

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 1 of 63

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [4- Northeast Conference and Region Standings Update](#)
- [4- Baby-sitter Ad](#)
- [5- NEC Boys Basketball Standings](#)
- [6- NEC Girls Basketball Standings](#)
- [7- Boys Dak XII/NEC Pairings](#)
- [8- Prairie Doc](#)
- [9- Weekly Vikings Roundup](#)
- [10- GDI Fitness Center Ad](#)
- [11- EarthTalk: Reducing Food Insecurity](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Medicaid enrollment stabilizes in SD after dropping by thousands last year](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Deadly shooting in Minneapolis could lead to partial government shutdown over ICE funding](#)
- [17- Weather Pages](#)
- [21- Daily Devotional](#)
- [22- Subscription Form](#)
- [23- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [24- News from the Associated Press](#)

Carnival of Silver Skates is rescheduled for Sunday, Feb. 1, 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Monday, Jan. 26, 2026

School Breakfast: Egg bake.
School Lunch: Corn dogs, baked beans.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
Groton Senior Citizens meet with potluck dinner at the Groton Community Center, noon.
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.
Boys MS Wrestling at Ipswich, 6 p.m.
JH BBB at Britton-Hecla (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)

Tuesday, Jan. 27, 2026

School Breakfast: Muffins.
School Lunch: Pasta bake, green beans.
Groton United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.
JH BBB: Sisseton at Groton (7th at 4 p.m., 8th at 5 p.m.)
GBB at Aberdeen Roncalli: (GC-5, JVGBB-6, VGGBB-7:30)
Girls and Boys Wrestling at Garretson, 5 p.m.



Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026

School Breakfast: Oatmeal.
School Lunch: Soup and (tbd), sandwich.
Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.
United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.
Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.
6th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.
3rd/4th Grade Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m.
5th Grade BBB Practice, 6 p.m.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 2 of 63

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.

Minnesota Protester Killed

Federal officers shot and killed Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old protester, in Minneapolis Saturday. The incident marks the second fatal shooting of a US citizen by officers in Minnesota this month, after an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent killed driver Renee Good on Jan. 7.

The Department of Homeland Security says Pretti approached Border Patrol agents with a 9mm semi-automatic handgun and resisted attempts to disarm him. Video footage suggests Pretti carried a concealed firearm on his waistband but did not touch or reach for the gun during interactions with officers. Officers appear to discover and remove the firearm after Pretti is pinned facedown to the ground, and 10 shots are fired soon after.

Police say Pretti had a legal permit to carry a firearm. Some states bar guns at protests, though Minnesota is not one of them.

Storm Slams Down

Nearly 200 million people across nearly 40 states were under winter alerts this weekend, as a massive winter storm hit the continental US. More than 800,000 customers lost power, with Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas hardest hit. At least four men—two in Louisiana, one in Texas, and one in Kansas—have died.

The storm has also caused more than 10,000 flight cancellations—the most in a single day since the COVID-19 pandemic. At least 1,800 flights have been canceled for today as of this writing. Millions of drivers have been encouraged to stay off the road. Schools have been closed in New York, Georgia, and North Carolina, among other states. Temperatures fell 10 to 40 degrees below average in much of the central US, with wind chills as low as minus 30 degrees.

Storm conditions are expected to continue in the Northeast today, with New England predicted to see up to 18 inches of snow.

Death-Defying Climb

Famed rock climber Alex Honnold added to his list of accomplishments over the weekend, free soloing—scaling without ropes—Taiwan's Taipei 101 skyscraper yesterday. The feat, livestreamed by Netflix, set the record for the tallest free solo of a skyscraper.

The 40-year-old father of two made the 1,667-foot ascent in roughly 90 minutes, snapping a selfie once reaching the top. Long known in the climbing community, Honnold burst into public consciousness upon the 2018 release of "Free Solo," an Oscar-winning documentary following his successful attempt to become the only person ever to climb Yosemite's infamous El Capitan without ropes. He's also free soloed famous ascents like Yosemite's Half Dome and Zion's Moonlight Buttress, among many others.

He attributes his success to meticulous preparation, attention to detail, and minimizing risk. Imaging of his brain also suggested his response to fear stimuli, controlled by the amygdala, is significantly less intense than average.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 3 of 63

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Super Bowl LX set, with New England Patriots facing Seattle Seahawks on Feb. 8 after winning their respective conference championships yesterday; see preview.

Felipe Nasr wins third consecutive Rolex 24 at Daytona for Porsche Penske Motorsport.

Skippy Longstocking wins \$3M Pegasus World Cup.

"Mercy" unseats "Avatar 3" at top of box office charts in weekend debut, delivers \$11.2M opening weekend amid winter storm.

Science & Technology

Earthquake sensor networks can be used to detect the sonic boom created by space trash as it falls back to Earth, allowing quicker retrieval of the debris.

Researchers develop ultrasound technique that provides 3D color images; allows researchers to view soft tissue and how blood vessels are functioning at once.

Cancer tumors release a protein in mice that helps clear out amyloid beta plaques in the brain, which play a key role in Alzheimer's; may help explain the link between cancer diagnosis and reduced risk for the neurological disease.

Business & Markets

US stock markets end Friday mixed (S&P 500 +0.0%, Dow -0.6%, Nasdaq +0.3%) after midweek volatility; marks second straight week all three indexes finished lower.

Legal AI startup Harvey acquires Hexus, which uses AI to create videos, guides, and more.

President Donald Trump threatens 100% tariffs on Canada if the country makes a trade deal with China; comes days after Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's speech at Davos, calling on smaller economies to increase cooperation.

Silver passes \$100 per ounce for the first time in history, gold hits record high of \$4,988 per ounce; surge in precious metals driven in part by investors seeking safety amid geopolitical uncertainty.

Politics & World Affairs

Senate Democrats say they will block government funding package if it includes money for the Department of Homeland Security following Saturday's fatal shooting in Minnesota; funding is set to run out Friday, Jan. 30.

China's defense ministry announces investigation into the country's top general, does not elaborate on alleged wrongdoing; follows expulsion of nine top generals in October, part of the country's biggest public crackdown on the military in decades.

Last round of voting ends in Myanmar amid civil war; military-backed group expected to win parliamentary majority in what critics call sham election.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 4 of 63

Northeast Conference and Region Standings Update

The latest Northeast Conference standings have been calculated, and several tight races are developing as teams battle for top positioning.

