, more than 250,000 children born each year would not be granted U.S. citizenship and it would effectively create a class of 2.7 million stateless people by 2045, according to a recent study by the think tank the Migration Policy Institute.

In response to Trump's executive order, multiple lawsuits were filed and lower courts across the country have granted preliminary injunctions against the order.

One of the challenges to birthright citizenship, brought by Democratic attorneys general, made its way to the Supreme Court, but the Trump administration asked the justices to weigh in on the issue of nationwide injunctions issued by lower courts, rather than the merits of birthright citizenship.

The justices decided on an order that limited nationwide injunctions, such as class action suits.

The merits of birthright citizenship are now before the Supreme Court, which is expected to hear oral arguments in February.

That birthright citizenship case is *Barbara v. Trump*, which stems from a case in New Hampshire. A federal judge issued a preliminary injunction to bar the executive order from taking effect against a class of babies born on or after Feb. 20, 2025. Those children would have been denied citizenship under the president's executive order.

## Lawmakers' Access to ICE Facilities

As the Trump administration continues with aggressive immigration enforcement and detention, one of the few tools Democrats have, as the minority party, is oversight of Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilities.

More than 60,000 immigrants are detained across various ICE facilities in the country, and Democrats argue they need access to conduct oversight at the facilities. Under a 2019 appropriations law, any lawmaker can carry out an unannounced visit at a federal facility that holds immigrants.

But after several Democrats were denied access to ICE facilities in July, due to a policy instituted by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem that required seven days notice, a dozen House Democrats sued.

Last month, a federal judge granted the lawmakers' request to stay the new policy by Noem. But after Minnesota lawmakers said they were denied an oversight visit to an ICE facility following a deadly shooting by an immigration officer in Minneapolis, Democrats were back in court Jan. 14.

Noem required a seven-day notice, nearly identical to the policy that initially prompted the suit from

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 19 of 62

Democrats last year.

The federal judge handling the case, Jia Cobb, is probing whether the Trump administration has violated her court order.

Democrats who sued include: Joe Neguse of Colorado, Adriano Espaillat of New York, Jamie Raskin of Maryland, Robert Garcia of California, J. Luis Correa of California, Jason Crow of Colorado, Veronica Escobar of Texas, Dan Goldman of New York, Jimmy Gomez of California, Raul Ruiz of California, Bennie Thompson of Mississippi and Norma Torres of California.

## **Expanded Use of Expedited Removal**

A pillar of the Trump administration's mass deportation campaign is the expanded use of expedited removal. The Trump policy allows the removal of immigrants through the interior of the country without an appearance before an immigration judge.

In March, immigration advocacy groups sued the Trump administration over the policy, arguing it stripped due process rights of immigrants.

In August, the District Court for the District of Columbia issued a stay in the policy, temporarily blocking the Trump administration from using it. The Department of Justice appealed, and in September a panel of appellate judges denied the Trump administration's request to lift the lower courts' stay.

Most recently, in December, the Trump administration defended the merits of its fast-track deportation policy before a panel of judges in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. The Department of Justice argued that immigrants who have been in the country for less than two years without legal authorization are not guaranteed due process.

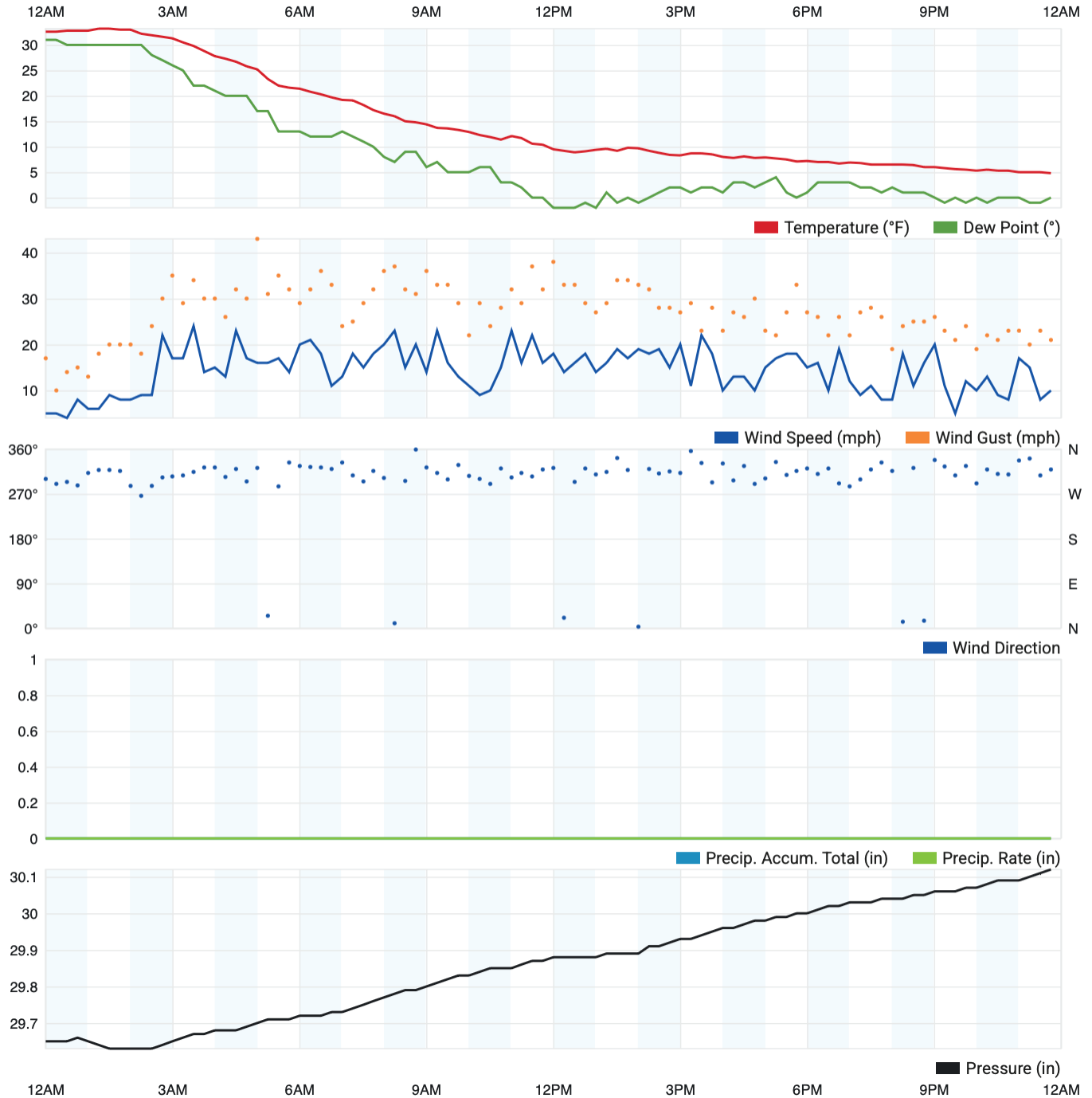
*Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 20 of 62

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

January 16, 2026



# Broton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 21 of 62

Cold ...

Today



High: 10 °F

Partly Sunny and Blustery then Partly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 5 °F↑

Chance Snow

Wind Advisory

Sunday



High: 22 °F↓

Windy. Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy

Sunday Night



Low: -3 °F

Partly Cloudy and Blustery then Partly Cloudy

M.L.King Day



High: 11 °F

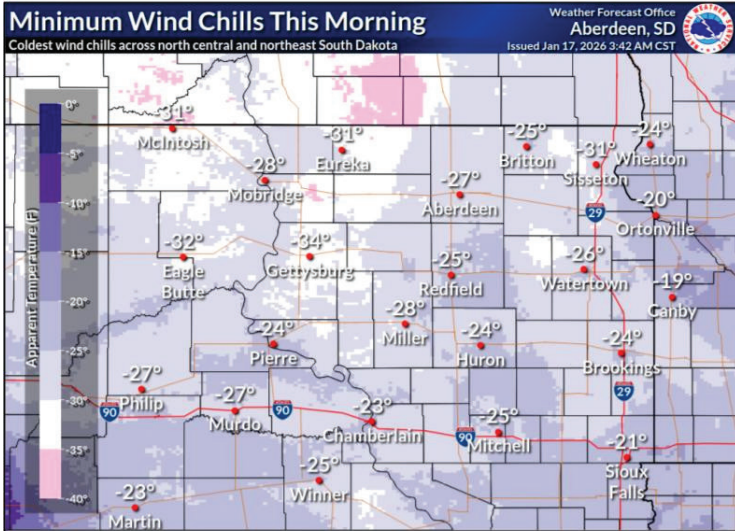
Mostly Sunny



## Cold Temperatures Today

January 17, 2026  
5:31 AM

Afternoon Wind Chill values in the -5°F to -15°F range



	Temperature Forecast (°F)																	
	1/17																	
	Sat																	
	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm	10pm	11pm
Aberdeen	-1	-1	0	1	1	2	3	5	6	7	9	7	6	6	6	7	8	9
Britton	-2	-2	-1	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	4	2	2	3	3	4	7
Clark	-4	-3	-1	0	-1	-1	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	2	3	3	5	
Eagle Butte	-6	-5	-3	-2	-1	1	3	7	10	12	18	13	12	13	13	14	16	19
Ellendale	-3	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	4	5	6	8	6	4	5	5	6	6	9
Eureka	-2	-3	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	3	4	6	10	6	6	5	6	8	9	12
Gettysburg	-7	-6	-4	-3	-2	-1	-1	3	4	5	9	6	5	6	6	7	9	12
Kennebec	-1	-1	0	2	2	3	4	7	9	10	12	11	9	9	9	10	13	
McIntosh	-6	-6	-5	-5	-4	-2	0	6	9	12	18	13	12	13	13	15	16	21
Milbank	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	4	4	5	6	4	3	2	3	3	4	5
Miller	-3	-2	0	1	2	2	3	5	6	7	10	7	5	5	6	7	8	11
Mobridge	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	3	6	8	9	14	10	10	9	10	11	12	15
Murdo	-3	-3	-1	-1	0	1	3	8	10	12	15	13	12	11	11	12	14	18
Pierre	1	1	2	2	4	4	6	9	10	12	15	13	11	11	12	12	14	16
Redfield	0	0	1	2	2	2	3	5	6	6	8	7	6	5	6	6	7	9
Sisseton	-3	-2	0	0	1	2	2	3	3	4	6	3	2	2	2	3	4	7
Watertown	-2	-2	-1	0	-1	-1	1	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	4
Webster	-4	-3	-2	-1	-1	-1	0	0	2	2	4	2	0	0	1	1	2	5
Wheaton	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	4	3	1	1	1	1	2	4

- **Temperatures** won't recover much today as the core of the arctic air mass remains in place. **Gusty Northwest Winds** will be slow to diminish through the day
- **Lingering Flurries** and **Patchy Blowing Snow** Possible

Temperatures will remain well below normal today as the core of the arctic air mass remains in place. Gusty northwest winds will continue through the day leading to wind chill values through the morning between 25-35 below zero. Winds slowly diminish during the afternoon with improving wind chill values. With the new snowfall on the ground in some areas, patchy blowing snow will remain a possibility into the early afternoon

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 22 of 62

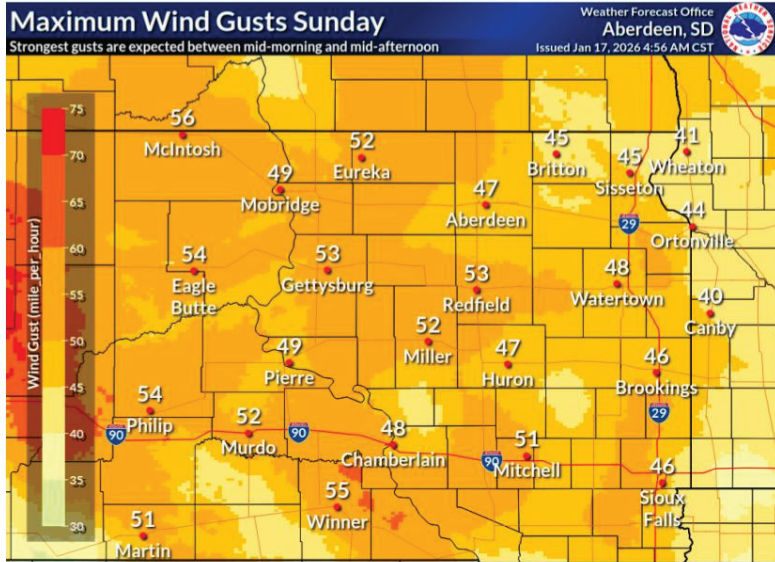


## Strong Winds Return Sunday

January 17, 2026

5:39 AM

NW Winds of 25-40 mph with gusts up to 60 mph possible



### Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	1/18 Sun								1/19 Mon
	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am
<b>Aberdeen</b>	24	30	38	46	47	46	37	30	23
<b>Britton</b>	28	28	33	44	45	43	38	31	24
<b>Clark</b>	24	28	36	45	51	51	40	33	28
<b>Eagle Butte</b>	38	46	52	54	54	53	40	35	28
<b>Ellendale</b>	31	36	45	51	52	49	38	32	26
<b>Eureka</b>	32	41	47	52	52	51	38	32	26
<b>Gettysburg</b>	29	39	46	52	53	51	37	32	25
<b>Kennebec</b>	25	40	47	54	58	55	40	32	25
<b>McIntosh</b>	40	48	53	55	56	55	40	33	26
<b>Milbank</b>	17	21	30	41	47	47	39	33	28
<b>Miller</b>	25	37	44	49	52	51	37	32	26
<b>Mobridge</b>	32	40	46	49	49	46	36	31	24
<b>Murdo</b>	30	43	47	52	52	49	37	30	24
<b>Pierre</b>	22	37	44	47	49	48	36	29	20
<b>Redfield</b>	22	32	40	49	53	52	38	32	26
<b>Sisseton</b>	23	26	35	40	45	45	40	35	28
<b>Watertown</b>	22	28	36	45	48	48	40	35	28
<b>Webster</b>	24	29	35	44	46	46	40	35	28
<b>Wheaton</b>	17	20	26	38	40	41	38	35	28

- Strong winds will combine with a 20-30 percent chance of light snow leading to **blowing snow** and **reduced visibilities**

Strong northwest winds will return on Sunday as another clipper like system moves through the region. The strongest winds will be possible between mid morning and mid afternoon where gusts will range between 45 mph to near 60 mph. There will be a 20-30 percent chance of light snow and this combined with the strong winds will bring another bout of blowing snow and reduced visibilities to the area.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 23 of 62

