

Groton Daily Independent

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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.

Tuesday, Jan. 20, 2026

School Breakfast: Breakfast slider.
School Lunch: Tater hot hot dish, cooked broccoli.
City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.
Groton United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
MS Boys Wrestling at Simmons Middle School, 4 p.m.
Boys Wrestling Triangular with Clark/Willow Lake at Hamlin, 6 p.m.
JH BBB at Northwestern, 6 p.m.



Wednesday, Jan. 21, 2026

School Breakfast: Omelets.
School Lunch: Pasta primavera.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad Council, 7 p.m.
Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.
6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.
3rd/4th Grade Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.
5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

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1440

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

Iranian Death Toll

At least 5,000 people have been killed in protests across Iran, including roughly 500 security personnel, an Iranian official said yesterday (human rights groups say they have verified over 3,900 people dead with potentially thousands more believed to be killed). The unrest is believed to be the deadliest since the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The announcement comes as President Donald Trump appears to have backed down from threats to strike Tehran, though he reiterated calls for regime change Saturday. Trump cited Iran's alleged decision to refrain from 800 planned executions in his decision to back down. However, the US last week dispatched an aircraft carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln, toward the region; it could take days before the strike group arrives in the Middle East. US officials say another decision could come within weeks.

Iran is 12 days into a nationwide internet blackout, although some users have reported access to WhatsApp and texting. Iran's crackdown has meanwhile reportedly quelled the protests.

NASA's Lunar Launcher

The massive rocket system that will ferry NASA astronauts on the Artemis II mission was moved to its launch pad Saturday (w/video), the latest step in the agency's effort to return humans to the moon. Officials said the mission could launch as soon as Feb. 6.

Established during the first Trump administration, the Artemis program is meant to return humans to the moon for the first time since 1972 (and set the groundwork for an eventual lunar base). Blasting off on NASA's Space Launch System, Artemis I made an uncrewed trip around the moon in 2022; the upcoming flight will follow a similar trajectory, but with astronauts aboard. Artemis III, tentatively scheduled for summer 2027, will land humans on the moon's surface.

Aside from space exploration, the program has taken on a geopolitical element, with China and Russia collaborating on a nuclear-powered lunar base near the moon's south pole.

EU-Mercosur Deal

The European Union and four South American countries—the so-called Mercosur bloc—signed their long-delayed free trade agreement Saturday. The agreement came despite protests from some European farmers.

The Mercosur deal was 25 years in the making and covers roughly one-quarter of global gross domestic product—\$128.8B in trade as of 2024. More than 90% of tariffs will be dropped between the EU's 27 member countries and Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay. Some cuts will be phased in over the next 10 to 15 years. European exports including cars, wine, and cheese are expected to benefit from reduced tariffs, in exchange for the EU lowering tariffs on South American imports including beef and soybeans.

Today, the European Parliament will take steps to ratify the deal despite opposition from Austria, France, Hungary, Ireland, and Poland. South American legislatures must also ratify the agreement before it can go into effect.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

NFL conference championship games set for Sunday, Jan. 25 with Denver Broncos hosting the New England Patriots, Seattle Seahawks hosting the Los Angeles Rams.

No. 1 Indiana faces No. 10 Miami in college football championship game tonight at 7:30 pm ET on ESPN. Venus Williams becomes the oldest woman to compete in an Australian Open singles main draw at age 45. "Sentimental Value" sweeps top awards at the European Film Awards, including best film, best director.

Science & Technology

Researchers create high-resolution map of Antarctica's features buried underneath its ice; results reveal hidden valleys, mountains, and more.

Astronomers discover bar-shaped cloud of iron atoms inside the famous Ring Nebula; origin of metal cloud unknown, nebula was first observed in 1779.

Physicists develop new method to cool ions trapped for quantum computing applications to 10 times below the limit of current laser-based approaches.

The best resources we've found to explain quantum computing (1440 Topics)

Business & Markets

US stock markets fall slightly Friday (S&P 500 -0.1%, Dow -0.2%, Nasdaq -0.1%) amid speculation on who will replace Fed Chair Jerome Powell.

Chipmaker TSMC posts record fourth quarter earnings, with revenue up 25% year-over-year.

President Donald Trump threatens eight European countries with 10% tariffs starting in February for opposing US control of Greenland.

Elon Musk reportedly seeking as much as \$134B from OpenAI and Microsoft in damages, alleging they committed fraud by departing from their nonprofit mission; Musk helped launch OpenAI in 2015 with \$38M in seed funding.

Politics & World Affairs

Army puts 1,500 soldiers on standby for possible deployment to Minnesota.

Wildfires in Chile kill at least 18 people as of this writing, force at least 20,000 to evacuate.

Portugal elections head to rare runoff.

Syrian government signs ceasefire deal with Syrian Democratic Forces, a Kurdish-led group backed by the US, after seizing control of Kurdish territory.

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The Vikings are officially spectators now, but the NFL postseason has a funny way of reminding you why you keep watching, even when your own team is already on the couch. This weekend gave us everything. Overtime drama, blowouts, missed opportunities, and a couple of performances that will live in playoff lore for a long time. Four games, four very different outcomes, and plenty of lessons for teams still chasing a Super Bowl.

Denver Broncos (1) 33, Buffalo Bills (6) 30 (OT)

The weekend kicked off with the most entertaining game of the bunch. Buffalo had multiple chances to put Denver away, and every time, they let the door stay cracked. The Broncos took advantage. After trading blows

throughout regulation, Denver finished the job in overtime to escape with a 33-30 win. Buffalo's offense moved the ball consistently, but red-zone inefficiency and a few costly mistakes kept them from closing things out. Denver, meanwhile, stayed patient, leaned on balance, and made the one extra play when it mattered most. For the Bills, it is another postseason that ends with "what if". For the Broncos, they'll be without their 2nd-year QB Bo Nix, who fractured his ankle and will miss the rest of the season.

Seattle Seahawks (1) 41, San Francisco 49ers (6) 6

If you were looking for drama, this was not the game for you. Seattle came out angry, focused, and ruthless. The Seahawks jumped on San Francisco early and never let up, turning what was supposed to be a competitive playoff matchup into a laugher by halftime. San Francisco had no answers on either side of the ball, and once things started to snowball, it was clear this one was over. Seattle dominated the line of scrimmage, forced mistakes, and sent a loud message to the rest of the league that they are not just happy to be here. For the 49ers, this one will sting for a long time.

New England Patriots (2) 28, Houston Texans (5) 16

This game felt exactly like a Patriots playoff win has felt for the better part of two decades. New England did not overwhelm Houston with flash or fireworks. They simply executed better in every phase of the game. The Texans hung around early, but once the Patriots grabbed control, they never gave it back. Houston struggled to sustain drives, and New England capitalized on short fields and key moments. It was not pretty, but it was efficient, disciplined, and effective. The Texans' season ends with progress, while the Patriots keep marching forward, doing what they always seem to do in January.

Los Angeles Rams (5) 20, Chicago Bears (2) 17 (OT)

Sunday night delivered the chaos that playoff football promises. Chicago looked like the better team for long stretches, but the Rams refused to go away. The game swung back and forth, and neither side could land the knockout punch in regulation. Overtime felt inevitable, and Los Angeles made sure it did not last long. The Rams capitalized on a Bears mistake and walked it off with a 20-17 win, silencing the Chicago crowd and ending a promising season in brutal fashion. For the Bears, it is a painful reminder that playoff football comes down to inches and execution. For the Rams, it is proof that experience still matters when the lights are brightest.

When the dust settled, the top seeds mostly held serve, but not without resistance. Denver's overtime win and Los Angeles' road upset were reminders that the margin for error in the playoffs is razor thin. One missed tackle, one failed conversion, or one bad decision can swing an entire season.

As Vikings fans, watching these games is equal parts entertainment and frustration. You see teams make mistakes Minnesota has made all year. You also see teams rise to the moment in ways the Vikings simply did not. That contrast is hard to ignore.

The postseason only gets tougher from here. The teams still standing are battle-tested, confident, and one step closer to hoisting a trophy. For everyone else, including the Vikings, the offseason questions start now.

And unfortunately, they are the same ones we have been asking for years.

“Sole Survivors: How to give your feet the support they need”

Our feet support us all day, but often get overlooked until they start hurting. When every step hurts, it becomes clear how important our feet are. There can be many causes of foot pain. There are many things that can cause foot pain. A common cause is problems with the arches in the feet.

There are three arches in the foot. They are created by ligaments and tendons in the foot along the metatarsal and tarsal bones. The transverse arch is just behind the toes and goes across the front of the foot. The lateral longitudinal arch is on the foot’s outside. It helps keep your foot stable while walking. The medial longitudinal arch is the one that we are most familiar with. It is what most people refer to when they describe having high arches or flat feet.

These three arches form a triangle in your foot from the heel to the base of the toes. The foot’s arches are key for balance and shock absorption while walking. Problems with the arches can cause issues with the ankles, knees, and even cause issues in the back. It is important to address issues with the arches to prevent problems elsewhere.

“Flat feet” is when the medial transverse arch falls. This makes the ankle roll inward. We call this condition “pronation.” Some people do not have any pain with this condition. In some people, this pronation can lead to pain. You might feel it in the arch of your foot, your ankle, or your knees. This happens because ligaments and tendons get stretched too much.

High arches are the opposite of flat feet. This is where the arch of the foot rises higher than normal. Due to this, the foot does not absorb shock as well when walking and can lead to increased pain in the feet. It can also lead to hammertoes, bunions, and plantar fasciitis. This also affects how weight distributes across the foot, which can impact balance.

While both of these conditions sound like opposites, it is possible to have both at the same time. A person may have a high arch while sitting. However, when they stand and put weight on their feet, the arch can flatten to flat feet. The answer to both of these problems is the correct support for the foot and arch. Flat feet need help to maintain the normal arch. High arches need extra cushioning and support. This helps spread weight and absorb impact while walking.

No one wants their feet to merely survive the day. If you’re worried about your arches or have foot pain, seeing a podiatrist is a great first step. They can help get you back on track to walking pain-free so you can not just survive, but thrive.



Jill Kruse, DO

Dr. Jill Kruse is a hospitalist at the Brookings Health System in Brookings, SD. She serves as one of the Prairie Doc Volunteer Hosts during its 24th Season providing Health Education Based on Science, Built on Trust. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).

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EARTHTALK

Severe Crisis At The Great Barrier Reef, Researchers Warn by Chuhan Wang

Dear EarthTalk: How is the Great Barrier Reef off Australia faring?
—Mary Smith, via email

The Great Barrier Reef, one of the world's most biodiverse marine ecosystems, is facing its most severe crisis. Stretching over 2,300 kilometers and home to thousands of marine species, the reef provides not only ecological richness but also over \$6 billion annually to Australia's economy. However, in recent years, climate-driven stressors have pushed it to the brink. "It just kept warming... The heating was intense," says marine biologist Maria Byrne of the University of Sydney, describing the 2024 heatwave. That event was one of the most catastrophic coral bleaching episodes ever. In 2024, Byrne and her team tracked 400 coral colonies. They found that 80 percent were bleached and 53 percent had died.



The marine life at and around Australia's Great Barrier Reef is in jeopardy due to global warming and other threats. Credit: Roddy Scheer.

This heatwave led to the sixth mass bleaching for the reef since 1998. However, this was the first time severe bleaching had occurred consecutively, from 2023 to 2024, making it incredibly difficult for the ecosystem to recover. Aerial and in-water surveys confirmed widespread bleaching across the northern regions of the reef during the 2024-2025 summer. While some areas reported low to medium bleaching (One to-30 percent), the Far Northern region faced limited access, leaving conditions unclear.

The main factor behind this is rising sea temperatures, with ocean surfaces recorded at 1.2 degrees Celsius above average in February 2024. These higher temperatures caused corals to expel the symbiotic algae that give them color and nutrients, which leads to bleaching and, eventually, death. Flooding, fresh-water runoff and outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish due to have worsened the bleaching.

This is not just an isolated event. The 2024-2025 season is part of a global bleaching crisis, with reefs in 54 countries impacted. The National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has officially declared this the fourth global bleaching event, the consequences of which are devastating. Beyond biodiversity loss, the collapse threatens the stability of Australia's tourism and fishing industries.

Government strategies included investments in water quality programs and coral restoration projects. However, conservationists warn these measures are not enough. "The next term of government could be the last opportunity to give the reef a fighting chance," says Richard Leck, the head of oceans at WWF Australia. Experts are calling for urgent climate action, like stronger climate policies, supporting reef conservation organizations, reducing carbon emissions, and raising awareness about coral bleaching. We need to start taking meaningful action against climate change and pollution.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Far fewer people buy Obamacare coverage as insurance premiums spike

While some states are seeing more enrollees, there has been a drop nationwide

BY: NADA HASSANEIN

Nationwide, the number of people buying health plans on Obamacare insurance marketplaces is down by about 833,000 compared with a year ago, according to federal data released this week.

Many states are reporting fewer new enrollees, more people dropping their coverage, and more people choosing cheaper and less generous health insurance plans with higher deductibles.

Across most states, Thursday was the last day to enroll for plans that start in February. But nine states and Washington, D.C., have deadlines later this month, so the numbers could change.

There are 21 states with state-run health insurance marketplaces, and the rest use the federal website. The vast majority of states have seen declines in enrollment so far, compared with around this time last year.

Preliminary data released Monday by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services shows 22.8 million enrollees, down from a record total of 24.3 million last year.

Premiums have surged as a result of the expiration of enhanced federal subsidies first made available by the American Rescue Plan Act in 2021 and later extended through the end of 2025 by the Inflation Reduction Act. The availability of the subsidies spurred a sharp increase in the number of people buying health plans on the marketplaces. In 2020, 11.4 million people were enrolled in marketplaces through Obamacare, formally known as the Affordable Care Act. More than double that amount enrolled last year.

Congress failed to reach an agreement on extending the subsidies before the end of last year and still hasn't reached one. As a result, premiums were expected to increase this year by 114% on average — from \$888 last year to about \$1,904, according to estimates made in September by health policy research organization KFF.

The higher costs appear to be driving many people to forgo insurance or opt for cheaper, less generous plans this year, health officials and analysts say. Several states with state-based marketplaces — including Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, New York, Vermont, Virginia and Washington — are reporting fewer enrollments this year in comparison with enrollments through early January 2025, according to early data. Other states, such as California, are reporting fewer new enrollees.

"It's important to consider that this is preliminary data, so this represents people who have signed up and selected the plan — but they probably haven't received their first premium bill," said Elizabeth Lukanen, executive director of the health policy research organization State Health Access Data Assistance Center at the University of Minnesota. "Once that happens, I think there's concern — and it seems very possible — that people may decide to drop coverage. So, the decline could get bigger.

"On the other hand, open enrollment hasn't closed, so you have two things sort of competing. It seems pretty likely that there will be a decline," she said.

If the downward trend continues, the nation could see the first decline in enrollment since 2020, Lukanen said, adding that a full picture of income levels and demographics of people who have dropped coverage won't be clear until the summer.

In Pennsylvania, data updated through Tuesday shows more than 15,000 previously enrolled adults between the ages of 55 and 64 have dropped coverage entirely — the most of any age bracket.

Pennsylvania's state-based exchange, Pennie, has seen about 15% fewer new enrollments compared with last year. The state is also reporting 1,000 residents dropping coverage per day during open enrollment — with the most coverage losses among people with incomes 150% to 200% of the poverty level. These could include families of two adults and two children with an income between \$48,225 and \$64,300.

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The state is seeing an “unprecedented” number of previously enrolled people dropping coverage, said Devon Trolley, executive director of the Pennsylvania Health Insurance Exchange Authority.

California is reporting 31% fewer new enrollees this year compared with last year, and more than a third of new enrollees are choosing bronze plans — the lowest, least generous coverage tier — up from less than a quarter at this time last year.

In Minnesota, data as of Dec. 3 shows more than half of active enrollees are opting to keep their coverage tier. But of those changing plans, more than a third — 37% — are going to cheaper plans. The state notes a full picture won’t be available until March.

Meanwhile, some states are seeing roughly the same number of enrollees or more. Texas, for example, is reporting about 4.1 million people enrolling this year compared with 4 million last year.

Charles Miller, health and economic mobility policy director at Texas 2036, a policy research nonprofit, said it’s unclear why enrollments are up, but pointed to some clues.

“Texas had a uniquely large population of uninsured individuals eligible for free and inexpensive plans that hadn’t enrolled previously ... [and] has more affordable bronze and gold plans than many states,” he said.

He attributes that to a bipartisan state law, enacted in 2021, that had the effect of increasing subsidies for those plans, Miller said.

Nevada is seeing fewer enrollees overall. But compared with this time last year, the state is seeing 29% more people who are actively shopping the website to explore plans, said Katie Charleson, communications officer at the Nevada Health Authority Division of Consumer Health Services.

The state introduced a new public option, according to the Nevada Current, and health officials told lawmakers last week that about 1 in 5 active shoppers are opting for that plan.

In addition to the expiration of the subsidies, the cost of coverage has risen because of other factors, according to insurers. They say they’ve had to raise premiums because of rising prescription drug costs, inflation and workforce challenges, such as provider shortages.

But the enhanced premium tax credits were aimed at buffering those year-to-year changes for Americans with lower incomes, said Trolley, adding that the tax credit structure “helps make sure that [enrollees] don’t see those really larger drops that happen from time to time, sort of from those market forces.”

“When there are broader rate increases of ... the total cost of the coverage, the tax credits are structured so that people who get a tax credit don’t feel a lot of that increase. They’re sort of sheltered from it on a year to year basis,” Trolley said. “The tax credit is tied to someone’s income and limits what they pay as part of their income, not necessarily tied to the cost of the coverage.”

She added that she’s also heard from some residents who say they are waiting to enroll in a plan to see if Congress takes action.

“People are leaving the ACA marketplace because the trade-offs have just become harder to justify,” Lukanen said. “What worries me is that when the coverage becomes unaffordable, it isn’t that people suddenly stop needing care. They just lose the protection that insurance offers, and those health care costs don’t go away.”

Lukanen added that if more people forgo coverage, health care services may end up costing the nation more overall.

“If people are going to the doctor and they don’t have insurance, these costs are then just shifted. They’re shifted to hospitals, ultimately to the community and the taxpayer.”

Trolley echoed that, saying she’s concerned about the overall burden on providers in rural counties, which are seeing the highest drops in Obamacare coverage in Pennsylvania.

“Any increase in the uninsured rate is going to further strain providers that are in rural areas, especially — further strain their financial situation,” she said. “We are very concerned about that in Pennsylvania.”

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

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

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

Civil rights settlement bars jail time for those who can't pay sobriety monitoring fees

Lawyer says Pennington County case involving 24-7 program should put sheriffs on notice

BY: JOHN HULT

South Dakota's second most populous county has agreed it will no longer jail people who can't afford to pay the daily fees attached to the state's signature sobriety program.

Pennington County's settlement in a federal class action lawsuit could impact the way counties operate the 24-7 program, which originated in South Dakota and has since spread to other states.

People accused of crimes involving drugs or alcohol can be assigned to the program and released as they await trial, or as part of their sentence, on the condition they submit to sobriety monitoring and pay for it.

The participation price varies based on the type of monitoring involved and how long a person takes part. Some people pay \$2 a day for breath testing, while others pay \$30-\$42 a week for urinalysis drug testing or alcohol monitoring bracelets. Judges also permit participants to shift from one method to another along the way to better suit their financial or life circumstances.

Some people remain on the program for weeks or months, and occasionally for a year or more, depending on how long it takes for their case to work its way through the court system.

The Pennington County settlement comes in a lawsuit filed in 2023 by a Rapid City man named Ricky Lookingback, who'd been ordered to participate in drug testing.

He was jailed for failure to pay a 24-7 fee, which he argued was a violation of constitutional prohibitions on jailing people for debt. He also alleged that he belonged to a class of individuals who'd been jailed for the same reason in Pennington County, and asked for a judgment on behalf of all class members.

Under the terms of the agreement, Lookingback and 37 others jailed for inability to pay program fees are members of the class and are each eligible for cash payments, with Lookingback in line for \$10,000 and the others for \$1,000 each. The settlement also dictates that no one can be jailed or threatened with jail time for their inability to pay program fees.

Class members will have the opportunity to object to the terms of the settlement at a hearing in February. A federal judge can then accept or reject the agreement, which has been signed by Lookingback and county officials.

Jim Leach, Lookingback's Rapid City lawyer, said the settlement should put all South Dakota counties on notice that jailing the indigent is a civil rights violation and could draw a legal challenge.

"I've got nothing against the 24-7 program," Leach said in an interview with South Dakota Searchlight. "From everything I can gather, it's a really good program that has helped a lot of people. But nonetheless, the basic constitutional law in this country is that we cannot jail people for poverty."