In the girls' Northeast Conference division, Clark/Willow Lake and Hamlin remain the only undefeated teams. Roncalli and Deuel each sit just behind them with one loss on the season.

In the boys' Northeast Conference division, Clark/Willow Lake continues to hold an unblemished record. Groton Area, Britton-Hecla, Sisseton, and Hamlin are all close behind, each carrying one conference loss.

In Region 1A girls' competition, Groton Area climbed into the number two spot after handing Milbank its second loss of the season. Roncalli currently holds the top position, sitting less than half a point ahead of the Tigers in the region standings. Over in Region 2 girls, Clark/Willow Lake maintains the number one ranking, followed by Sioux Valley and Hamlin.

On the boys' side in Region 1A, Groton Area holds a 1.2-point advantage to remain in the top spot over Sisseton and Britton-Hecla. In Region 2A boys' standings, Clark/Willow Lake, Hamlin, and Sioux Valley occupy the top three positions.

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I'm in Groton but am willing to drive to nearby towns!

The advertisement features a colorful illustration of a teddy bear, a baby bottle, and a stacking toy on the left, and a yellow bucket with cleaning supplies on the right. At the bottom, there is a scene with a yellow house, a red car, and a winding road through a field of flowers under a blue sky with clouds.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 5 of 63

NEC Boys Basketball Standings

	(C)	(S)
Clark/Willow Lake	4-0	11-0
Groton Area	6-1	9-3
Britton-Hecla	4-1	9-2
Sisseton	2-1	7-3
Hamlin	2-1	8-1
Webster Area	4-3	4-6
Roncalli	2-3	3-6
Milbank	1-3	7-4
Deuel	0-2	3-6
Redfield	0-5	1-8
Tiospa Zina	0-5	3-7

Roncalli (2-3)

Roncalli 75, Redfield 48
Webster Area 55, Roncalli 52
Sisseton 65, Roncalli 60
Roncalli 71, Tiospa Zina 37
Clark/WL 64, Roncalli 28

Britton-Hecla (4-1)

Britton-Hecla 56, Tiospa Zina 25
Webster 58, Britton-Hecla 47
Britton-Hecla 51, Deuel 34
Britton-Hecla 53, Milbank 51
Britton-Hecla 62, Redfield 36

Groton Area (6-1)

Groton Area 55, Hamlin 50
Groton Area 66, Sisseton 33
Groton Area 81, Redfield 32
Groton Area 63, Webster 43
Clark/WL 56, Groton Area 39
Groton Area 83, Tiospa Zina 9
Groton Area 57, Milbank 36

Milbank (1-3)

Clark/WL 61, Milbank 38
Britton-Hecla 53, Milbank 51
Milbank 65, Redfield 42
Groton Area 57, Milbank 36

Redfield (0-5)

Roncalli 75, Redfield 48
Groton Area 81, Redfield 32
Britton-Hecla 62, Redfield 36
Milbank 65, Redfield 42
Sisseton 64, Redfield 41

Sisseton (2-1)

Groton Area 66, Sisseton 33
Sisseton 65, Roncalli 60
Sisseton 64, Redfield 41

Webster Area (4-3)

Webster 58, Britton-Hecla 47
Groton 63, Webster 43
Webster Area 55, Roncalli 52
Webster Area 71, Tiospa Zina 29
Webster Area 52, Deuel 44
Clark/WL 68, Webster Area 36
Hamlin 68, Webster Area 30

Clark/Willow Lake (4-0)

Clark/WL 61, Milbank 38
Clark/Willow Lake 56, Groton 39
Clark/WL 68, Webster 36
Clark/WL 64, Roncalli 28

Deuel (0-2)

Britton-Hecla 51, Deuel 34
Webster Area 52, Deuel 44

Hamlin (2-1)

Groton Area 55, Hamlin 50
Hamlin 80, Tiospa Zina 22
Hamlin 68, Webster Area 30

Tiospa Zina (0-5)

Britton-Hecla 56, Tiospa Zina 25
Webster Area 71, Tiospa Zina 29
Hamlin 80, Tiospa Zina 22
Groton Area 82, Tiospa Zina 9
Roncalli 71, Tiospa Zina 37

Jan. 29

Britton-Hecla at Roncalli
Milbank at Deuel
Hamlin at Sisseton

Jan. 30

Clark/Willow Lake at Redfield

Feb. 3

Roncalli at Groton Area
Sisseton at Britton-Hecla
Milbank at Hamlin
Deuel at Tiospa Zina

Feb. 5

Groton Area at Deuel
Webster at Redfield

Feb. 6

Milbank at Roncalli
Clark/Willow Lake at Sisseton

Feb. 10

Roncalli at Hamlin
Britton-Hecla at Clark/WL
Milbank at Sisseton

Feb. 12

Deuel at Hamlin

Feb. 13

Deuel at Redfield
Sisseton at Tiospa Zina

Feb. 16

Clark/Willow Lake at Deuel

Feb. 17

Britton-Hecla at Hamlin
Deuel at Sisseton
Clark/WL at Tiospa Zina

Feb. 19

Roncalli at Deuel
Webster at Milbank
Hamlin at Clark/Willow Lake

Feb. 20

Britton-Hecla at Groton Area
Redfield at Tiospa Zina

Feb. 23

Hamlin at Redfield

Feb. 27

Tiospa Zina at Milbank

Sisseton at Webster tbd

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 6 of 63

NEC Girls Basketball Standings

	(C)	(S)
Clark/Willow Lake	4-0	10-1
Hamlin	3-0	9-1
Roncalli	4-1	9-2
Deuel	1-1	3-6
Groton Area	4-2	8-4
Milbank	3-2	8-2
Webster	3-3	3-7
Sisseton	1-2	3-6
Britton-Hecla	1-4	3-8
Tiospa Zina	1-5	4-7
Redfield	0-5	3-7

Roncalli (4-1)

Roncalli 57, Redfield 24
Roncalli 50, Webster Area 36
Roncalli 37, Sisseton 28
Roncalli 71, Tiospa Zina 21
Clark/WL 50, Roncalli 38

Britton-Hecla (1-4)

Tiospa Zina 48, Britton-Hecla 44
Webster 62, Britton-Hecla 39
Deuel 38, Britton-Hecla 33
Milbank 58, Britton-Hecla 12
Britton-Hecla 29, Redfield 28

Groton Area (4-2)

Hamlin 46, Groton Area 21
Groton Area 40, Sisseton 36
Groton Area 42, Redfield 20
Clark/WL 38, Groton Area 34
Groton Area 71, Tiospa Zina 3
Groton Area 54, Milbank 45