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 33 °F at 1:19 AM

Low Temp: 5 °F at 11:23 PM

Wind: 43 mph at 4:56 AM

Precip: : 0.00

## Today's Info

Record High: 48 in 1947

Record Low: -32 in 1997

Average High: 23

Average Low: 1

Average Precip in Jan.: 0.33

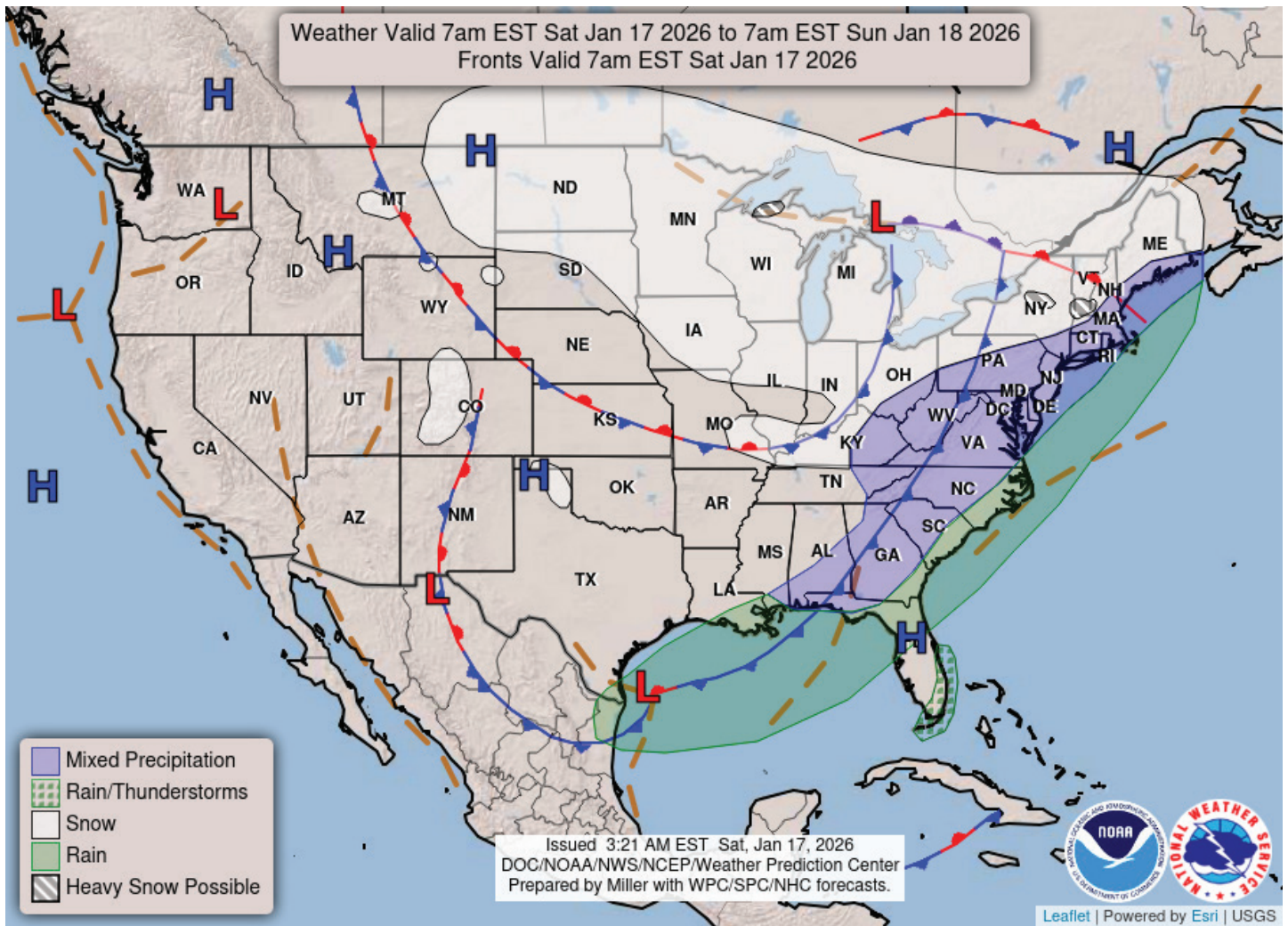
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.33

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:17 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:06 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 24 of 62

## Today in Weather History

January 17, 1996: Two to as much as fifteen inches of snow, high winds from 40 to 60 mph, and cold arctic air resulted in blizzard conditions and extreme wind chills from 40 below to 70 below from the mid-morning of the 17th to the early evening of the 18th. Most schools, federal, state, and county offices were closed. Various activities are also canceled. Travel was challenging due to the near-zero visibility, with some vehicles stranded. Highway 12 from Webster to the Minnesota border and Interstate-29 closed on the 18th. Hundreds of people were stranded, with some people stranded in their vehicles. Some pheasants and wildlife were lost due to the snow-packed so hard they could not dig out. Some snowfall amounts include; 2 inches at Highmore, 3 inches at Pierre and 9NE Reliance, 5 inches at Mobridge, Presho, Roscoe, 10SE Stephan, and Ree Heights, 6 inches at Tulare, 7 inches 12W Tulare and 5E 3S Faulkton, 8 inches 11E 2S Hosmer and at Doland, 9 inches at Mellette, Aberdeen, and Redfield, and 10 inches at Eureka and Britton, and 12 inches at Wilmot, Rosholt, and Ortonville, Minnesota. Fifteen inches occurred at Wheaton, Clinton, and Graceville. The extreme wind chills and some blowing snow continued across central and north-central South Dakota into the early evening of the 18th.

January 17, 2012: Below are some very rare lake effect waterspouts. Chris Westcott took these pictures in the vicinity of Lower Brule. The waterspouts form from the instability created when the air associated with the Missouri River's relatively warm open waters interacts with the frigid air located just above the surface. These types of waterspouts have a very short lifespan and dissipate just as quickly as they form. Chris saw six of them at one time.

1490: On the night of January 17 through the 18th, a "certain fine rain, which froze whilst it fell, and made icicles upon trees" occurred in Florence, Italy. "There was such a quantity of it that the weight bowed the trees down to the ground and broke the branches." The above is from "A Florentine Diary from 1450 to 1516" by Landucci, Luca.

1706: Scientist, inventor, and founding father Benjamin Franklin was born on this day. He is credited with discovering electricity, inventing lightning rods, and mapping the Gulf Stream. After the Icelandic volcanic eruption of Laki in 1783 and the subsequent harsh winter of Europe in 1784, Franklin connected the causal nature of these two events.

1837: The green flash was first documented by Captain Back of the H. M. S. Terror while in the Arctic during 1836-1837. He wrote: "In the morning, however, at a quarter before ten o'clock while standing on an ice hummock about 17 feet high, and looking toward the east, I had observed the upper limb of the sun, as it filled a triangular cleft on the ridge of the headland, of the most brilliant emerald color, a phenomenon which I had not witnessed before in these regions."

1916: Reno, Nevada, received 22.5 inches of snow, its greatest 1-day snowfall total ever. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the Reno Gazette-Journal.

1982: Strong chinook winds caused severe wind damage in Boulder, Colorado. A wind gust of 118 mph was recorded on the roof of the Environmental Research Laboratories (ERL), and a wind gust of 137 mph was measured atop the roof of the NCAR building (in the southwest part of the city, 600 feet above ground level). The high winds uprooted trees and damaged roofs.

1994: On January 17, 1994, at 4:31 a.m. PST, a magnitude 6.7 earthquake centered in Northridge struck the southern California area. Known as the Northridge Earthquake, it caused at least 57 fatalities (a subsequent study put the death toll at 72, including heart attacks) and injured thousands. Click [HERE](#) for more information from the California Department of Conservation.

1999: An F4 tornado tracked across southern Jacksonville, Tennessee, damaging more than 200 homes and 55 buses. The storm killed six people and injured 106.

2016: A potent storm system developed and tracked quickly eastward across the Gulf of America and toward Florida on Saturday, January 16, 2016. The impacts from this storm reached west-central and southwest Florida during the early morning hours of Sunday, January 17, 2016. A squall line of strong to severe thunderstorms, just ahead of the cold front, produced periodic wind damage and isolated tornadoes as it quickly moved ashore across west-central and southwest Florida and pushed across the state. Two EF2 tornadoes touched down, one near Siesta Key in Sarasota County and the other near Duette in Manatee County. Two adults were killed and four others injured when their mobile home rolled over and was destroyed by the tornado in Manatee County.

## The Benefits of Wisdom

**God generously gives wisdom—all we have to do is ask.**

James 1:5-8: 5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord,

8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

Wisdom is one of the most important tools in times of trial. And James 1:5 says God will give it generously when we ask.

However, there are times when wisdom doesn't feel easy to acquire—for example, when God allows a test in our life after we've asked Him to make us wise. He may permit a challenge because temptations and difficulty can help us discover our level of devotion to Him. When we go through a time of testing, we learn whether we're willing to say, "God, I don't like this or understand it, but I'm going to obey You no matter what." It's hard to know for sure whether we would respond this way unless we go through difficulties that put our faith to the proof.

In fact, we grow in our devotion to the Lord by making wise decisions despite opposition and by obeying regardless of temptation or inconvenience. Such challenges are similar to a refiner's fire: They sanctify and purify us (Job 23:10). These situations not only reveal what God is doing in us; they can also point out ways we might be trying to ignore the Holy Spirit's guidance.

Allowing God to do His work positions us to receive blessings, see His power, and feel His love in new ways. This is not only a way to become wise; it's also the pathway to great joy.

*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

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 26 of 62

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# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 27 of 62



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.16.26

2 22 33 42 67 1

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$250,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.14.26

1 10 23 33 35 6

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$12,980,000**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 5 Mins 33  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.16.26

4 6 9 14 17 17

TOP PRIZE:

**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 20 Mins 33  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.14.26

2 13 25 30 31

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$197,000**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 20 Mins 33  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.14.26

6 20 28 47 48 3

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 49 Mins 34  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
01.14.26

6 24 39 43 51 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$179,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 49 Mins 34  
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 28 of 62

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

### **BOYS PREP BASKETBALL**

Alcester-Hudson 73, Flandreau Indian 54  
Garretson 55, Colman-Egan 48  
Gregory 69, Burke 41  
Lead-Deadwood 56, Hot Springs 38  
Lower Brule 57, Kimball-White Lake 31  
Mitchell 53, Brookings 39  
Scotland/Menno 61, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 54  
Sioux Falls Christian 82, Hill City 44  
Sioux Falls Jefferson 78, Sioux Falls Washington 73  
Sioux Falls Lincoln 82, Huron 57  
Sioux Falls Lutheran 66, Chester 49  
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 82, Tea 55  
Sioux Valley 52, McCook Central-Montrose 40  
Upton, Wyo. 55, Edgemont 22  
Watertown 59, Yankton 51  
West Central 46, St Thomas More 42  
281 Conference Tournament=  
First Round=  
Highmore-Harold 50, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 33  
Iroquois-Lake Preston 73, James Valley Christian School 60  
Wessington Springs 65, Sunshine Bible Academy 42  
Wolsey-Wessington 55, Hitchcock-Tulare 38  
Jones County Invitational Tournament=  
Bennett County 52, Philip 19  
Kadoka 70, Crazy Horse 43  
Lyman 70, Jones County 27  
Stanley County 42, White River 41  
West River Tournament=  
New Underwood 59, Faith 55, OT  
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=  
Deuel vs. Clark-Willow Lake, ppd.  
Douglas vs. Spearfish, ppd.  
Ipswich vs. Waubay/Summit, ppd. to Jan 24th.  
Mahpiya Lúta Red Cloud vs. Custer, ppd.

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

### **GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL=**

Arlington 66, Elkton-Lake Benton 37  
Bennett County 68, Upton, Wyo. 25  
Colman-Egan 58, Garretson 9  
Dell Rapids St Mary's 65, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 22  
Flandreau 60, Madison 43  
Hot Springs 49, Edgemont 15  
Huron 72, Sioux Falls Lincoln 27

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 29 of 62

Mitchell 50, Brookings 20  
Rock Valley, Iowa 94, Canton 64  
Scotland/Menno 37, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 34  
Sioux Falls Christian 65, Hill City 32  
Sioux Falls Washington 64, Sioux Falls Jefferson 63  
West Central 51, St Thomas More 36  
Yankton 59, Watertown 46  
POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS=  
Deuel vs. Clark-Willow Lake, ppd.  
Douglas vs. Spearfish, ppd.  
Herreid-Selby vs. Aberdeen Christian, ppd.  
Ipswich vs. Waubay/Summit, ppd. to Jan 24th.  
Wakpala vs. Little Wound, ppd.

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

## US congressional delegation seeks to reassure Denmark and Greenland after Trump's threats

By DANIEL NIEMANN Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — A bipartisan U.S. congressional delegation on Saturday sought to reassure Denmark and Greenland of their support following President Donald Trump's threat to punish countries with tariffs if they don't back the U.S. taking over the strategic Arctic island.

Delegation leader Sen. Chris Coons, a Delaware Democrat, said the current rhetoric around Greenland is causing concern across the Danish kingdom. He said he wants to de-escalate the situation.

"I hope that the people of the Kingdom of Denmark do not abandon their faith in the American people," Coons said in Copenhagen, adding that the U.S. has respect for Denmark and NATO "for all we've done together."

Meanwhile, thousands of people marched through Copenhagen, many of them carrying Greenland's flag, on Saturday afternoon in support of the self-governing island. Others held signs with slogans like "Make America Smart Again" and "Hands Off."

"This is important for the whole world," Danish protester Elise Riechie told The Associated Press as she held Danish and Greenlandic flags. "There are many small countries. None of them are for sale."

Other rallies were planned in Nuuk, the Greenlandic capital, and elsewhere in the Danish kingdom.

Coons' comments contrasted with that emanating from the White House. Trump has sought to justify his calls for a U.S. takeover by repeatedly claiming that China and Russia have their own designs on Greenland, which holds vast untapped reserves of critical minerals. The White House hasn't ruled out taking the territory by force.

"There are no current security threats to Greenland," Coons said.

Trump for months has insisted that the U.S. should control Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark, and said earlier this week that anything less than the Arctic island being in U.S. hands would be "unacceptable."

During an unrelated event at the White House about rural health care, he recounted Friday how he had threatened European allies with tariffs on pharmaceuticals.

"I may do that for Greenland, too," Trump said. "I may put a tariff on countries if they don't go along with Greenland, because we need Greenland for national security. So I may do that," he said.

He had not previously mentioned using tariffs to try to force the issue.

Earlier this week, the foreign ministers of Denmark and Greenland met in Washington with U.S. Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

That encounter didn't resolve the deep differences, but did produce an agreement to set up a working

group — on whose purpose Denmark and the White House then offered sharply diverging public views. European leaders have insisted it is only for Denmark and Greenland to decide on matters concerning the territory, and Denmark said this week that it was increasing its military presence in Greenland in cooperation with allies.

"There is almost no better ally to the United States than Denmark," Coons said. "If we do things that cause Danes to question whether we can be counted on as a NATO ally, why would any other country seek to be our ally or believe in our representations?"

## Family of Iranian protester searched for her body in a pile of corpses and buried her on a roadside

By SARAH EL DEEB and JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Robina Aminian's family believes the college student was killed by a bullet fired by Iranian security forces straight into the back of her head.

But her death in the nationwide protests that challenged the Islamic Republic's theocracy was only the start of the family's agony. In the aftermath of the killing, Aminian's mother had to look through piles of bloodied corpses to find her daughter's body. Then the family raced to escape authorities who might demand payment to release the body and buried her hastily in an unmarked roadside pit.

Their odyssey reflects the trail of anguish left by Iran's deadly assault on protesters, which has led to desperate relatives searching overflowing morgues across the country. For families, the loss of loved ones is compounded by the difficulty they face in grieving and giving the dead a dignified sendoff.

More than a week after she was killed, Aminian's relatives say they still have not held a funeral for the young Kurdish woman who was studying fashion in Tehran, the capital.

"She wanted a bright future for herself," her uncle, Nezar Minoei, said from Oslo. "But unfortunately, the future has been stolen from her."

Details of death are unclear

Details about what happened to Aminian are scant. After her death, her mother called relatives outside the country, recounting what she learned from Aminian's friends, who were present when she was killed.

The Associated Press spoke to three relatives, who all described similar details from the mother's account. An Oslo-based human rights organization, Iran Human Rights, released a report about her killing, citing witness testimony. They verified there was a shooting on the night of Jan. 8 around the campus of the Shariati Technical and Vocational College for Girls.

With communications greatly limited in Iran, the AP has been unable to independently confirm the family's account or the wounds to Aminian's body or to verify its location. The Iranian mission to the United Nations in New York did not respond to questions about the death.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which relies on a network of activists on the ground and has been accurate during previous unrest in Iran, said at least 3,090 people have been killed. Iran's government has not offered any overall casualties figures.

Friends called mother to report daughter's shooting

Everything that Aminian's relatives abroad know about her death comes from a brief phone call her mother was able to make Jan. 10 to relatives in Oslo.

They say the mother, Amina Norei, got a call Jan. 8 from Aminian's friends, who said she had been gunned down by security forces. The friends told Norei they were walking away from campus in Tehran after dark when they saw a protest and joined in.

A bullet fired by security forces struck the back of Aminian's head, her friends told the mother.

Videos shared on social media, verified by the AP, and statements by rights groups, doctors and survivors, describe Iranian agents using rifles and shotguns to disperse protesters across the country.

Iran's theocracy, which has used violence in previous rounds of unrest, increasingly refers to demonstrators as "terrorists." Authorities allege some demonstrators were armed, but there are no allegations that anyone was armed in Aminian's vicinity at the time of her death.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 31 of 62

Aminian's relatives said she was not an activist or involved in politics.