24-7 built on frequent testing, participant fees

Under the 24-7 program, testing fees are due at the time of testing or in advance.

In the cheapest and most common form of 24-7, people appear twice daily at a local jail to take breath tests for alcohol, at a cost of \$1 per test. Those who fail a test or fail to show up can be put in jail, after which a judge decides whether to release them again.

More than 90,000 people have been on some version of the program since its launch, and hundreds participate every day. Its rollout began as a three-county pilot project in 2005 under the guidance of former Attorney General Larry Long, who'd tried it decades earlier as Bennett County's state's attorney.

In testimony before the Legislature in 2022, Long called it "the most efficient tool to reduce DUIs ever enacted in South Dakota."

Driving under the influence arrests have not dropped dramatically since the program launched, but they also haven't grown in line with the state's population, which is 20% higher today than in 2005.

DUI arrests hit 11,612 in 2024, the last full year reported in the Department of Public Safety's annual summary. That was the highest tally since 2007, the year the 24-7 program went statewide, when there

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were 11,756 DUI arrests.

Long stepped down as attorney general in 2009 to become a circuit court judge. In an interview with South Dakota Searchlight, he said DUIs holding more or less steady is a sign that the program works.

The bigger impact, Long said, has been on felony drunken driving charges and alcohol-related traffic crashes.

In 2007, when the program went statewide, there were 1,092 felony DUI charges, each representing a third or subsequent offense. By 2017, the year he retired as a judge, that number had fallen to 699. In the last fiscal year, there were 468 charges for such repeat offenses, according to the Unified Judicial System.

Alcohol-related crashes, meanwhile, hit a record high of 630 in 2006, according to the Department of Public Safety. The highest tally since then was 535, recorded in 2021. In 2024, there were 458 such crashes.

Since its start in South Dakota, versions of the 24-7 program have spread to other states, including North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Wisconsin and Utah.

Constitutional concerns about jailing the program's poorest participants have always been a sticking point, Long said, even for people who've generally supported the concept.

The price point for breath tests was set low intentionally, he said, in hopes of making the program accessible to the widest range of people.

From the start, Long advised the county sheriffs who run the programs that an inability to pay shouldn't be enough to draw immediate sanctions.

"What I used to say during my presentations was 'if you skip or if you fail, you go to jail,'" said Long. "You don't go to jail for not paying."

Long acknowledged, however, that local officials may not have always followed that guidance.

There are no statewide statistics on how many people may have been jailed for failure to pay 24-7 fees, according to the Attorney's General's Office, since counties manage their own programs. During debate on a bill to alter the program in 2022, administrators said punishment for failure to pay alone is a rarity, based on reports from counties.

Fees still too much for some

The 24-7 fees may be fairly low, but they're still more than some people have, said Leach.

Lookingback was and remains homeless, Leach said, and he was placed in a version of 24-7 that required him to take three drug tests each week, at a cost of \$10 per test.

Court documents in the case, filed by Pennington County, say Lookingback was released from jail and ordered to sign in to the program and did not on multiple occasions in 2023. On those occasions, the county said, he was sanctioned for failure to appear for testing.

In the fall of that year, he was again ordered into the program. On Sept. 23, 2023, he showed up but didn't have the \$10 needed to pay the fees. As a result, Leach said, Lookingback found himself again incarcerated at the Pennington County Jail.

If a judge accepts the settlement agreement, Pennington County will pay Lookingback \$10,000 for that incarceration, and will set aside another \$37,000 for the 37 other people who were found to have been jailed for their inability to pay.

Leach will be required to "make reasonable efforts" to contact the 37 people, who were identified in county records obtained over the course of the lawsuit. Any money that goes uncollected, the settlement says, will be given to a nonprofit organization called the Public Justice Debtor's Project. The New York-based nonprofit works to address issues related to the jailing of defendants for unpaid court fees across multiple jurisdictions.

Leach can ask the judge to order Pennington County to pay attorney's fees, but the settlement says he's entitled to none of the money the county's already promised to pay through the agreement.

Helene Duhamel, spokeswoman for the Pennington County Sheriff's Department, said in a statement the settlement "clarifies that 24-7 Sobriety Program participants who have not paid the court-ordered fees" won't be incarcerated.

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"Instead, individuals who have not paid the 24-7 Program fees may be reported to the courts or supervising authority," Duhamel said. "Any sanction decisions for nonpayment would be set by the court."

A judge can look at each case individually to determine if the person who didn't pay on a given day truly could not afford to, or if they were able to pay and didn't. Participants can be sanctioned under the latter circumstance, under the terms of the settlement, but not for a legitimate lack of funds.

The settlement applies to the 37 known members of the class, Leach said, but the class also includes any people who "have been or will in the future be incarcerated in Pennington County, threatened with incarceration or sanctions, based in whole or in part on inability to pay the fees required to participate in the 24-7 Program."

The county currently has 352 people in the program.

Other counties, statewide impacts

Lucas Oyler, the program's former state coordinator, told lawmakers in 2022 that an inability to threaten jail for failure to pay might cause county sheriffs, who administer 24-7 tests, to opt out of participating in the program.

Leach said he doubts that. He said the majority of people who wind up involved in the criminal justice system, even those deemed income-eligible for a court-appointed lawyer, are able to pay \$2 a day.

"But at the same time, there's a certain group of people who are just poor," Leach said, in ways that are "far beyond anything" most people have experienced.

Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead was among the first sheriffs to use 24-7, and he's been following the Pennington County lawsuit closely.

The policy for 24-7 participants in Minnehaha County, he said, is built around an understanding that an inability to pay doesn't justify an immediate jail stay.

"If a person has been released from jail and ordered by a judge to comply with the 24-7 program as a condition of release but cannot pay," Milstead wrote in an email to South Dakota Searchlight, "then it is up to the judge to decide whether bond should be revoked, modified, or remain."

In response to questions from South Dakota Searchlight on how counties ought to proceed in the face of the successful class action lawsuit, Attorney General Marty Jackley issued a statement saying his office intends to let counties decide the right approach.

"While we cannot dictate how an agency operates its program," Jackley wrote, "we are committed to supporting them in ensuring compliance with state statutes and administrative rules."

Long, the former attorney general who launched the program, said a case can be made that counties — or even community organizations — would benefit in the long run if they decide to pay 24-7 fees for the indigent, who might be "among the ones who'd most benefit from it."

Keeping habitual drinkers or drug users sober can reduce visits to the emergency room, Long said, as well as business losses from theft.

"There is some community benefit to keeping these folks sober," Long said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: South Dakota Searchlight has engaged attorney Jim Leach, who is quoted in this story, in a past legal matter.

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

State needs to spend \$106 million in federal funds on water, housing, other projects by end of year

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

South Dakota must spend \$106 million in remaining pandemic relief by the end of the year, or it has to be returned to the federal government.

Most of the funds left to spend are for water and wastewater infrastructure projects, housing, broadband, ambulance upgrades and telemedicine upgrades in nursing homes, according to a Wednesday presentation from the Bureau of Finance and Management at the Capitol in Pierre.

Bureau Commissioner Jim Terwilliger told lawmakers on the budget committee that the state will meet the deadline to "maximize those dollars."

"We feel like we're in a good place," Terwilliger said.

Federal relief and stimulus funding for South Dakota in response to the COVID-19 pandemic included about \$974 million from the State Fiscal Recovery Funds authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The unspent balance represents about 10% of that funding.

The funding has been transformative in some sectors of the state. South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources Secretary Hunter Roberts said during the last legislative session the influx of cash sparked an overdue "water renaissance."

Roberts' department has \$75 million left to spend on water and sewer projects. Some projects that have used ARPA funding so far include upgrades for the Mni Waste Water Company in western South Dakota, a regional waterline upgrade for the Randall Community Water District in eastern South Dakota, and funding for the Western Dakota Regional Water System study.

The bureau receives quarterly department reports for how funding is spent. As the end of 2026 approaches, any unspent funds will be reallocated to water projects.

About \$14 million for workforce housing projects, which is roughly a quarter of that program's ARPA funding, has not been spent. A mix of federal and state funding was approved by lawmakers in 2022 to help increase South Dakota's housing stock as the state's population grows. Roughly \$64 million in state-funded loans for workforce housing also remain unobligated, with Gov. Larry Rhoden proposing those state funds be shifted to airport improvement projects, and a legislative task force recommending the money be used for property tax credits.

About \$4 million, which is nearly half of the ARPA funding meant to improve emergency medical services across the state, has not been spent, according to the presentation. About \$2 million, which is three-quarters of the ARPA funding promised to nursing home telemedicine upgrades, hasn't been spent yet either. Both grant programs are under the state Department of Health.

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

Nearly six decades after his death, King's vision for equality is still a 'living challenge' for all

BY: MAYA HOMAN

Legislators, religious leaders and community members gathered at Georgia's state Capitol in Atlanta Friday to commemorate civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. the day after what would have been his 97th birthday.

The ceremony, held amid a nationwide backlash to diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and growing calls for increased affordability, highlighted King's efforts to fight for racial equality and economic justice.

In this year's keynote address, John Hope Bryant, the founder, CEO and chair of Operation HOPE, highlighted King's efforts to expand economic empowerment, calling him the "embodiment" of what it means to have financial freedom.

King's family was able to send him to the historically Black Morehouse College in Atlanta when he was 15 years old in the 1940s. He would go on to earn advanced degrees.

"That took economic freedom. That took the ability to have a voice," Bryant said.

Bryant also called on lawmakers, advocates and everyday Georgians to work toward improving financial literacy, calling it "the civil rights issue of this generation."

"What good is it to get the lunch counter access if you can't pay the bill for the burger?" he said.

The ceremony was also attended by some of King's surviving family members, the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus and other elected officials.

Government facilities across the state will be closed Monday in observance of King's birthday, celebrated every third Monday in January. In 1968, King was slain at the age of 39 after becoming the face of the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement fighting the systemic racism Black people endured across the deep South and other parts of America.

But this year, the celebration for some might look slightly different: visitors to national parks across the nation will no longer be granted free access on Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday after the U.S. Department of the Interior removed the holiday from the calendar of fee-free days. Free access to national parks was also revoked on Juneteenth, a holiday that commemorates the official end of slavery in America.

Trump has also recently made comments to the New York Times criticizing the Civil Rights Movement, claiming that it led to white people being "very badly treated."

But in Georgia, where King was born and lived for much of his life, representatives from both sides of the aisle were united in commemorating his birthday. Republican Gov. Brian Kemp celebrated King's advocacy and legacy of nonviolence in his remarks to the crowd Friday.

"It goes without saying that one of the towering figures of America's rich history is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.," Kemp said. "He did as much — if not more than anyone — to ensure we work toward fulfilling those founding principles that inspired the very birth of the United States: liberty, truth and justice for all."

Sen. Nikki Merritt, a Grayson Democrat and chair of the Georgia Legislative Black Caucus, urged attendees to continue fighting for King's message of equality.

"Dr. King envisioned a world where children of all backgrounds could join hands as equals, and that vision is not a relic of the past," Merritt said. "It is a living challenge to each of us every day."

MLK Day celebrations across metro Atlanta will continue throughout the weekend, with a commemorative service at the Ebenezer Baptist Church, where King once served as a pastor, as well as a parade, a 5K race, and numerous community service events.

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

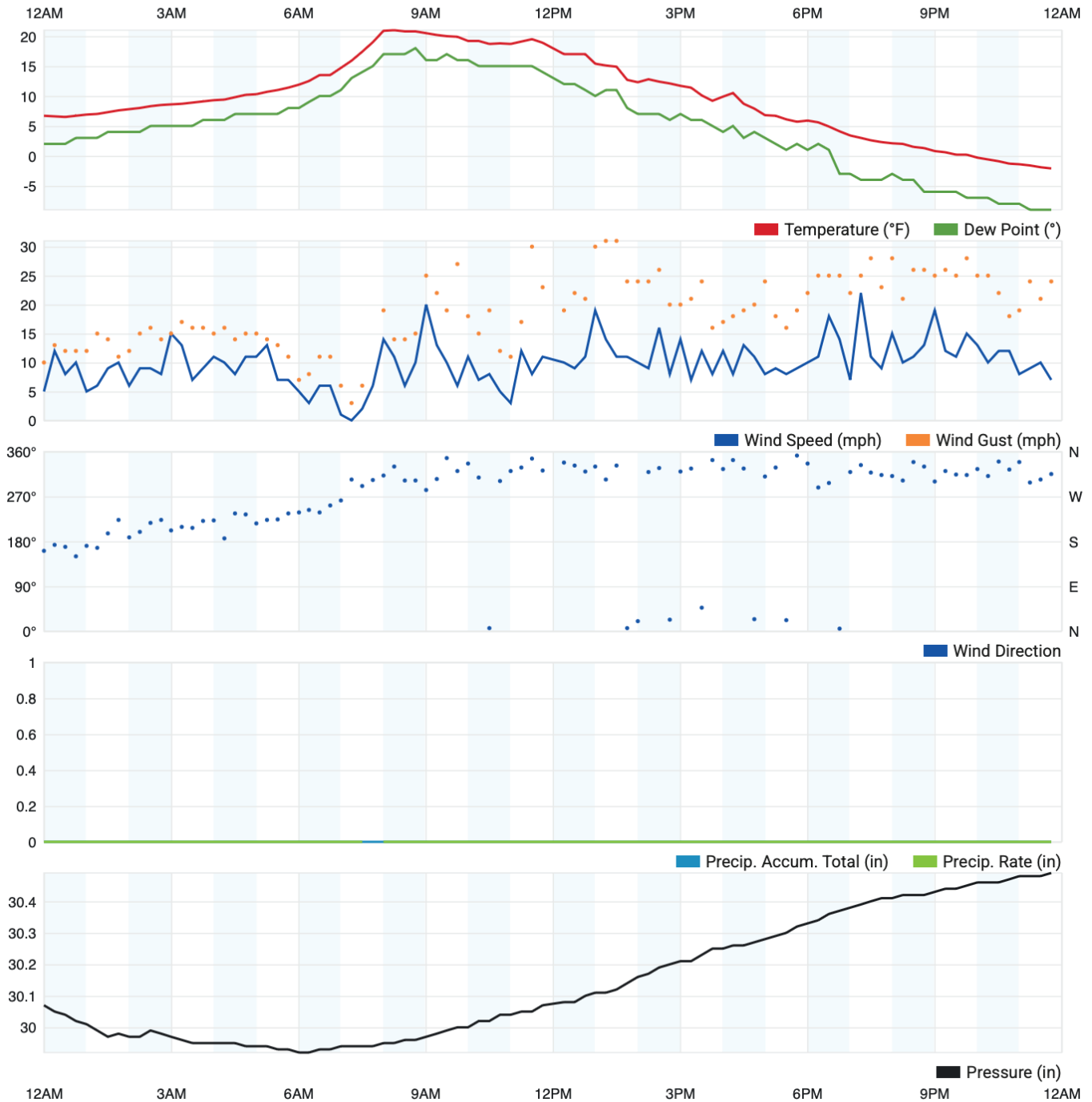
Maya Homan covers state politics and policy for the Georgia Recorder. Previously, she worked as a fellow for USA TODAY covering Georgia politics and the 2024 presidential election. She is a 2023 graduate of Northeastern University, and can usually be found knitting in a committee meeting.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

January 18, 2026



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M.L.King Day

Tonight

Tuesday

Tuesday Night

Wednesday



High: 11 °F

Partly Sunny



Low: -4 °F

Mostly Clear



High: 17 °F

Partly Sunny then Snow Likely



Low: 9 °F

Slight Chance Snow then Mostly Cloudy



High: 25 °F

Chance Snow and Patchy Blowing Snow

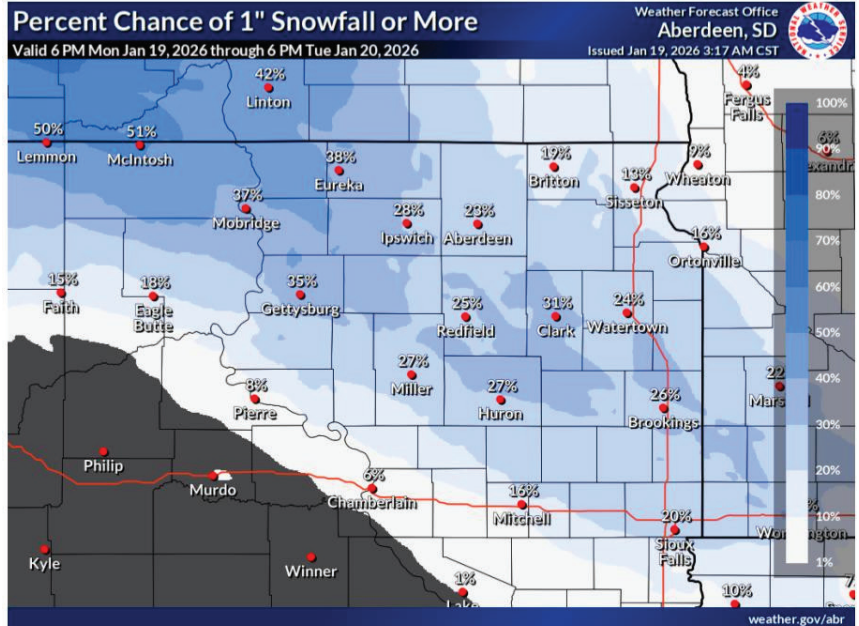


Tuesday's Snowfall

January 19, 2026
4:34 AM CST

Key Messages

- 50-70% chance of light snow, mainly falling during the daytime hours, tapering off during the evening
- Total accumulations generally an inch or less
- Strong winds are not expected, therefore, reduction in visibility is not anticipated



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The first of a couple rounds of snowfall will be possible on Tuesday. Generally light accumulations are expected at this time with a 30-60 percent chance for 1 inch or more of snow across parts of north central and northeast SD and west central MN.