Milbank (3-2)

Clark/WL 61, Milbank 42
Milbank 58, Britton-Hecla 12
Milbank 72, Tiospa Zina 23
Milbank 55, Redfield 29
Groton Area 54, Milbank 34

Sisseton (1-2)

Groton Area 40, Sisseton 36
Roncalli 37, Sisseton 28
Sisseton 50, Redfield 48

Redfield (0-5)

Roncalli 57, Redfield 24
Groton Area 42, Redfield 20
Britton-Hecla 29, Redfield 28
Milbank 55, Redfield 29
Sisseton 50, Redfield 48

Webster (3-3)

Webster 62, Britton-Hecla 39
Roncalli 50, Webster 36
Webster 64, Tiospa Zina 24
Webster 52, Deuel 29
Clark/WL 58, Webster 34
Hamlin 54, Webster 21

Clark/Willow Lake (4-0)

Clark/WL 61, Milbank 42
Clark/WL 38, Groton 34
Clark/WL 59, Webster 34
Clark/WL 50, Roncalli 38

Deuel (1-1)

Deuel 38, Britton-Hecla 33
Webster 52, Deuel 29

Hamlin (3-0)

Hamlin 46, Groton 21
Hamlin 83, Tiospa Zina 11
Hamlin 54, Webster 21

Tiospa Zina (1-5)

Tiospa Zina 48, Britton-Hecla 44
Webster 64, Tiospa Zina 24
Hamlin 83, Tiospa Zina 11
Milbank 72, Tiospa Zina 23
Groton 71, Tiospa Zina 3
Roncalli 71, Tiospa Zina 21

Jan. 27

Groton at Roncalli

Jan. 29

Groton Area at Webster Area
Milbank at Deuel
Redfield at Clark/Willow Lake
Hamlin at Sisseton

Jan. 30

Roncalli at Britton-Hecla

Feb. 3

Sisseton at Britton-Hecla
Milbank at Hamlin
Deuel at Tiospa Zina

Feb. 5

Roncalli at Milbank
Groton Area at Deuel
Webster Area at Redfield
Sisseton at Clark/Willow Lake

Feb. 10

Roncalli at Hamlin
Britton-Hecla at Clark/WL
Milbank at Sisseton

Feb. 12

Tiospa Zina at Sisseton
Deuel at Hamlin

Feb. 13

Deuel at Redfield

Feb. 16

Hamlin at Redfield
Clark/WL at Deuel

Feb. 17

Britton-Hecla at Hamlin
Deuel at Sisseton
Clark/WL at Tiospa Zina

Feb. 19

Roncalli at Deuel
Webster Area at Milbank
Hamlin at Clark/WL

Feb. 20

Britton-Hecla at Groton Area
Redfield at Tiospa Zina

Sisseton at Webster tbd

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 7 of 63

2026 Dak XII/NEC Conference Clash

Boys Event – January 31st, 2026

SCHEDULE (AUXILIARY GYM)			
Time	Dak XII Team		NEC Team
11:00am	Canton C-Hawks	vs.	Redfield Pheasants
12:30pm	Elk Point/Jefferson Huskies	vs.	Deuel Cardinals
2:00pm	Madison Bulldogs	vs.	Rapid City Christian Comets
3:30pm	Tri-Valley Mustangs	vs.	Milbank Bulldogs
5:00pm	Dell Rapids Quarriers	vs.	Mobridge-Pollock Tigers

SCHEDULE (MAIN GYM)			
Time	Dak XII Team		NEC Team
11:45am	Dakota Valley Panthers	vs.	Britton-Hecla Braves
1:15pm	Lennox Orioles	vs.	Sisseton Redmen
2:45pm	Vermillion Tanagers	vs.	Groton Area Tigers
4:15pm	Sioux Falls Christian Chargers	vs.	Clark/Willow Lake Cyclones
5:45pm	West Central Trojans	vs.	Hamlin Chargers

- All games played at Madison High School and Auxiliary Gymnasiums
- Seed points calculated for all games played through Saturday, January 24th then matchups were determined by those seed points.
- Ticket Prices (\$7 adults, \$5 students)
- Games will not start early.

“For the health of it. Be Selfish: Invest in education. Your own and the kids down the street.”

When we asked ChatGPT if it was a good idea to invest in education it responded with the wisdom and confidence of a sentient being who believes they are on the cusp of knowing everything. It told me the reason to invest in education and yourself is primarily financial, using examples like increased lifetime earnings, career stability, etc. And yes, although these things are true and GPT was not hallucinating, it missed the mark.

Education abroad programs through universities are one of the many vetted, safe, hands on, transformative experiences educational institutions provide to students and a great way for students to invest in their learning.

This past May we co-led our fifth education abroad program with nearly 30 future healthcare professionals to Ghana. We spent 2 weeks in west Africa shadowing and learning, providing support as needed, developing empathy, and building communication, diagnostic, & clinical skills. This experience was transformational, for me as an educator, and for every student who is so fortunate to invest in themselves in this way.

Over the span of 2 weeks students spent half of each day shadowing in the KNUST Hospital in Kumasi, Ghana. We then engaged deeply in the community and culture each afternoon. Students visited a local elementary school, the largest market in west Africa, learned local history, and toured a slave trade castle where 30,000 slaves made their way through the door of no return each year. We were fortunate enough to participate in a safari with close-up experiences with monkeys, baboons, elephants and more. Finally, we spent a few days learning about the history and current healthcare system in the U.K. with our boots on the ground in London. We rode big red busses and saw Big Ben, and hosted a guest lecture with a professor from Cambridge Medical School. In just 17 days, students had powerful opportunities to learn about healthcare systems in hands-on ways across the world.

These experiences built empathy, opened students' eyes to the developing world, and transformed their lives and their future work as healthcare providers. As students reflected on their experiences in the hospital, they started to see how culture influences a person's experience with healthcare and then started to see those same values reflected in our afternoon excursions. One quote from a student highlighted family and how that extends to the community: "After seeing how these patients rely on their family and how family-orientated their culture is, I was challenged to see the importance and role of family in the US."

To learn more, tune in to Prairie Doc Programming to see and hear directly from students about their life-changing experiences. We guarantee you'll leave inspired and hopeful. Then use that inspiration to invest in yourself, set a goal to read more, attend a webinar, recommit to your health and wellness goals, and if you find yourself so inclined to invest in the education of others check out <https://www.sdstatealumnifoundation.org>.