Mother 'looked through so many beautiful faces'

Aminian's mother was in Kermanshah, a western city in the Kurdish region of Iran nearly 460 kilometers (230 miles) from Tehran, when she learned about her daughter's death.

She rushed to Tehran in the middle of the night, she told family. Norei recalled to them how she began unzipping body bag after body bag, looking for Aminian.

"She looked through so many beautiful faces, trying to find her girl," Hali Norei, Amnian's aunt, said from Oslo. "And what is so horrifying for me is imagining what my sister feels as she searches for her daughter."

Many other Iranian families are searching overflowing morgues for loved ones, according to rights group Amnesty International. Bodies have piled up in trucks, freight containers and warehouses, the group said.

When Norei found her daughter, she was joined by her husband, daughter and son, and the family rushed out with the body, fearing authorities would block their way and insist on a payment to release the corpse, according to Minoei, Aminian's uncle.

"She actually stole the body," Minoei said.

In a statement to the AP, the New York City-based Center for Human Rights in Iran said it has received multiple accounts of intelligence forces demanding money from families in exchange for the return of protesters' bodies. The group called the levies "a well-known, standard practice" in Iran to scare families into not publicly mourning their dead.

Other families reported to the center that they were forced to sign papers falsely declaring that their dead relatives were members of the security forces in order to retrieve the bodies.

Iranian state television recently aired a statement saying mortuary and burial services were free, after repeated allegations of the practice.

Minoei said the mother told him that she and her oldest daughter spent the seven-hour ride back to Kermanshah clutching the body in the backseat, blood and tears staining their clothes. When they got home, the mother told him, security forces had surrounded their house.

Amina Norei told her family they had only one option: They drove out of town and dug a pit on the side of the road. They placed the body inside and drove away. Aminian is still believed to be buried there, in an unmarked grave.

Relatives said they have not heard from Amina Norei or other relatives in Iran since Sunday.

## Iran's leader calls Trump a 'criminal' for backing protests and blames demonstrators for deaths

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Saturday branded U.S. President Donald Trump a "criminal" for supporting protesters in Iran, and blamed demonstrators for causing thousands of deaths.

In a speech broadcast by state television, Khamenei said the protests had left "several thousand" people dead — the first indication from an Iranian leader of the extent of the casualties from the wave of protests that began Dec. 28 and led to a bloody crackdown.

"In this revolt, the U.S. president made remarks in person, encouraged seditious people to go ahead and said: 'We do support you, we do support you militarily,'" said Khamenei, who has final say on all state matters. He reiterated an accusation that the U.S. seeks domination over Iran's economic and political resources.

"We do consider the U.S. president a criminal, because of casualties and damages, because of accusations against the Iranian nation," he said. He described the protesters as "foot soldiers" of the United States and said they had destroyed mosques and educational centers. "Through hurting people, they killed several thousand of them," he said.

Trump had sounded a conciliatory tone

His comments come a day after Trump sounded a conciliatory tone, saying that "Iran canceled the

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 32 of 62

hanging of over 800 people," and adding that "I greatly respect the fact that they canceled." He did not clarify who he spoke to in Iran to confirm the state of any planned executions. His comments were a sign he may be backing away from a military strike.

In recent days, Trump had told protesting Iranians that "help is on the way" and that his administration would "act accordingly" if the killing of demonstrators continued or if Iranian authorities executed detained protesters.

In his speech, Khamenei said rioters were armed with live ammunition that was imported from abroad, without naming any countries.

"We do not plan, we do not take the country toward war. But we do not release domestic offenders, worse than domestic offenders, there are international offenders. We do not let them alone either," he said, and urged officials to pursue the cases.

An uneasy calm

Iran has returned to an uneasy calm after harsh repression of protests that began Dec. 28 over Iran's ailing economy. The crackdown has left at least 3,090 people dead, according to the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, exceeding that of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades and recalling the chaos surrounding the 1979 revolution.

The agency has been accurate throughout the years of demonstrations, relying on a network of activists inside Iran that confirms all reported fatalities. The AP has been unable to independently confirm the toll.

Iranian officials have repeatedly accused the United States and Israel of fomenting unrest in the country. On Friday, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, in a phone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin, accused the U.S. and Israel of meddling in the unrest.

Reports of limited internet access briefly restored

There have been no signs of protests for days in Tehran, where shopping and street life have returned to outward normality, and Iranian state media has not reported on any new unrest.

During the unrest, authorities blocked all internet access on Jan. 8. On Saturday, text messaging and very limited internet services began functioning again briefly in parts of Iran, witnesses said.

Cellphone text messaging began operating overnight, while users were able to access local websites through a domestic internet service. Some also reported limited access to international internet services via use of a virtual private network, or VPN.

The extent of access and what was behind it wasn't immediately. It was possible that officials were turning on some systems for the start of the Iranian working week, as the outage has affected businesses, particularly banks in the country trying to handle transactions.

Internet traffic monitoring service Cloudflare and internet access advocacy group NetBlocks reported very slight increases in connectivity Saturday morning, while Iran's semi-official Mehr news agency also reported limited internet access. It did not offer an explanation.

Exiled Iranian royal calls for further protests

There have been no signs of protests for days in Tehran, where shopping and street life have returned to outward normality. A call by Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi for protesters to take to the streets again from Saturday to Monday did not appear to have been heeded by Saturday afternoon.

Pahlavi, whose father was overthrown by Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, enjoys support from die-hard monarchists in the diaspora but has struggled to gain wider appeal within Iran. However, that has not stopped him from presenting himself as the transitional leader of Iran if the government were to fall.

## **ICE says Cuban immigrant died while attempting suicide. A witness says guards pinned and choked him**

By MICHAEL BIESECKER, CEDAR ATTANASIO and RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A Cuban immigrant died in a Texas immigration detention facility earlier this month during an altercation with guards, and the local medical examiner has indicated that his death will likely

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 33 of 62

be classified as a homicide.

The federal government has provided a differing account surrounding the Jan. 3 death of Geraldo Lunas Campos, saying the detainee was attempting suicide and staff tried to save him.

A witness told The Associated Press that Lunas Campos died after he was handcuffed, tackled by guards and placed in a chokehold until he lost consciousness. The immigrant's family was told by the El Paso County Medical Examiner's Office on Wednesday that a preliminary autopsy report said the death was a homicide resulting from asphyxia from chest and neck compression, according to a recording of the call reviewed by the AP.

The death and conflicting accounts have intensified scrutiny into the conditions of immigration jails at a time when the government has been rounding up immigrants in large numbers around the country and detaining them at facilities like the one in El Paso where Lunas Campos died.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is legally required to issue public notification of detainee deaths. Last week, it said Lunas Campos, a 55-year-old father of four and registered sex offender, had died at Camp East Montana, but made no mention of him being involved in an altercation with staff immediately before his death.

In response to questions from the AP, the Department of Homeland Security, which includes ICE, on Thursday amended its account of Lunas Campos' death, saying he tried to kill himself.

"Campos violently resisted the security staff and continued to attempt to take his life," DHS spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said. "During the ensuing struggle, Campos stopped breathing and lost consciousness."

In an interview before DHS updated its account, detainee Santos Jesús Flores, 47, from El Salvador, said he witnessed the incident through the window of his cell in the special housing unit, where detainees are held in isolation for disciplinary infractions.

"He didn't want to enter the cell where they were going to put him," Flores told the AP on Thursday, speaking in Spanish from a phone in the facility. "The last thing he said was that he couldn't breathe."

Among the first sent to Camp Montana East

Camp Montana East is a sprawling tent facility hastily constructed in the desert on the grounds of Fort Bliss, an Army base. The AP reported in August that the \$1.2 billion facility, expected to become the largest detention facility in the United States, was being built and operated by a private contractor headquartered in a single-family home in Richmond, Virginia. The company, Acquisition Logistics LLC, had no prior experience running a corrections facility.

It was not immediately clear whether the guards present when Lunas Campos died were government employees or those of the private contractor. Emails seeking comment on Thursday from Acquisition Logistics executives received no response.

Lunas Campos was among the first detainees sent to Camp Montana East, arriving in September after ICE arrested him in Rochester, New York, where he lived for more than two decades. He was legally admitted to the U.S. in 1996, part of a wave of Cuban immigrants seeking to reach Florida by boat.

ICE said he was picked up in July as part of a planned immigration enforcement operation due to criminal convictions that made him eligible for removal.

New York court records show Lunas Campos was convicted in 2003 of sexual contact with an individual under 11, a felony for which he was sentenced to one year in jail and placed on the state's sex offender registry.

Lunas Campos was also sentenced to five years in prison and three years of supervision in 2009 after being convicted of attempting to sell a controlled substance, according to the New York corrections records. He completed the sentence in January 2017.

Lunas Campos' adult daughter said the child sexual abuse accusation was false, made as part of a contentious custody battle.

"My father was not a child molester," said Kary Lunas, 25. "He was a good dad. He was a human being."

Conflicting accounts

On the day he died, according to ICE, Lunas Campos became disruptive while in line for medication and refused to return to his assigned dorm. He was then taken to the segregation block.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 34 of 62

"While in segregation, staff observed him in distress and contacted on-site medical personnel for assistance," the agency said in its Jan. 9 release. "Medical staff responded, initiated lifesaving measures, and requested emergency medical services."

Lunas Campos was pronounced dead after paramedics arrived.

Flores said that account omitted key details — Lunas Campos was already handcuffed when at least five guards pinned him to the floor, and at least one squeezed his arm around the detainee's neck.

Within about five minutes, Flores said, Lunas Campos was no longer moving.

"After he stopped breathing, they removed the handcuffs," Flores said.

Flores is not represented by a lawyer and said he has already consented to deportation to his home country. Though he acknowledged he was taking a risk by speaking to the AP, Flores said he wanted to highlight that "in this place, guards abuse people a lot."

He said multiple detainees in the unit witnessed the altercation, and security cameras there should have captured the events. Flores also said investigators had not interviewed him.

DHS did not respond to questions about whether Lunas Campos was handcuffed when they say he attempted suicide, or exactly how he had tried to kill himself.

"ICE takes seriously the health and safety of all those detained in our custody," McLaughlin said. "This is still an active investigation, and more details are forthcoming."

DHS wouldn't say whether other agencies were investigating. The El Paso medical examiner's office confirmed Thursday that it conducted an autopsy, but declined further comment.

A final determination of homicide by the medical examiner would typically be critical in determining whether any guards are held criminally or civilly liable. When such deaths are ruled accidental or something other than homicide, they are less likely to trigger criminal investigations, while civil wrongful death lawsuits become harder to prove.

The fact that Lunas Campos died on an Army base could also limit state and local officials' legal jurisdiction to investigate. An El Paso County District Attorney's Office spokesperson declined to comment Thursday on whether it was involved in an investigation.

The deaths of inmates and other detainees after officers hold them face down and put pressure on their backs and necks to restrain them have been a problem in law enforcement for decades. A 2024 AP investigation documented hundreds of deaths during police encounters in which people were restrained in a prone position. Many uttered "I can't breathe" before suffocating, according to scores of body camera and bystander videos. Authorities often attempt to shift the blame for such deaths to preexisting medical conditions or drug use.

Dr. Victor Weedn, a forensic pathologist who has studied prone restraint deaths, said the preliminary autopsy ruling of homicide indicates guards' actions caused Lunas Campos' death, but does not mean they intended to kill. He said the medical examiner's office could come under pressure to stop short of calling it a homicide, but will probably "stick to its guns."

"This probably passes the 'but for' test. 'But for' the actions of the officers, he would not have died. For us, that's generally a homicide," he said.

'I just want justice, and his body here'

Jeanette Pagan-Lopez, the mother of Lunas Campos' two youngest children, said the day after he died the medical examiner's office called to inform her that his body was at the county morgue. She immediately called ICE to find out what happened.

Pagan-Lopez, who lives in Rochester, said the assistant director of the El Paso ICE field office eventually called her back. She said the official told her the cause of death was still pending and that they were awaiting toxicology report results. He also told her the only way Lunas Campos' body could be returned to Rochester free of charge was if she consented to his being cremated, she said.

Pagan-Lopez declined and is now seeking help from family and friends to raise the money needed to ship his body home and pay for a funeral.

After failing to get details about the circumstances surrounding his death from ICE, Pagan-Lopez said

she got a call from a detainee at Camp Montana East who then put her in touch with Flores, who first told her about the altercation with guards.

Since then, she said she has repeatedly called ICE, but is no longer getting a response. Pagan-Lopez, who is a U.S. citizen, said she also twice called the FBI, where an agent took her information and then hung up.

Pagan-Lopez said she and Lunas Campos were together about 15 years before breaking up eight years ago. She described him as an attentive father who, until his detention, had worked in a minimum-wage job at a furniture store, the only employment she said he could find due to his criminal record.

She said that in the family's last phone call the week after Christmas, Lunas Campos talked to his kids about his expected deportation back to Cuba. He said he wanted them to visit the island, so that he could stay in their lives.

"He wasn't a bad guy," Pagan-Lopez said. "I just want justice, and his body here. That's all I want."

## Judge rules feds in Minneapolis immigration operation can't detain or tear gas peaceful protesters

By AUDREY McAVOY and STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Federal officers in the Minneapolis area participating in its largest recent U.S. immigration enforcement operation can't detain or tear gas peaceful protesters who aren't obstructing authorities, including when these people are observing the agents, a judge in Minnesota ruled Friday.

U.S. District Judge Kate Menendez's ruling addresses a case filed in December on behalf of six Minnesota activists. The six are among the thousands who have been observing the activities of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol officers enforcing the Trump administration's immigration crackdown in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area since last month.

Federal agents and demonstrators have repeatedly clashed since the crackdown began. The confrontations escalated after an immigration agent fatally shot Renee Good in the head on Jan. 7 as she drove away from a scene in Minneapolis, an incident that was captured on video from several angles. Agents have arrested or briefly detained many people in the Twin Cities.

The activists in the case are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota, which says government officers are violating the constitutional rights of Twin Cities residents.

After the ruling, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin issued a statement saying her agency was taking "appropriate and constitutional measures to uphold the rule of law and protect our officers and the public from dangerous rioters."

She said people have assaulted officers, vandalized their vehicles and federal property, and attempted to impede officers from doing their work.

"We remind the public that rioting is dangerous — obstructing law enforcement is a federal crime and assaulting law enforcement is a felony," McLaughlin said.

The ACLU didn't immediately respond to requests for comment Friday night.

The ruling prohibits the officers from detaining drivers and passengers in vehicles when there is no reasonable suspicion they are obstructing or interfering with the officers.

Safely following agents "at an appropriate distance does not, by itself, create reasonable suspicion to justify a vehicle stop," the ruling said.

Menendez said the agents would not be allowed to arrest people without probable cause or reasonable suspicion the person has committed a crime or was obstructing or interfering with the activities of officers.

Menendez is also presiding over a lawsuit filed Monday by the state of Minnesota and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul seeking to suspend the enforcement crackdown, and some of the legal issues are similar. She declined at a hearing Wednesday to grant the state's request for an immediate temporary restraining order in that case.

"What we need most of all right now is a pause. The temperature needs to be lowered," state Assistant Attorney General Brian Carter told her.

Menendez said the issues raised by the state and cities in that case are "enormously important." But she

said it raises high-level constitutional and other legal issues, and for some of those issues there are few on-point precedents. So she ordered both sides to file more briefs next week.

## Ukrainian delegation arrives in US for peace talks as Russia hammers energy sites

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Ukrainian delegation arrived in the United States for talks Saturday on a U.S.-led diplomatic push to end the nearly 4-year-old war as Russian attacks again took aim at Ukraine's power grid, cutting electricity and heating in freezing temperatures.

Kyrylo Budanov, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's chief of staff, said he arrived in the U.S. to discuss "the details of the peace agreement."

Writing on the Telegram messaging app, Budanov said he, together with Ukrainian negotiators Rustem Umerov and Davyd Arakhamia, would meet with U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff, President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner and U.S. Army Secretary Dan Driscoll.

Zelenskyy said Friday that the delegation would try to finalize with U.S. officials documents for a proposed peace settlement that relate to postwar security guarantees and economic recovery.