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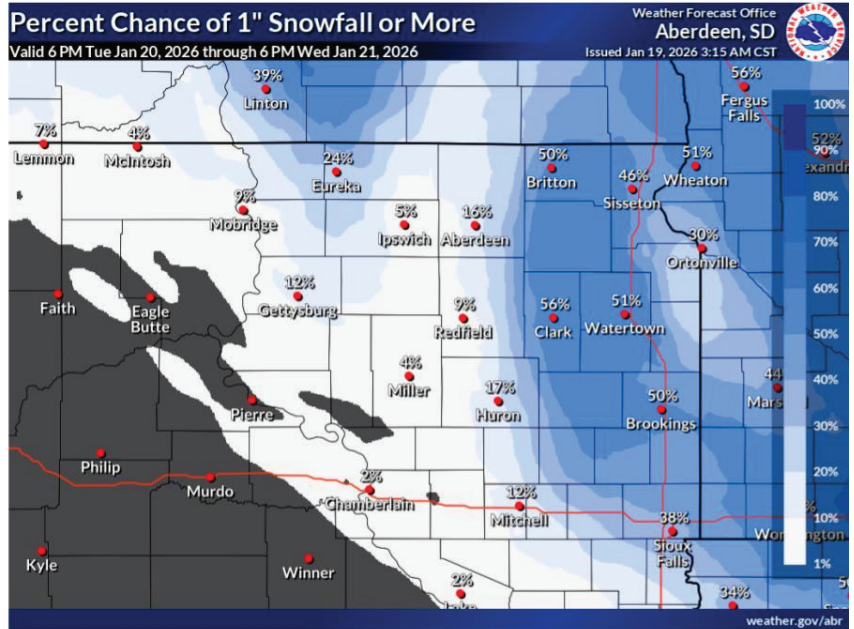


Wednesday's Snowfall

January 19, 2026
4:46 AM CST

Key Messages

- 20-60% chance of light snow, mainly falling during the daytime hours, gradually tapering off Wednesday night
- Total accumulations generally an inch or less
- Stronger winds will lead to blowing snow and reduced visibilities



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

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



Gust Winds Wednesday

January 19, 2026
4:56 AM

- Northwest winds will gust up to **35-45 mph from mid morning through early evening**
- Snow falling during the day will combine with the increasing winds and lead to **blowing snow and reduced visibilities**
- *Hazardous driving conditions will be possible, especially from north central South Dakota into northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota*

Maximum Wind Gust Forecast (mph)

	1/21															
	Wed															
	6am	7am	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm	6pm	7pm	8pm	9pm
Aberdeen	18	21	23	26	29	31	36	35	35	36	31	28	24	22	21	20
Britton	20	21	23	26	28	30	33	32	33	35	31	29	25	24	23	22
Clark	18	21	23	25	28	30	35	33	35	37	33	30	28	25	24	23
Eagle Butte	28	31	35	39	41	44	46	45	45	43	39	35	30	29	26	24
Ellendale	20	22	24	28	30	32	38	36	37	38	32	29	25	24	23	22
Eureka	23	25	28	31	33	36	41	39	39	39	36	32	29	26	25	24
Gettysburg	23	25	28	32	35	38	43	40	40	39	36	32	28	26	24	23
Kennebec	23	25	28	31	36	39	46	44	45	44	38	32	26	25	23	22
McIntosh	28	30	35	39	41	44	46	45	45	43	39	36	31	30	28	24
Milbank	17	18	20	22	24	26	29	30	30	30	29	26	25	24	24	23
Miller	22	24	26	30	32	36	40	38	38	37	33	30	25	25	24	23
Mobridge	22	24	28	32	35	37	40	38	38	37	33	30	25	24	23	22
Murdo	23	25	30	33	37	40	45	44	43	41	36	31	26	24	22	20
Pierre	18	21	24	29	32	36	40	39	38	37	32	29	24	23	21	18
Redfield	20	22	24	28	30	32	37	36	36	37	32	29	24	24	23	22
Sisseton	20	22	23	24	26	28	31	32	33	35	32	30	28	26	25	24
Watertown	18	21	23	25	28	30	32	32	33	35	32	30	28	26	24	23
Webster	21	23	25	26	28	30	33	32	33	35	32	30	28	26	25	24
Wheaton	16	18	20	20	24	26	26	29	29	29	28	25	25	23	23	22

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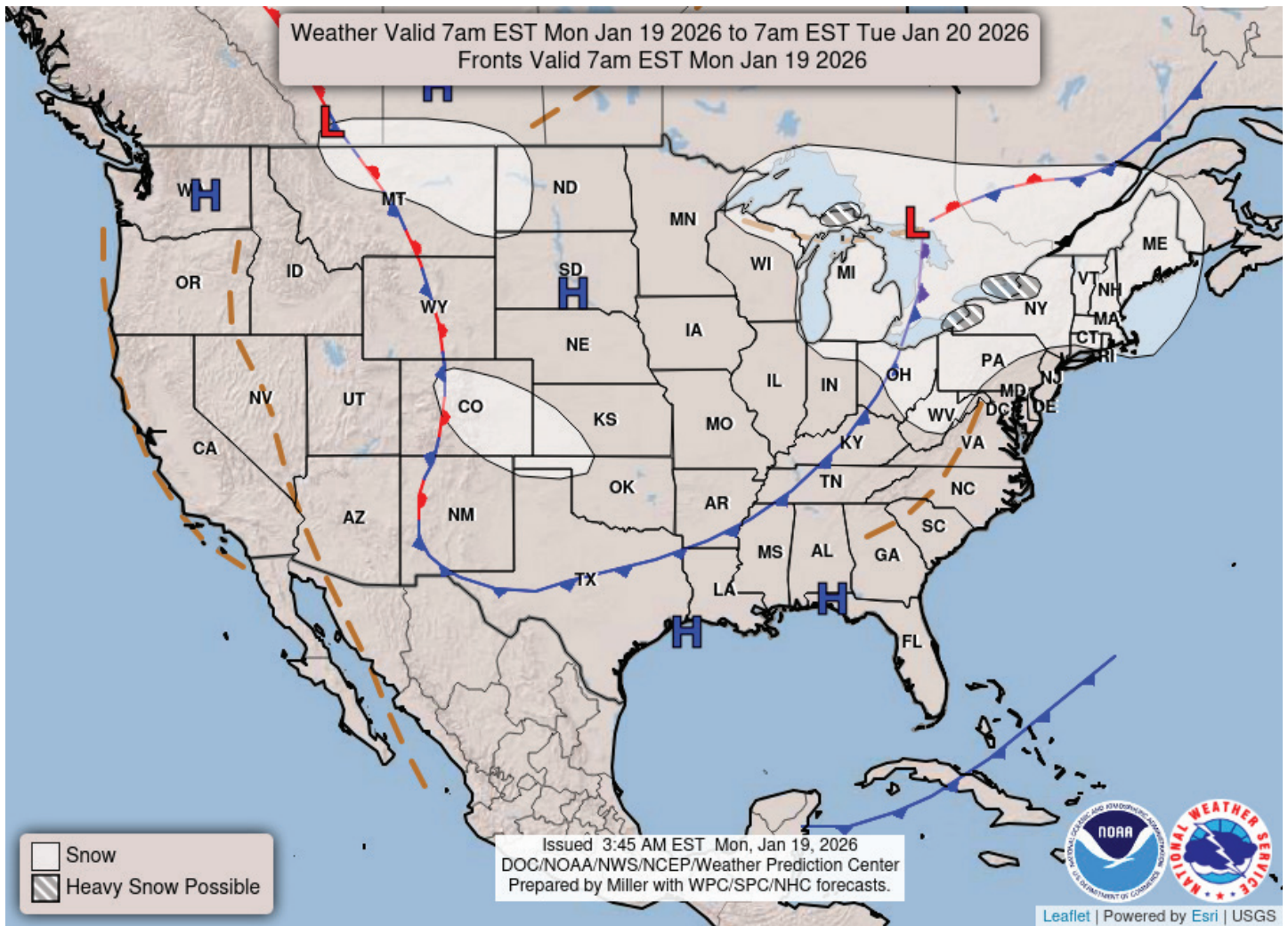
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 21 °F at 8:08 AM
Low Temp: -2 °F at 11:27 PM
Wind: 32 mph at 1:23 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1921
Record Low: -36 in 1943
Average High: 23
Average Low: 1
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.36
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.36
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:20 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:05 am



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Today in Weather History

January 19, 1970: An extremely cold air mass was over settle over South Dakota and western Minnesota. After a frigid night, daytime high temperatures struggled to reach the single digits below zero. Overnight low temperatures across the area were from 25 below to 34 below zero, with daytime highs from 3 above at Sisseton to 12 degrees below zero at Pierre. Record low temperatures were set at Wheaton, Watertown, Pierre, and Kennebec. The temperature fell to 32 degrees below zero at Pierre, 33 degrees below zero at Watertown and Wheaton, and 34 degrees zero at Kennebec. Aberdeen fell to 35 degrees below zero, Sisseton dropped to 26 degrees below zero, Mobridge fell to 25 degrees below zero, Sisseton fell to 26 degrees below zero, and Timber Lake fell to 27 degrees below zero.

1810 — The famous "cold day" in New England. Gale force winds wrecked homes, and accompanied a sudden overnight drop in temperature of 50 degrees. Tragedy struck Sanbornton NH where three children froze to death. (David Ludlum)

1839: An Aurora Borealis observed at Bossekop, Norway, on January 19th, 1839. Illustration from 'Electricity and Magnetism' by Amedee Guillemin (1826-1893), published in London in 1891.

1883: The steamers of Cimbria and Sultan collided in the North Sea due to dense fog. This collision resulted in the death of over 350 people.

1933 — Giant Forest CA received 60 inches of snow in just 24 hours, a state record, and the second highest 24 hour total of record for the U.S. (David Ludlum)

1961: Eight inches of snow fell and caused crippling traffic jams around the Washington D.C. area on the eve of John Kennedy's inauguration. The president-elect had to cancel dinner plans and, in a struggle to keep other commitments, reportedly had only 4 hours of sleep. Former President Herbert Hoover was unable to fly into Washington National Airport due to the weather, and he had to miss the swearing-in ceremony.

1977: Snow fell in South Florida for the first time in recorded history.

1988 — A powerful storm hit the central U.S. producing blizzard conditions in the Central High Plains, and severe thunderstorms in the Lower Mississippi Valley. Snowfall totals ranged up to 36 inches at Wolf Creek Pass CO, with 31 inches at Elsmere NE. Tornadoes claimed five lives in Tennessee, and a tornado at Cullman AL injured 35 persons. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — The high temperature for the day at Fairbanks, AK, was a frigid 41 degrees below zero, and the morning low of 24 degrees below zero at Anchorage AK was their coldest reading in fourteen years. (National Weather Summary)

1990 — Thunderstorms produced large hail and damaging winds in eastern Texas and Louisiana. Tornadoes at Garland TX and Apple Springs TX each injured one person. Heavy snow spread from the Southern and Central Rockies into the Great Plains. Storm totals in New Mexico reached 36 inches at Gascon. Totals in the Central Plains ranged up to 15 inches near McCook NE and Garden City KS. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1993: An unusual series of Pacific storm systems tracked across Arizona from January 6th through the 19th, producing heavy and prolonged precipitation across the state. These heavy rains caused the most widespread and severe flooding in Arizona since the turn of the century. The protracted rainfall over the 2 weeks caused multiple flood peaks on most streams and rivers. A large garbage landfill and portions of the new Mill Avenue Bridge under construction were washed away by the raging Salt River. The Gillespie Dam west of Phoenix was damaged as high water spread throughout low-lying areas. One man drowned while trying to cross the Agua Fria River. The image below is from Storm Data.

1996: January 1996 is known as one of the worst snowmelt floods on record for the Mid-Atlantic. The region saw blizzard conditions on January 6 and 7th, which produced 15 to 24 inches east of I-95, and 2 to 3 feet of snow west of I-95. With a tremendous amount of snow on the ground, on January 19, temperatures soared into the 50s and 60s ahead of an approaching cold front. At 7 am in Washington, D.C., was reporting a temperature of 60 degrees with a dewpoint of 60 degrees, both unusually high for a January morning. The warm temperatures combined with rain to melt much of the snowpack, released into the waterways.



Daily Devotion

Waiting On God's Guidance

Determine to wait for God's leading—don't allow yourself to be pressured into a quick decision.

Psalms 25:4-5: 4 Make me know Your ways, O LORD; Teach me Your paths.

5 Lead me in Your truth and teach me, For You are the God of my salvation; For You I wait all the day.

Have you ever prayed for God to lead you, but then didn't listen for His answer? At one point or another, most of us have done that—making our own decision and trusting He would bless it. But expecting God to approve of our plan often leads to missing out on His best. To avoid disappointment, let's be aware of three impulses that interfere with hearing His direction accurately.

Be mindful of human desires. Wants are not wrong, but longings become unhealthy when they consume our thoughts.

Watch out for faulty advice. We should carefully seek counsel from those who walk closely with Jesus and are grounded in His Word (Proverbs 1:5).

Be careful when feeling impatient, doubtful, or pressured. These emotions can lead us to make rash decisions that do far more harm than good. Patience is hard, but God's perfect will is always worth the wait.

When you trusted in Christ, the Holy Spirit came into your heart and sealed you as a child of God. If you ask and believe, the Spirit will teach you how to live a godly life. Determine to follow Him by cleansing your heart, asking for guidance, waiting, and listening.

We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.16.26

2 22 33 42 67 1

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$250,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 32 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.17.26

7 28 29 35 39 8

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$13,090,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 47 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.18.26

11 18 21 42 48 17

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 2 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.17.26

2 13 24 25 28

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$205,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 15 Hrs 2 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.17.26

1 4 6 34 56 19

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 31 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.17.26

5 8 27 49 57 14

Power Play: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$193,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 31 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Prince Harry's court battle against British tabloids reaches final chapter

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Tens of millions of dollars are on the line as Prince Harry returned to court Monday for the third and final chapter in his legal quest to tame the British tabloids.

Harry, also known as the Duke of Sussex, is the most prominent litigant in a case full of high-profile plaintiffs who accuse the publisher of the Daily Mail of invading their privacy by using unlawful information-gathering tactics to snoop on them for sensational headlines.

Harry, Elton John and actors Elizabeth Hurley and Sadie Frost are among a group of seven who allege that Associated Newspapers Ltd. hired private investigators to bug their cars, obtain their private records and eavesdrop on phone calls.

The publisher has denied the allegations and called them preposterous.

Attorney David Sherborne opened his case by saying there was a culture at Associated Newspapers that spanned decades to unlawfully dig up dirt "that wrecked the lives of so many."

He said the company's vigorous denials, destruction of records and "masses upon masses of missing documents" had prevented the claimants from learning what the newspapers had done.

"They swore that they were a clean ship," Sherborne said. "Associated knew that these emphatic denials were not true. ... They knew they had skeletons in their closet."

The trial in London's High Court is expected to last nine weeks and will see the return of Harry to the witness box for the second time since he made history in 2023 by becoming the first senior member of the royal family to testify in more than a century.

Harry waved cheerfully at reporters and said "good morning" as he entered the court building via a side entrance. He took a seat in the back row of the courtroom near Hurley and Frost.

The prince vs. the publishers

The case was one of many that has emerged from the widespread phone hacking scandal in which some journalists began intercepting voicemail messages around the turn of this century and continued for more than a decade.

Harry won a court judgment in 2023 that condemned the publishers of the Daily Mirror for "widespread and habitual" phone hacking. Last year, Rupert Murdoch's flagship U.K. tabloid made an unprecedented apology for intruding on his life for years, and agreed to pay substantial damages to settle his privacy invasion lawsuit.

Harry's self-proclaimed mission to reform the media is more personal and goes far beyond headlines that attempted to document his party boy youth and romance ups and downs.

He holds the press responsible for the death of his mother, Princess Diana, who was killed in a car crash in 1997 while being pursued by paparazzi in Paris. He also blames them for persistent attacks on his wife, Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, that led them to leave royal life and move to the United States in 2020.

Repairing rift in the royal family

The trial comes as Harry tries to repair a damaged relationship with his family since he moved to America and burned the bridge behind him by penning a scorching 2023 memoir, "Spare," and airing other family grievances in a Netflix series.

Frosty relations with his father, King Charles III, appear to be thawing a bit after the two met for tea last fall when Harry was last in town.

But a reunion this time looks unlikely.

The start of the trial coincides with Charles' trip to Scotland and Harry's visit is expected to be limited to the opening of the trial and his early testimony.

Wins and losses before trial

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The case against the Mail was filed in 2022 and has been the subject of several contentious hearings that have led to rulings that each side has claimed as victories.

Lawyers for Associated Newspapers had argued that the case should be thrown out because claims dating as far back as 1993 were brought too late. But in a ruling saying the cases have a "real prospect of succeeding," Judge Matthew Nicklin said the papers had "not been able to deliver a 'knockout blow'" to the claims.

In the same ruling, Nicklin handed a win to the Mail in saying Harry and the others could not use records that allegedly showed payments by the Daily Mail and Mail on Sunday to private investigators because they had been disclosed in confidence to a government inquiry into phone hacking.

But Harry's lawyers later got permission from U.K. government officials to use the documents.

Private eye with conflicting claims

A private investigator whose name is on a sworn statement supporting the claims of Harry and the celebrities has filed another statement denying he ever snooped on them.

During an early hearing in the case, attorney David Sherborne said his clients were not aware they were phone hacking victims until Gavin Burrows and other investigators came forward in 2021 to "do the right thing" and help those he targeted.

Burrows said he "must have done hundreds of jobs" for the Mail between 2000 and 2005, and that Harry, John and his husband, David Furnish, and Hurley and Frost were "just a small handful of my targets."

But he has since signed another statement saying he had not been hired by Associated Newspapers to do any unlawful work.

It's unclear what impact his conflicting statements will have on the case.

The other claimants are anti-racism activist Doreen Lawrence and former politician Simon Hughes.

China's population falls again as births drop to lowest rate since 1949 communist revolution

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — How do you persuade a population to have more babies after generations of limiting families to just one?

A decade after ending China's longtime one-child policy, the country's authorities are pushing a range of ideas and policies to try to encourage more births — tactics that range from cash subsidies to taxing condoms to eliminating a tax on matchmakers and day care centers.

The efforts haven't paid off yet. At least, that's what population figures released Monday show for what is now the world's second-most populous nation. China's population of 1.4 billion continued to shrink, marking the fourth straight year of decrease, new government statistics show. The total population in 2025 stood at 1.404 billion, which was 3 million less than the previous year.

Measured another way, the birth rate in 2025 — 5.63 per 1,000 people — is the lowest on record since 1949, the year that Mao Zedong's Communists overthrew the Nationalists and began running China. Figures before that, under the previous Nationalist government, were not available.

China was long the world's most populous nation until 2023, when it was surpassed by regional neighbor and sometime rival India. Monday's statistics illustrate the stark demographic pressures faced by the country as it tries to pivot from a problem it is working hard to overcome: status as a nation with a growing but transitional economy that, as is often said, is "getting old before it gets rich."

Is a snake involved?

The number of new babies born was just 7.92 million in 2025, a decline of 1.62 million, or 17%, from the previous year. The latest birth numbers show that the slight tick upward in 2024 was not a lasting trend. Births declined for seven years in a row through 2023.

Most families cite the costs and pressure of raising a child in a highly competitive society as significant hurdles that now loom larger in the face of an economic downturn that has impacted households struggling to meet their living costs.

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Across the region, "it's these big structural issues which are much harder to tackle, whether it's housing, and work and getting a job and getting started in life and expectations around education..." said Stuart Gietel-Basten, director of the Center for Aging Science at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. "It's gonna be difficult to make a major change in those number of births until those are addressed."

Another potential factor in the numbers, at least for 2025: Last year in China was the year of the snake, considered one of the least favored years for having a child under the Chinese zodiac. The government's official Xinhua News Agency, however, did say early last year — perhaps optimistically — that the snake "is shaking off its negative connotations."

Like many other countries in Asia, China has faced a declining fertility rate, or the average number of babies a woman is expected to have in her lifetime. While the government does not regularly publish a fertility rate, last saying it was 1.3 in 2020, experts have estimated it is now around 1. Both figures are far below the 2.1 rate that would maintain the size of China's population.

For decades, the Chinese government barred people from having more than one baby and often sanctioned those who did — a policy that produced more than two generations of only children. In 2015, the government raised the permitted amount of offspring to two and then, facing demographic pressure, further revised the limit to three in 2021.

Economics are behind the decision

The push for more births is about the economy. China now has 323 million people over 60, or 23% of the entire population. That number has continued to rise, while the working-age population is shrinking, meaning there are fewer workers to support the older population.

This demographic shift is happening while China is in the process of trying to transition away from labor-intensive industries like farming and manufacturing into a consumer-driven economy built with high-tech manufacturing.

While China's rapid development in manufacturing with high-tech and robotics can reduce the impact of a shrinking labor force, "the bigger concern is whether economic growth can stay afloat with a shrinking population," said Gary Ng, senior economist for Asia Pacific at French investment bank Natixis.

China reported a 5% annual economic growth for 2025 on Monday, based on official data. But some analysts expect growth to slow over the next few years.

To cope with these massive changes, China will eventually need to reform its pension system, Ng said, as well as broaden the tax base to cope with the higher government expenditure.

Officials have had limited success with policy changes to incentivize families to have more children. In July, the government announced cash subsidies of 3,600 yuan (\$500) per child to families.

Coupling incentives with other attempts to mold behavior, the government also has started taxing condoms. China removed contraceptives, including condoms, from a value-added tax exemption list in 2025, meaning condoms are now being hit with a 13% tax that kicked into effect Jan. 1.

To further promote child-rearing, kindergartens and daycares have been added to the tax-exemption list, along with matchmaking services.

Researchers like Gietel-Basten say that young women want policies, especially in the workplace, that ensure they are not penalized for taking time off to have children, and that this is up to private companies to change. "It shouldn't be this massive penalty," he said.

Inequality and unease are rising as elite Davos event opens with pro-business Trump set to attend

By JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP) — Corporate chiefs and government leaders including U.S. President Donald Trump swarm into Davos, Switzerland, this week, joining an elite annual meeting that promotes dialogue and economic progress — even as a domineering tone from Washington has upended the global order and billionaires have reaped trillions in new wealth as the poor lag behind.

The World Economic Forum, the think tank whose four-day annual meeting opens Tuesday, has a stated

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motto of "improving the state of the world," and this year's theme is "A spirit of dialogue." One question is whether Trump will speak with attendees — or at them.

Nearly 3,000 attendees from the interlinked worlds of business, advocacy and policy will tackle issues including the growing gap between rich and poor; AI's impact on jobs; concerns about geo-economic conflict; tariffs that have rocked longstanding trade relationships; and an erosion of trust between communities and countries.

"It's really going to be a discussion at a very important moment ... geopolitics is changing," said Mirek Dušek, a forum managing director in charge of programming. "Some people think we're in a transition. Some people think we've already entered a new era. But I think it's undeniable that you are seeing a more competitive, more contested landscape."

Trump set to loom large

Trump's third visit to Davos as president comes as U.S. allies worry about his ambition to take over Greenland, Latin America is grappling with his efforts to reap Venezuela's oil, and his hardball tactics toward Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell have stirred concern among business leaders and lawmakers alike.

Trump's peace-making credentials also will be on the table: An announcement looms about his "Board of Peace" for Gaza, and he and his administration are expected to have bilateral meetings in the warren of side rooms at the Congress Center.

The U.S. leader seems to revel in strolling through the Davos Congress Center and among executives who back his business-minded, money-making approach to politics.

Critics will also be nearby: He's blown hot and cold recently with Colombian President Gustavo Petro, an invitee; Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi of Iran, whose leaders face U.S. sanctions over their handling of recent protests, will be on hand.