We want to interject one final observation. We want to assure you the kids are alright. There are many negative hot takes about the younger generation and overall they are wrong. Keep investing in these amazing youth and our future is bright – the kids are alright!

Dr. Greg Heiberger serves as the interim dean of the Van D. & Barbara B. Fishback Honors College. He previously served as associate dean of academics and student success in the College of Natural Sciences at South Dakota State University and is a tenured associate professor in the Biology & Microbiology Department. He helped to create and implement the SDSU - KNUST relationship, has led numerous study abroad experiences including 4 courses to Ghana.

Ashley is the Coordinator for Student Success with the College of Natural Sciences. She has been advising pre-medical students since 2022 and has led several study abroad programs, including 3 programs to Ghana. She also teaches First Year Seminar and Career Seminar courses, and MCAT prep every spring.

Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 9 of 63



The Conference Championship games are considered by many to be the two best games of the season, and the two games we witnessed Sunday were certainly a testament to that opinion.

The day started with the New England Patriots heading to Denver to take on the Broncos. The Broncos might have been playing their backup QB, but a raucous home crowd and a late-January snowstorm helped level the playing field. The game was a grind-it-out battle of wills, with the Patriots coming out on top 10-7, punching their ticket to Super Bowl LX.

After both teams went three-and-out to start the game, Broncos head coach Sean Payton dialed up a deep shot, and Jarrett Stidham hit Marvin Mims Jr. for a 52-yard completion. Two plays later, Stidham found Courtland Sutton in the endzone to take a 7-0 lead. In the second quarter, a Denver fumble gave the ball to New England at the 12-yard line, and two plays later, QB Drake Maye scampered for a touchdown to even the score. Both teams missed field goals to end the half, keeping the score 7-7 heading into halftime.

New England had two solid drives in the third quarter, both of them ending in field goal attempts, and although one of them was missed, NE still took a 10-7 lead into the fourth quarter. At this point, the field was a sloppy mess, and neither team could do much on offense. With a little over two minutes left in the game, Stidham threw an interception, giving the ball back to the Patriots, and one first down later, the clock hit zeros and New England was on their way to yet another Super Bowl appearance.

The second game of the day featured the Los Angeles Rams traveling to Seattle to battle the Seahawks. This was the third time this season the two divisional foes faced off against each other. The first two games were split, with the Rams winning the first matchup by two points and the Seahawks winning the second matchup by one point. This game also came down to the wire.

Seattle came out hot, taking advantage of their home field crowd by forcing the Rams to punt after a three-and-out and then marching down the field to find the end zone to take a 7-0 lead. The two teams then went back-to-back-to-back field goals, resulting in a 10-6 Seattle lead early in the second quarter. After a Seattle punt, Los Angeles put together their best touchdown drive of the day, going 87 yards on 12 plays and taking over seven minutes off the clock. That gave the Rams a 13-10 lead with less than two minutes left in the half. LA then forced a Seattle three-and-out, and all the momentum seemed to be on the visitors' side. However, a short possession by the Rams gave the ball back to Seattle with a minute left in the half, and six plays later, they found the end zone to reclaim the lead heading into halftime.

The second half was a masterclass of offense, with both teams lighting up the scoreboard. There were four consecutive touchdowns scored in the third quarter, and the Seahawks managed to take a four-point lead into the fourth quarter. At this point, both teams were trying to control the clock, knowing that the last team to have the ball would likely win. The Rams put together a great drive, going 84 yards on 14 plays and taking seven and a half minutes off the clock, but on fourth-and-four at the Seattle six-yard line, Matthew Stafford threw an incompleteness. Seattle managed to keep the ball away from LA to preserve their 31-27 lead, and now the Seahawks will be soaring into the Super Bowl.

Seattle's win is bittersweet for Vikings fans. Sam Darnold led Minnesota to 14 wins last season before melting down to end the season with two ugly losses. The Vikings could have brought Darnold back, but they elected to give the keys to J.J. McCarthy. Now Darnold is heading to the Super Bowl, while the Vikings still have a giant question mark at the most important position in football. Hindsight is always 20/20, so even though the decision made sense at the time, it might go down as one of the worst decisions in franchise history.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 10 of 63

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Call or Text Tina at 605/397-7285

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EARTHTALK

Reducing Food Insecurity Without Increasing Food Waste by Rachel Berliner

Dear EarthTalk: How do we reduce food insecurity without increasing food waste? – D.A., via email

Food insecurity, the lacking of access to adequate food, is a prevalent global issue. According to a study conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 1.3 billion people experienced food insecurity in 2022. And it is experienced in varying degrees; some experience food insecurity as not having enough to eat; others need to sacrifice nutritional value. Food insecurity has many climate-related causes. For example, extreme weather and natural disasters impact crop production, and pollutants make soil no longer fertile, ultimately decreasing the amount of viable, nutritional food available.

The best way to improve food security is to decrease personal waste. Slight changes in cooking, buying and disposal practices can reduce food waste and, subsequently, food insecurity. Planning meals at the beginning of the week allows individuals to gauge exactly how much food they will need to buy and eliminate the possibility of waste. Freezing leftovers or unused ingredients and using food scraps for another purpose, like pickling vegetables that are not as fresh, are great alternatives to food disposal. "The waste of one player is a raw material for another," says Yana Pannecoucke, a program manager for Get Wasted, which focuses on reducing food waste. "For example, a lime that's too yellow or a carrot that has an ugly shape might not fit the criteria of a supermarket but is perfectly healthy for human consumption."

Improved agricultural practices can also help to increase food security. Vertical farming allows farmers to grow crops in tightly-packed layers rather than space-consuming rows. "This is a way to learn new technology and mass produce crops..." says Dan Hilarides, manager of Vertical Acres. Also, improving post-harvest conditions can decrease crop loss. Utilizing cold storage warehouses and facilities and improving the efficiency of transportation help to keep food fresh.

Education, especially for children and youth, is a particularly impactful global initiative when it comes to improving food security. Organizations around the world increasing awareness about food insecurity, meal preparation and sustainable food markets. "Our educational programs support student learning about complex food issues and teach them how to advocate for themselves and their communities," says Keren Dalyot, implementation leader at FoodEducators, a startup working towards increasing food security.

More and more people are working together to advocate for food insecure communities and increase food availability. If you are interested in improving food security, try out one of the food waste-reducing methods above, educate families and friends about ways they can help, or support organizations educating the next generation about food insecurity.