If American officials approve the proposals, the U.S. and Ukraine could sign the documents next week at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Zelenskyy said at a Kyiv news conference with Czech President Petr Pavel.

Trump plans to be in Davos, according to organizers.

Russia would still need to be consulted on the proposals.

Russia struck energy infrastructure in Ukraine's Kyiv and Odesa regions overnight into Saturday, the Ministry of Energy said. More than 20 settlements in the Kyiv region were left without power following the attacks, the ministry wrote on its official Telegram channel.

Russia has hammered Ukraine's power grid, especially in winter, throughout the war. It aims to weaken the Ukrainian will to resist in a strategy that Kyiv officials call "weaponizing winter."

Ukraine's new energy minister, Denys Shmyhal, said Friday that Russia had conducted 612 attacks on energy targets over last year. That barrage has intensified in recent months as nighttime temperatures plunge to minus 18 degrees Celsius (0 Fahrenheit).

Ukraine has introduced emergency measures, including temporarily easing curfew restrictions to allow people to go whenever they need to public heating centers set up by the authorities, Shmyhal said. He said hospitals, schools and other critical infrastructure remain the top priority for electricity and heat supplies.

Officials have instructed state energy companies Ukrzaliznytsia, Naftogaz and Ukroboronprom to urgently purchase imported electricity covering at least 50% of their own consumption, according to Shmyhal.

## Things to know about the High Seas Treaty as it takes effect

By ANNIKA HAMMERSCHLAG Associated Press

The world's first legally binding agreement to protect marine life in international waters took effect Saturday, marking a historic moment for ocean conservation after nearly two decades of negotiations.

The High Seas Treaty will govern nearly half the planet's surface – the vast ocean areas beyond any country's control. These waters face mounting threats from destructive fishing practices, shipping, plastic pollution, overfishing and potential deep sea mining, all compounded by climate change. The ocean absorbs carbon dioxide and produces oxygen, making its health critical for addressing the climate crisis.

The treaty entered into force 120 days after it reached the threshold of ratification by 60 countries in September. As of Friday, 83 countries had ratified it, including the recent addition of major maritime powers such as China and Japan.

The treaty creates the first framework for establishing Marine Protected Areas on the high seas, which make up about two-thirds of the world's ocean. Currently, only around 1% of these international waters are protected.

Immediate obligations for countries

From Saturday, ratifying countries must begin working together on ocean science and technology as well as help developing nations build capacity to participate in ocean governance. Companies planning activities that could harm marine life must conduct environmental impact assessments that meet the treaty's standards. Those conducting research on ocean organisms that could be used commercially, such as for new medicines, must notify other countries and share their findings.

Perhaps most significantly, countries must now promote the treaty's conservation goals when they participate in other international bodies that regulate ocean activities, such as regional fisheries organizations, the International Maritime Organization and the International Seabed Authority.

While key institutions like the treaty's secretariat and scientific body are still being developed, countries can begin preparing proposals for Marine Protected Areas immediately. Potential sites include the Emperor Seamounts in the North Pacific, the Sargasso Sea in the Atlantic and the Salas y Gomez and Nazca Ridges off South America.

Pressure to act quickly

Conservationists warn governments must act quickly to achieve the global goal of protecting 30% of the world's oceans by 2030 – a target scientists say is critical for ocean health. Because the high seas make up such a vast portion of the oceans, their protection is essential to reaching that goal.

"The marine protected areas under the treaty will only be as strong as the governments make them," said Megan Randles, global political lead for Greenpeace's Ocean Campaign. "We can't trust big fishing industry players to simply stop fishing in these critical ecosystems. We need governments to use the treaty to force their hands."

How those protected areas will actually be monitored and enforced is undecided. Countries are exploring various options, from satellite technology to coordinating patrols between multiple nations to using other UN agencies to help with oversight, said Rebecca Hubbard, director of the High Seas Alliance. Those details will be worked out as the first protected areas take shape.

Within a year, the treaty's first Conference of Parties will meet to decide key operational details, from budgets to the makeup of various committees. Countries have been working through many of those questions at preparatory meetings, with a final session scheduled for late March. The earliest any Marine Protected Areas could actually win approval would be at the second COP, since the scientific body that will review proposals hasn't yet been established.

The U.S. is notably absent

The United States has signed but not ratified the treaty, meaning it can participate as an observer but won't have voting rights. Under international law, signatory countries are expected to comply with treaty objectives even before ratification.

"The High Seas Treaty has such incredibly broad and strong political support from across all regions of the world," said Hubbard. "Whilst it's disappointing that the U.S. hasn't yet ratified, it doesn't undermine its momentum and the support that it has already."

Advocates emphasize that broad support must now turn into rapid implementation.

"The treaty is a sign that in a divided world, protecting nature and protecting our global commons can still triumph over political rivalries," Randles said. "The ocean connects us all."

## **Actor Timothy Busfield's attorneys say an investigation undermines state's child sex abuse charges**

By AUDREY McAVOY Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Emmy Award-winning actor Timothy Busfield's attorneys told a court Friday he should be released while he awaits the outcome of child sex abuse charges against him because an independent investigation undermined the state's allegations, the parents of his accusers have a history of fraud and dishonesty, and he passed a polygraph test.

Busfield was ordered held without bond at his first court appearance Wednesday, a day after he turned

himself in to face charges stemming from allegations that he inappropriately touched a minor on the set of a TV series he was directing in New Mexico.

A judge will hold a detention hearing on Tuesday to determine whether Busfield will remain in jail.

Albuquerque police issued a warrant for his arrest last week on two counts of criminal sexual contact of a minor and one count of child abuse. A criminal complaint alleges the acts occurred on the set of the series "The Cleaning Lady," which was filmed in the city.

In a video shared before turning himself in, Busfield called the allegations lies. Busfield, who is married to actor Melissa Gilbert, is known for appearances in "The West Wing," "Field of Dreams" and "Thirty-something."

According to the criminal complaint, an investigator with the police department says the child reported Busfield touched him on private areas over his clothing on one occasion when he was 7 years old and another time when he was 8.

The boy's twin brother told authorities he was also touched by Busfield, but did not specify where. He said he didn't say anything because he didn't want to get in trouble.

Busfield's attorneys said in court filings that the allegations against him emerged only after the boys lost their role in the TV show, creating a financial and retaliatory motive. The filings detailed what the attorneys said was a history of fraud by both the father and mother.

They cited an investigation by Warner Bros. into the allegations, which they said prosecutors didn't include in their criminal complaint, found the allegations unfounded. Independent witnesses supported the report's conclusions, the court filings said.

Busfield also submitted letters vouching for his character. His passing of the polygraph test aligns with the other information submitted, his attorneys said.

Legal experts say New Mexico is among a few states that allow polygraph evidence in criminal cases, but a judge has final say over whether one can be used. There are strict requirements for admission.

## **Trump's Twin Cities immigration crackdown has made chaos and tension the new normal**

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Work starts around sunrise for the federal officers carrying out the immigration crackdown in and around the Twin Cities, with hundreds of people in tactical gear streaming out of a bland office building near the main airport.

Within minutes, hulking SUVs, pickup trucks and minivans begin leaving, forming the unmarked convoys that have quickly become feared and common sights in the streets of Minneapolis, St. Paul and their suburbs.

Protesters also arrive early, braving the cold to stand across the street from the fenced-in federal compound, which houses an immigration court and government offices. "Go home!" they shout as convoys roar past. "ICE out!"

Things often turn uglier after nightfall, when the convoys return and the protesters sometimes grow angrier, shaking fences and occasionally smacking passing cars. Eventually, the federal officers march toward them, firing tear gas and flash grenades before hauling away at least a few people.

"We're not going anywhere!" a woman shouted on a recent morning. "We're here until you leave."

This is the daily rhythm of Operation Metro Surge, the Trump administration's latest and biggest crackdown yet, with more than 2,000 officers taking part. The surge has pitted city and state officials against the federal government, sparked daily clashes between activists and immigration officers in the deeply liberal cities, and left a mother of three dead.

The crackdown is barely noticeable in some areas, particularly in whiter, wealthier neighborhoods and suburbs, where convoys and tear gas are rare. And even in neighborhoods where masked immigration officers are common, they often move with ghostlike quickness, making arrests and disappearing before protesters can gather in force.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 39 of 62

Still, the surge can be felt across broad swaths of the Twin Cities area, which is home to more than 3 million people.

"We don't use the word 'invasion' lightly," Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, a Democrat, told reporters this week, noting that his police force has just 600 officers. "What we are seeing is thousands — plural, thousands — of federal agents coming into our city."

Those agents have an outsized presence in a small city.

It can take hours to drive across Los Angeles and Chicago, both targets of Trump administration crack-downs. It can take 15 minutes to cross Minneapolis.

So as worry ripples through the region, children are skipping school or learning remotely, families are avoiding religious services and many businesses, especially in immigrant neighborhoods, have closed temporarily.

Drive down Lake Street, an immigrant hub since the days when newcomers came to Minneapolis from Norway and Sweden, and the sidewalks now seem crowded only with activists standing watch, ready to blow warning whistles at the first sign of a convoy.

At La Michoacana Purepecha, where customers can order ice cream, chocolate covered bananas and pork rinds, the door is locked and staff let in people one at a time. Nearby, at Taqueria Los Ocampo, a sign in English and Spanish says the restaurant is temporarily closed because of "current conditions."

A dozen blocks away at the Karmel Mall, where the city's large Somali community goes for everything from food and coffee to tax preparation, signs on the doors warn, "No ICE enter without court order."

The shadow of George Floyd

It's been nearly six years since George Floyd was murdered by a Minneapolis police officer, but the scars from that killing remain raw.

Floyd was killed just blocks from where an Immigration and Citizenship Enforcement officer shot and killed Renee Good, a 37-year-old American citizen, during a Jan. 7 confrontation after she stopped to help neighbors during an enforcement operation. Federal officials say the officer fired in self-defense after Good "weaponized" her vehicle. City and state officials dismiss those explanations and point to multiple bystander videos of the confrontation.

For Twin Cities residents, the crackdown can feel overwhelming.

"Enough is enough," said Johan Baumeister, who came to the scene of Good's death soon after the shooting to lay flowers.

He said he didn't want to see the violent protests that shook Minneapolis after Floyd's death, causing billions of dollars in damage. But this city has a long history of activism and protests, and he had no doubt there would be more.

"I think they'll see Minneapolis show our rage again," he predicted.

He was right.

In the days since, there have been repeated confrontations between activists and immigration officers. Most amounted to little more than shouted insults and taunting, with destruction mostly limited to broken windows, graffiti and some badly damaged federal vehicles.

But angry clashes now flare regularly across the Twin Cities. Some protesters clearly want to provoke the federal officers, throwing snowballs at them or screaming obscenities through bullhorns from just a couple feet away. The serious force, though, comes from immigration officers, who have broken car windows, pepper-sprayed protesters and warned observers not to follow them through the streets. Immigrants and citizens have been yanked from cars and homes and detained, sometimes for days. And most clashes end in tear gas.

Drivers in Minneapolis or St. Paul can now stumble across intersections blocked by men in body armor and gas masks, with helicopters clattering overhead and the air filled with the shriek of protesters' whistles.

Shovel your neighbor's walk

In a state that prides itself on its decency, there's something particularly Minnesotan about the protests, Soon after Good was shot, Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat and regular Trump target, repeatedly said he was angry but also urged people to find ways to help their communities.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 40 of 62

"It might be shoveling your neighbor's walk," he said. "It might mean being at a food bank. It might be pausing to talk to someone you haven't talked to before."

He and other leaders have pleaded with protesters to remain peaceful, warning that the White House was looking for a chance to crack down harder.

And when protests do become clashes, residents will often spill from their homes, handing out bottled water so people can flush tear gas from their eyes.

Residents stand watch at schools to warn immigrant parents if convoys approach while they're picking up their children. They take care packages to people too afraid to go out, and arrange rides for them to work and doctor's visits.

On Thursday, in the basement of a Lutheran church in St. Paul, the group Open Market MN assembled food packs for more than a hundred families staying home. Colin Anderson, the group's outreach director, said the group has seen a surge in requests.

Sometimes, people don't even understand what has happened to them.

Like Christian Molina from suburban Coon Rapids, who was driving through a Minneapolis neighborhood on a recent day, taking his car to a mechanic, when immigration officers began following him. He wonders if it's because he looks Hispanic.

They turned on their siren, but Molina kept driving, unsure who they were.

Eventually, the officers sped up, hit his rear bumper and both cars stopped. Two emerged and asked Molina for his papers. He refused, saying he'd wait for the police. Crowds began to gather, and a clash soon broke out, ending with tear gas.

So the officers left.

They left behind an angry, worried man who suddenly owned a sedan with a mangled rear fender.

Long after the officers were gone he had one final question.

"Who's going to pay for my car?"

## More than 100 dead in torrential rains and floods across southern Africa

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME, MICHELLE GUMEDE and GERALD IMRAY Associated Press

NKOMAZI, South Africa (AP) — Army helicopters rescued people stranded on rooftops and hundreds of tourists and workers were evacuated from one of the world's biggest game reserves, as torrential rains and flooding in three countries in southern Africa killed more than 100 people, authorities said Friday.

The death toll across South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe is an accumulation after weeks of heavy rains. Weather services issued warnings that more rain was on the way, possibly bringing more destructive flooding.

More than 200,000 people affected in Mozambique

Mozambique was the hardest hit, with flooding across swathes of the country's central and southern provinces. Its Institute for Disaster Management and Risk Reduction said 103 people had died in an unusually severe rainy season since late last year, though that count included deaths from various causes including electrocution from lightning strikes, drowning in floods, infrastructure collapse caused by the severe weather and cholera, the institute said.

More than 200,000 people have been affected in Mozambique, thousands of homes have been damaged and tens of thousands face evacuation, the World Food Program said of another crisis in a poor country with limited resources that has faced several damaging cyclones in the last few years.

In neighboring South Africa, officials said Friday the death toll from floods in two northern provinces had risen to at least 30, with rescue efforts ongoing.

Zimbabwe's disaster management agency said that 70 people have died and more than 1,000 homes have been destroyed in heavy rains since the beginning of the year, while infrastructure including schools, roads and bridges collapsed. Flooding has also hit the island nation of Madagascar as well as Malawi and

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 41 of 62

Zambia.

The United States' Famine Early Warning System said flooding was reported or expected in at least seven southern African nations, possibly due to the presence of the La Nina weather phenomenon that can bring heavy rains to parts of southeastern Africa.

The army is deployed in South Africa

The South African army was using helicopters to pluck people to safety as they took refuge on rooftops or in trees in the northern Limpopo province. The army also had to rescue police officers and border control officers from a checkpoint on the South Africa-Zimbabwe border, it said.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa visited flood-stricken areas in Limpopo on Thursday and said that region had received around 400 millimeters (more than 15 inches) of rain in less than a week. He said that in one district he visited "there are 36 houses that have just been wiped away from the face of the Earth."

Limpopo Premier Phophi Ramathuba said more than 1,000 houses were damaged across the province, with many of them washed away entirely. "It's so terrible," she said.

There was also extensive damage in Mpumalanga province, where roads and bridges were damaged or destroyed. In the Nkomazi Municipality near the border with Mozambique, residents were trying to repair the damage in their flooded homes and yards — and bracing for more extreme weather after the South African Weather Service issued a red-level 10 alert for more destructive rains and floods for that part of the country, the highest warning level.

"I am still terrified that the rains will return as these were the worst rains I have seen in this area," said Nkomazi resident Josephina Mashaba.

Tourists and staff evacuated at Kruger park

South Africa's renowned Kruger National Park, which covers some 22,000 square kilometers (7,722 square miles) across Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces, has been affected by severe flooding. Around 600 tourists and staff members have been evacuated from camps to high-lying areas in the park, park spokesperson Reynold Thakhuli said.

He couldn't immediately say how many people there were in the park, which has been closed to new visitors after several rivers burst their banks and flooded camps, restaurants and other areas. The national parks agency said precautions were being taken and no deaths or injuries had been reported at Kruger, but parts of the park were completely cut off by the floods.