The two likeliest counterweights to Trump's administration on the international scene — China and the European Union — get top billing on the first day of the event: EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen will speak Tuesday morning, right before Vice Premier He Lifeng, China's "economic czar" — as Dušek put it.

Founder Schwab sits out, as Nvidia chief makes a debut

The forum will be without its founder, Klaus Schwab, who hosted the first event in Davos 55 years ago focusing on business, only to see it since balloon into a catchall extravaganza. He stepped down in April. New co-chairs Larry Fink, the head of investment firm BlackRock, and Andre Hoffman, vice chair of pharmaceuticals firm Roche, are in charge.

This year will also mark the debut appearance of Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, arguably the world's most important tech leader today, among some 850 CEOs and chairs of global companies — along with some celebrities like Hollywood actor and safe-water advocate Matt Damon.

The future of AI, its impact on business and work, and the prospects for artificial general intelligence will be key themes.

The presidents of Argentina, France, Indonesia, Syria and Ukraine will be among the dozens of national leaders on hand.

As rich-poor divide widens, trust in institutions falters

Leading public-relations firm Edelman reports in its annual trust barometer — launched a quarter-century ago and this year surveying nearly 34,000 people in 28 countries — that trade and recession fears have climbed to an all-time high, optimism is falling especially in developed countries, and "grievance" last year has morphed into broader "insularity."

"People are retreating from dialogue and compromise, choosing the safety of the familiar over the perceived risk of change," said CEO Richard Edelman. "We favor nationalism over global connection and individual gain over joint progress. Our mentality has shifted from 'we' to 'me'."

The survey found that about two-thirds of respondents said their trust was concentrated toward CEOs of the companies that they work for, fellow citizens or neighbors, while nearly 70% believed institutional leaders — such as from business or government — deliberately misled the public.

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Oxfam, the world-renowned advocacy group, issued a report ahead of the Davos event which showed that billionaire wealth rose by more than 16% last year, three times faster than the past five-year average, to more than \$18 trillion. It drew on Forbes magazine data on the world's richest people.

Oxfam said the \$2.5 trillion rise in the wealth of billionaires last year would be enough to eradicate extreme poverty 26 times over. Their wealth has risen by more than four-fifths since 2020, while nearly half the world's population lives in poverty, the group said.

The Trump administration has led a "pro-billionaire agenda," the group said, through actions such as slashing taxes for the wealthiest, fostering the growth of AI-related stocks that help rich investors get richer, and thwarting efforts to tax giant companies.

The advocacy group wants more national efforts to reduce inequality, higher taxes on the ultra-rich to reduce their power, and greater limits on their ability to shape policy through lobbying.

With such concerns filtering through to policymakers, Trump, who is leading the biggest-ever U.S. delegation and will have about a half-dozen Cabinet secretaries in tow, is expected to discuss housing and affordability in his Davos speech on Wednesday.

Critics of WEF, and Trump, take to the streets

As usual, protesters rallied over the weekend in and near Davos ahead of the event. Hundreds of marchers scaled an Alpine road up to the town on Saturday behind a banner in German that read "No Profit from War" and alongside a truck that bore a sign: World Economic Failure.

Companies like Microsoft, India's Tata Consultancy, social media titan TikTok and cybersecurity firm CrowdStrike have joined governments from countries like Nigeria, Qatar, Ukraine and the United States — a USA House is making a debut this year — to set up shop on the Davos Promenade to promote their services, products and national economies.

Davos storekeepers rent out their premises so that forum participants can have the prime real estate for the week.

Critics have long accused the annual meeting in Davos of generating more rhetoric than results, and they see Trump's return as sign of the disconnect between haves and have-nots. Some say Swiss leaders who support the event and flock to Davos too are adding to the problem.

"It is worrying how Swiss politicians are courting warmongers and their profiteers in Davos," said Mirjam Hostetmann, president of Switzerland's Young Socialists, who have led protests against the event. "The WEF will never bring peace, but will only fuel escalation."

Death toll in Spanish train collision rises to 39 and authorities fear more bodies could be found

By IAIN SULLIVAN, JOSEPH WILSON and SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

ADAMUZ, Spain (AP) — Spanish police said Monday that at least 39 people are confirmed dead in a high-speed train collision the previous night in the south of the country.

Efforts to recover the bodies are continuing and the death toll is likely to rise. Some bodies were found hundreds of meters from the crash site, Andalusia regional president Juanma Moreno said.

The crash occurred Sunday at 7:45 p.m. when the tail end of a train carrying 289 passengers on the route from Malaga to the capital, Madrid, went off the rails at 7:45 p.m. It slammed into an incoming train traveling from Madrid to Huelva, another southern Spanish city, according to rail operator Adif.

The head of the second train, which was carrying nearly 200 passengers, took the brunt of the impact, Spanish Transport Minister Óscar Puente said. That collision knocked its first two carriages off the track and sent them plummeting down a 4-meter (13-foot) slope. Puente said that it appeared the largest number of the deaths occurred in those carriages.

Authorities said all the survivors had been rescued in the early morning while work remained to recover and identify the dead.

Moreno said Monday morning that emergency services were still searching.

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"It is likely (that there will be more dead people found) when you look at the mass of metal that is there. The firefighters have done a great job, but unfortunately when they get the heavy machinery to lift the carriages it is probable we will find more victims."

"Here at ground zero, when you look at this mass of twisted iron, you see the violence of the impact," Moreno said.

Moreno said that authorities are also searching the area near the accident for possible bodies.

"The impact was so incredibly violent that we have found bodies hundreds of meters away," Moreno said.

Various Spaniards who had loved ones traveling on the trains posted messages on social media saying they were unaccounted for and pleading for any information.

Spain's Civil Guard opened an office in Cordoba, the nearest city to the crash, for family members of the missing to seek help and leave DNA samples to be used to possibly identify bodies.

Video and photos showed twisted train cars lying on their sides under floodlights late on Sunday. Passengers reported climbing out of smashed windows, with some using emergency hammers to break the windows, according to Salvador Jiménez, a journalist for Spanish broadcaster RTVE, who was on board one of the derailed trains.

He told the network by phone Sunday that "there was a moment when it felt like an earthquake and the train had indeed derailed."

Authorities said 159 people were injured. As of Monday, that included 11 adults and one child in critical condition.

The collision took place near Adamuz, a town in the province of Cordoba, about 370 kilometers (about 230 miles) south of Madrid.

A sports center was turned into a makeshift hospital in Adamuz and the Spanish Red Cross set up a help center offering assistance to emergency services and people seeking information. Members of the Civil Guard and civil defense worked on site throughout the night.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez expressed his condolences to the victims' families. "Tonight is a night of deep pain for our country," he wrote on X.

The prime minister will visit the accident site on Monday, according to his office.

Officials call accident 'strange'

Transport Minister Puente early Monday said the cause of the crash was unknown.

He called it "a truly strange" incident because it happened on a flat stretch of track that had been renovated in May. He also said the train that jumped the track was less than 4 years old. That train belonged to the private company Iryo, while the second train, which took the brunt of the impact, was part of Spain's public train company, Renfe.

According to Puente, the back part of the first train derailed and crashed into the head of the other train. When asked by reporters how long an inquiry into the crash's cause could take, he said it could be a month.

Alvaro Fernández, the president of Renfe, told Spanish public radio RNE that both trains were well under the speed limit of 250 kph; he said one was going 205 kph, the other 210 kph. He also said that "human error could be ruled out."

The incident "must be related to the moving equipment of Iryo or the infrastructure" the Renfe president said.

Iryo issued a statement on Monday saying that its train was manufactured in 2022 and passed its latest safety check on Jan. 15. It reiterated its condolences for the victims and said it would completely cooperate with the official investigation into the causes of the tragedy.

Train services Monday between Madrid and cities in Andalusia were canceled.

Spain leads Europe in high-speed trains

Spain has spent decades investing heavily in high-speed trains and currently has the largest rail network in Europe for trains moving over 250 kph (155 mph), with more than 3,100 kilometers (1,900 miles) of track, according to the European Union.

The network is a popular, competitively priced and safe mode of transport. Renfe said more than 25 million passengers took one of its high-speed trains in 2024.

Sunday's accident was the first with deaths since Spain's high-speed rail network opened its first line in 1992.

Spain's worst train accident this century occurred in 2013, when 80 people died after a train derailed in the country's northwest. An investigation concluded the train was traveling 179 kph (111 mph) on a stretch with an 80 kph (50 mph) speed limit when it left the tracks. That stretch of track was not high speed.

1 dead and 4 wounded in Czech town hall shooting

PRAGUE (AP) — A shooting at a town hall in northern Czech Republic on Monday left one dead and four others wounded, including a police officer, police said.

Police said the suspect was fatally shot and there was no further danger.

The shooting took place at the Chribska town hall, police said.

A motive for the shooting wasn't immediately clear.

Starmer says a trade war is in no one's interest after Trump's Greenland tariff threat

LONDON (AP) — British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Monday that U.S. President Donald Trump's threat of tariffs against allies over Greenland is "completely wrong" and a trade war is in no one's interest.

Trump said Saturday that he would charge a 10% import tax starting in February on goods from eight European nations, including the U.K., because of their opposition to American control of Greenland, setting up a potentially dangerous test of U.S. partnerships in Europe. Greenland is a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark.

The president indicated the tariffs were retaliation for last week's deployment of symbolic numbers of troops from the European countries to Greenland, which he has said was essential for the "Golden Dome" missile defense system for the U.S. He also has argued that Russia and China might try to take over the island.

Starmer said Britain supports the "fundamental right" of Greenland and Denmark to decide the future of the Arctic island.

Starmer, who has worked to forge a strong relationship with Trump, said the U.K.-U.S. relationship was vital and "we are determined to keep that relationship strong, constructive and focused on results." But he said that doesn't mean pretending differences don't exist.

He said at a news conference in London that "being pragmatic does not mean being passive and partnership does not mean abandoning principles." But seeking to calm the turmoil, Starmer said Britain will work with allies in Europe, NATO and the United States and "keep dialogue open."

He indicated that Britain is not planning to consider retaliatory tariffs. "We have not got to that stage. My focus is on making sure we don't get to that stage," he said.

Six of the eight countries targeted are part of the 27-member European Union, which operates as a single economic zone in terms of trade.

European Council President Antonio Costa said Sunday that the bloc's leaders expressed "readiness to defend ourselves against any form of coercion." He is expected to convene a summit of the bloc's leaders later this week.

Denmark's defense minister and Greenland's foreign minister are expected Monday to meet NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte in Brussels, a meeting that was planned before the latest escalation.

In a statement beforehand, Danish Defense Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said Denmark and Greenland were "meeting broad support for NATO to do more in the Arctic" and would discuss that with Rutte.

US futures sink after Trump warns of higher tariffs for 8 countries over Greenland issue

By ELAINE KURTENBACH AP Business Writer

BANGKOK (AP) — European shares and U.S. stock futures skidded Monday after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to slap a 10% extra tariff on imports from eight European countries because they oppose having America take control of Greenland.

Germany's DAX lost 1.1% to 25,020.35 and the CAC 40 in Paris shed 1.3% to 8,150.78. Britain's FTSE 100 declined 0.3% to 10,206.12.

The future for the S&P 500 fell 0.8%, while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was down 0.7%.

The European countries targeted by Trump blasted his threat to raise tariffs, saying they "undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral." An unusually strong joint statement from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Finland was the most forceful rebuke from the European allies since Trump returned to the White House almost a year ago.

Trump's moves are testing the strategic alignment and institutional trust underlying support from Europe, the largest trading partner and provider of financing to the United States, Stephen Innes of SPI Asset Management said in a commentary.

"In a world where geopolitical cohesion within the Western alliance is no longer taken for granted, the willingness to recycle capital indefinitely into U.S. assets becomes less automatic. This is not a short-term liquidation story. It is a slow rebalancing story, and those are far more consequential," Innes said.

In Asia, shares were mixed after China reported that its economy expanded at a 5% annual pace in 2025, though it slowed in the last quarter. Strong exports, despite Trump's higher tariffs on imports from China, helped to offset relatively weak domestic demand.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng index lost 1.1% to 26,563.90. The Shanghai Composite index gained 0.3% to 4,114.00.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 declined 0.7% to 53,583.57. Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi was due to hold a news conference later Monday as she prepares to dissolve the parliament for a snap election next month.

Elsewhere in Asia, South Korea's Kospi jumped 1.3% to 4,904.66, pushing further into record territory on strong gains for tech-related companies. Computer chip maker SK Hynix climbed 1.1%.

Taiwan's Taiex added 0.7%, while the Sensex in India fell 0.6%.

On Friday, stocks edged lower on Wall Street as the first week of corporate earnings season ended with markets trading near record levels.

The S&P 500 fell 0.1% and the Dow industrials lost 0.2%. The Nasdaq composite shed 0.1%. They all notched weekly losses, while smaller company stocks fared better. The Russell 2000 eked out a 0.1% gain.

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.

Earnings updates might give investors a better sense of how consumers are spending their money and how businesses are faring with persisting inflation and higher 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.

This week will bring a broader mix of earnings from airlines, industrial companies, and technology companies. United Airlines, 3M, and Intel are all scheduled to release their quarterly earnings results.

The U.S. central bank will get another update on inflation this week with the government's release of the personal consumption expenditures price index, or PCE. It is the Federal Reserve's preferred measure for inflation.

The Fed's next policy meeting is in two weeks, when it is expected to keep its current benchmark interest rate as it strives to balance a slowing jobs market with stubbornly high inflation, which remains above the Fed's 2% goal.

In other dealings early Monday, U.S. benchmark crude oil slipped 37 cents to \$58.97 per barrel. It has

settled after a spate of volatility during widespread protests in Iran against that country's leadership. Brent crude, the international standard, gave up 45 cents to \$63.68 a barrel. The price of gold resumed its upward climb, gaining 1.6%, while the price of silver jumped 4.4%. The U.S. dollar rose to 157.99 Japanese yen from 157.93 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1626 from \$1.1581.

Hackers target Iran state TV's satellite transmission to broadcast exiled crown prince

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Hackers disrupted Iranian state television satellite transmissions to air footage supporting the country's exiled crown prince and calling on security forces to not "point your weapons at the people," online video showed early Monday, the latest disruption to follow nationwide protests in the country.

The hacking comes as the death toll in a crackdown by authorities that smothered the demonstrations reached at least 3,919 people killed, activists said. They fear the number will grow far higher as information leaks out of a country still gripped by the government's decision to shut down the internet.

Meanwhile, tensions remain high between the United States and Iran over the crackdown after President Donald Trump drew two red lines for the Islamic Republic — the killing of peaceful protesters and Tehran conducting mass executions in the wake of the demonstrations. A U.S. aircraft carrier, which days earlier had been in the South China Sea, passed Singapore overnight to enter the Strait of Malacca — putting it on a route that could bring it to the Middle East.

State TV disrupted

The footage aired Sunday night across multiple channels broadcast by satellite from Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting, the country's state broadcaster which has a monopoly on television and radio broadcasting. The video aired two clips of exiled Crown Prince Reza Pahlavi, then included footage of security forces and others in what appeared to be Iranian police uniforms. It claimed without offering evidence others had "laid down their weapons and swore an oath of allegiance to the people."

"This is a message to the army and security forces," one graphic read. "Don't point your weapons at the people. Join the nation for the freedom of Iran."

The semiofficial Fars news agency, believed to be close to the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, quoted a statement from the state broadcaster acknowledging that the signal in "some areas of the country was momentarily disrupted by an unknown source." It did not discuss what had been aired.

A statement from Pahlavi's office acknowledged the disruption that showed the crown prince. It did not respond to questions from The Associated Press about the hack.

"I have a special message for the military. You are the national army of Iran, not the Islamic Republic army," Pahlavi said in the hacked broadcast. "You have a duty to protect your own lives. You don't have much time left. Join the people as soon as possible."

Social media footage shared abroad, possibly from those with Starlink satellites to get around the internet shutdown, showed the hack in progress across multiple channels. Pahlavi's campaign also shared the footage.

Sunday's hack isn't the first to see Iranian airwaves disrupted. In 1986, The Washington Post reported that the CIA supplied the prince's allies "a miniaturized television transmitter for an 11-minute clandestine broadcast" to Iran by Pahlavi that pirated the signal of two stations in the Islamic Republic.

In 2022, multiple channels aired footage showing leaders from the exiled opposition group Mujahedeen-Khalq and a graphic calling for the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Pahlavi's father, Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, fled Iran ahead of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Pahlavi, the son, urged protesters onto the streets Jan. 8 as Iranian authorities shut down the internet and drastically intensified their crackdown.

How much support Pahlavi has inside of Iran remains an open question, though there have been pro-

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shah cries at the demonstrations.

US aircraft carrier possibly on path to Mideast

As tensions remain high between Tehran and Washington, ship-tracking data analyzed by the AP on Monday showed the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier, as well as other American military vessels, in the Strait of Malacca after passing Singapore on a route that could take them to the Middle East.

The Lincoln had been in the South China Sea with its strike group as a deterrent to China over tensions with Taiwan. Tracking data showed that the USS Frank E. Petersen Jr., the USS Michael Murphy and the USS Spruance, all Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers, were traveling with the Lincoln through the strait.

Multiple U.S. media reports quoting anonymous officials have said the Lincoln, which has its homeport in San Diego, was on its way to the Mideast. It likely would still need several days of travel before its aircraft would be in range of the region. The Mideast has been without an aircraft carrier group or an amphibious ready group, likely complicating any discussion of a military operation targeting Iran given Gulf Arab states' broad opposition to such an attack.

Death toll from crackdown rises

The death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades, and recalls the chaos surrounding the 1979 revolution. The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency put the death toll Sunday to at least 3,919 people killed, warning it likely would go higher.

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

Iranian officials have not given a clear death toll, although on Saturday, Khamenei said the protests had left "several thousand" people dead and blamed the United States for the deaths. It was the first indication from an Iranian leader of the extent of the casualties from the wave of protests that began Dec. 28 over Iran's ailing economy.

DOJ vows to press charges after activists disrupt church where Minnesota ICE official is a pastor

By JACK BROOK Associated Press/Report for America

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The U.S. Department of Justice said Sunday it is investigating a group of protesters in Minnesota who disrupted services at a church where a local official with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement apparently serves as a pastor.

A livestreamed video posted on the Facebook page of Black Lives Matter Minnesota, one of the protest's organizers, shows a group of people interrupting services at the Cities Church in St. Paul by chanting "ICE out" and "Justice for Renee Good." The 37-year-old mother of three was fatally shot by an ICE agent in Minneapolis earlier this month amid a surge in federal immigration enforcement activities.

The protesters allege that one of the church's pastors — David Easterwood — also leads the local ICE field office overseeing the operations that have involved violent tactics and illegal arrests.

U.S. Department of Justice Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon said her agency is investigating federal civil rights violations "by these people desecrating a house of worship and interfering with Christian worshippers."

"A house of worship is not a public forum for your protest! It is a space protected from exactly such acts by federal criminal and civil laws!" she said on social media.

Attorney General Pam Bondi also weighed in on social media, saying that any violations of federal law would be prosecuted.

Nekima Levy Armstrong, who participated in the protest and leads the local grassroots civil rights organization Racial Justice Network, dismissed the potential DOJ investigation as a sham and a distraction from federal agents' actions in Minneapolis-St. Paul.

"When you think about the federal government unleashing barbaric ICE agents upon our community and

all the harm that they have caused, to have someone serving as a pastor who oversees these ICE agents, is almost unfathomable to me," said Armstrong, who added she is an ordained reverend. "If people are more concerned about someone coming to a church on a Sunday and disrupting business as usual than they are about the atrocities that we are experiencing in our community, then they need to check their theology and the need to check their hearts."

The website of St. Paul-based Cities Church lists David Easterwood as a pastor, and his personal information appears to match that of the David Easterwood identified in court filings as the acting director of the ICE St. Paul field office. Easterwood appeared alongside DHS Secretary Kristi Noem at a Minneapolis press conference last October.

Cities Church did not respond to a phone call or emailed request for comment Sunday evening, and Easterwood's personal contact information could not immediately be located.

Easterwood did not lead the part of the service that was livestreamed, and it was unclear if he was present at the church Sunday.

In a Jan. 5 court filing, Easterwood defended ICE's tactics in Minnesota such as swapping license plates and spraying protesters with chemical irritants. He wrote that federal agents were experiencing increased threats and aggression and crowd control devices like flash-bang grenades were important to protect against violent attacks. He testified that he was unaware of agents "knowingly targeting or retaliating against peaceful protesters or legal observers with less lethal munitions and/or crowd control devices."

"Agitators aren't just targeting our officers. Now they're targeting churches, too," the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency stated. "They're going from hotel to hotel, church to church, hunting for federal law enforcement who are risking their lives to protect Americans."