More and more people are working together to advocate for food insecure communities and increase food availability. Credit: Pexels.com.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Medicaid enrollment stabilizes in SD after dropping by thousands last year

State department says trends are partly related to implementation of automatic renewal process

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

South Dakota regularly disenrolled one of the highest percentages of Medicaid patients in the country each month last year, contributing to one of the largest yearly decreases in the state's Medicaid enrollment in the last decade.

The state often switched places with Oklahoma last year for the first and second highest-percentage of disenrollments in the nation, according to national Medicaid data, with disenrollment rates regularly over one-third of patients up for renewal. Medicaid, which is funded jointly by the federal government and states, provides health insurance for people with disabilities or low incomes.

Overall, South Dakota Medicaid enrollment dropped by about 9,000 people from February to November last year, primarily among traditional Medicaid for adults and children, and has since stabilized around 141,000. That number includes expanded-eligibility Medicaid for adults ages 19 through 64, approved by South Dakota voters in 2022, which has stayed relatively stable at around 30,000 people enrolled.

Department of Social Services Secretary Matt Althoff spoke to South Dakota Searchlight after he presented Medicaid enrollment information to the legislative budget committee on Wednesday at the Capitol in Pierre. He said the reason for the higher disenrollments was a combination of South Dakota's use of an automatic renewal process known as *ex parte*, and the lingering impact of post-COVID pandemic removals.

Althoff told lawmakers that while Medicaid is a "big spend" in the department's budget, it is "super impactful in our efforts to lift people who are downtrodden and facing bad times up.

"Without our ability to work pain free or feel confident that 'I'm not going to die' or 'I'm having my personal health in good order,' we don't go forward ambitiously, we don't take risks, we don't find jobs that we need," Althoff said.

The decrease could also be due to a healthy economy, said Jennifer Tolbert, deputy director of the Program on Medicaid and the Uninsured for KFF. The nonprofit health policy organization researches and reports on major health issues in the United States. South Dakota reported one of the lowest unemployment rates in the nation over the last year.

The decrease in enrollment throughout the year matches nationwide decreased enrollment, Tolbert added.

State predicted enrollment decrease

A year ago, Althoff told lawmakers there would be a decrease in enrollment as the department implemented *ex parte*, or automated renewals, to identify enrollees no longer eligible for the program. At the same time, the process allows states to simplify Medicaid renewals, eliminating the need for people to resubmit eligibility information to the state.

South Dakota was not able to use *ex parte* until it upgraded to a new online enrollment system, Althoff told lawmakers at the time. He said that once the state was able to use *ex parte* in late 2024, it used external databases to reference and remove South Dakotans who were "no longer eligible" for enrollment, for reasons such as finding a job that put them outside income limits.

The state is required by law to first attempt to renew patients by crosschecking with other data sources,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 13 of 63

within the state or through a third party. If a state identifies an ineligible patient on the rolls, patients are sent notification and paperwork to prove otherwise.

But an average of 9% of patients up for renewal were terminated because they were no longer eligible, according to state data. The majority of disenrollments were "procedural terminations," due to missing and improper paperwork.

Tolbert said for a majority of people who lose Medicaid access, it's not because they are no longer eligible or because their income exceeds the limit, but rather because they "weren't able to navigate the renewal process."

Procedural disenrollment can be due to unreliable mail, and the disenrollment often leads to confusion and a lack of insurance for people who need health care, said Shelly Ten Napel, CEO of Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas.

Increases in automatic renewals prevent "time consuming" paperwork for patients and the state, and it means fewer people are "showing up for care who have unknowingly lost coverage," Ten Napel said.

Althoff predicted that fiscal year 2025 average monthly Medicaid enrollees would drop to just under 140,000 by June of last year, a drop of about 8,000 enrollees, before climbing back up.

Medicaid enrollment in reality dropped to 144,310 by June of last year and continued to decrease through September, to 141,012 average monthly enrollees. Enrollment has since plateaued, with 141,151 average monthly enrollees in November, according to the latest Medicaid enrollment report.

Change in ex parte could 'stabilize' enrollment

South Dakota's high disenrollment rate changed after the state Department of Social Services changed its automatic renewal labeling and process, due to modernized enrollment software. The latest national Medicaid report dropped South Dakota's disenrollment standing to 22nd highest in the nation, at a disenrollment rate of about 20%.

Since July, the state's number of terminated Medicaid recipients due to procedural disenrollment — often due to failing to fill out required renewal, financial or residential documents — dropped to an average of 17%.

Althoff told Searchlight that the department recognized its comparatively high procedural disenrollment rate and made changes.

Starting in July, the department started retaining "categorically eligible recipients" in the Medicaid program, which includes children in Child Protective Services custody or adults who are older or disabled who receive supplemental security income from the Social Security Administration.

"We changed how we define those administrative functions, and that's what led to the radical change," Althoff said.

Many Medicaid cases up for renewal in the first half of 2025 weren't able to go through the ex parte process as well, according to a state Department of Services spokesperson, because of the modernization of the state's Medicaid enrollment software. The state continued its standard practice of mailing renewal forms, which historically result in higher procedural disenrollment rates.

It wasn't until September of last year that all Medicaid cases were in a "ready state" for ex parte with the state's new enrollment software, according to the department. Department officials expect Medicaid enrollment to stabilize over the next year, due in part to the ex parte process and changes regarding the "categorically eligible recipients."

More than half of Medicaid recipients up for renewal since July were automatically renewed — over 60% in September and October.

Between ex parte reapproval and approvals through submitted renewal forms in the last three months of reports, over three-fourths of recipients due for renewal are being renewed.

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.

Deadly shooting in Minneapolis could lead to partial government shutdown over ICE funding

BY: JACOB FISCHLER

A partial federal government shutdown appeared Sunday to unexpectedly be on the horizon, after another fatal shooting by federal immigration agents in Minneapolis led key U.S. Senate Democrats to say they will oppose a spending package that includes immigration enforcement funds.

Senators have until a Friday deadline to clear a package of six House-passed funding measures, including the \$64.4 billion Homeland Security appropriations bill that includes funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the U.S. Border Patrol.

Republicans hold a majority in the chamber but would need at least seven Democrats to join them in voting for the package in order to clear the chamber's 60-vote threshold to advance legislation.

The agreement had appeared to be on track for easy passage by the Senate by Friday, when a stopgap spending law expires.