Southern Africa has experienced a series of extreme weather events in recent years, including devastating cyclones that killed thousands across several countries and a scorching drought that caused a food crisis in parts of a region that often suffers food shortages.

The World Food Program said more than 70,000 hectares (about 173,000 acres) of crops in Mozambique, including staples such as rice and corn, have been waterlogged in the current flooding, worsening food insecurity for thousands of small-scale farmers who rely on their harvests for food.

## Trump says he may punish countries with tariffs if they don't back the US controlling Greenland

By DANIEL NIEMANN and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump suggested Friday that he may punish countries with tariffs if they don't back the U.S. controlling Greenland, a message that came as a bipartisan Congressional delegation sought to lower tensions in the Danish capital.

Trump for months has insisted that the U.S. should control Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark, and said earlier this week that anything less than the Arctic island being in U.S. hands would be "unacceptable."

During an unrelated event at the White House about rural health care, he recounted Friday how he had threatened European allies with tariffs on pharmaceuticals.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 42 of 62

"I may do that for Greenland too," Trump said. "I may put a tariff on countries if they don't go along with Greenland, because we need Greenland for national security. So I may do that," he said.

He had not previously mentioned using tariffs to try to force the issue.

Earlier this week, the foreign ministers of Denmark and Greenland met in Washington this week with U.S. Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

That encounter didn't resolve the deep differences, but did produce an agreement to set up a working group — on whose purpose Denmark and the White House then offered sharply diverging public views.

European leaders have insisted that is only for Denmark and Greenland to decide on matters concerning the territory, and Denmark said this week that it was increasing its military presence in Greenland in cooperation with allies.

A relationship that 'we need to nurture'

In Copenhagen, a group of senators and members of the House of Representatives met Friday with Danish and Greenlandic lawmakers, and with leaders including Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen.

Delegation leader Sen. Chris Coons, a Delaware Democrat, thanked the group's hosts for "225 years of being a good and trusted ally and partner" and said that "we had a strong and robust dialogue about how we extend that into the future."

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, an Alaska Republican, said after meeting lawmakers that the visit reflected a strong relationship over decades and "it is one that we need to nurture." She told reporters that "Greenland needs to be viewed as our ally, not as an asset, and I think that's what you're hearing with this delegation."

The tone contrasted with that emanating from the White House. Trump has sought to justify his calls for a U.S. takeover by repeatedly claiming that China and Russia have their own designs on Greenland, which holds vast untapped reserves of critical minerals. The White House hasn't ruled out taking the territory by force.

"We have heard so many lies, to be honest and so much exaggeration on the threats towards Greenland," said Aaja Chemnitz, a Greenlandic politician and member of the Danish parliament who took part in Friday's meetings. "And mostly, I would say the threats that we're seeing right now is from the U.S. side."

Murkowski emphasized the role of Congress in spending and in conveying messages from constituents.

"I think it is important to underscore that when you ask the American people whether or not they think it is a good idea for the United States to acquire Greenland, the vast majority, some 75%, will say, we do not think that that is a good idea," she said.

Along with Sen. Jeanne Shaheen, a New Hampshire Democrat, Murkowski has introduced bipartisan legislation that would prohibit the use of U.S. Defense or State department funds to annex or take control of Greenland or the sovereign territory of any NATO member state without that ally's consent or authorization from the North Atlantic Council.

Inuit council criticizes White House statements

The dispute is looming large in the lives of Greenlanders. Greenland's prime minister, Jens-Frederik Nielsen, said on Tuesday that "if we have to choose between the United States and Denmark here and now, we choose Denmark. We choose NATO. We choose the Kingdom of Denmark. We choose the EU."

The chair of the Nuuk, Greenland-based Inuit Circumpolar Council, which represents around 180,000 Inuit from Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Russia's Chukotka region on international issues, said persistent statements from the White House that the U.S. must own Greenland offer "a clear picture of how the US administration views the people of Greenland, how the U.S. administration views Indigenous peoples, and peoples that are few in numbers."

Sara Olsvig told The Associated Press in Nuuk that the issue is "how one of the biggest powers in the world views other peoples that are less powerful than them. And that really is concerning."

Indigenous Inuit in Greenland do not want to be colonized again, she said.

## **FAA urges pilots to exercise caution over eastern Pacific, citing 'military activities'**

The Federal Aviation Administration on Friday urged U.S. aircraft operators to "exercise caution" when flying over the eastern Pacific Ocean near Mexico, Central America and parts of South America, citing "military activities" and possible satellite navigation interference.

The warning was issued in a series of Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs) issued by the FAA. They say, "Potential risks exist for aircraft at all altitudes, including during overflight and the arrival and departure phases of flight." The alerts are in effect for 60 days. Such notices are issued routinely in any region where there are hostilities nearby.

The notices come after nearly four months of U.S. military strikes against boats in the Caribbean Sea and the eastern Pacific that the U.S. alleged were trafficking drugs. That campaign included 35 known strikes that killed at least 115 people, according to the Trump administration.

In November, the FAA warned all pilots to exercise caution when flying in the airspace over Venezuela "due to the worsening security situation and heightened military activity."

On Jan. 3, the U.S. conducted a "large-scale strike" across Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, were seized and transported to New York, where they face federal drug trafficking charges.

In December, a JetBlue flight from the small Caribbean nation of Curaçao halted its ascent to avoid colliding with a U.S. Air Force refueling tanker.

## **Justice Department investigating whether Minnesota's Walz and Frey impeded immigration enforcement**

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, ERIC TUCKER and JACK BROOK Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Justice Department is investigating whether Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey have impeded federal immigration enforcement through public statements they have made, two people familiar with the matter said Friday.

The investigation, which both Walz and Frey said was a bullying tactic meant to threaten political opposition, focused on potential violation of a conspiracy statute, the people said.

The people spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss a pending investigation by name.

CBS News first reported the investigation.

The investigation comes during a weeklong immigration crackdown in Minneapolis and St. Paul that the Department of Homeland Security has called its largest recent immigration enforcement operation, resulting in more than 2,500 arrests.

The operation has become more confrontational since the fatal shooting of Renee Good on Jan. 7, with agents pulling people from cars and homes and frequently being confronted by angry bystanders demanding they leave. State and local officials have repeatedly told protesters to remain peaceful.

In response to reports of the investigation, Walz said in a statement: "Two days ago it was Elissa Slotkin. Last week it was Jerome Powell. Before that, Mark Kelly. Weaponizing the justice system and threatening political opponents is a dangerous, authoritarian tactic."

U.S. senators Kelly, from Arizona, and Slotkin, from Michigan, are under investigation from the President Donald Trump administration after appearing with other Democratic lawmakers in a video urging members of the military to resist "illegal orders." The administration has also launched a criminal investigation of Powell, a first for a sitting federal reserve chair.

Walz's office said it has not received any notice of an investigation.

Frey described the investigation as an attempt to intimidate him for "standing up for Minneapolis, our local law enforcement, and our residents against the chaos and danger this Administration has brought to our streets."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 44 of 62

The U.S. attorney's office in Minneapolis did not immediately comment.

In a post on the social media platform X following reports of the investigation, Attorney General Pam Bondi said: "A reminder to all those in Minnesota: No one is above the law." She did not specifically mention the investigation.

State calls for peaceful protests

With more protests expected in the Twin Cities this weekend, state authorities urged demonstrators to avoid confrontation.

"While peaceful expression is protected, any actions that harm people, destroy property or jeopardize public safety will not be tolerated," said Commissioner Bob Jacobson of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

His comments came after Trump backed off a bit from his threat a day earlier to invoke an 1807 law, the Insurrection Act, to send troops to suppress demonstrations.

"I don't think there's any reason right now to use it, but if I needed it, I'd use it," Trump told reporters outside the White House.

A U.S. judge in Minnesota ruled on Friday that the federal officers working in the Minneapolis-area enforcement operation can't detain or tear gas peaceful protesters who aren't obstructing authorities, including when they're observing agents.

The case was filed before Good's shooting on behalf of six Minnesota activists represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota.

Government attorneys had argued that the officers have been acting within their legal authority to enforce immigration laws and protect themselves. But the ACLU has said government officers are violating the constitutional rights of Twin Cities residents.

Detention whiplash

A Liberian man who has been shuttled in and out of custody since immigration agents broke down his door with a battering ram was released again Friday, hours after a routine check-in with authorities led to his second arrest.

The dramatic initial arrest of Garrison Gibson last weekend was captured on video. U.S. District Judge Jeffrey Bryan ruled the arrest unlawful Thursday and freed him, but Gibson was detained again Friday when he appeared at an immigration office.

A few hours later, Gibson was free again, attorney Marc Prokosch said.

Gibson, 37, who fled the civil war in his West African home country as a child, had been ordered removed from the U.S., apparently because of a 2008 drug conviction that was later dismissed. He has remained in the country legally under what's known as an order of supervision, Prokosch said, and complied with the requirement that he meet regularly with immigration authorities.

In his Thursday order, the judge agreed that officials violated regulations by not giving Gibson enough notice that his supervision status had been revoked. Prokosch said he was told by ICE that they are "now going through their proper channels" to revoke the order.

911 caller: Good was shot 'point blank'

Minneapolis authorities released police and fire dispatch logs and transcripts of 911 calls related to the fatal shooting of Good. Firefighters found what appeared to be two gunshot wounds in her right chest, one in her left forearm and a possible gunshot wound on the left side of her head, records show.

"They shot her, like, cause she wouldn't open her car door," a caller said. "Point blank range in her car."

Good, 37, was at the wheel of her Honda Pilot, which was partially blocking a street. Video showed an officer approached the SUV, demanded that she open the door and grabbed the handle.

Good began to pull forward and turned the vehicle's wheel to the right. Another ICE officer, Jonathan Ross, pulled his gun and fired at close range, jumping back as the SUV moved past him. DHS claims the agent shot Good in self-defense.

## Tennessee judge grants expanded media access to state-run executions

By ADRIAN SAINZ Associated Press

A judge ruled Friday that Tennessee prison officials must grant expanded access to media members to view state-run executions, after a coalition of news organizations including The Associated Press sued on claims that state execution protocols unconstitutionally limit thorough and accurate reporting.

Before Chancellor I'Ashea L. Myles' order, reporters witnessing lethal injections were limited to a short time period during which they could view the execution process. The coalition's lawsuit argued the protocols violate the public and press's constitutional rights to witness the entirety of executions conducted by the Tennessee Department of Correction, "from the time the condemned enters the execution chamber until after the condemned is declared dead."

The lawsuit sought a judgment that the protocols are unconstitutional and an injunction to allow the press to see the full execution process. Myles' order granted a temporary injunction allowing media members and other witnesses to see most of the execution process, with security procedures in place for those carrying out the procedures.

The lawsuit, filed in Davidson County Chancery Court in Nashville, names as defendants Kenneth Nelsen, warden of Riverbend Maximum Security Institution in Nashville that houses Tennessee's execution chamber, and Frank Strada, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Correction.

The department did not immediately respond to a request for comment sent after hours Friday to a department spokesperson.

During previous executions, media members began seeing what happens once the condemned person is already strapped to a gurney and hooked up to IV lines. They don't know at which precise moment the injections begin and those administering the injections are in a separate room.

The protocol says that after the syringes of saline and pentobarbital are administered, a team leader signals to the warden and a five-minute waiting period begins. After that period, the blinds are closed, the camera is turned off and then the doctor comes in to determine if the person is dead. If that is the case, the warden announces on the intercom system that the sentence was carried out and witnesses are directed to exit.

Essentially, the process granted witnesses a 10 to 15 minute window where they could observe the process.

Prison officials argued that the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution does not grant the press a right of special access to information not regularly available to the public. They claimed that the restrictions are necessary because allowing the press to see the full execution would endanger prison security and people involved in the process.

The judge's order says members of the execution team shall wear a disposable protective suit covering the members' regular work uniform, identification badge and hair. Team members also will be offered a mask "to further conceal his or her identity should they so choose to wear one," the judge wrote.

During executions involving lethal injection, curtains to the official witness room shall be opened to the execution chamber at 10 a.m., which, according to protocols, is when the inmate is secured with restraints on a gurney and the IV insertion process begins.

The curtains must remain open until the pronouncement of death, the judge ruled.

"This Court finds that a meaningful and full observation of executions allows the public to assess whether the state carries out death sentences in a lawful and humane manner and ensures that the execution process remains subject to democratic oversight," the judge wrote.

In addition to AP, the media coalition includes Gannett Co., Inc.; Nashville Public Media, Inc.; Nashville Public Radio; Scripps Media, Inc.; Six Rivers Media, LLC; and TEGNA INC.

## No sign of new protests in Iran as a hard-line cleric calls for executions and threatens Trump

By JON GAMBRELL and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — As Iran returned to uneasy calm after a wave of protests that drew a bloody crackdown, a senior hard-line cleric called Friday for the death penalty for detained demonstrators and directly threatened U.S. President Donald Trump — evidence of the rage gripping authorities in the Islamic Republic.

Trump, though, struck a conciliatory note, thanking Iran's leaders for not executing hundreds of detained protesters, in a further sign he may be backing away from a military strike. Executions, as well as the killing of peaceful protesters, are two of the red lines laid down by Trump for possible action against Iran.

Harsh repression that has left several thousand people dead appears to have succeeded in stifling demonstrations that began Dec. 28 over Iran's ailing economy and morphed into protests directly challenging the country's theocracy.

There have been no signs of protests for days in Tehran, where shopping and street life have returned to outward normality, though a week-old internet blackout continued. Authorities have not reported any unrest elsewhere in the country.

"Iran canceled the hanging of over 800 people," Trump told reporters in Washington, adding that "I greatly respect the fact that they canceled."

Trump did not clarify who he spoke to in Iran to confirm the state of any planned executions.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency on Friday put the death toll at 3,090. The number, which exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades and recalls the chaos surrounding the 1979 revolution, continues to rise. The agency has been accurate throughout the years of demonstrations, relying on a network of activists inside Iran that confirms all reported fatalities.

The AP has been unable to independently confirm the toll. Iran's government has not provided casualty figures.

### Hard-line cleric's fiery sermon

In contrast, the sermon by Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami carried by Iranian state radio sparked chants from those gathered for prayers, including: "Armed hypocrites should be put to death!"

Khatami, a member of Iran's Assembly of Experts and Guardian Council long known for his hard-line views, described the protesters as the "butlers" of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and "Trump's soldiers." He said Netanyahu and Trump should await "hard revenge from the system."

"Americans and Zionists should not expect peace," the cleric said.

His fiery speech came as allies of Iran and the United States alike sought to defuse tensions. Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke Friday to both Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian and Israel's Netanyahu, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Russia had previously kept largely quiet about the protests. Moscow has watched several key allies suffer blows as its resources and focus are consumed by its 4-year-old war against Ukraine, including the downfall of Syria's former President Bashar Assad in 2024, last year's U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran and the U.S. seizure of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro this month.

### Exiled Iranian royal calls for fight to continue

Days after Trump pledged "help is on its way" for the protesters, both the demonstrations and the prospect of imminent U.S. retaliation appeared to have receded. One diplomat told The Associated Press that top officials from Egypt, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Qatar had raised concerns with Trump that a U.S. military intervention would shake the global economy and destabilize an already volatile region.

Iran's exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi urged the U.S. to make good on its pledge to intervene. Pahlavi, whose father was overthrown by Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, said he still believes the president's promise of assistance.

"I believe the president is a man of his word," Pahlavi told reporters in Washington. He added that "regardless of whether action is taken or not, we as Iranians have no choice to carry on the fight."

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 47 of 62

"I will return to Iran," he vowed. Hours later, he urged protesters to take to the streets again from Saturday to Monday.

Despite support by diehard monarchists in the diaspora, Pahlavi has struggled to gain wider appeal within Iran. But that has not stopped him from presenting himself as the transitional leader of Iran if the government were to fall.

Iran authorities list protest damage

Khatami, the hard-line cleric, also provided the first overall statistics on damage from the protests, claiming 350 mosques, 126 prayer halls and 20 other holy places had sustained damage. Another 80 homes of Friday prayer leaders — an important position within Iran's theocracy — were also damaged, likely underlining the anger demonstrators felt toward symbols of the government.