Black Lives Matter Minnesota co-founder Monique Cullars-Doty said that the DOJ's prosecution was misguided.

"If you got a head — a leader in a church — that is leading and orchestrating ICE raids, my God, what has the world come to?" Cullars-Doty said. "We can't sit back idly and watch people go and be led astray."

Rams shake off wild, late TD pass by Caleb Williams, beat Bears 20-17 in OT to reach NFC title game

By ANDREW SELIGMAN AP Sports Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Matthew Stafford and Sean McVay shot knowing glances at each other, then went to work on the drive that got the Los Angeles Rams one step away from the Super Bowl.

Stafford and the Rams survived an incredible throw by Caleb Williams that forced overtime, beating the Chicago Bears 20-17 on Sunday night to advance to the NFC championship game.

Harrison Mevis kicked a 42-yard field goal in OT after Kam Curl intercepted a deep pass by Williams on the Bears' first possession of the extra period. Stafford glanced at his coach prior to the winning drive, then completed three passes for first downs — including a 16-yarder to Puka Nacua to get the Rams into field-goal range.

"I looked right at Sean, he looked right at me," Stafford said. "And I'm like, 'Here we go.' That's what it's all about. What an unbelievable job by our defense today, getting us the ball over and over again. Whether it be fourth-down stops or turnovers, they were clutch and timely."

So was Mevis.

The "Thicker Kicker," as he's known, ended the Bears' season. Teammates mobbed him while a crowd that was rocking earlier watched in near silence at the conclusion of a cold, snowy night.

The Rams (14-5) will visit NFC West rival Seattle next Sunday in their first trip to the conference championship game since the 2021 team won the Super Bowl. The Seahawks beat San Francisco 41-6 on Saturday.

"It was like, all right, the football gods are smiling on us," McVay said. "The weather had calmed down. There wasn't a lot of wind right there. ... I was really happy for him, and I was very confident that he would make that."

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Los Angeles led 17-10 in the final minute of regulation and the Bears faced fourth-and-4 from the 14-yard line when Williams backpedaled to avoid the pass rush and heaved the ball to Cole Kmet for the tying touchdown with 18 seconds left. Although officially a 14-yard pass, the ball traveled 51.2 yards in the air, according to the NFL's Next Gen Stats.

Bears coach Ben Johnson thought about trying for a go-ahead 2-point conversion but decided to send out Cairo Santos for the extra point.

Williams threw for two touchdowns but was intercepted three times as the Bears (12-7) — who pulled off seven fourth-quarter comeback wins in Johnson's first season — came up short this time. They won the NFC North after finishing last in the division a year ago.

"Our guys are feeling it right now," Johnson said. "They all believed, man. They all believed that we could find a way to win each and every week. And so it's disappointing like that. I'm proud of the group. It's a special group."

Fireworks in the fourth

Stafford led a 91-yard touchdown drive in the fourth quarter, with Kyren Williams scoring from the 5 to give the Rams a 17-10 lead with 8:50 remaining. Nacua kept the possession going on the previous play with a 2-yard run on fourth-and-5.

The Bears then drove to the 2, but Omar Speights broke up Williams' fourth-down pass to Luther Burden just inside the goal line.

Chicago got the ball back at midfield with just under two minutes remaining after Ethan Evans shanked a 33-yard punt, setting up Williams' heroics.

Overtime gets off to slow start

In overtime, the Bears won the toss and deferred. They quickly got the ball back when the Rams went three-and-out. Los Angeles was forced to punt after Blake Corum got stopped for a 1-yard loss on third-and-1 at the 36.

Chicago took over at the 16. Williams kept the drive going with a 3-yard keeper on fourth-and-1 near midfield. But Curl picked off Williams' pass intended for DJ Moore two plays later.

Stafford was 20 of 42 for 258 yards and took four sacks. Nacua had 56 yards receiving after going for 111 in a wild-card win over Carolina, and Kyren Williams ran for 87 yards and two scores.

"I definitely didn't get into a great rhythm today, there's no question about that," said Stafford, who sprained the index finger on his throwing hand against the Panthers. "I had some opportunities in the pass game, just some things that made it tough. Obviously, I can be better. But playoff football is about winning the football game."

Caleb Williams completed 23 of 42 passes for 257 yards. Moore had a touchdown catch, and D'Andre Swift ran for 76 yards.

"In these moments you feel that you let your team down, you feel this and that," Williams said. "It's a good lesson learned for us, first time being in this situation for me and for us as a team. I'm excited for what's to come, but obviously going to go back and watch this and see how I can be better."

Injuries

Rams: CB Emmanuel Forbes Jr. (shoulder) was hurt in the first half.

Bears: TE Colston Loveland (concussion) exited late in regulation.

Up next

Rams: Los Angeles and Seattle split two close games in the regular season, with the home team winning each time.

Bears: Prepare for next season.

The current US political climate is spurring a 'reclaim' and rallying on the MLK holiday

By TERRY TANG Associated Press

As communities across the country on Monday host parades, panels and service projects for the 40th federal observation of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the political climate for some is more fraught with tensions than festive with reflection on the slain Black American civil rights icon's legacy.

In the year since Donald Trump's second inauguration fell on King Day, the Republican president has gone scorched earth against diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives and targeted mostly Black-led cities for federal law enforcement operations, among other policies that many King admirers have criticized.

One year ago, Trump's executive orders, "Ending Illegal Discrimination And Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity" and "Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing," accelerated a rollback of civil rights and racial justice initiatives in federal agencies, corporations and universities. Last month, the National Park Service announced it will no longer offer free admission to parks on King Day and Juneteenth, but instead on Flag Day and Trump's birthday.

The fatal shooting this month of an unarmed Minneapolis woman in her car by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents sent there to target the city's Somali immigrant population, as well as Trump recently decrying civil rights as discrimination against white people, have only intensified fears of a regression from the social progress King and many others advocated for.

Still, the concerns have not chilled many King holiday events planned this year. Some conservative admirers of King say the holiday should be a reminder of the civil rights icon's plea that all people be judged by their character and not their skin color. Some Black advocacy groups, however, are vowing a day of resistance and rallies nationwide.

'We've always strived to be a more perfect union'

In a recent interview with the New York Times, Trump said he felt the Civil Rights Movement and the reforms it helped usher in were harmful to white people, who "were very badly treated." Politicians and advocates say Trump's comments are what are harmful, because they dismiss the hard work of King and others that helped not just Black Americans but other groups, including women and the LGBTQ+ community.

"I think the Civil Rights Movement was one of the things that made our country so unique, that we haven't always been perfect, but we've always strived to be this more perfect union, and that's what I think the Civil Rights Movement represents," Gov. Wes Moore, Maryland's first Black governor and only the nation's third elected Black governor, said this week in an interview with The Associated Press.

Maya Wiley, president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, one of the nation's oldest and largest civil rights coalitions, said the Trump administration's priorities make clear it is actively trying to erase the movement.

"From health care access and affordable housing to good paying jobs and union representation," Wiley said, "things Dr. King made part of his clarion call for a beloved community are still at stake and is even more so because (the administration) has dismantled the very terms of government and the norms of our culture."

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

The conservative Heritage Foundation think tank is encouraging the holiday's focus to stay solely on King himself. Brenda Hafera, a foundation research fellow, urged people to visit the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park in Atlanta or reread his "I have a dream" speech delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington nearly 63 years ago.

But using the holiday as a platform to rally and speak about "anti-racism" and "critical race theory" actually rejects King's ambition for the country, Hafera argued.

"I think efforts should be conducted in the spirit of what Martin Luther King actually believed and what he preached. And his vision was a colorblind society, right," Hafera said. "He says very famously in his speech, don't judge by the color of your skin, but the content of your character."

Groups call for holiday of reclamation, education and rallying

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The NAACP, the nation's oldest civil right organization which had a myriad MLK Day events planned for Monday, asserted that the heightened fears among communities of color and in immigrant communities mean King Day observances must take a different tone. People will have to put their safety first, even if their government isn't, said Wisdom Cole, NAACP senior national director of advocacy.

"As folks are using their constitutional right to protest and to speak out and stand up for what they believe in, we are being faced with violence. We are faced with increased police and state violence inflicted by the government," Cole said.

The Movement for Black Lives, a coalition of organizations affiliated with the Black Lives Matter movement, has planned its events under the banner "Reclaim MLK Day of Action." Organizers planned demonstrations in Atlanta, Chicago and Oakland, California, among other cities, over the weekend and Monday.

"This year it is more important than ever to reclaim MLK's radical legacy, letting his wisdom and fierce commitment to freedom move us into the action necessary to take care of one another, fight back, and free ourselves from this fascist regime," Devonte Jackson, a national organizing director for the coalition, said in a statement.

Indiana school cancels historic MLK Day event

For the first time in its 60-year history, Indiana University in Indianapolis canceled its annual Martin Luther King dinner. Over the years, the event drew notable guest speakers including Shirley Chisholm, the first Black woman elected to Congress, and activist Angela Davis.

The reasoning was "budget constraints," according to a social media post by the school's Black Student Union. However, the group said it was worried this was "connected to broader political pressures." A few students have since organized smaller community dinners or "eat-ins" to fill the void, WTHR-TV in Indianapolis reported.

Meanwhile, the St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church in Westbrook, Maine, canceled a MLK Day service due to "unforeseen circumstances," according to the parish website. But a member of the church's "social justice and peace committee" told NewsCenterMaine.com that the pastor was concerned about people's safety amid rumors of ICE agents being in the area.

Overall, there have been few reports of King Day events being majorly scaled down or canceled altogether.

In Memphis, Tennessee, the National Civil Rights Museum is going about its annual King Day celebration as normal. The museum is located on the site of the former Lorraine Motel, where King was shot on April 4, 1968. The museum is offering free admission on the holiday, an annual tradition.

"This milestone year is not only about looking back at what Dr. King stood for, but also recognizing the people who continue to make his ideals real today," museum President Russell Wigginton said.

Europe warns of 'dangerous downward spiral' after Trump threatens tariffs over Greenland

By STEFANIE DAZIO, JILL LAWLESS and EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — The eight European countries targeted by U.S. President Donald Trump for a 10% tariff for opposing American control of Greenland blasted the move Sunday, warning that his threats "undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral."

The joint statement by some of America's closest allies signaled a possible turning point in the recent tensions over sovereignty and security nearly 24 hours after Trump's threat.

It was also the most forceful rebuke of Trump from the European allies since he returned to the White House almost a year ago. In recent months, Europeans have mostly opted for diplomacy and flattery around him, even when seeking an end to the war in Ukraine. Sunday's statement, as well as some European countries sending troops to Greenland for a Danish military training exercise, appeared to be a step away from that strategy.

The unusually strong joint statement from Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Finland said troops sent to Greenland for operation "Arctic Endurance"

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pose "no threat to anyone."

Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen told reporters in Oslo that a dialogue was opened with the U.S. last week and "we will not give up on that. ... So we will stay on track — unless U.S. decides differently."

Added Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide at the same news conference: "We will not allow ourselves to be put under pressure, and those types of threats (of U.S. tariffs) are unacceptable between close allies,"

Six of the countries targeted are part of the 27-member European Union, which operates as a single economic zone in terms of trade.

Following emergency talks among the EU's national envoys Sunday, EU Council President Antonio Costa said the bloc's leaders agree "that tariffs would undermine transatlantic relations and are incompatible with the EU-U.S. trade agreement."

They expressed "readiness to defend ourselves against any form of coercion," Costa said in a statement. He is expected to convene a summit of the bloc's leaders later this week.

Solidarity with Denmark and Greenland

Trump's Saturday announcement sets up a potentially dangerous test of U.S. partnerships in Europe. He appeared to indicate that he was using the tariffs as leverage to force talks over the status of Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark that he regards as critical to U.S. national security.

Late Sunday, Trump posted on his social media platform that NATO has warned Denmark for two decades of the Russian threat to Greenland. He said Denmark hasn't acted and "Now it is time, and it will be done!!!"

"We stand in full solidarity with the Kingdom of Denmark and the people of Greenland," the group said. "Building on the process begun last week, we stand ready to engage in a dialogue based on the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity that we stand firmly behind. Tariff threats undermine transatlantic relations and risk a dangerous downward spiral."

There are immediate questions about how the White House could implement tariffs against the EU. It was unclear, too, how Trump could act under U.S. law, though he could cite emergency economic powers that are currently subject to a U.S. Supreme Court challenge.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said China and Russia will benefit from divisions between the U.S. and Europe. She added on social media: "If Greenland's security is at risk, we can address this inside NATO.."

Europe has been trying to keep Trump on its side to ensure U.S. support for Ukraine, including Washington sharing intelligence with Kyiv and its involvement in security guarantees if a peace agreement is reached with Russia.

Rasmus Søndergaard, a senior researcher at the Danish Institute for International Studies, called Trump's announcement "unprecedented" because tariff threats normally stem from trade disagreements, not territorial disputes between allies.

"That's of course why we're seeing the response from European countries saying 'enough is enough,'" he told The Associated Press. "I think there's in part probably a strategic calculation, of course, from the governments in these countries that if you give in to Trump on this, what will be the next thing? And at some point you have to sort of push back."

Søndergaard also said Trump leveled the playing field for Europe with the tariff threat. Europeans cannot compete militarily, but the EU can wield an economic weapon through reciprocal tariffs.

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte wrote on social media Sunday that he'd spoken with Trump. Rutte has been criticized in recent days for largely sidestepping questions about Trump and Greenland and any NATO tensions over the island.

"We will continue working on this, and I look forward to seeing him in Davos later this week," Rutte said.

U.K. Prime Minister Keir Starmer also spoke to Trump and told him that "applying tariffs on allies for pursuing the collective security of NATO allies is wrong," a Downing Street spokeswoman said. That call followed conversations with Rutte, Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Trump's move was also panned domestically.

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U.S. Sen. Mark Kelly, an Arizona Democrat, said Trump's threatened tariffs on U.S. allies would make Americans "pay more to try to get territory we don't need."

"Troops from European countries are arriving in Greenland to defend the territory from us. Let that sink in," Kelly said on social media. "The damage this President is doing to our reputation and our relationships is growing, making us less safe. If something doesn't change we will be on our own with adversaries and enemies in every direction."

Former U.S. Vice President Mike Pence said he supports the United States ultimately owning Greenland, but not how Trump is trying to accomplish it.

He said he had concerns whether Trump had the constitutional authority to impose unilateral tariffs on NATO allies, as well as about a threat of a military invasion. Trump's current position threatens "to fracture that strong relationship, not just with Denmark, but with all of our NATO allies," Pence said on CNN's "State of the Union."

Trump's populist allies criticize the tariff threat

The tariff announcement also drew blowback from Trump's populist allies in Europe.

Italy's right-wing premier, Giorgia Meloni, considered one of Trump's closest allies on the continent, said she had spoken to him about the tariffs, which she described as "a mistake."

The deployment to Greenland of small numbers of troops by some European countries was misunderstood by Washington, Meloni said, adding it was not a move against the U.S. but aimed to provide security against "other actors" that she didn't identify.

Jordan Bardella, president of Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally party in France and a European Parliament lawmaker, posted that the EU should suspend last year's tariff deal with the U.S., describing Trump's threats as "commercial blackmail."

Trump also achieved the rare feat of uniting Britain's main political parties — including the hard-right Reform UK party — all of whom criticized the tariff threat.

Also in London on Sunday, a heckler yelled "leave Greenland alone!" while Vanessa Williams sang "The Star-Spangled Banner" before an NBA game between Memphis and Orlando. The outburst drew scattered laughs and applause.

High-speed trains collide after one derails in southern Spain, killing at least 21

By JOSEPH WILSON, SUMAN NAISHADHAM and IAIN SULLIVAN Associated Press

ADAMUZ, Spain (AP) — A high-speed train derailed, jumped onto the track in the opposite direction and slammed into an oncoming train Sunday in southern Spain, killing at least 21 and injuring dozens more, the country's transport minister said.

The tail end of an evening train traveling from Malaga to Madrid with some 300 passengers went off the rails near Córdoba at 7:45 p.m. and slammed into a train with some 200 passengers coming from Madrid to Huelva, another southern Spanish city, according to rail operator Adif.

Spain's Transport Minister Oscar Puente updated the death toll to 21 after midnight when he said that rescuers had removed all the survivors. But Puente said there could be more victims still to be confirmed.

Andalusia regional President Juanma Moreno said 75 passengers were hospitalized, with most taken to the nearby city of Cordoba, including 15 people with serious injuries.

The Spanish Red Cross set up a help center in the town of Adamuz, near the crash site, offering assistance to emergency services and people seeking information. Members of Spain's Civil Guard and Civil Defense were also on site working in the cold, cloudless night. Only emergency services were allowed to approach the crash site.

Moreno said emergency workers would work all night to remove bodies from the wreckage.

"We have a very difficult night ahead," Andalusia's regional health chief Antonio Sanz said.

Officials call accident 'strange'

Puente said the cause of the crash was unknown.

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He called it “a truly strange” incident because it happened on a flat stretch of track that had been renovated in May. He also said the train that jumped the track was less than 4 years old. That train belonged to the private company Iryo, while the second train, which took the brunt of the impact, was part of Spain’s public train company Renfe.

Iryo issued a statement saying it “deeply lamented what has happened” and that it was working with authorities to manage the situation.

According to Puente, the back part of the first train derailed and crashed into the head of the other train, knocking its first two carriages off the track and down a 4-meter (13-foot) slope. He said the worst damage was to the front section of the Renfe train.

When asked by reporters how long an inquiry into the crash’s cause could take, he said it could be a month.

Impact ‘felt like an earthquake’

Salvador Jiménez, a journalist for Spanish broadcaster RTVE, was on board one of the derailed trains and told the network by phone that “there was a moment when it felt like an earthquake and the train had indeed derailed.”

He said passengers used emergency hammers to break the windows, and that some had walked away without serious injuries. Videos from the scene show people crawling out of windows to escape the wreckage with carriages leaning at an angle.

The crash occurred in the early evening near the village of Adamuz and hundreds of survivors had to be rescued in the darkness.

Francisco Carmona, the firefighter chief of Cordoba, told Spanish national radio RNE that one of the trains was badly mangled, with at least four wagons off the rails.

The regional Civil Protection chief, María Belén Moya Rojas, told Canal Sur the crash happened in an area that is hard to reach. She added that local people were taking blankets and water to the scene to help the victims, she said.

Spain’s military emergency relief units joined the deployment of other rescue units. The Red Cross also provided support to health care officials.

“Tonight is one of deep sadness for our country,” Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez wrote on X. “I want to express my sincerest condolences to the family and loved ones of the victims.”

Spain’s King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia also expressed their condolences and concern on social media.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a post on X that she was following “the terrible news” from Cordoba.

“Tonight you are in my thoughts,” she wrote in Spanish.

Spain leads Europe in high-speed trains

Spain has the largest high-speed rail network in Europe for trains moving over 250 kph (155 mph), with more than 3,100 kilometers (1,900 miles) of track, according to the European Union.

The network is a popular, competitively priced and safe mode of transport. Renfe said more than 25 million passengers took one of its high-speed trains in 2024.

Adif said train services between Madrid and cities in Andalusia would not run Monday.

Spain’s worst train accident this century occurred in 2013, when 80 people died after a train derailed in the country’s northwest. An investigation concluded the train was traveling 179 kph (111 mph) on a stretch with an 80 kph (50 mph) speed limit when it left the tracks.

Wildfires race across Chile, leaving 18 dead and forcing thousands to flee

By JAVIER TORRES Associated Press

PENCO, Chile (AP) — Wildfires raging across central and southern Chile on Sunday left at least 18 people dead, scorched thousands of acres of forest and destroyed hundreds of homes, authorities said, as the South American country swelters under a heat wave.

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Chilean President Gabriel Boric declared a state of catastrophe in the country's central Biobio region and the neighboring Ñuble region, around 500 kilometers (300 miles) south of Santiago, the capital.

The emergency designation allows greater coordination with the military to rein in over two dozen active wildfires that have so far blazed through 8,500 hectares (21,000 acres), according to the national forestry agency.

In a press conference from the hard-hit city of Concepción in the Biobio region, Boric expressed his support and condolences to the victims and warned that the government's initial reports of 18 people killed and 300 houses destroyed were expected to rise as the extent of the losses came into focus.

He estimated the total number of affected homes in the Biobio region alone to be "certainly more than a thousand, just so far." Already the fires ravaging the hillsides forced 50,000 people to evacuate.

"The first priority, as you know, in these emergencies is always to fight and extinguish the fire. But we cannot forget, at any time, that there are human tragedies here, families who are suffering," he said. "These are difficult times."

His address followed complaints from local authorities that for hours, destruction was everywhere and help was nowhere.

"Dear President Boric, from the bottom of my heart, I have been here for four hours, a community is burning and there is no (government) presence," Rodrigo Vera, the mayor of the small coastal town of Penco in the Biobio region, said on a local radio station earlier Sunday. "How can a minister do nothing but call me to tell me that the military is going to arrive at some point?"