But after Saturday's killing of 37-year-old Alex Jeffrey Pretti, the second by Homeland Security Department officers in Minneapolis this month, key moderate Democrats, appropriators and leaders said they would not support the package if it includes the Homeland Security legislation in its current form.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer also said his caucus would not provide the votes needed, citing the killings of Pretti and Renee Good in Minneapolis on Jan. 7, and called for the DHS bill to be split from the five spending bills with broad bipartisan support.

"Senate Democrats will not allow the current DHS funding bill to move forward," Schumer said in a Sunday statement. "The appalling murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti on the streets of Minneapolis must lead Republicans to join Democrats in overhauling ICE and CBP to protect the public. People should be safe from abuse by their own government.

"Senate Republicans must work with Democrats to advance the other five funding bills while we work to rewrite the DHS bill," he added. "This is (the) best course of action, and the American people are on our side."

A complicating factor is the DHS bill also includes funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, even as a major winter storm swept through a large swath of the nation Saturday and Sunday, triggering disaster declarations in multiple states.

President Donald Trump and key administration officials committed to a robust media strategy over the weekend, defending the officers involved and smearing Pretti, despite contradictory evidence in available video.

Some elected Republicans backed the administration's account, but an unusual number of GOP members of Congress and at least one governor called for accountability.

Latest shooting a turning point

Five of the eight Democrats and independents who voted with Republicans to end a shutdown in November have said they will not support the package if it includes DHS funding.

Maine independent Angus King, who caucuses with Democrats, said on CBS News' "Face the Nation" that he would vote against the package.

"I hate shutdowns," King said in a video interview on the Sunday morning show. "I'm one of the people that helped negotiate the solution to the end of the last shutdown, but I can't vote for a bill that includes ICE funding under these circumstances."

Nevada Democrat Catherine Cortez Masto, a former federal prosecutor, criticized Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and called for blocking the funding package.

"The Trump administration and Kristi Noem are putting undertrained, combative federal agents on the streets with no accountability," she said. "They are oppressing Americans and are at odds with local law enforcement. This is clearly not about keeping Americans safe, it's brutalizing U.S. citizens and law-abiding

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 15 of 63

immigrants. I will not support the current Homeland Security funding bill.”

Cortez Masto called for the DHS bill to be split off from the rest of the package.

“We have bipartisan agreement on 96% of the budget. We’ve already passed six funding bills,” she said. “Let’s pass the remaining five bipartisan bills and fund essential agencies while we continue to fight for a Department of Homeland Security that respects Americans’ constitutional rights and preserves federal law enforcement’s essential role to keep us safe.”

Fellow Nevada Democrat Jacky Rosen, who also voted to end the shutdown in November, said “enough is enough” and that she would oppose a funding package that did not “rein in ICE’s out-of-control conduct.”

“As a member of the U.S. Senate, I have the responsibility to hold the Trump Administration accountable when I see abuses of power — like we are seeing from ICE right now,” she said. “That is why I’ll be voting against any government funding package that contains the bill that funds this agency, until we have guardrails in place to curtail these abuses of power and ensure more accountability and transparency.

“My personal guiding principle has always been ‘agree where you can and fight where you must,’” she added. “And I believe this is a time when we must fight back.”

Virginia’s Tim Kaine said in a Friday statement — before Pretti’s killing — that he would oppose the package for several reasons, including as a check on ICE.

“We are not living in normal times,” he said. “The President is acting chaotically and unlawfully and we shouldn’t give his deranged decisions the imprimatur of congressional approval by passing this legislation without significant amendment.”

Democratic Whip Dick Durbin of Illinois also said after Pretti’s killing early Saturday — the third shooting by immigration officers in Minneapolis in three weeks — that he would vote against the package. Durbin is a senior member of the Appropriations Committee.

DHS funding

The House last week passed the DHS funding bill, with seven Democrats voting to approve it, and a separate package of three other appropriations bills that passed with broad bipartisan support. House members passed two other funding bills the week before.

The fiscal 2026 Homeland Security spending bill cuts funding for Customs and Border Protection by \$1.3 billion, and maintains flat funding for ICE at \$10 billion.

The bill attempts to put guardrails around immigration enforcement by allocating \$20 million for body cameras for ICE and CBP officers.

But even if the funding bill doesn’t pass or gets held up, the immigration enforcement agencies are still flush with cash after the One Big Beautiful Bill Act that Republicans passed last year allocated \$190 billion for DHS. ICE is slated to receive about \$75 billion over four years, or \$18.7 billion a year.

Path forward

Any Senate amendment to the House-passed package would require another House vote. The House is scheduled to be out this week and the chamber, narrowly controlled by Republicans, may be unwilling to cooperate with Senate changes.

Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins, a Maine Republican up for reelection this year in one of the nation’s most closely watched races, did not dismiss the possibility of changes in the spending bill package, telling The New York Times on Saturday she was “exploring all options” for passage.

The major winter storm also hit Washington, D.C., and could further complicate the Senate vote or potential House consideration. All flights into Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport were canceled Sunday as snow and sleet covered the region.

A handful of GOP officials, including Sens. Thom Tillis of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska called for more scrutiny into Pretti’s killing and ICE’s conduct more generally.

“There must be a thorough and impartial investigation into yesterday’s Minneapolis shooting, which is the basic standard that law enforcement and the American people expect following any officer-involved

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 16 of 63

shooting," Tillis said on social media.

"For this specific incident, that requires cooperation and transparency between federal, state, and local law enforcement. Any administration official who rushes to judgment and tries to shut down an investigation before it begins are doing an incredible disservice to the nation and to President Trump's legacy."

Cassidy posted on social media: "The events in Minneapolis are incredibly disturbing. The credibility of ICE and DHS are at stake. There must be a full joint federal and state investigation. We can trust the American people with the truth."

Rep. Michael McCaul, a Texas Republican who is a former chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee, said on social media he was "troubled by the events that have unfolded in Minneapolis."

"As an attorney and former federal prosecutor, I believe a thorough investigation is necessary—both to get to the bottom of these incidents and to maintain Americans' confidence in our justice system," he said.

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, a Republican, was among those who said he was troubled by the shooting.

"I think the death of Americans, what we're seeing on TV, it's causing deep concerns over federal tactics and accountability," Stitt said on CNN's "State of the Union." "Americans don't like what they're seeing right now."

Administration, some allies defend shooting

Many others, including Republican senators and Trump administration officials speaking on Sunday talk shows — Noem, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, FBI Director Kash Patel and Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche — defended the agents involved and blamed Pretti and state and local Democrats in Minneapolis.