He said 400 hospitals, 106 ambulances, 71 fire department vehicles, and another 50 emergency vehicles also sustained damage.

Even as protests appeared to have been smothered inside Iran, thousands of exiled Iranians and their supporters have taken to the streets in cities across Europe to shout out their rage at the government of the Islamic Republic.

Amid the continuing internet shutdown, some Iranians crossed borders to communicate with the outside world. At a border crossing in Turkey's eastern province of Van, a trickle of Iranians crossing on Friday said they were traveling to get around the communications blackout.

"I will go back to Iran after they open the internet," said a traveler who gave only his first name, Mehdi, out of security concerns.

Also crossing the border were some Turkish citizens escaping the unrest in Iran.

Mehmet Önder, 47, was in Tehran for his textiles business when the protests erupted. He said he laid low in his hotel until it was shut for security reasons, then stayed with one of his customers until he was able to return to Turkey.

Although he did not venture into the streets, Önder said he heard heavy gunfire.

"I understand guns, because I served in the military in the southeast of Turkey," he said. "The guns they were firing were not simple weapons. They were machine guns."

In a sign of the conflict's potential to spill over borders, a Kurdish separatist group in Iraq said it has launched attacks on Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard in recent days in retaliation for Tehran's crackdown on protests.

A representative of the Kurdistan Freedom Party, or PAK, said its members have "played a role in the protests through both financial support and armed operations to defend protesters when needed." The group said the attacks were launched by members of its military wing based inside Iran.

## **White House names some leaders with roles in next steps in Gaza, while Palestinian committee meets**

By TOQA EZZIDIN, FATMA KHALED and MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — The White House released the names of some of the leaders who will play a role in overseeing next steps in Gaza after the Palestinian committee set to govern the territory under U.S. supervision met for the first time Friday in Cairo.

The committee's leader, Ali Shaath, an engineer and former Palestinian Authority official from Gaza, pledged to get to work quickly to improve conditions. He expects reconstruction and recovery to take about three years and plans to focus first on immediate needs, including shelter.

"The Palestinian people were looking forward to this committee, its establishment and its work to rescue them," Shaath said after the meeting, in a television interview with Egypt's state-owned Al-Qahera News.

U.S. President Donald Trump supports the group's efforts to govern Gaza after the two-year war between Israel and Hamas. Israeli troops withdrew from parts of Gaza after the ceasefire took effect on Oct. 10, while thousands of displaced Palestinians have returned to what is left of their homes.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 48 of 62

Now, there will be a number of huge challenges going forward, including the deployment of an international security force to supervise the ceasefire deal and the difficult process of disarming Hamas.

Under Trump's plan, Shaath's technocratic committee will run day-to-day affairs in Gaza under the oversight of a Trump-led "Board of Peace," whose members have not yet been named.

White House names some officials to oversight boards

The White House said an executive board will work to carry out the vision of the Board of Peace.

The executive board's members include U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Trump envoy Steve Witkoff, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Apollo Global Management CEO Marc Rowan, World Bank President Ajay Banga, and Trump's deputy national security adviser Robert Gabriel.

Nickolay Mladenov, a former Bulgarian politician and U.N. Mideast envoy, is to serve as the executive board's representative overseeing day-to-day matters.

The White House also announced the members of another board, the "Gaza Executive Board," which will work with Mladenov, the technocratic committee and the international stabilization force.

Witkoff, Kushner, Blair, Rowan and Mladenov will also sit on that board. Additional members include: Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan; Qatari diplomat Ali Al-Thawadi; Hassan Rashad, director of Egypt's General Intelligence Agency; Emirati minister Reem Al-Hashimy; Israeli businessman Yakir Gabay; and Sigrid Kaag, the Netherlands' former deputy prime minister and a Mideast expert.

Death of boy mourned in the West Bank

In the West Bank, friends and relatives gathered Friday to mourn the death of a 14-year-old Palestinian boy killed by Israeli forces.

The Palestinian Health Ministry, which confirmed his death, said Mohammad Na'san was the first child killed by the army in the occupied West Bank in 2026.

Residents said Israeli forces fired stun grenades and tear gas in an unprovoked attack. Israel's military said in a statement that the incursion came after Palestinians had hurled rocks at Israelis and set tires aflame.

"There was gunfire directed at citizens and farmers, the most dangerous of which occurred during the storming of the village as people were leaving the mosques. The streets were crowded with the elderly, children, women, and elders, and they began firing relentlessly," said Ameen Abu Aliya, head of the Al-Mughayyir village council.

The death was the latest episode of violence to hit al-Mughayyir, a village east of Ramallah that has become a flashpoint in the West Bank. Much of the community's agricultural land falls under Israeli military control.

Early this year, settlers and Israeli military bulldozers destroyed olive groves in the area, saying they were searching for Palestinian gunmen. A children's park in al-Mughayyir was also demolished.

In 2025, 240 Palestinians — including 55 children — were killed by Israeli forces or settlers in the West Bank, while Palestinians killed 17 Israelis — including one child — in the region, according to the United Nations.

Meanwhile, two children were killed Friday in Gaza, a 7-year-old girl and a 16-year-old boy. They were killed in Beith Lahiya, near the Yellow Line, and their bodies taken to al-Shifa Hospital, the hospital said. No further details were immediately available.

## How the Trump administration erased centuries of Justice Department experience

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michael Ben' Ary was driving one of his children to soccer practice on an October evening last year when he paused at a red light to check his work phone. He was in the middle of a counterterrorism prosecution so important that President Donald Trump highlighted it in his address to Congress.

Ben' Ary said he was shocked to see his phone had been disabled. He found the explanation later in his personal email account, a letter informing him he had been fired.

A veteran prosecutor, Ben' Ary handled high-profile cases over two decades at the Justice Department,

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 49 of 62

including the murder of a Drug Enforcement Administration agent and a suicide bomb plot targeting the U.S. Capitol. Most recently he was leading the case arising from a deadly attack on American service members in Afghanistan.

Yet the same credentials that enhanced Ben'ary's résumé spelled the undoing of his government career. His termination without explanation came hours after right-wing commentator Julie Kelly told hundreds of thousands of online followers that Ben'ary had previously served as a senior counsel to Lisa Monaco, the No. 2 Justice Department official in Democratic President Joe Biden's administration. Kelly also suggested Ben'ary was part of the "internal resistance" to prosecuting former FBI Director James Comey, even though Ben'ary was never involved in the case.

As Trump's attorney general, Pam Bondi, approaches her first year on the job, the firings of lawyers such as Ben'ary have defined her turbulent tenure. The terminations and a larger voluntary exodus of lawyers have erased centuries of combined experience and left the department with fewer career employees to act as a bulwark for the rule of law at a time when Trump, a Republican, is testing the limits of executive power by demanding prosecutions of his political enemies.

Interviews by The Associated Press of more than a half-dozen fired employees offer a snapshot of the toll throughout the department. The departures include lawyers who prosecuted violent attacks on police at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021; environmental, civil rights and ethics enforcers; counterterrorism prosecutors; immigration judges; and attorneys who defend administration policies. This week, several prosecutors in Minnesota moved to resign amid turmoil over an investigation into the shooting of a woman in Minneapolis by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer.

"To lose people at that career level, people who otherwise intended to stay and now are either being discharged or themselves are walking away, is immensely damaging to the public interest," said Stuart Gerson, a senior official in the George H.W. Bush administration and acting attorney general early in Bill Clinton's administration. "We're losing really capable people, people who have never viewed themselves as political and attempted to do the right thing."

Justice Connection, a network of department alums, estimates that more than 230 lawyers, agents and other employees from across the department were fired last year, apparently because of their work on cases they were assigned or past criticism of Trump, or seemingly no reason. More than 6,400 employees are estimated to have left a department that at the end of 2025 had roughly 108,000, the group says.

The Justice Department says it has hired thousands of career attorneys over the past year. The Trump administration has characterized some of the fired and departed workers as out of step with its agenda.

Ben'ary left with unfinished business, including the prosecution stemming from the airport bombing in Kabul, the Afghan capital, and the national security unit he led at the U.S. attorney's office for the Eastern District of Virginia.

Left to pack his belongings, he posted a typed note near his door that functioned as a distress call, reminding colleagues they had sworn an oath to follow the facts "without fear or favor" and "unhindered by political interference."

But, he warned, "In recent months, the political leadership of the Department have violated these principles, jeopardizing our national security and making American citizens less safe."

Unparalleled in scale, scope and motivation

Since its founding in 1870, the Justice Department has occupied elevated status in American democracy, sustained through transitions of power by reliance on facts, evidence and law.

To be sure, there has always been a political component to the department, with lawyers appointed by the president.

But even during turbulent times, when attorneys general have been pushed out by presidents or resigned rather than accede to White House demands — as in the Watergate-era "Saturday Night Massacre" — the department's rank and file have generally been insulated thanks to long-recognized civil service protections.

"This is completely unprecedented in both its scale and scope and underlying motivation," said Peter Keisler, a senior official in the George W. Bush Justice Department.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 50 of 62

In his first term, Trump pushed out one attorney general and accepted another's resignation, but the workforce remained largely intact. He returned to office in January 2025 seething over Biden-era prosecutions of him and vowing retribution.

The firings began even before Bondi arrived in February. Prosecutors on special counsel Jack Smith's team that investigated Trump were terminated days after the inauguration, followed by prosecutors hired on temporary assignments for cases resulting from the Capitol insurrection in 2021.

"The people working on these cases were not political agents of any kind," said Aliya Khalidi, a Jan. 6 prosecutor who was fired. "It's all people who just care about the rule of law."

The firings have continued, at times surgical, at times random and almost always without explanation.

Adam Schleifer, a Los Angeles prosecutor targeted in a social media post by far-right activist Laura Loomer over past critical comments of Trump, was fired in March. The Justice Department the following month fired attorney Erez Reuveni, who conceded in court that Salvadoran national Kilmar Abrego Garcia was mistakenly deported. Reuveni later accused the department of trying to mislead judges to execute deportations. Department officials deny the assertion.

Two weeks after Maurene Comey completed a sex trafficking trial against Sean "Diddy" Combs, the New York prosecutor was fired, also without explanation. Like Ben'ary, she wrote a pointed farewell, telling colleagues that "fear is the tool of a tyrant." Her father, the former FBI director who was a frequent Trump target, said those same words after being indicted in September in a case that has been dismissed.

Among the most affected sections is the storied Civil Rights Division. A recent open letter of protest was signed by more than 200 employees who left in 2025, with several supervisors recently giving notice of plans to depart. The Public Integrity Section, which prosecutes sensitive public corruption cases, has also been hollowed out by resignations.

The Justice Department has disputed the accounts of some of those who have been fired or quit and has defended the termination of those who investigated Trump as "consistent with the mission of ending the weaponization of government."

"This is the most efficient Department of Justice in American history, and our attorneys will continue to deliver measurable results for the American people," the department said in a statement. More than 3,400 career attorneys have been hired since Trump took office, the department says.

The departures have caused backlogs and staff shortages, with senior leaders soliciting job applications. It has affected the department's daily business as well as efforts to fulfill Trump's desires to prosecute political opponents.

Desperate for lawyers willing to file criminal cases against Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James, the administration in September forced out the veteran U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, replacing him with Lindsey Halligan, a White House aide with no experience as a federal prosecutor.

Halligan secured the indictments but the win was short-lived.

One judge later identified grave missteps in how Halligan presented the Comey case to a grand jury. Another dismissed both prosecutions outright, calling Halligan's appointment unlawful.

Smith, the special counsel who investigated Trump but left before he could be fired, has himself lamented the losses. "These are not partisans," he recently told lawmakers.

"They just want to do good work," he added, "and I think when you lose that culture, you lose a lot."

'Our dream was to be federal prosecutors'

Khalidi joined the department in 2023 in a group of new prosecutors hired to help with the hundreds of cases stemming from the Capitol riot.

Upon Trump's return to the White House, she watched cases she prosecuted get dismantled by Trump's sweeping clemency for all 1,500 defendants charged in the riot, including those who attacked police.

Less than two weeks later, a Justice Department demand for the names of FBI agents involved in Jan. 6 investigations triggered rumors of potential mass firings. Worried about the agents she worked with, Khalidi spent the day checking in on them. But as she started preparing dinner one Friday evening, she received an email suggesting she had lost her own job.

Attached was a memo from then-acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove ordering the firings of pros-

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 51 of 62

ecutors such as Khalidi who had been hired for temporary assignments but were moved into permanent roles after Trump's win, a maneuver Bove called "subversive personnel actions by the previous administration." Neither the email nor memo identified the fired prosecutors, leaving them to guess.

Khalidi grabbed a suitcase to collect family photos and other personal items she kept at work and rushed to the office, retreating with fellow shocked prosecutors to a bar where they received termination emails.

The group of 15 fired attorneys later assembled to surrender their computers and phones, entering the same room where they gathered on their first day in 2023.

"For a lot of us, our dream was to be federal prosecutors," Khalidi said. "And so we had happy memories of that room, of being excited on our first day. So it was just kind of surreal to be back there turning in our stuff."

The news came for Anam Petit, an immigration judge, during a break between hearings.

Hired during the Biden administration, she said she felt a little uneasy when Trump won the election but also figured her position would probably be safe because immigration judges generally have job stability and because they bear responsibility for issuing removal orders for those who are in the United States illegally, a core presidential priority.

Petit arrived on Sept. 5 bracing for bad news because it was the Friday of the pay period before her two-year work anniversary, when her probationary appointment was poised to become permanent. Though she said she had received strong performance reviews and had already exceeded her case completion goal for the year, she had become anxious as colleagues were fired amid an administration push to accelerate deportations.

She was in the courtroom between hearings when she learned via email that she had been fired. She left to text her husband, then returned to the courtroom to render a decision in the case before her.

"I just put my phone back in my pocket and went into the courtroom and delivered my decision, with a very shaky voice and shaky hands, trying to center myself back to that decision just so that I could relay it," Petit said.

Joseph Tirrell was mindful of his job security from the very start of the Trump administration. As the department's chief ethics officer, he had affirmed that Smith, the special counsel, was entitled to a law firm's free legal services, a decision he sensed had the potential to rile incoming leadership.

But he remained in the position and over the ensuing months counseled Bondi's staff on the propriety of accepting various gifts, including a cigar box from mixed martial arts fighter Conor McGregor.

He was fired in July, just before a FIFA Club World Cup final in New Jersey that Tirrell had said Bondi could not ethically accept a free invitation to. He was not terribly surprised, he says, when it was later reported that Bondi attended in Trump's box. The Justice Department said in a statement that none of Tirrell's advice "was ever overruled" and that "the Attorney General obtained ethics approval to attend this event in her official capacity as a member of the FIFA Task Force."

"There's a great deal of fear there just because I was fired and just because so many others were summarily fired," Tirrell said. "Are you going to get fired because you provided ethics advice? Are you going to get fired because you have a pride flag on your desk?"

'Our country depends on you'

Trump was promoting his administration's commitment to counterterrorism during his address to Congress in March when he announced a success: the capture of a militant from the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate who was charged in the Kabul airport bombing that killed 13 American service members during the 2021 withdrawal from the country.

Mohammad Sharifullah arrived the following day in the United States, encountering Ben'ary in an Alexandria, Virginia, courtroom.

Ben'ary spent the next several months working on the case, but on Oct. 1, he was fired. It was the apparent result, he told colleagues, of a social media post he said contained "false information" — a reference to the one from Kelly, the commentator.

The termination was so abrupt that Ben'ary could not tell his colleagues where he had saved important

filings and notes. Another prosecutor listed on the case, James Comey's son-in-law, Troy Edwards, had resigned days earlier upon Comey's indictment. Once set for trial last month, the case has been postponed.

In his farewell note, Ben'ary observed that he was not alone, that in "just a few short months" career employees like himself had been removed from U.S. attorneys offices, the FBI "and other critical parts of DOJ."

"While I am no longer your colleague, I ask that each of you continue to do the right thing, in the right way, for the right reasons," Ben'ary wrote. "Follow the facts and the law. Stand up for what we all believe in — our Constitution and the rule of law. Our country depends on you."

## Venezuelan opposition leader is confident about return of democracy but says little of her plans

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and ISABEL DEBRE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado said on Friday she's confident of her country's eventual transition to democracy after the U.S. military ousted former President Nicolás Maduro.