Firefighters struggled to extinguish the flames, with the heat and strong winds hampering their efforts. Temperatures topped 38 C (100 F) on Sunday, and the scorching weather was expected to persist through Monday.

"Weather conditions for coming hours are not good and indicate extreme temperatures," said Interior Minister Álvaro Elizalde.

Residents said the fires took them by surprise after midnight, trapping them in their homes.

"Many people didn't evacuate. They stayed in their houses because they thought the fire would stop at the edge of the forest," said John Guzmán, 55, surveying the scene in Penco, where smoke blanketed the sky in an orange haze. "It was completely out of control. No one expected it."

The fire engulfed most of Penco, burning cars, a school and a church. Thousands of people scrambled to take refuge in makeshift emergency shelters.

"We fled running, with the kids, in the dark," said Juan Lagos, 52.

The government imposed a nighttime curfew in the area. Charred bodies were found across fields, homes, along roads and in cars.

"From what we can see, there are people who died ... and we knew them well," said Víctor Burboa, 54. "Everyone here knew them."

Wildfires afflict central and southern Chile every summer, typically reaching a peak in February as temperatures surge and the country continues to reel from a yearslong drought. In 2024, massive fires ripping across Chile's central coastline killed at least 130 people, becoming the nation's deadliest natural disaster since a devastating 2010 earthquake.

Neighboring Argentina has also struggled to contain wildfires consuming thousands of acres of forest in recent weeks as the country's southern Patagonia area experiences a spell of hot, dry weather.

Syrian government announces a ceasefire with the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces

By GHAITH ALSAYED and OMAR ALBAM Associated Press

RAQQA, Syria (AP) — The Syrian government Sunday announced a ceasefire with the Syrian Democratic Forces, taking almost full control of the country and dismantling the Kurdish-led forces that controlled the northeast for over a decade.

The announcement comes as tensions between government forces and the SDF boiled over earlier this

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month, eventually resulting in a major push by government forces toward the east. The SDF appeared to have largely retreated after initial clashes on a tense front line area in eastern Aleppo province.

Hours after the government announced the deal, SDF leader Mazloum Abdi confirmed it in a video statement, saying the group had accepted the agreement, which stipulates their withdrawal from Raqqa and Deir el-Zour provinces "to stop the bloodshed."

"We will explain the terms of the agreement to our people in the coming days," he said.

Syria's Defense Ministry said it ordered the fighting to halt on the front lines after the agreement was announced.

New government had struggled to take control

Syria's new leaders, since toppling Bashar Assad in December 2024, have struggled to assert their full authority over the war-torn country. An agreement was reached in March that would merge the SDF with Damascus, but it didn't gain traction as both sides accused each other of violating the deal.

Since the push, the government has largely asserted control of the Deir el-Zour and Raqqa provinces, critical areas under the SDF that include oil and gas fields, river dams along the Euphrates, and border crossings.

Syria's state-run news agency SANA showed President Ahmad al-Sharaa signing and holding the agreement. Abdi, who was scheduled to meet with the president in Damascus was not seen, though his signature appeared on the document. Al-Sharaa told journalists that Abdi could not travel due to bad weather and will visit Damascus on Monday.

"It's a victory for all Syrians of all backgrounds," al-Sharaa told journalists in Damascus after signing the agreement. "Hopefully Syria will end its state of division and move to a state of unity and progress."

The two warring sides are key allies of Washington. U.S. Envoy Tom Barrack met with al-Sharaa earlier Sunday as government forces were sweeping into the city of Raqqa and across Deir el-Zour province. Abdi reportedly joined the meeting over the phone.

US envoy says agreement will lead to dialogue and cooperation

Barrack praised the agreement, saying it will lead to "renewed dialogue and cooperation toward a unified Syria," ahead of working on the details of implementing the integration.

"This agreement and ceasefire represent a pivotal inflection point, where former adversaries embrace partnership over division," said Barrack in a post on X.

The agreement includes dismantling the SDF and having its forces join Syria's military and security forces, while senior military and civilian officials would be given high-ranking positions in state institutions.

The SDF would have to give up the Raqqa and Deir el-Zour provinces — both Arab-majority areas — to the Syrian military and government, as well as its border crossings and oil and gas fields. Hassakha Province, the heartland of the Kurdish population, is only expected to give its civilian administration back to Damascus, while the Kurdish-led agencies that handled prisons and sprawling camps with thousands of detained Islamic State group fighters and families would be handed over to Damascus.

President says agreement will be implemented gradually

There was no clear timeline on when and how the different elements of the agreement will take effect. Al-Sharaa told journalists that it will be gradually implemented, beginning with the cessation of hostilities.

It appeared that tensions following clashes in Aleppo earlier this month had calmed after Abdi announced that his troops will withdraw east of the Euphrates River, and al-Sharaa issued a presidential decree that would strengthen Kurdish rights in the country.

Initially the withdrawal appeared to be going as planned, but then new clashes broke out and the Syrian military seized Tabqa, continuing into Raqqa province.

A senior Syrian government official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly said government forces pushed eastward because the SDF despite saying they will withdraw east of the Euphrates by 7 a.m. did not do so.

Armed Arab clans in Raqqa and Deir el-Zour that largely do not support the SDF backed Damascus. By Sunday evening, the SDF lost control of large swaths of its territory and infrastructure, including dams and oil and gas fields.

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The SDF took Raqqa from the Islamic State in 2017 as part of its military campaign to take down the group's so-called caliphate, which at its peak stretched across large parts of Syria and Iraq. At the height of its control, IS declared Raqqa its capital.

An Associated Press reporter in the area said that large military convoys swept into Raqqa city Sunday evening and were greeted by residents. It appeared that the SDF had withdrawn.

Raqqa celebrates as Qamishli is circumspect

Crowds in Raqqa celebrated in the streets late into the evening, waving Syrian flags and setting off fireworks, while some fired into the air.

"Today, everyone is born anew," said Yahya Al Ahmad, who was among the revelers.

A couple of thousand Kurdish families who lived in the areas captured by government forces fled to the SDF-controlled city of Qamishli amid the offensive. Many of them had previously been displaced from other areas multiple times during Syria's 14-year civil war and were living in tents camps. A cultural center in the city was turned into a temporary shelter for them.

Residents of Qamishli expressed both hope and skepticism about the deal.

"The Kurds have become victims of international agreements and international deception," said Goran Ibrahim, a doctor. But he said, "With regards to this agreement, the positive part is the end of the fighting between Arabs and Kurds in the region."

Syria's ambassador to the U.N., Ibrahim Olabi, told the AP, "Really this is now a moment to show that Syrians are able to put differences aside and move ahead...It's a victory for Syria."

'60 Minutes' airs report on Trump deportations that was suddenly pulled a month ago

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

"60 Minutes" on Sunday aired its story about Trump administration deportations that was abruptly pulled from the newsmagazine's lineup a month ago, a move that had triggered an internal battle about political pressure that spilled out into the open.

Correspondent Sharyn Alfonsi made no reference to her dispute with CBS News editor-in-chief Bari Weiss in the story about deportees who had been sent to El Salvador's notoriously harsh CECOT prison. When the segment was struck from the Dec. 21 episode on Weiss' orders, Alfonsi told her "60 Minutes" colleagues that it "was not an editorial decision, it was a political one."

Weiss had argued that the story did not sufficiently reflect the administration's viewpoint or advance reporting that had been done by other news organizations earlier.

The story shown Sunday included no on-camera interviews with Trump administration officials. But it did include statements from the White House and Department of Homeland Security that were not part of what Alfonsi had used before her story was pulled. Some of statements, which were carried in full on the "60 Minutes" website, were dated prior to Dec. 21.

"Since November, '60 Minutes' has made several attempts to interview key Trump administration officials on camera about our story," Alfonsi said. "They declined our requests."

Alfonsi did not immediately return a message from The Associated Press on Sunday. She said in her email that the administration's refusal to consent to on-camera interviews was a tactical maneuver designed to kill the story.

CBS says it was always going to air the piece

CBS News, in a statement said, that its "leadership has always been committed to airing the "60 Minutes" CECOT piece as soon as it was ready. Tonight, viewers get to see it, along with other important stories, all of which speak to CBS News' independence and the power of our storytelling."

Alfonsi's report was the second of three on Sunday's show, with the lead story being Cecilia Vega's report from Minneapolis about ICE enforcement efforts and the protests to its tactics.

The initial decision to sideline Alfonsi's CECOT story became a flashpoint for critics who said the appoint-

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ment of Weiss, founder of the Free Press website who had no previous experience in television news, represented an attempt by the network's new corporate leadership to curry favor with Trump.

While pulled from the broadcast in December, Alfonsi's original story mistakenly became available online. CBS News had fed a version of the newsmagazine to Global Television, a network that airs "60 Minutes" in Canada, which posted it on its website before the last-minute switch removing the piece.

That enabled sharp-eyed viewers to see what Weiss had rejected, offering the opportunity to compare it to what "60 Minutes" eventually put on the air.

The body of the story was unchanged. It included a brief clip of President Donald Trump saying the prison operators "don't play games," and one from White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt saying that "heinous monsters, rapists, murderers, sexual assaulters, predators who have no right to be in this country" were sent there.

Alfonsi's introduction was updated to lead with the Jan. 3 U.S. raid that led to the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, currently held in U.S. custody. She changed the end of the story to include the administration comment, including its explanation for not providing detailed records on the migrants sent to El Salvador.

The administration also provided photos of tattoos worn by the two migrants Alfonsi interviewed, including one swastika that the interviewee said he had gotten as a teen-ager not knowing what it meant.

The CBS-administration relationship has evolved

Since Weiss' appointment, Trump administration officials have been more visible on CBS News, in interviews that she sometimes helped arrange. The president himself was interviewed by Norah O'Donnell on "60 Minutes" on Nov. 2.

The New York Times reported Saturday that after Trump was interviewed last week by new "CBS Evening News" anchor Tony Dokoupil, Leavitt told the network that "we'll sue your ass off" if the exchange wasn't aired in full.

All of the 13-minute interview was shown Tuesday, an unusual step for one of the broadcast networks' evening newscasts, a half hour summary of the day's big stories. CBS told The Times that it had decided to run the interview unedited at the time it was booked.

Trump has objected in the past to how his interviews have been edited — including releasing an unedited transcript of an interview conducted by Lesley Stahl of "60 Minutes" in 2020.

Maye throws 3 TD passes, Stroud has 4 INTs as Patriots top Texans 28-16 to advance to AFC title game

By KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writer

FOXBOROUGH, Mass. (AP) — Mike Vrabel returned to New England on a mission to have the franchise playing again in meaningful games in January — as he did so often as a player.

In his first year as the head coach, he wanted to do it by building a culture of players that wanted to perform for each another. Their most complete team effort of the season has the Patriots one win from a trip to the Super Bowl.

Drake Maye threw three touchdown passes in the snow and rain, Marcus Jones returned one of C.J. Stroud's four interceptions for a score and the Patriots defeated the Houston Texans 28-16 on Sunday to advance to the AFC championship game for the first time in seven years.

The Patriots (16-3) will take on the Broncos (15-3) in Denver next Sunday, with the winner advancing to the NFL's title game in three weeks.

"Everybody's stepping up. We're using everybody. Everybody's making plays. Everybody's helping us win," said Vrabel, who won three Super Bowls as a playmaking linebacker for the Patriots. "I'm excited for these guys, but also, they're not satisfied, and I can tell that."

The Patriots — winners of 15 of their last 16 games — will make their 16th conference championship game appearance and first since their run to their sixth Super Bowl title under Bill Belichick in the 2018 season. New England has won its last nine divisional round games.

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Maye finished 16 of 27 for 179 yards, but had an interception and fumbled four times, losing two in cold conditions in which snow and rain fell throughout. One of Maye's fumbles set up Houston's first touchdown.

"Just proud of the guys," Maye said. "Battled the elements. This is New England. This is what we're trying to embrace and we want to embrace all season long. Props to our defense, played a hell of a game. We've got to protect the football better, but we made enough plays to win it."

Carlton Davis III had two interceptions for New England. Craig Woodson added an interception and fumble recovery.

"They bring it every week," Maye said of his defense. "It's fun to watch. And we could help them out some more, but just proud of the guys. Enjoy this one, and we're back on the road."

The eight combined turnovers — Woody Marks also lost a fumble for Houston — were the most in a playoff game since 2015 when the Cardinals and Panthers combined for eight in the NFC championship game.

The Texans (13-6) have lost in the divisional round in three straight seasons under coach DeMeco Ryans. The franchise fell to 0-7 in this round.

"It's tough to win a game when you turn the ball over five times," Ryans said.

Stroud finished 20 of 47 with a TD pass. All of his interceptions came in the first half as he became the first player with five or more INTs and five or more fumbles in a single postseason. Will Anderson forced two fumbles for the Texans.

"I feel like I let people down," Stroud said. "I'm not happy with that. It hurts. I'm not used to it."

Leading 21-16 in the fourth quarter, the Patriots stretched their lead to 27-16 when Kayshon Boutte got behind Derek Stingley Jr. and pulled in a diving, one-hand catch in the corner of the end zone for a touchdown.

The Texans had the ball with 5:48 to play, but punted on fourth-and-18 at their own 21 with 4:18 remaining.

New England's next drive took the clock under two minutes. But the Texans turned it over on downs when Stroud's fourth-down pass to Xavier Hutchinson was batted down by Robert Spillane.

The Patriots now go back on the road, where they are 8-0 this season.

"We feel like we deserve to be here," Maye said. "I like our chances with those guys in the locker room."

Early action

With the Patriots leading 7-3 early, a series of miscues produced the next two scores.

Maye was strip-sacked by Danielle Hunter deep in Patriots territory, but left tackle Will Campbell fell on the ball and the Patriots punted.

The Texans gave it right back when Stroud's deep pass along the sideline was intercepted by Davis III.

Maye fumbled again when he attempted to run on a busted play and had the ball stripped by Tommy Togia and recovered by Azeez Al-Shaair. Six plays later, Stroud linked up with Christian Kirk on a 10-yard touchdown pass.

But on Houston's next drive, Stroud was rushed up the middle by K'Lavon Chaisson and he lofted a pass that was intercepted by Jones and returned for the score to put New England back in front.

Later in the quarter, the Patriots' lead increased to 21-10 when they capped a five-play, 56-yard drive with a 7-yard TD pass from Maye to Stefon Diggs.

Mr. Pick-6

Jones scored on an interception return for the second time this season. It was the first of his career in the playoffs and first for New England in the postseason since Asante Samuel had one vs. Indianapolis on Jan. 21, 2007, in the AFC championship game.

Injuries

Texans: TE Dalton Schultz (calf) left in the first quarter and didn't return. ... LG Tytus Howard limped off in the second quarter. ... TE Cade Stover left in the fourth with a knee injury and didn't return.

Patriots: LB Robert Spillane left in the first quarter with a thumb injury, but returned. ... RB TreVeyon Henderson was shaken up after a second quarter run before jogging off. ... S Craig Woodson exited after his INT with a head injury, but returned. ... RB Rhamondre Stevenson left in the second quarter with an

eye issue. ... Davis injured his head in the fourth quarter.

\$1 billion gets a permanent seat on Trump's Board of Peace for Gaza, as India and others invited

By CARA ANNA and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

At least eight more countries say the United States has invited them to join President Donald Trump's Board of Peace, a new body of world leaders meant to oversee next steps in Gaza that shows ambitions for a broader mandate in global affairs. Two of the countries, Hungary and Vietnam, said they have accepted.

A \$1 billion contribution secures permanent membership on the Trump-led board instead of a three-year appointment, which has no contribution requirement, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity about the charter, which hasn't been made public. The official said the money raised would go to rebuilding Gaza.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has accepted an invitation to join the board, Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó told state radio Sunday. Orbán is one of Trump's most ardent supporters in Europe.

Vietnam's Communist Party chief, To Lam, also has accepted, a foreign ministry statement said.

India has received an invitation, a senior government official with knowledge of the matter said, speaking on condition of anonymity as the information hadn't been made public by authorities.

Australia has been invited and will talk it through with the U.S. "to properly understand what this means and what's involved," Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles told Australian Broadcasting Corp. on Monday.

Jordan, Greece, Cyprus and Pakistan said Sunday they had received invitations. Canada, Turkey, Egypt, Paraguay, Argentina and Albania have already said they were invited. It was not clear how many have been invited in all.

The U.S. is expected to announce its official list of members in the coming days, likely during the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

Those on the board will oversee next steps in Gaza as the ceasefire that took effect on Oct. 10 moves into its challenging second phase. It includes a new Palestinian committee in Gaza, the deployment of an international security force, disarmament of Hamas and reconstruction of the war-battered territory.

In letters sent Friday to world leaders inviting them to be "founding members," Trump said the Board of Peace would "embark on a bold new approach to resolving global conflict."

That could become a potential rival to the U.N. Security Council, the most powerful body of the global entity created in the wake of World War II. The 15-seat council has been blocked by U.S. vetoes from taking action to end the war in Gaza, while the U.N.'s clout has been diminished by major funding cuts by the Trump administration and other donors.

Trump's invitation letters for the Board of Peace noted that the Security Council had endorsed the U.S. 20-point Gaza ceasefire plan, which includes the board's creation. The letters were posted on social media by some invitees.

The White House last week also announced an executive committee of leaders who will carry out the Board of Peace's vision, but Israel on Saturday objected that the committee "was not coordinated with Israel and is contrary to its policy," without details. The statement by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office was rare criticism of its close ally in Washington.

The executive committee's members include U.S. Secretary of State Rubio, Trump envoy Steve Witkoff, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, World Bank President Ajay Banga and Trump's deputy national security adviser Robert Gabriel, along with an Israeli business owner, billionaire Yakir Gabay.

Members also include representatives of ceasefire monitors Qatar, Egypt and Turkey. Turkey has a strained relationship with Israel but good relations with Hamas and could play an important role in persuading the group to yield power in Gaza and disarm.

Sending soldiers to Minneapolis for immigration crackdown would be unconstitutional, mayor says

By JACK BROOK and SARAH RAZA Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The mayor of Minneapolis said Sunday that sending active duty soldiers into Minnesota to help with an immigration crackdown is a ridiculous and unconstitutional idea as he urged protesters to remain peaceful so the president won't see a need to send in the U.S. military.

Daily protests have been ongoing throughout January since the Department of Homeland Security ramped up immigration enforcement in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul by bringing in more than 2,000 federal officers.

Three hotels where protesters have said Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers were staying in the area stopped taking reservations Sunday.

In a diverse neighborhood where immigration officers have been seen frequently, U.S. postal workers marched through on Sunday, chanting: "Protect our routes. Get ICE out."

Soldiers specialized in arctic duty told to be ready

The Pentagon has ordered about 1,500 active-duty soldiers based in Alaska who specialize in operating in arctic conditions to be ready in case of a possible deployment to Minnesota, two defense officials said Sunday.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military plans, said two infantry battalions of the Army's 11th Airborne Division have been given prepare-to-deploy orders.

One defense official said the troops are standing by to deploy to Minnesota should President Donald Trump invoke the Insurrection Act.

The rarely used 19th century law would allow the president to send military troops into Minnesota, where protesters have been confronting federal immigration agents for weeks. He has since backed off the threat, at least for now.

"It's ridiculous, but we will not be intimidated by the actions of this federal government," Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey told CNN's State of the Union on Sunday. "It is not fair, it's not just, and it's completely unconstitutional."

Thousands of Minneapolis citizens are exercising their First Amendment rights and the protests have been peaceful, Frey said.

"We are not going to take the bait. We will not counter Donald Trump's chaos with our own brand of chaos here," Frey said.

Gov. Tim Walz has mobilized the Minnesota National Guard, although no units have been deployed to the streets.

Some hotels close or stop accepting reservations amid protests

At least three hotels in Minneapolis-St. Paul that protesters said housed officers in the immigrant crackdown were not accepting reservations Sunday. Rooms could not be booked online before early February at the Hilton DoubleTree and IHG InterContinental hotels in downtown St. Paul and at the Hilton Canopy hotel in Minneapolis.

Over the phone, an InterContinental hotel front desk employee said it was closing for the safety of the staff, but declined to comment on the specific concerns. The DoubleTree and InterContinental hotels had empty lobbies with signs out front saying they were "temporarily closed for business until further notice." The Canopy hotel was open, but not accepting reservations.

The Canopy has been the site of noisy protests by anti-ICE demonstrators aimed to prevent agents from sleeping.

"The owner of the independently owned and operated InterContinental St. Paul has decided to temporarily close their hotels to prioritize the safety of guests and team members given ongoing safety concerns in the area," IHG Hotels & Resorts spokesperson Taylor Solomon said in a statement Sunday. "All guests with existing reservations can contact the hotel team for assistance with alternative accommodations."