But she acknowledged the challenge of holding free elections after decades of autocratic rule and declined to set any timetable. When pressed, she also took pains to avoid giving any details on her plans to return home, saying only that she would return "as soon as possible."

Her struggle to offer clear answers in Friday's news conference reflects how President Donald Trump's endorsement of a Maduro loyalist to lead Venezuela for now has frozen out the nation's Nobel Peace Prize-winning crusader for democracy.

With little choice but to put her faith in the U.S. and hope for an eventual transition, Machado has sought to cozy up to Trump, presenting her Nobel medal to him a day earlier at the White House.

As Machado was meeting with Trump, CIA Director John Ratcliffe was in Venezuela meeting with acting President Delcy Rodríguez, further confirmation that Maduro's longtime second in command was the woman that Washington preferred to see managing Venezuela at the moment.

Speaking to reporters at the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank in Washington, Machado said she was "profoundly, profoundly confident that we will have an orderly transition" to democracy that would also transform Venezuela's self-proclaimed socialist government long hostile to the U.S. into a strong U.S. ally.

She dismissed the perception that, in choosing to work with Rodríguez, Trump had snubbed her opposition movement, whose candidate was widely believed to have beaten Maduro in the 2024 presidential election.

"This has nothing to do with a tension or decision between Delcy Rodríguez and myself," she said, but avoided elaborating in favor of more general assertions about her party's popular mandate and the government's dismal human rights record.

"The only thing they have is terror," she said of Maduro's government.

Machado waved away the suggestion that her movement wouldn't be able to assert authority over security forces that remain loyal to Maduro and have long benefited from corruption under his government.

"There are not religious tensions within the Venezuelan society or racial or regional or political or social tensions," she said.

But she also acknowledged "the difficulty of destroying a 27-year structure allied with the Russians and the Iranians."

"We are facing challenging times ahead," she said.

In apparent deference to Trump, she provided almost no details on Friday about what they discussed or even what she thought the U.S. should do in Venezuela, saying, "I think I don't need to urge the president on specific things."

Trump has said little about his administration's plans for holding new elections in Venezuela and far more about its vision for reviving the nation's crumbling oil infrastructure. He's relying on a crippling oil blockade and threats of further military action to keep the interim government in line.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 53 of 62

In a sign that the U.S. is exploring the restoration of relations with Venezuela, U.S. officials are considering reopening the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, which Trump closed during his first administration.

Machado traveled to Washington looking to rekindle the support for democracy in Venezuela that Trump showed during his first administration. She presented him with the prize she won last year, praising him for what she said was his commitment to Venezuela's freedom. The Nobel Institute has been clear, however, that the prize cannot be shared or transferred.

Trump, who has actively campaigned to be awarded the prize, said Machado left the medal for him to keep. "And by the way, I think she's a very fine woman," he said. "And we'll be talking again."

That was of small comfort after Trump said it would be difficult for Machado to lead because she "doesn't have the support within or the respect within the country."

Machado crisscrossed Venezuela ahead of the 2024 presidential elections, rallying millions of voters looking to end 25 years of single party rule. When she was barred from the race, a previously unknown former diplomat, Edmundo Gonzalez, replaced her on the ballot. But election officials loyal to the ruling party declared Maduro the winner despite ample credible evidence to the contrary.

Machado, revered by millions in Venezuela, went into hiding but vowed to continue fighting until democracy was restored. She reemerged in December to pick up her Nobel Peace Prize in Norway, the first time in more than a decade that she had left Venezuela.

## Stocks edge a bit below their latest records on Wall Street

By DAMIAN J. TROISE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Stocks edged a bit lower on Wall Street Friday as the first week of corporate earnings season ended with markets trading near record levels.

The wobbly day for stocks closed out a week of similar movements for major indexes amid profit reports from banks and updates on inflation.

The S&P 500 fell 4.46 points, or 0.1%, to 6,940.01. It is sitting just below its record, which was set on Monday. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 83.11 points, or 0.2%, to 49,359.33. The Nasdaq composite fell 14.63 points, or 0.1%, to 23,515.39. Each index notched weekly losses.

Smaller company stocks fared better. The Russell 2000 eked out a 0.1%, while also notching a 2% gain for the week.

Technology stocks were the strongest forces behind the market's moves throughout most of the day. Several big technology stocks made strong gains and helped offset losses elsewhere.

Broadcom rose 2.5% and Micron Technology rose 7.8%. The semiconductor companies are among several Big Tech companies with outsized valuations that often push the market higher or lower.

A handful of regional U.S. banks reported their earnings following mixed reports from their larger peers. Pittsburgh's PNC jumped 3.8% after it beat Wall Street's fourth-quarter targets, but Regions Financial fell 2.6% after reporting results that missed forecasts.

Outside of the banking sector, transport company J.B. Hunt Transport Services fell 1% after reporting mixed quarterly financial results.

The latest round of earnings updates from companies could help give Wall Street a better sense of how consumers are spending their money and how businesses are operating amid economic concerns brought on by inflation and tariffs. Results from the technology sector are being scrutinized by investors trying to figure out whether the high stock prices fueled by the craze around artificial intelligence are justified.

"Despite the strong start to 2026, we would not be surprised if markets experience volatility in the coming weeks as fourth quarter earnings progress and the threat of escalating geopolitical tensions remains," wrote Doug Beath, global equity strategist at Wells Fargo Investment Institute, in a note to investors.

Wall Street will have a broader mix of earnings to review next week, coming from airlines, industrial companies, and technology companies. United Airlines, 3M, and Intel are all scheduled to release their quarterly earnings results next week.

Crude oil prices rose after dropping sharply on Thursday. The price of U.S. crude oil rose 0.4% to \$59.44

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 54 of 62

and the price of Brent crude, the international standard, rose 0.6% to \$64.13. Oil prices have been volatile amid widespread protests in Iran against that country's leadership and President Donald Trump's warnings that the U.S. "will come to their rescue."

Gold prices, which have also been volatile this week, fell. Prices for the precious metal, often viewed as a safe haven amid economic and geopolitical uncertainty, fell 0.6%, but are still up more than 5% so far in January.

Treasury yields moved higher in the bond market. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.23% from 4.17% late Thursday. The two-year Treasury yield, which more closely tracks expectations for what the Federal Reserve will do, rose to 3.60% from 3.57% late Thursday.

The Fed's next policy meeting on interest rates is in two weeks, and Wall Street is betting that it will maintain its current benchmark interest rate. The central bank is trying to balance a slowing jobs market with stubbornly high inflation. Updates on inflation this week showed that prices remain above the Fed's 2% goal.

The U.S. central bank will get one more update on inflation next week when the government releases the personal consumption expenditures price index, or PCE. It is the Fed's preferred measure for inflation.

European markets fell, and markets in Asia were mixed. Taiwan's benchmark index rose 1.9% after its government signed a trade deal with the U.S. China, which claims the self-governed island as its own territory, protested the agreement.

The deal with Taiwan comes amid an ongoing trade war between the U.S. and much of the world. Uncertainty over tariffs have raised concerns about inflation and economic damage because of higher costs for businesses and consumers.

Canada is the latest to shift its partnerships because of the uncertainty. It has agreed to cut its 100% tariff on Chinese electric cars in return for lower tariffs on Canadian farm products as part of a break with the U.S. Tesla fell 0.2% and Rivian fell 2.3%.

## Supreme Court will hear appeal by maker of popular Roundup weedkiller to block thousands of lawsuits

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court agreed on Friday to hear an appeal from global agrochemical manufacturer Bayer to block thousands of state lawsuits alleging it failed to warn people that its popular weedkiller could cause cancer.

The justices will consider whether the Environmental Protection Agency's approval of the Roundup weed-killer without a cancer warning should rule out the state court claims.

The Trump administration has weighed in on Bayer's behalf, reversing the Biden administration's position and putting it at odds with some supporters of the Make America Healthy Again agenda who oppose giving the company the legal immunity it seeks.

Some studies associate Roundup's key ingredient, glyphosate, with cancer, although the EPA has said it is not likely to be carcinogenic to humans when used as directed.

Bayer disputes the cancer claims but has set aside \$16 billion to settle cases. At the same time, it has tried to persuade states to pass laws barring the lawsuits. Georgia and North Dakota have done so.

The high court will take up a case from Missouri, in which a jury awarded \$1.25 million to a man who developed non-Hodgkin's lymphoma after spraying Roundup on a community garden in St. Louis.

The Supreme Court in 2022 declined to hear a similar claim from Bayer in a California case that awarded more than \$86 million to a married couple.

But Germany-based Bayer, which acquired Roundup maker Monsanto in 2018, contends the Supreme Court should intervene now because lower courts have issued conflicting rulings. In 2024, the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in Bayer's favor.

Bayer faces about 181,000 Roundup claims, mostly from residential users. It has stopped using glyphosate in Roundup sold in the U.S. residential lawn and garden market. But glyphosate remains in agricultural

products. It's designed to be used with genetically modified seeds, including corn, soybeans and cotton, that resist the weedkiller's deadly effect. It allows farmers to produce more while conserving the soil by tilling it less.

Bayer has said it might have to consider pulling glyphosate from U.S. agricultural markets if the lawsuits persist.

"It is time for the U.S. legal system to establish that companies should not be punished under state laws for complying with federal warning label requirements," Bayer CEO Bill Anderson said in a statement.

Environmental groups said Bayer wants to keep juries out of the lawsuits because it keeps losing in state courts.

"It's a sad day in America when our highest court agrees to consider depriving thousands of Roundup users suffering from cancer of their day in court," said Lori Ann Burd, environmental health director at the Center for Biological Diversity.

It's unclear if the case will be argued in the spring or at the start of the next court term, in October.

## Trump to pardon ex-Puerto Rico governor Vázquez in campaign finance case, official says

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump plans to pardon former Puerto Rico Gov. Wanda Vázquez, a White House official said Friday.

Vázquez pleaded guilty last August to a campaign finance violation in a federal case that authorities say also involved a former FBI agent and a Venezuelan banker. Her sentencing was set for later this month.

Federal prosecutors had been seeking one year behind bars, something that Vázquez's attorneys opposed as they accused prosecutors of violating a guilty plea deal reached last year that saw previous charges including bribery and fraud dropped.

They noted that Vázquez had agreed to plead guilty to accepting a promise of a campaign contribution that was never received.

Attorneys for Vázquez did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The official who confirmed the planned pardon indicated Trump saw the case as political prosecution and said the investigation into Vázquez, a Republican aligned with the pro-statehood New Progressive Party, had begun 10 days after she endorsed Trump in 2020. The official wasn't authorized to reveal the news by name and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

CBS News was the first to report the plan to pardon Vázquez.

Pablo José Hernández, Puerto Rico's representative in Congress and a member of the island's main opposition party, condemned a pardon for Vázquez.

"Impunity protects and fosters corruption. The pardon ... undermines public integrity, shatters faith in justice, and offends those of us who believe in honest governance," said Hernández, a Democrat with Puerto Rico's Popular Democratic Party.

Vázquez, an attorney, was the U.S. territory's first former governor to plead guilty to a crime, specifically accepting a donation from a foreigner for her 2020 political campaign.

She was arrested in August 2022 and accused of engaging in a bribery scheme from December 2019 through June 2020 while governor. At the time, she told reporters that she was innocent.

Authorities said that Puerto Rico's Office of the Commissioner of Financial Institutions was investigating an international bank owned by Venezuelan Julio Martín Herrera Velutini because of alleged suspicious transactions that had not been reported by the bank.

Authorities said Herrera and Mark Rossini, a former FBI agent who provided consulting services to Herrera, allegedly promised to support Vázquez's campaign if she dismissed the commissioner and appointing a new one of Herrera's choosing.

Authorities said Vázquez demanded the commissioner's resignation in February 2020 after allegedly accepting the bribery offer. She also was accused of appointing a new commissioner in May 2020: a former

consultant for Herrera's bank.

Vázquez was the second woman to serve as Puerto Rico's governor and the first former governor to face federal charges.

She was sworn in as governor in August 2019 after former Gov. Ricardo Rosselló resigned following massive protests. Vázquez served until 2021, after losing the primaries of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party to former Gov. Pedro Pierluisi.

## Trump says he wants to keep Hasset in White House, clouding Fed chair selection

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Friday said he would like to keep his top economic adviser, Kevin Hasset, at the White House rather than potentially nominate him to replace Jerome Powell as chair of the Federal Reserve.

"I actually want to keep you where you are, if you want to know the truth," Trump said at a White House event, when he saw Hasset, director of the National Economic Council, in the audience. "I just want to thank you, you were fantastic on television the other day."

Trump's comments, while not clearly definitive, have upended expectations around the extensive search the White House has undergone to find a new Fed chair, one of the most powerful financial positions in the world. The president's remarks have boosted the prospects for Kevin Warsh, a former Fed governor and already a top contender for the position.

Hasset has generally been seen as the front-runner in the race to replace Powell because he has worked for Trump since his first presidential term. Last month, Trump referred to Hasset as a "potential Fed chair."

Powell's term as chair will end May 15, though he could take the unusual step of remaining on the board as governor afterward. Trump appointed Powell in 2018 but soon soured on him for raising the Fed's key interest rate that year.

Warsh's candidacy has also likely been boosted by the Justice Department's subpoenas of the Federal Reserve last week, revealed Sunday in an unusually direct video statement by Powell. The Fed chair charged that the subpoenas were essentially punishment for the central bank's refusal to lower interest rates as sharply as Trump would like.

The criminal investigation — a first for a sitting Fed chair — sparked pushback on Capitol Hill, with many Republican senators dismissing the idea that Powell could have committed a crime. The subpoenas related to testimony Powell gave last June before the Senate Banking Committee that touched on a \$2.5 billion building renovation project.

The backlash has intensified concerns in the Senate, analysts say, that the Trump administration is seeking to undermine the Fed's independence from day-to-day politics. That, in turn, may reduce Hasset's prospects.

The brouhaha over the subpoenas is "making it harder to confirm Hasset, who is distinctively close to the president," Krishna Guha, an analyst at investment bank Evercore ISI, wrote in a client note. "Warsh is trusted by Senate Republicans and would be much easier to confirm."

Yet Warsh, historically, is known as a "hawk," or someone who traditionally supports higher interest rates to ward off inflation, as opposed to a "dove," or someone who prefers lower borrowing costs to spur hiring and growth.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury note rose Friday, to just above 4.2%, from about 4.17% Thursday. The increase likely reflected a sense that Warsh's chances had improved, and as a result the Fed would be less likely over time to cut rates than under a Hasset chairmanship.

## Ex-husband indicted by grand jury in slaying of couple found in their Ohio home

By PATRICK AFTOORA-ORSAGOS Associated Press

Columbus, OHIO (AP) — An Ohio grand jury has indicted a man in the double homicide of his ex-wife and her husband who were killed in their Columbus home last month.

Court records show a Franklin County grand jury charged Michael David McKee on Jan. 16, with aggravated murder and aggravated burglary while using a firearm suppressor.

McKee, 39, a vascular surgeon who was living in Chicago, is charged in the shooting deaths of 39-year-old Monique Tepe, from whom he was divorced in 2017, and dentist Dr. Spencer Tepe, 37, in their home on Dec. 30.

No attorney for McKee was listed on court documents.

Authorities apprehended McKee in Rockford, Illinois, last weekend. The hospital where he worked — OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center — has said it is cooperating with the investigation. He is currently being held after he waived his right to an extradition hearing Monday. His next hearing in Winnebago County, Illinois, is scheduled for Jan. 23.

Columbus Police Chief Elaine Bryant said in an Associated Press interview Wednesday that authorities now believe McKee was the person seen walking down a dark alley near the Tepes' home in video footage from the night of the murders. His vehicle has also been identified traveling near the house, and a firearm found in his Illinois residence also matched evidence at the scene, she said. Authorities have not disclosed what type of firearm was used in the slaying.

His arrest Saturday attracted national attention, capping off nearly two weeks of speculation surrounding the mysterious killings. No obvious signs of forced entry were found at the Tepes' home. Police also said no weapon was found there, and murder-suicide was not suspected. Nothing was stolen, and the couple's two young children and their dog were left unharmed in the home.