Earlier this month, Hilton and the local operator of the Hampton Inn Lakeville hotel near Minneapolis

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apologized after the property wouldn't allow federal immigration agents to stay there. Hampton Inn locations are under the Hilton brand, but the Lakeville hotel is independently operated by Everpeak Hospitality. Everpeak said the cancelation was inconsistent with their policy.

US postal workers march and protest

Peter Noble joined dozens of other U.S. Post Office workers Sunday on their only day off from their mail routes to march against the immigration crackdown. They passed by the place where an immigration officer shot and killed Renee Good, a U.S. citizen and mother of three, during a Jan. 7 confrontation.

"I've seen them driving recklessly around the streets while I am on my route, putting lives in danger," Noble said.

Letter carrier Susan Becker said she came out to march on the coldest day since the crackdown started because it's important to keep telling the federal government she thinks what it is doing is wrong. She said people on her route have reported ICE breaking into apartment buildings and tackling people in the parking lot of shopping centers.

"These people are by and large citizens and immigrants. But they're citizens, and they deserve to be here; they've earned their place and they are good people," Becker said.

Republican congressman asks governor to tone down comments

A Republican U.S. House member called for Walz to tone down his comments about fighting the federal government and instead start to help law enforcement.

Many of the officers in Minnesota are neighbors just doing the jobs they were sent to do, House Majority Whip Tom Emmer told WCCO-AM in Minneapolis.

"These are not mean spirited people. But right now, they feel like they're under attack. They don't know where the next attack is going to come from and who it is. So people need to keep in mind this starts at the top," Emmer said.

Across social media, videos have been posted of federal officers spraying protesters with pepper spray, knocking down doors and forcibly taking people into custody. On Friday, a federal judge ruled that immigration officers can't detain or tear gas peaceful protesters who aren't obstructing authorities, including when they're observing the officers during the Minnesota crackdown.

Army puts 1,500 soldiers on standby for possible Minnesota deployment, AP sources say

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon has ordered about 1,500 active duty soldiers to be ready in case of a possible deployment to Minnesota, where federal authorities have been conducting a massive immigration enforcement operation, two defense officials said Sunday.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military plans, said two infantry battalions of the Army's 11th Airborne Division have been given prepare-to-deploy orders. The unit is based in Alaska and specializes in operating in arctic conditions.

One defense official said the troops are standing by to deploy to Minnesota should President Donald Trump invoke the Insurrection Act, a rarely used 19th century law that would allow him to employ active duty troops as law enforcement.

The move comes just days after Trump threatened to do just that to quell protests against his administration's immigration crackdown.

In an emailed statement, Pentagon chief spokesman Sean Parnell did not deny the orders were issued and said the military "is always prepared to execute the orders of the Commander-in-Chief if called upon."

ABC News was the first to report the development.

On Thursday, Trump said in a social media post that he would invoke the 1807 law "if the corrupt politicians of Minnesota don't obey the law and stop the professional agitators and insurrectionists from attacking the Patriots of I.C.E., who are only trying to do their job."

He appeared to walk back the threat a day later, telling reporters at the White House that there wasn't

a reason to use it "right now."

"If I needed it, I'd use it," Trump said. "It's very powerful."

Trump has repeatedly threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act throughout both of his terms. In 2020 he threatened to use it to quell protests after George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis police, and in recent months he threatened to use it for immigration protests.

The law was most recently invoked by President George H.W. Bush in 1992 to end unrest in Los Angeles after the acquittal of four white police officers in the beating of Rodney King.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat and frequent target of Trump, has urged the president to refrain from sending in more troops.

"I'm making a direct appeal to the President: Let's turn the temperature down. Stop this campaign of retribution. This is not who we are," Walz said last week on social media.

US-based activist agency says it has verified 3,919 deaths from Iran protests

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A U.S.-based activist agency said Sunday it has verified at least 3,919 deaths during a wave of protests that swept Iran and led to a bloody crackdown, and fears the number could be significantly higher.

The Human Rights Activists News Agency posted the revised figure, up from the previous toll of 3,308. The death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades, and recalls the chaos surrounding the 1979 revolution.

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

Iranian officials have not given a clear death toll, although on Saturday, the country's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said the protests had left "several thousand" people dead — and blamed the United States for the deaths. It was the first indication from an Iranian leader of the extent of the casualties from the wave of protests that began Dec. 28 over Iran's ailing economy.

The Human Rights Activists News Agency says 24,669 protesters have been arrested in the crackdown.

Iranian officials have repeatedly accused the United States and Israel of fomenting unrest in the country.

Tension with the United States has been high, with U.S. President Donald Trump repeatedly threatening Tehran with military action if his administration found the Islamic Republic was using deadly force against anti-government protesters.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, in a post Sunday on X, blamed "longstanding enmity and inhumane sanctions" imposed by the U.S. and its allies for any hardships the Iranian people might be facing. "Any aggression against the Supreme Leader of our country is tantamount to all-out war against the Iranian nation," he wrote.

During the protests, Trump had told demonstrators 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.

But he later struck a conciliatory tone, saying that Iranian officials had "canceled the hanging of over 800 people" and that "I greatly respect the fact that they canceled."

A family member of detained Iranian protester Erfan Soltani said Sunday that the 26-year-old is in good physical health and was able to see his family days after his planned execution was postponed.

Somayeh, a 45-year-old close relative of Soltani who is living abroad, told AP that his family had been told his execution would be set for Wednesday but it was postponed when they reached the prison in Karaj, a city northwest of Tehran.

"I ask everyone to help in securing Erfan's freedom," Somayeh, who asked to be identified by first name only for fear of government reprisal, said in a video message.

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On Saturday, Khamenei branded Trump a “criminal” for supporting the rallies and blamed the U.S. for the casualties, describing the protesters as “foot soldiers” of the United States.

Trump, in an interview with Politico on Saturday, called for an end to Khamenei’s nearly 40-year reign, calling him as “a sick man who should run his country properly and stop killing people.”

No protests have been reported for days in Iran, where the streets have returned to an uneasy calm. Instead, some Iranians chanted anti-Khamenei slogans from the windows of their homes on Saturday night, the chants reverberating around neighborhoods in Tehran, Shiraz and Isfahan, witnesses said.

Authorities have also blocked access to the internet since Jan. 8. On Saturday, very limited internet services functioned again briefly. Access to some online services such as Google began working again on Sunday, although users said they could access only domestic websites, and email services continued to be blocked.

Small part of Sunshine State becomes Snowy State as Florida gets snow for 2nd year in a row

PENSACOLA, Fla. (AP) — A small part of Florida is the Snowy State for the second year in a row.

Snow briefly covered the grass and rooftops in parts of the western Florida Panhandle on Sunday morning as just enough frigid air rushed in behind a cold front to turn the last rain showers into snowflakes in the Sunshine State.

Elsewhere, the winter weather promised to interfere with playoff football in places — Boston and Chicago — more accustomed to it, although the visiting teams come from warmer climates. And in the upper Midwest, residents braced for blizzard conditions.

The southern snow wasn’t a once-in-a-lifetime thing. Less than a year ago, on Jan. 21, 2025, some of the same areas of Florida that briefly saw frosty lawns received up to 8 inches (20 centimeters) of snow in what was the most significant snowfall in many places since the late 1800s.

Snow photos flooded social media. There were a few flakes on the beach and snow nestled into palm fronds. It was too warm to stick to the roads, but a dusting of snow sat on the grass for a little while before mostly melting.

The rare snow in the South wasn’t just in Florida. Southeastern Alabama and southern Georgia also reported snow in some areas as they also celebrated a second winter wonderland in less than a year.

Snow covered the ground in Columbus and Macon, Georgia, and officials warned enough might fall to make travel treacherous in spots.

Heavier snowfall was expected to hit New England. Three to five inches (7 to 13 centimeters) of afternoon and evening snow was predicted in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts, where the New England Patriots were hosting the Houston Texans.

Those in the Boston area could expect “wet and heavy” snow showers, said National Weather Service meteorologist Kyle Pederson, although the heaviest snowfall wasn’t expected until 7 p.m., long after the game’s 3 p.m. kickoff.

“There’s a low-pressure system passing offshore and it’s close enough to bring us some snow, but far enough away not to be a major hit,” Pederson said.

Snow — but much less of it — was also predicted for Chicago; there, it’s the frigid temperatures that will come into play as the Bears host the Rams from sunny Los Angeles. Snow accumulation was expected to be minimal, but temperatures in the teens and a wind chill of near zero were the main concerns.

A blizzard warning was in effect until 9 p.m. local time for parts of northwest and west central Minnesota and southeast North Dakota. Snow was expected to be limited to two inches (5 centimeters) but forecasters said that wind gusts of up to 55 mph (88 kph) could create whiteout conditions, making travel hazardous and possibly life-threatening.

Thousands of fans celebrate life of legendary Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir in San Francisco

By JANIE HAR Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Thousands of people gathered Saturday at San Francisco's Civic Center to celebrate the life of Bob Weir, the legendary guitarist and founding member of the Grateful Dead who died last week at age 78.

Musicians Joan Baez and John Mayer spoke on a makeshift stage in front of the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium after four Buddhist monks opened the event with a prayer in Tibetan. Fans carried long-stemmed red roses, placing some at an altar filled with photos and candles. They wrote notes on colored paper, professing their love and thanking him for the journey.

Several asked him to say hello to fellow singer and guitarist Jerry Garcia and bass guitarist Phil Lesh, also founding members who preceded him in death. Garcia died in 1995; Lesh died in 2024.

"I'm here to celebrate Bob Weir," said Ruthie Garcia, who is no relation to Jerry, a fan since 1989. "Celebrating him and helping him go home."

Saturday's celebration brought plenty of fans with long dreadlocks and wearing tie-dye clothing, some using walkers. But there were also young couples, men in their 20s and a father who brought his 6-year-old son in order to pass on to the next generation a love of live music and the tight-knit Deadhead community.

The Bay Area native joined the Grateful Dead — originally the Warlocks — in 1965 in San Francisco at just 17 years old. He wrote or co-wrote and sang lead vocals on Dead classics including "Sugar Magnolia," "One More Saturday Night" and "Mexicali Blues." He was generally considered less shaggy looking than the other band members, although he adopted a long beard like Garcia's later in life.

The Dead played music that pulled in blues, jazz, country, folk and psychedelia in long improvisational jams. Their concerts attracted avid Deadheads who followed them on tours. The band played on decades after Garcia's death, morphing into Dead & Company with John Mayer.

Darla Sagos, who caught an early flight out of Seattle Saturday morning to make the public mourning, said she suspected something was up when there were no new gigs announced after Dead & Company played three nights in San Francisco last summer. It was unusual, as his calendar often showed where he would be playing next.

"We were hoping that everything was OK and that we were going to get more music from him," she said. "But we will continue the music, with all of us and everyone that's going to be playing it."

Sagos and her husband, Adam Sagos, have a one-year-old grandson who will grow up knowing the music.

A statement on Weir's Instagram account announced his passing Jan. 10. It said he beat cancer, but he succumbed to underlying lung issues. He is survived by his wife and two daughters, who were at Saturday's event.

His death was sudden and unexpected, said daughter Monet Weir, but he had always wished for the music and the legacy of the Dead to outlast him.

American music, he believed, could unite, she said.

"The show must go on," Monet Weir said.

SoCal Edison lawsuits claim series of missteps made Eaton Fire more deadly

ALTADENA, Calif. (AP) — Southern California Edison has filed lawsuits accusing Los Angeles County, local water agencies and the Southern California Gas Company of a series of missteps that the utility says made last year's Eaton Fire more deadly.

The utility filed cross-complaints in Los Angeles Superior Court on Friday against Los Angeles County, Pasadena Water and Power and five other water agencies, KABC-TV reported. SoCal Edison also filed a separate court complaint against SoCalGas.

The fire that ignited on Jan. 7, 2025, killed 19 people and destroyed more than 9,400 homes and other

structures. It took firefighters nearly a month to extinguish the blaze, which scorched 22 square miles (57 square kilometers).

The cause remains under investigation, but evidence suggests one of the utility's idled power lines might have sparked the fire.

SoCal Edison claims in the lawsuits that Los Angeles County agencies failed to send timely evacuation warnings to residents in east and west Altadena. Eighteen of the 19 people who died in the fire lived in west Altadena.

Los Angeles County declined to comment about the latest court filings.

The utility also claims water agencies, including Pasadena Water and Power, did not provide enough water as the fire spread, leaving firefighters with limited resources.

In a separate court filing, SoCal Edison blames SoCalGas, claiming the gas utility did not begin widespread shutoffs until four days after the fire started. SoCal Edison says gas leaks and gas-fed fires helped fuel the blaze.

SoCalGas said it is reviewing the complaint and will respond through the judicial process. Meanwhile, Pasadena officials rejected SoCal Edison's claims, saying the city believes the utility's equipment caused the fire.

SoCal Edison is facing 998 lawsuits from fire victims, insurers and government entities. The U.S. Department of Justice has also sued the company over damage to National Forest land.

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."

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

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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, 38, 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.

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Box Office: '28 Years Later: The Bone Temple' opens behind 'Avatar: Fire and Ash'

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

"28 Years Later: The Bone Temple" may have scored well with critics, but slightly more moviegoing audiences chose to spend the holiday weekend catching up with "Avatar: Fire and Ash." James Cameron's epic topped the North American box office charts for the fifth straight weekend with \$13.3 million in ticket sales, according to studio estimates Sunday. The Walt Disney Co. also celebrated another win as their Thanksgiving release "Zootopia 2" became the highest grossing animated Motion Picture Association release of all time.

Meanwhile "The Bone Temple," directed by Nia DaCosta, landed in second place with \$13 million through Sunday. By the end of Monday's Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday, it's expected to be at \$15 million, still trailing "Avatar's" projected \$17.2 million. The film, released by Sony Pictures and starring Ralph Fiennes and Jack O'Connell, opened wide this weekend in 3,506 theaters on a wave of hype and strong reviews. It currently has a 93% on Rotten Tomatoes, and 72% of audiences said in a PostTrak poll that they would "definitely recommend" the movie. Considering it's also solidly in the horror genre and arriving in January, often a dumping ground for lesser movies, "The Bone Temple" should have done better. Internationally, it made \$16.2 million from 61 markets.

But perhaps in a case of too much too soon, the sequel also comes less than a year after the previous installment, "28 Years Later," which opened to \$30 million in June. Going into the weekend, "The Bone Temple" was expected to make at least \$20 million through Monday. With a reported \$63 million production budget, not including marketing and promotion, it also has a long journey to break even.

"It's one of those head-scratchers," said Paul Dergarabedian, the head of marketplace trends for Comscore. "There may be a little bit of confusion from audiences. But word-of-mouth might sustain it in this marketplace, like we saw with 'The Housemaid' and 'Zootopia 2.'"

Danny Boyle and Alex Garland, the team who started it all with "28 Days Later," which came out in 2002, are also working on a third installment.

Third place went to "Zootopia 2," with \$8.8 million in its eighth weekend. With global grosses currently at \$1.7 billion, it surpassed "Inside Out 2" as the highest grossing MPA animated release of all time. The MPA distinction means that the Chinese blockbuster "Ne Zha 2," which has made over \$2.2 billion, is not included in the rankings. "Zootopia 2" is also now the ninth biggest global release of all time.

"The Housemaid," one of the other major blockbusters of late, landed in fourth place with \$8.5 million. Made for only \$35 million, the Lionsgate release has grossed nearly \$250 million worldwide.

Rounding out the top five was "Marty Supreme," which became A24's highest grossing North American release with a running gross of \$79.7 million, unseating "Everything Everywhere All at Once." Josh Safdie's mid-century adrenaline rush may get another boost after Oscar nominations are announced Thursday.

"Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring" and "The Two Towers" were also back in theaters this weekend and both in the top 10, grossing \$3.6 million and \$2.4 million respectively.

Outside of the top 10, Focus Features' "Hamnet," which won best drama and best female actor for Jessie Buckley at the Golden Globes last weekend and is considered another top Oscar contender, expanded to 718 locations this weekend where it made \$1.3 million through Sunday.

Top 10 movies by domestic box office

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

1. "Avatar: Fire and Ash," \$13.3 million.
2. "28 Years Later: The Bone Temple," \$13 million.
3. "Zootopia 2," \$8.8 million.
4. "The Housemaid," \$8.5 million
5. "Marty Supreme," \$5.5 million.
6. "Primate," \$5 million.

7. "Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring," \$3.6 million.
8. "Greenland 2: Migration," \$3.4 million.
9. "Anaconda," \$3.2 million.
10. "Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers," \$2.4 million.

Video shows fires in Palestinian village in West Bank during Israeli settler attack

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli settlers rampaged through a Palestinian village in the West Bank, setting fire to a series of structures, according to security camera footage obtained by The Associated Press on Sunday, in an overnight onslaught that has become a common phenomenon in the occupied territory.

In the video, time-stamped at around 10 p.m. Saturday, several structures in the village go up in flames as the sound of gunfire, screaming and barking echoes in the background. At one point in the video, the fires grow so large that they illuminate the bands of settlers, dressed in black, pacing freely through the village.

Also Sunday, at least four more countries said they had been invited to join U.S. President Donald Trump's Board of Peace, the international body expected to oversee his Gaza ceasefire plan and perhaps other conflict resolutions.

Meanwhile, an Israeli Cabinet minister said that he'd ordered officials to disconnect the water and electricity for facilities of the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees, or UNRWA. It's the latest action in Israel's long-running campaign to shut down the agency. UNRWA fears the shutdown could hamper its work in east Jerusalem.

Settler attack video

The footage obtained by the AP showed the moment dozens of settlers descended on the small Bedouin hamlet of Khirbet al-Sidra, north of Jerusalem, attacking Palestinians and international activists and burning cars and homes, according to the Palestinian Authority's Jerusalem governate, which monitors Palestinian affairs in the area.

In a statement, it said that eight homes and at least two cars were burned in the attack.

Israel's military said that soldiers dispatched to the village found an Israeli vehicle with clubs inside. It said that Palestinians, Israelis and foreign nationals were injured, and troops were searching the area to make arrests. As of Sunday afternoon, no arrests had been reported.

It marked the latest assault in the tense territory as settler violence spikes in recent months.

Around 500,000 Israelis have settled in the West Bank since Israel captured the territory, along with east Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, in the 1967 Mideast war. Their presence is viewed by most of the international community as illegal and a major obstacle to peace.

The Palestinians seek all three areas for a future state. Israel has sought to play down the violence as the work of a small, radical minority. But Israel's far-right government, dominated by settlers and their supporters, has done little to stop the attacks.

Board of Peace invites

Jordan, Greece, Cyprus and Pakistan on Sunday announced that they had received invitations to Trump's Board of Peace. Albania, Egypt, Paraguay, Argentina and Turkey have already said they were invited.

The board, made up of world leaders, was initially seen as a mechanism focused on ending the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. It's now taking shape with ambitions to have a far broader mandate to address other global crises, potentially rivaling the United Nations.

The U.S. hasn't yet announced the official list of members. In letters sent Friday to various world leaders inviting them to be "founding members" of the board, Trump says the body would "embark on a bold new approach to resolving global conflict."

A U.S. official said there is no requirement to contribute money to join the Board of Peace, but confirmed

that a \$1 billion contribution secures a permanent membership, rather than a three-year appointment. The official spoke on condition of anonymity about the charter, which hasn't been made public, and said the money raised would go to rebuilding Gaza.

Israel moves against UNRWA

Israeli Energy Minister Eli Cohen said on X Sunday he'd issued formal notices to disconnect water and electricity from facilities belonging to UNRWA.

The U.N. agency said on X that the shutdown could take effect within two weeks. It comes after Israel's parliament in December passed a bill to cut the supply of electricity and water to the facilities.

The earlier ban already has closed many of UNRWA's services in east Jerusalem, though it continues to operate a vocational training center in east Jerusalem.

The agency provides aid and services — including health and education — to around 2.5 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza and the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, as well as 3 million more in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon.

Earlier last year, Israel banned the agency from operating on its territory. The ban followed months of attacks on the agency by Israel, which says it's deeply infiltrated by Hamas. UNRWA rejects that accusation.

Counterprotesters chase off conservative influencer during Minneapolis immigration crackdown

By JACK BROOK Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Hundreds of counterprotesters drowned out a far-right activist's attempt to hold a small rally in support of the Trump administration's latest immigration crackdown in Minneapolis on Saturday, as the governor's office announced that National Guard troops were mobilized and ready to assist law enforcement though not yet deployed to city streets.

There have been protests every day since the Department of Homeland Security ramped up immigration enforcement in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul by bringing in more than 2,000 federal officers.

Conservative influencer Jake Lang organized an anti-Islam, anti-Somali and pro-ICE demonstration, saying on social media beforehand that he intended to "burn a Quran" on the steps of City Hall. But it was not clear if he carried out that plan.

Only a small number of people showed up for Lang's demonstration, while hundreds of counterprotesters converged at the site, yelling over his attempts to speak and chasing the pro-ICE group away. They forced at least one person to take off a shirt they deemed objectionable.

Lang appeared to be injured as he left the scene, with bruises and scrapes on his head.

Lang was previously charged with assaulting an officer with a baseball bat, civil disorder and other crimes before receiving clemency as part of President Donald Trump's sweeping act of clemency for Jan. 6 defendants last year. Lang recently announced that he is running for U.S. Senate in Florida.

In Minneapolis, snowballs and water balloons were also thrown before an armored police van and heavily equipped city police arrived.

"We're out here to show Nazis and ICE and DHS and MAGA you are not welcome in Minneapolis," protester Luke Rimington said. "Stay out of our city, stay out of our state. Go home."

National Guard 'staged and ready'

The state guard said in a statement that it had been "mobilized" by Democratic Gov. Tim Walz to support the Minnesota State Patrol "to assist in providing traffic support to protect life, preserve property, and support the rights of all Minnesotans to assemble peacefully."

Maj. Andrea Tsuchiya, a spokesperson for the guard, said it was "staged and ready" but yet to be deployed.

The announcement came more than a week after Walz, a frequent critic and target of Trump, told the guard to be ready to support law enforcement in the state.

During the daily protests, demonstrators have railed against masked immigration officers pulling people from homes and cars and other aggressive tactics. The operation in the deeply liberal Twin Cities has

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claimed at least one life: Renee Good, a U.S. citizen and mother of three, was shot by an ICE officer during a Jan. 7 confrontation.

On Friday a federal judge ruled that immigration officers cannot detain or tear gas peaceful protesters who are not obstructing authorities, including while observing officers during the Minnesota crackdown.

Living in fear

During a news conference Saturday, a man who fled civil war in Liberia as a child said he has been afraid to leave his Minneapolis home since being released from an immigration detention center following his arrest last weekend.

Video of federal officers breaking down Garrison Gibson's front door with a battering ram Jan. 11 become another rallying point for protesters who oppose the crackdown.

Gibson, 38, was ordered to be deported, 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. After his recent arrest, a judge ruled that federal officials did not give him enough notice that his supervision status had been revoked.

Then Gibson was taken back into custody for several hours Friday when he made a routine check-in with immigration officials. Gibson's cousin Abena Abraham said Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials told her White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller ordered the second arrest.

The White House denied the account of the re-arrest and that Miller had anything to do with it.

Gibson was flown to a Texas immigration detention facility but returned home following the judge's ruling. His family used a dumbbell to keep their damaged front door closed amid subfreezing temperatures before spending \$700 to fix it.

"I don't leave the house," Gibson said at a news conference.

DHS said an "activist judge" was again trying to stop the deportation of "criminal illegal aliens."

"We will continue to fight for the arrest, detention, and removal of aliens who have no right to be in this country," Assistant Homeland Security Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said.

Gibson said he has done everything he was supposed to do: "If I was a violent person, I would not have been out these past 17 years, checking in."

Republicans and Democrats are trying to contain Trump's Greenland aggression. Will it be enough?

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican lawmakers are scrambling to contain President Donald Trump's threats of taking possession of Greenland, with some showing the most strident opposition to almost anything the Trump administration has done since taking office.

They gave floor speeches on the importance of NATO last week. They introduced bills meant to prevent the U.S. from attacking Denmark. And several traveled to Copenhagen to meet with Danish counterparts.

But it's not clear that will be enough, as the president continues to insist that he will take control of the Arctic island. It's raised fears of an end to NATO — a decades-old alliance that has been a pillar of American strength in Europe and around the globe — and raised questions on Capitol Hill and around the world about what Trump's aggressive, go-it-alone foreign policy will mean for world order.

"When the most powerful military nation on earth threatens your territory through its president over and over and over again, you start to take it seriously," Sen. Chris Coons told The Associated Press.

The Delaware Democrat organized the bipartisan trip to Denmark to "bring the temperature down a bit," he said, as well as further talks about mutual military agreements in the Arctic. Republican Sens. Thom Tillis of North Carolina and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska accompanied a handful of Democrats on the trip. Also, Republican lawmakers joined in meetings in Washington last week with the Danish foreign minister and his Greenlandic counterpart where they discussed security agreements.

Yet it's clear Trump has other ideas. He said Saturday he will charge a 10% import tax starting in February on goods from eight European nations because of their opposition to his Greenland plans.

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Trump said on social media that because of modern weapons systems "the need to ACQUIRE is especially important."

The pushback to Trump's Greenland plans

Key Republicans have made clear they think that forcefully taking Greenland is out of the question. But so far, they've avoided directly rebuking Trump for his talk of possessing the island.

Tillis on social media called Trump's tariff plans "bad for America, bad for American businesses, and bad for America's allies."

Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., told reporters Thursday that "there's certainly not an appetite here for some of the options that have been talked about or considered."

In a floor speech, Thune's predecessor as Republican leader, Sen. Mitch McConnell, warned that an attempt to seize Greenland would "shatter the trust of allies" and tarnish Trump's legacy with a disastrous foreign policy decision.

Republican and Democratic lawmakers alike see an obvious path to bolstering American interests in Greenland while keeping the relationship with NATO-ally Denmark intact.

In a meeting with lawmakers Thursday, Danish Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen and his Greenlandic counterpart Vivian Motzfeldt discussed how the countries could work together to develop critical mineral industries and military cooperation, Coons said. The diplomats also told the senators there is no evidence of Chinese or Russian activity in Greenland.

Trump has made the argument that the U.S. should take Greenland before China or Russia do, prompting worry across Europe. Troops from several nations have been sent to Greenland in support of Denmark.

Murkowski said on social media that "our NATO allies are being forced to divert attention and resources to Greenland, a dynamic that plays directly into Putin's hands by threatening the stability of the strongest coalition of democracies the world has ever seen."

What can Congress do?

Lawmakers are looking at a few options for taking a military attack on Greenland off the table. Still, the Trump administration has shown little if any willingness to get congressional approval before taking military action.

Lawmakers, including Republicans like Murkowski, are pushing legislation that would prohibit Department of Defense funds from being used to attack or occupy territory that belongs to other NATO members without their consent.

The Alaska senator also suggested Congress could act to nullify Trump's tariffs. Murkowski and several other Republicans have already helped pass resolutions last year meant to undo tariffs around the globe, but those pieces of legislation did not gain traction in the House. They would have also required Trump's signature or support from two-thirds of both chambers to override his veto.

Democrats have also found some traction with war powers resolutions meant to force the president to get congressional approval before engaging in hostilities. Republicans last week narrowly defeated one such resolution that would prohibit Trump from attacking Venezuela again, and Democrats think there could potentially be more Republicans who would support one applying to Greenland.

"What I've noticed is these war powers resolutions, they do put some pressure on Republicans," said Sen. Tim Kaine, a Virginia Democrat who has forced votes on several similar resolutions. He said the tactic has also compelled the Trump administration to provide lawmakers with briefings and commitments to get congressional approval before deploying troops.

Still, while dismissing the Venezuela war powers resolution on Wednesday, Republican leaders made the argument that the legislation should be ruled out of order because the Trump administration has said there are currently no U.S. troops on the ground in Venezuela.

That argument may set a precedent for future war powers resolutions, giving Republicans a way to avoid voting against Trump's wishes.

"If you don't have boots on the ground, it's a moot point," said Sen. Mike Rounds, a South Dakota Republican, about war powers resolutions in general. He also argued that the prospect of taking Greenland

over the objections of Denmark is nothing "more than a hypothetical."

Other Republicans have expressed support for Trump's insistence that the U.S. possess Greenland, though they have downplayed the idea that the U.S. would take it by force.

That's left the strongest objections on the Republican side of the aisle coming from a handful of lawmakers who are leaving Congress next year.

Rep. Don Bacon, a Nebraska Republican, told The Omaha World Herald that an invasion of Greenland would lead to Trump's impeachment — something he would "lean" towards supporting.

Tillis, another retiring Republican, has directed his criticism at Trump advisors like White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller.

"The fact that a small handful of 'advisors' are actively pushing for coercive action to seize territory of an ally is beyond stupid," he said.

Ukrainian drone strikes cut power to hundreds of thousands in Russia-occupied southern Ukraine

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian drone strikes damaged energy networks in Russia-occupied parts of southern Ukraine, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without power on Sunday, according to Kremlin-installed authorities there.

Meanwhile, Moscow has kept up its hammering of Ukraine's energy grid in overnight attacks that killed at least two people, according to Ukrainian officials.

More than 200,000 households in the Russia-held part of Ukraine's southern Zaporizhzhia region had no electricity on Sunday, according to the Kremlin-installed local governor.

In a Telegram post, Yevgeny Balitsky said that nearly 400 settlements have had their supply cut, because of damage to power networks from Ukrainian drone strikes.

Russia has hammered Ukraine's power grid, especially in winter, throughout the nearly four-year war. The strikes aim to weaken Ukrainians' will to resist in a strategy that Kyiv officials call "weaponizing winter."

Russia targeted energy infrastructure in Odesa region overnight on Sunday, according to Ukraine's Emergency Service. A fire broke out and was promptly extinguished.

At least six people were wounded in the Dnipropetrovsk region from Russian attacks, the emergency service said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a Telegram post that repairing the country's energy system remains challenging, "but we are doing everything we can to restore everything as quickly as possible."

He said that two people were killed in overnight attacks across the country that struck Sumy, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Khmelnytskyi and Odesa.

In total, more than 1,300 attack drones, 1,050 guided aerial bombs and 29 missiles of various types were used by Russia to strike Ukraine this week, Zelenskyy said.

U.S. talks

"If Russia deliberately delays the diplomatic process, the world's response should be decisive: more help for Ukraine and more pressure on the aggressor," Zelenskyy said.

He spoke the day after a Ukrainian delegation arrived in the United States for talks on a U.S.-led diplomatic push to end the war.

On Friday, Zelenskyy said 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.

Drones strike Russian Caucasus

Separately, in Russia's Caucasus mountains, two children and an adult were wounded overnight as debris from a Ukrainian drone fell on a five-story residential building in North Ossetia, according to the regional

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governor.

Seventy people had to be evacuated from the building, in the town of Beslan, and there was damage to its roof and windows, Gov. Sergei Menyaylo said in a Telegram post on Sunday morning.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that its forces shot down or suppressed 63 Ukrainian drones overnight over Russia and the occupied Crimean Peninsula. One person was hospitalized in Russia's Krasnodar region east of Crimea following a drone strike, local authorities said.

Nuclear plant repairs

Ukrainian crews have started repair works on the backup power line connecting the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant to the power grid, under a ceasefire brokered by the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Vienna-based U.N. organization said in an X post on Sunday.

The fate of the plant, occupied by Russia and the largest in Europe, is a central issue in ongoing U.S.-brokered peace talks.

"Crucial repair works on the essential back up Ferosplavna-1 330 kV power line connecting Ukraine's ZNPP to the grid have begun under another IAEA-brokered ceasefire," the agency said in the post.

The 330-kilovolt power line, which was damaged and disconnected because of fighting, is crucial to supplying the plant with electricity.

Why Bernice King sees MLK Day as a 'saving grace' in today's political climate

By KATE BRUMBACK Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Against a backdrop of political division and upheaval, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s daughter said the holiday honoring her father's legacy comes as "somewhat of a saving grace" this year.

"I say that because it inserts a sense of sanity and morality into our very troubling climate right now," the Rev. Bernice King said in an interview with The Associated Press. "With everything going on, the one thing that I think Dr. King reminds people of is hope and the ability to challenge injustice and inhumanity."

The holiday comes as President Donald Trump is about to mark the first anniversary of his second term in office on Tuesday. The "three evils" — poverty, racism and militarism — that the civil rights leader identified in a 1967 speech as threats to a democratic society "are very present and manifesting through a lot of what's happening" under Trump's leadership, Bernice King said.

King, CEO of the King Center in Atlanta, cited efforts to roll back diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives; directives to scrub key parts of history from government websites and remove "improper ideology" from Smithsonian museums; and immigration enforcement operations in multiple cities that have turned violent and resulted in the separation of families.

"Everything President Trump does is in the best interest of the American people," White House spokesperson Davis Ingle said in an email. "That includes rolling back harmful DEI agendas, deporting dangerous criminal illegal aliens from American communities, or ensuring we are being honest about our country's great history."

Maya Wiley, president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, one of the nation's oldest and largest civil rights coalitions, said King's words "ring more true today."

"We're at a period in our history where we literally have a regime actively working to erase the Civil Rights movement," she said. "This has been an administration dismantling intentionally and with ideological fervor every advancement we have made since the Civil War."

Wiley also recalled that King warned that "the prospect of war abroad was undermining to the beloved community globally and it was taking away from the ability for us to take care of all our people." Trump's administration has engaged in military strikes on alleged drug-smuggling boats and captured Venezuela's president in a surprise raid earlier this month.

Bernice King said she's not sure what her father would make of the United States today, nearly six decades after his assassination.

"He's not here. It's a different world," she said. "But what I can say is his teachings transcend time and

he taught us, I think, the way to address injustice through his nonviolent philosophy and methodology.”

Nonviolence should be embraced not just by those who are protesting and fighting against what they believe are injustices, but should also be adopted by immigration agents and other law enforcement officers, she said. To that end, she added, the King Center previously developed a curriculum that it now plans to redevelop to help officers see that they can carry out their duties while also respecting people’s humanity.

Even amid the “troubling climate” in the country right now, Bernice King said there is no question that “we have made so much progress as a nation.” The civil rights movement that her parents helped lead brought more people into mainstream politics who have sensitivity and compassion, she said. Despite efforts to scrap DEI initiatives and the deportation of people from around the world, “the inevitability is we’re so far into our diversity you can’t put that back in a box,” she said.

To honor her father’s legacy this year, she urged people to look inward.

“I think we spend a lot of time looking at everybody else and what everybody else is not doing or doing, and we’re looking out the window at all the problems of the world and talking about how bad they are and we don’t spend a lot of time on ourselves personally,” she said.

King endorsed participation in service projects to observe the holiday because they foster connection, sensitize people to the struggles of others and help us to understand each other better. But she said people should also look at what they can do in the year to come to further her father’s teachings.

“I think we have the opportunity to use this as a measuring point from year to year in terms of what we’re doing to move our society in a more just, humane, equitable and peaceful way,” she said.

Top-ranked Sabalenka and Alcaraz advance on an opening day of records at the Australian Open

By JOHN PYE AP Sports Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Aryna Sabalenka and Carlos Alcaraz fulfilled expectations on opening night of the Australian Open, the No. 1 seeds advancing in straight sets in a Sunday session that started with tennis royalty Rod Laver and Roger Federer in the crowd.

Rod Laver Arena was heaving for their first-round matches, capping a day when a record total of 100,763 fans packed into Melbourne Park.

The 45-year-old Venus Williams set a record, too, becoming the oldest player ever in the women’s singles draw at the Australian Open.

Out on John Cain Arena, the so-called People’s Court because it’s open to fans with ground passes, Williams was up two service breaks at 4-0 in the third set before Olga Danilovic rallied to win six straight games in a 6-7 (5), 6-3, 6-4 victory.

The seven-time major winner, playing on a wild-card entry in the singles in just her second major since returning to the tour last year, plans to continue in doubles.

“I’m really proud of my effort today because I’m playing better with each match, getting to the places that I want to get to,” she said. “Right now I’m just going to have to keep going forward and working on myself.”

Sabalenka fended off left-handed wild-card entry Tiantsoa Rakotomanga Rajaonah, 6-4, 6-1 after dropping the opening service game.

“I didn’t start my best. She showed up. Fired on. She was playing great,” said Sabalenka, who won the Australian title in 2023 and ’24 and was runner-up last year. “It was a tricky start.”

Sabalenka prepared for the first major of the season with a title in Brisbane but was a little more nervous than usual because Laver, the Australian great, and 20-time major winner Federer were watching.

“I’m a huge fan. I wanted to show great tennis so you guys enjoyed watching me play,” she said. “There was definitely a lot of pressure. I was walking, thinking ‘don’t look there, don’t look there!’”

Her next round is against Chinese qualifier Bai Zhuoxuan, who outlasted 2021 French Open runner-up Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 6-4, 2-6, 7-6 (10) in a 2-hour, 43-minute match. No. 28 Emma Raducanu, who could potentially meet Sabalenka in the third round, beat Mananchaya Sawangkaew 6-4, 6-1.

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Day 1 of a scheduled 15 closed with Alcaraz winning 6-3, 7-6 (2), 6-2 over Adam Walton, beginning his bid to set a record for being the youngest player to complete a career Grand Slam.

Zverev advances

Alexander Zverev, runner-up here last year to Jannik Sinner, shrugged off a sluggish start to beat Gabriel Diallo 6-7 (7), 6-1, 6-4, 6-2 to reach the second round at Melbourne Park for the 10th straight year.

"Definitely, when I saw the draw, wasn't too happy to be honest," Zverev said of the tricky challenge presented by No. 41-ranked Diallo. "He's very young, very talented. Unbelievably aggressive."

No. 10 Alexander Bublik advanced over Jenson Brooksby 6-4, 6-4, 6-4, No. 29 Frances Tiafoe overpowered Jason Kubler 7-6 (4), 6-3, 6-2 and Michael Zheng fended off Sebastian Korda 6-4, 6-4, 3-6, 6-7 (0), 6-3 in an all-American first-rounder.

Zheng, a college star at Columbia who advanced through qualifying to make his tour-level debut, will next face No. 32 Corentin Moutet, who was booed after his underarm serve on match point in a 6-4, 7-6 (1), 6-3 win over Tristan Schoolkate.

Upsets and ballkids

Two of the women's seeds went out in the opening afternoon, with Elsa Jacquemot ousting No. 20 Marta Kostyuk 6-7 (4), 7-6 (4), 7-6 (7) and Turkish qualifier Zeynep Sönmez upsetting No. 11 Ekaterina Alexandrova 7-5, 4-6, 6-4.

Sönmez halted her match briefly in the second set to help a ballkid who appeared to be struggling in the heat before the tournament medical team took over.

Seventh-seeded Jasmine Paolini, No. 12 Elina Svitolina and Maria Sakkari all advanced in straight sets.

Former Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova withdrew because of a shoulder injury before her scheduled first-round match, giving a place in the main draw to Taylor Townsend, the lucky loser from qualifying, to take on Hailey Baptiste.

In a 2 1/2-hour all-American contest on Court 13, Baptiste prevailed 6-3, 6-7 (3), 6-3.

Monday matches

Coco Gauff will open play Monday on Rod Laver Arena against Kamilla Rakhimova. Iga Swiatek and Novak Djokovic have night matches.

Today in History: January 19

Howard Hughes sets coast-to-coast flight record

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, Jan. 19, the 19th day of 2026. There are 346 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 19, 1937, Howard Hughes set a new transcontinental speed record in his H-1 Racer aircraft, flying from Los Angeles to Newark, New Jersey, in seven hours, 28 minutes and 25 seconds.

Also on this date:

In 1853, Giuseppe Verdi's opera "Il trovatore" premiered in Rome.

In 1861, Georgia became the fifth state to secede from the Union; it would join the Confederacy the following month.

In 1942, a German submarine sank the Canadian liner RMS Lady Hawkins off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, killing 251 people; 71 survived.

In 1955, President Dwight D. Eisenhower held the first televised presidential press conference.

In 1966, Indira Gandhi was elected to her first term as prime minister of India.

In 1987, H. Guy Hunt became Alabama's first Republican governor since 1874 as he was sworn into office, succeeding Democrat George C. Wallace.

In 2012, Rupert Murdoch's media empire apologized and agreed to cash payouts to 37 people whose telephones had been hacked by its tabloid press.

In 2024, Japan became the fifth country to reach the moon when its unmanned spacecraft touched down on the lunar surface with a pinpoint landing. The milestone put Japan in a club previously occupied

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by the United States, the Soviet Union, India and China.

Today's birthdays: Actor Tippi Hedren is 96. Actor-singer Michael Crawford is 84. Actor Shelley Fabares (fab-RAY') is 82. Country musician Dolly Parton is 80. Actor Katey Sagal is 72. Comedian Paul Rodriguez is 71. Basketball coach and commentator Jeff Van Gundy is 64. Tennis Hall of Famer Stefan Edberg is 60. Actor Shawn Wayans is 55. Actor Drea (DRAY-uh') de Matteo is 54. Football Hall of Famer Walter Jones is 52. Comedian-impressionist Frank Caliendo is 52. Actor Jodie Sweetin is 44. Film director Damien Chazelle is 41. Olympic gymnastics gold medalist Shawn Johnson is 34. Race car driver Bianca Bustamante is 21. Actor Jackson Dollinger is 19.