Byrant said police are encouraging the public to keep the tips coming. She said emails, phone calls and other messages left with CPD helped them to gather enough evidence to make an arrest.

"We want to thank our community specifically for stepping up, reaching out, giving us the information and being open to sharing that with us," she said. "It has been tremendous."

## Cuba launches mass demonstration to decry US attack on Venezuela and demand Maduro's release

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Tens of thousands of Cubans demonstrated Friday outside the U.S. Embassy in Havana to decry the killing of 32 Cuban officers in Venezuela and demand that the U.S. government release former Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

They crowded into the open-air "José Martí Anti-Imperialist" plaza across from the embassy in a rally organized by the Cuban government as tensions between Cuba and the U.S. spike following the U.S. attack Jan. 3 on Venezuela.

The 32 Cuban officers were part of Maduro's security detail killed during the raid on his residence in Caracas to seize the former leader and bring him to the U.S. to face drug trafficking charges.

"Humanity is experiencing something very complex, and (the U.S.) is governed by a president who considers himself an emperor," said René González, 64, one of the protesters.

"We must show him that ideas are worth more than weapons," he said. "This march is a message of our unity. Independence is sacred, and we will defend it tooth and nail if necessary."

Cuba's national anthem rang out at Friday's demonstration as large Cuban flags waved in the chilly wind and big waves broke nearby along Havana's famed sea wall. Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel shook hands with members of the crowd clad in jackets and scarves before speaking to them.

"The current U.S. administration has opened the door to an era of barbarism, plunder and neo-fascism,"

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 58 of 62

he said.

The demonstration was a show of popular strength after U.S. President Donald Trump recently demanded that Cuba make a deal with him before it is "too late." He did not explain what kind of deal.

Trump also has said that Cuba will no longer live off Venezuela's oil and money. Experts say the move could have catastrophic consequences since Cuba is already struggling with severe blackouts.

"No one here surrenders," Díaz-Canel said. "The current emperor of the White House and his infamous secretary of state haven't stopped threatening me."

Washington has maintained a policy of sanctions against Cuba since the 1960s to pressure the island's government to improve its human rights record, end its one-party communist system and allow democracy. The sanctions have been further tightened during Trump's presidency, suffocating the island's economy.

"Cuba does not have to make any political concessions, and that will never be on the table for negotiations aimed at reaching an understanding between Cuba and the United States," Díaz-Canel said. "It is important that they understand this. We will always be open to dialogue and improving relations between our two countries, but only on equal terms and based on mutual respect."

After the president's speech, the demonstration transitioned into a parade that Cubans call a "combatant march," a custom that originated during the time of the late leader Fidel Castro. The crowd was led by a line of people holding pictures of the 32 officers killed.

"Down with imperialism!" the crowd yelled. "Cuba will prevail!"

The demonstration was organized a day after tens of thousands of Cubans gathered at the headquarters of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces to pay their respects to the 32 officers slain.

Their remains arrived home on Thursday morning, and they are scheduled to be laid to rest on Friday afternoon in various cemeteries following memorial ceremonies in all of Cuba's provincial capitals.

## Inside a year of firings that have shaken the Trump Justice

### Department: 'A great deal of fear'

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Michael Ben'ary was driving one evening last October when he paused at a red light to check his work phone. He was in the middle of a counterterrorism prosecution so important that President Donald Trump highlighted it in his address to Congress.

Ben'ary said he was shocked to see his phone was disabled. He found the explanation later in his personal email account, a letter informing him he was fired.

A veteran prosecutor, Ben'ary handled high-profile cases over two decades at the Justice Department. Yet the same credentials that enhanced Ben'ary's resume spelled the undoing of his government career.

His termination came hours after right-wing commentator Julie Kelly told her online followers that he had previously served as a senior counsel to Lisa Monaco, the No. 2 Justice Department official in Democratic President Joe Biden's administration. Kelly also suggested Ben'ary was part of the "internal resistance" to prosecuting former FBI Director James Comey. Ben'ary was never involved in the case.

As Trump's attorney general, Pam Bondi, approaches her first year on the job, the firings of attorneys such as Ben'ary have defined her turbulent tenure. The terminations and a larger voluntary exodus of lawyers have erased centuries of combined experience and left the department with fewer career employees to act as a bulwark for the rule of law as Trump, a Republican, tests the limits of executive power by demanding prosecutions of his political enemies.

Interviews by The Associated Press of more than a half-dozen fired employees offer a snapshot of the toll. The departures include lawyers who prosecuted attacks on police at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, civil rights and ethics enforcers, immigration judges and attorneys who defend administration policies. This week, several prosecutors in Minnesota moved to resign amid turmoil over an investigation into the shooting of a woman in Minneapolis by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement officer.

"To lose people at that career level, people who otherwise intended to stay and now are either being discharged or themselves are walking away, is immensely damaging to the public interest," said Stuart

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 59 of 62

Gerson, a senior official in the George H.W. Bush administration and acting attorney general early in the Clinton administration.

Justice Connection, a network of department alums, estimates that more than 230 lawyers, agents and other employees from across the department were fired last year. More than 6,400 employees are estimated to have left a department that at the end of 2025 had roughly 108,000.

The Justice Department says it has hired thousands of career attorneys over the last year. The Trump administration has publicly characterized some of the fired and departed workers as out-of-step with its agenda.

After he was fired, Ben'ary who led the national security unit at the U.S. attorney's office for the Eastern District of Virginia, posted a note near his door reminding colleagues they had vowed to follow the facts "unhindered by political interference."

But, he warned, "In recent months, the political leadership of the Department have violated these principles, jeopardizing our national security and making American citizens less safe."

An unprecedented purge

The firings began before Bondi arrived in February. Prosecutors on special counsel Jack Smith's team that investigated Trump were terminated days after the inauguration, followed by prosecutors hired on temporary assignments for cases resulting from the Capitol insurrection in 2021.

"The people working on these cases were not political agents of any kind," said fired Jan. 6 prosecutor Aliya Khalidi.

The Justice Department has disputed the accounts of some of those who have fired or quit and has defended the termination of those who investigated Trump as "consistent with the mission of ending the weaponization of government."

"This is the most efficient Department of Justice in American history, and our attorneys will continue to deliver measurable results for the American people," the department said in a statement. It says more than 3,400 career attorneys have been hired since Trump took office.

The departures have affected the department's daily business as well as efforts to fulfill Trump's desires to prosecute political opponents.

Desperate for lawyers willing to file criminal cases against Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James, the administration in September forced out the veteran U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, replacing him with Lindsey Halligan, a White House aide with no experience as a federal prosecutor.

Halligan secured the indictments but the win was short-lived. A judge dismissed both prosecutions, calling Halligan's appointment unlawful.

Firings via email

Upon Trump's return to the White House, Khalidi watched Jan. 6 cases she handled get dismantled by Trump's sweeping clemency for all 1,500 defendants charged in the riot.

Less than two weeks later, a Justice Department demand for the names of FBI agents involved in Jan. 6 investigations triggered rumors of potential mass firings. As she prepared dinner one Friday evening, she received an email suggesting she had lost her own job.

The news came in September for Anam Petit, an immigration judge, who learned via email during a break between hearings that she'd been fired. She left to text her husband, then returned to work.

"I just put my phone back in my pocket and went into the courtroom and delivered my decision, with a very shaky voice and shaky hands, trying to center myself back to that decision just so that I could relay it," Petit said.

'Our country depends on you'

Trump used his address to Congress in March to announce the capture of a militant from the Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate who was charged in the Kabul airport bombing that killed 13 American service members during the 2021 withdrawal from the country.

Ben'ary spent the next several months working on the case against Mohammad Sharifullah. On Oct. 1, Ben'ary was fired without explanation.

In his farewell note, he observed that in "just a few short months" career employees like himself had been removed.

"While I am no longer your colleague, I ask that each of you continue to do the right thing, in the right way, for the right reasons," Ben'ary wrote. "Follow the facts and the law. Stand up for what we all believe in — our Constitution and the rule of law. Our country depends on you."

## **A South Korean court sentences Yoon to 5 years in prison on charges related to martial law decree**

By HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — A South Korean court sentenced former President Yoon Suk Yeol to five years in prison Friday in the first verdict from eight criminal trials over the martial law debacle that forced him out of office and other allegations.

Yoon was impeached, arrested and dismissed as president after his short-lived imposition of martial law in December 2024 triggered huge public protests calling for his ouster.

The most significant criminal charge against him alleges that his martial law enforcement amounted to a rebellion. An independent counsel has requested the death sentence over that charge, and the Seoul Central District Court will decide on that in a ruling on Feb. 19.

Yoon has maintained he didn't intend to place the country under military rule for an extended period, saying his decree was only meant to inform the people about the danger of the liberal-controlled parliament obstructing his agenda. But investigators have viewed Yoon's decree as an attempt to bolster and prolong his rule, charging him with rebellion, abuse of power and other criminal offenses.

Yoon gets 5-year prison term in 1st verdict from 8 trials

In Friday's case, the Seoul court sentenced Yoon for defying attempts to detain him and fabricating the martial law proclamation. He was also sentenced for sidestepping a legally mandated full Cabinet meeting, which deprived some Cabinet members who were not convened of their rights to deliberate on his decree.

Judge Baek Dae-hyun said in the televised ruling that imposing "a heavy punishment" was necessary because Yoon hasn't shown remorse and has only repeated "hard-to-comprehend excuses." The judge also said restoring legal systems damaged by Yoon's action was necessary.

Yoon's defense team said they will appeal the ruling, which they believe was "politicized" and reflected "the unilateral arguments by the independent counsel." Yoon's defense team argued the ruling "oversimplified the boundary between the exercise of the president's constitutional powers and criminal liability."

Yoon will likely avoid death sentence in rebellion trial

Park SungBae, a lawyer who specializes in criminal law, said there is little chance the court would decide Yoon should face the death penalty in the rebellion case. He said the court will likely issue a life sentence or a sentence of 30 years or more in prison.

South Korea has maintained a de facto moratorium on executions since 1997 and courts rarely hand down death sentences. Park said the court would take into account that Yoon's decree didn't cause casualties and didn't last long, although Yoon hasn't shown genuine remorse for his action.

South Korea has a history of pardoning former presidents who were jailed over diverse crimes in the name of promoting national unity. Those pardoned include strongman Chun Doo-hwan, who received the death penalty at a district court over his 1979 coup, the bloody 1980 crackdowns of pro-democracy protests that killed about 200 people, and other crimes.

Even if Yoon is spared the death penalty or life imprisonment at the rebellion trial, he may still face other prison sentences in the multiple smaller trials he faces.

Some observers say Yoon is likely retaining a defiant attitude in the ongoing trials to maintain his support base in the belief that he cannot avoid a lengthy sentence but could be pardoned in the future.

Yoon's decree plunged South Korea into political turmoil

On the night of Dec. 3, 2024, Yoon abruptly declared martial law in a televised speech, saying he would

eliminate “anti-state forces” and protect “the constitutional democratic order.” Yoon sent troops and police officers to encircle the National Assembly, but many apparently didn’t aggressively cordon off the area, allowing enough lawmakers to get into an assembly hall to vote down Yoon’s decree.

No major violence occurred, but Yoon’s decree caused the biggest political crisis in South Korea in decades and rattled its diplomacy and financial markets. For many, his decree, the first of its kind in more than 40 years in South Korea, brought back harrowing memories of past dictatorships in the 1970s and 1980s, when military-backed leaders used martial law and emergency measures to deploy soldiers and tanks on the streets to suppress demonstrations.

After Yoon’s ouster, his liberal rival Lee Jae Myung became president via a snap election last June. After taking office, Lee appointed three independent counsels to look into allegations involving Yoon, his wife and associates.

Yoon’s other trials deal with charges like ordering drone flights over North Korea to deliberately inflame animosities to look for a pretext to declare martial law. Other charges accuse Yoon of manipulating the investigation into a marine’s drowning in 2023 and receiving free opinion surveys from an election broker in return for a political favor.

## **Julio Iglesias calls sexual abuse allegations against him ‘absolutely untrue’**

MADRID (AP) — Grammy-winning singer Julio Iglesias on Friday denied allegations that he sexually assaulted two former employees, calling the accusations “absolutely untrue.”

Media reports from earlier this week alleged Iglesias had sexually and physically assaulted two women who worked at his residences in the Dominican Republic and the Bahamas between January and October 2021. A day later, Spanish prosecutors said they were studying the allegations.

“With deep sorrow, I respond to the accusations made by two people who previously worked at my home. I deny having abused, coerced or disrespected any woman. These accusations are absolutely false and cause me great sadness,” Iglesias said on Instagram.

Spanish news outlet elDiario.es and U.S. television network Univision Noticias published the joint, three-year investigation on Jan. 13 into Iglesias’ alleged misconduct.

A Spanish high court received formal allegations against Iglesias on Jan. 5, officials said. Iglesias could potentially be taken in front of the Madrid-based court, which can try alleged crimes by Spanish citizens while they are abroad, according to its press office.

A rights group representing the two women said they were accusing Iglesias of “crimes against sexual freedom and indemnity such as sexual harassment” and of “human trafficking for the purpose of forced labor and servitude.” Women’s Link Worldwide said the two women had presented the complaint to the Spanish court.

The 82-year-old is one of the world’s most successful musical artists, having sold more than 300 million records in more than a dozen languages. After making his start in Spain, Iglesias won immense popularity in the U.S. and wider world in the 1970s and 1980s. He is the father of pop singer Enrique Iglesias.

In 1988, he won a Grammy for Best Latin Pop Performance for his album “Un Hombre Solo.” He also received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Grammys in 2019.

“I had never experienced such malice, but I still have the strength for people to know the full truth and to defend my dignity against such a serious affront,” Iglesias wrote on social media.

He thanked those who had sent messages of support.

# Groton Daily Independent

Friday, January 16, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 226 ~ 62 of 62

## Today in History: January 17, US alcohol prohibition begins

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Jan. 17, the 17th day of 2026. There are 348 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 17, 1920, prohibition of alcohol began in the United States as the Volstead Act went into effect in support of the 18th Amendment.

Also on this date:

In 1950, the Great Brink's Robbery took place as seven masked men held up the Brink's Building in Boston, stealing \$1.2 million in cash and \$1.5 million in checks and money orders.

In 1961, President Dwight D. Eisenhower delivered his farewell address in which he warned against "the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex."

In 1977, convicted murderer Gary Gilmore, 36, was shot by a firing squad at Utah State Prison in the first U.S. execution in a decade. He was put to death after the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty the previous year.

In 1990, The Four Seasons, The Four Tops, The Kinks, The Platters, Simon and Garfunkel and The Who were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

In 1994, the Northridge earthquake rattled the Los Angeles area; the magnitude 6.7 quake was responsible for 57 deaths, 9,000 injuries and an estimated \$25 billion in damages.

In 1995, more than 6,000 people were killed when a magnitude 7.2 earthquake struck the city of Kobe (koh-bay), Japan.

In 2017, President Barack Obama granted clemency to Chelsea Manning, allowing the transgender Army intelligence officer convicted of leaking more than 700,000 U.S. documents to go free nearly three decades early. Manning was one of 209 people whose sentences were commuted by Obama days before leaving office.

In 2022, as Russian troops stationed near Ukraine's border launched drills, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov angrily rejected U.S. allegations that Moscow was preparing a pretext to invade Ukraine. (Russia would launch a full-scale invasion of the neighboring country on Feb. 24.)

Today's birthdays: Rock musician Mick Taylor is 77. U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is 72. Singer-songwriter Steve Earle is 71. Singer Paul Young is 70. TV host-comedian Steve Harvey is 69. Singer Susanna Hoffs (The Bangles) is 67. Actor-comedian Jim Carrey is 64. Former first lady Michelle Obama is 62. Musician Kid Rock is 55. Rapper Lil Jon is 54. Actor-singer Zooey Deschanel is 46. Basketball Hall of Famer Dwyane Wade is 44. DJ-musician Calvin Harris is 42. Boxer Oleksandr Usyk is 39. Actor Kelly Marie Tran is 37. Boxer-actor Jake Paul is 29.