"Democrats are now backing out of a bipartisan agreement to fund DHS, which makes sure our border is secure and our immigration laws are enforced," Senate Budget Committee Chairman Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., wrote on social media.

"This is reckless and quite frankly, very disappointing. It appears that Democrats are so wedded to supporting people carrying guns trying to interfere with a lawful arrest that they will shut down the government."

Patel, on "Sunday Morning Futures" on Fox News, said DHS is investigating the shooting but the FBI is processing physical evidence. "No one who wants to be peaceful shows up in a protest with a firearm that is loaded with two full magazines," Patel said, referring to reports that Pretti was carrying a handgun for which he had a concealed carry license, according to Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara.

Spokespeople for Collins, Schumer and Majority Leader John Thune of South Dakota did not return messages seeking comment Sunday. Senate Democrats were set to meet virtually on Sunday night, according to multiple media reports.

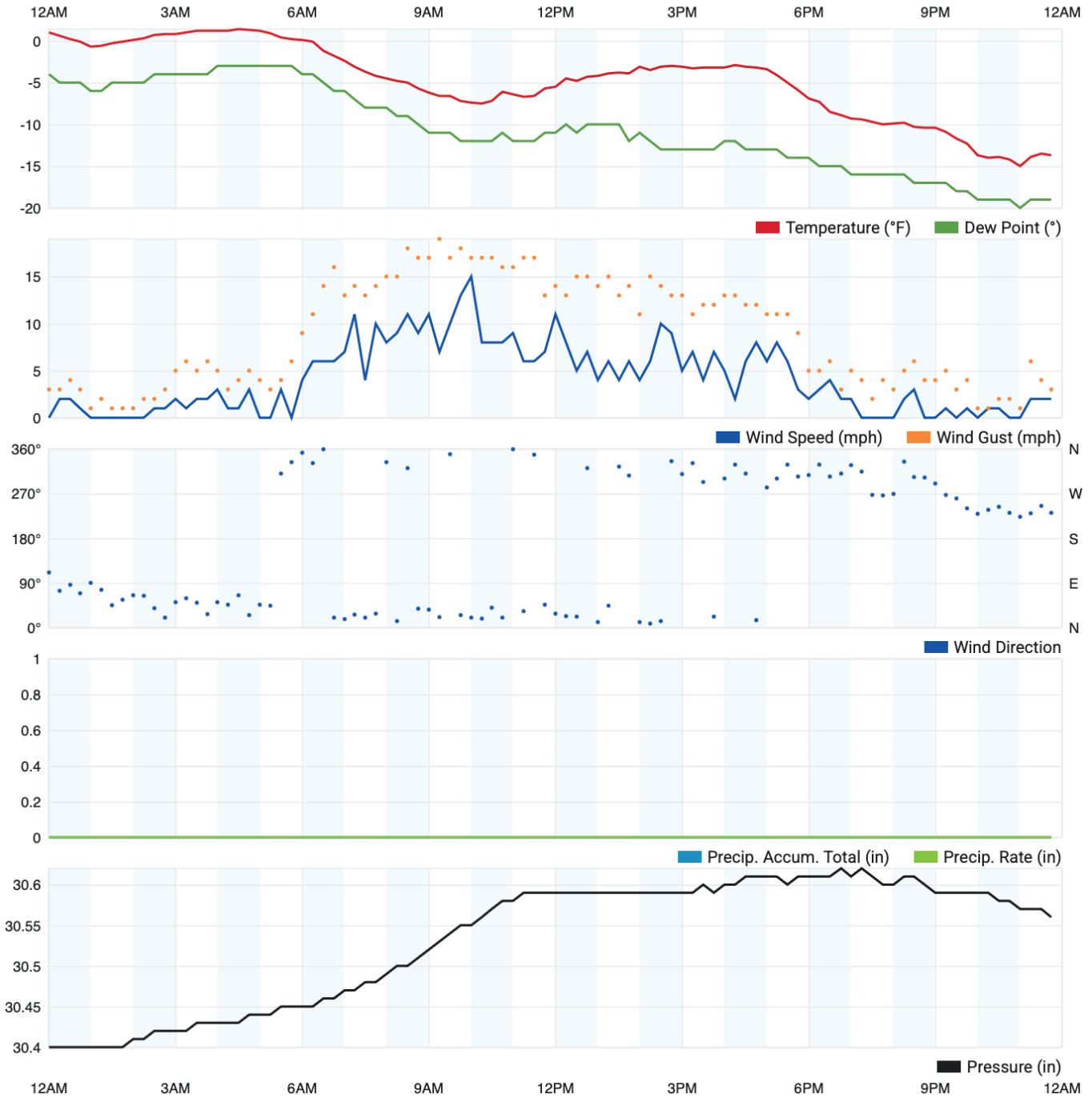
Jacob covers federal policy and helps direct national coverage as deputy Washington bureau chief for States Newsroom. Based in Oregon, he focuses on Western issues. His coverage areas include climate, energy development, public lands and infrastructure.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 17 of 63






Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

January 25, 2026



Broton Daily Independent

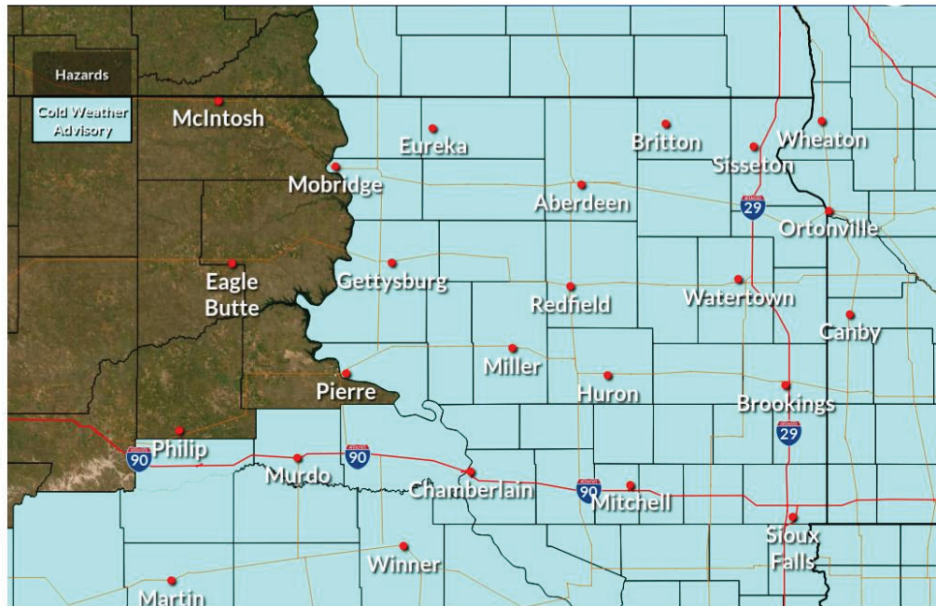
Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 18 of 63

Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday
				
High: 21 °F	Low: -2 °F	High: 11 °F	Low: 0 °F	High: 13 °F
Partly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Increasing Clouds	Partly Sunny

Wind Chills This Morning January 26, 2026 2:46 AM CST

Key Messages:

- Cold Weather Advisory This Morning (through 9 AM CST)
 - Wind Chills in the highlighted area: **-25 to -35 degrees**
- High Temperatures Today
 - Teens east of the James
 - 20s North Central/James Valley
 - 30s Central South Dakota



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A Cold Weather Advisory remains in effect through 9 AM CST for wind chills between -25 and -35 degrees. In these temperatures, frostbite can occur on exposed skin in as little as 10 minutes. Temperatures today are expected to rise into the teens to low 30s.

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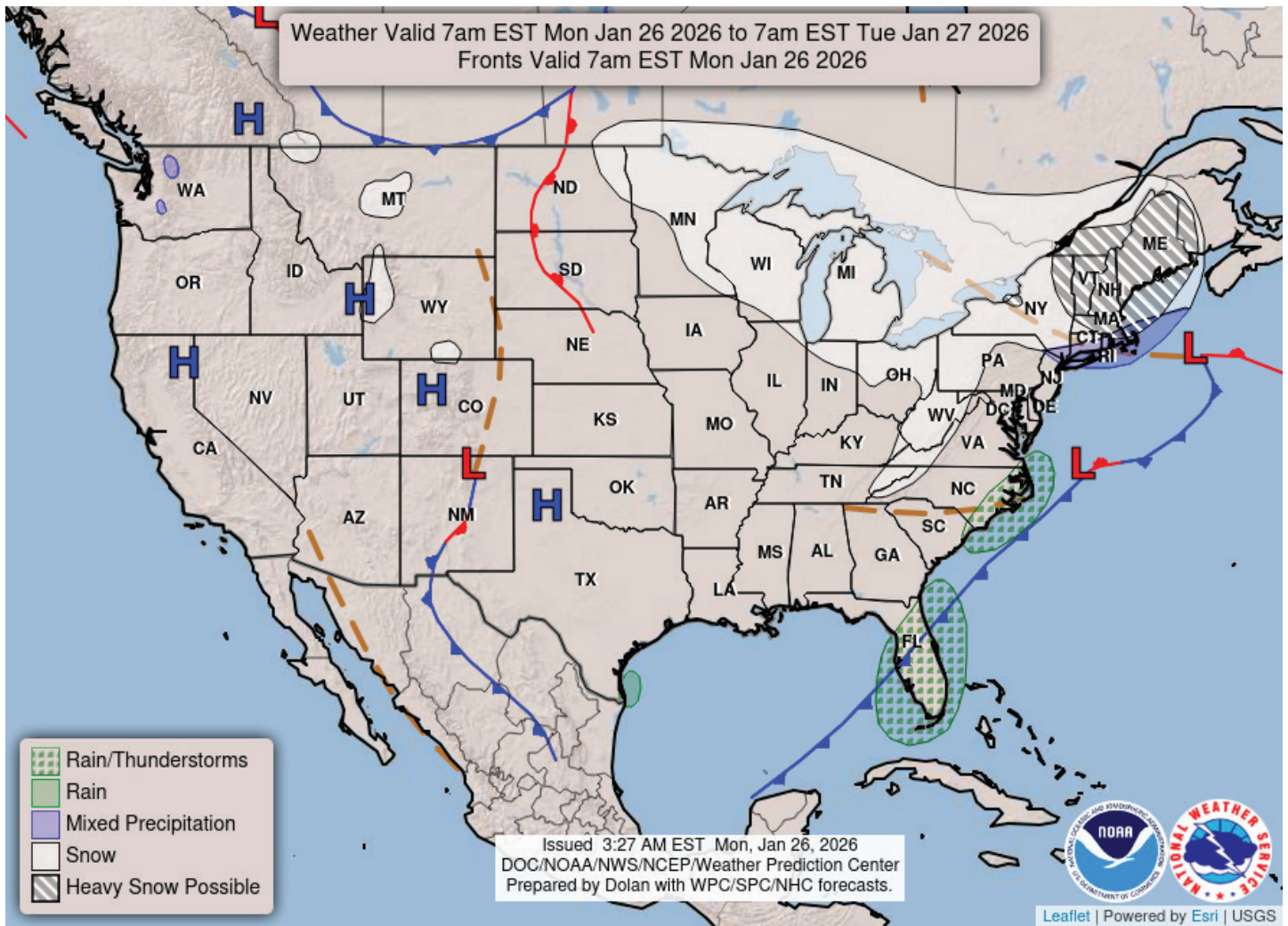
Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 19 of 63

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 2 °F at 4:38 AM
Low Temp: -15 °F at 11:03 PM
Wind: 19 mph at 9:13 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 1947
Record Low: -30 in 1950
Average High: 24
Average Low: 1
Average Precip in Jan.: 0.47
Precip to date in Jan.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.47
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:29 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:58 am



Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 20 of 63

Today in Weather History

January 26, 1977: Four days of very strong winds occurred from the 26th through the 29th, with a strong low-pressure area over western Ontario. Strong northwest winds of 30 to 45 mph with gusts into the 60s caused widespread blowing and drifting snow, with most roads closed with many traffic accidents. The winds combined with subzero temperatures creating wind chills of 60 to 80 below zero. Many schools were closed for several days.

January 26, 2014: A strong Alberta Clipper system-generated light snow and strong winds across the region resulting in blizzard conditions. On Sunday morning, a band of moderate to heavy snow showers developed over North Dakota and swept down through our region producing cloud to ground lightning and thundersnow at times. Snowfall amounts were generally three inches or less. Wind gusts ranged from 45 to 55 mph at times. Several no travel advisories were issued due to poor visibilities in blizzard conditions, with state officials closing a large portion of Interstate-29 from Brookings to the North Dakota border.

1700: A powerful earthquake struck the Pacific Northwest along the Cascadia Subduction zone. The estimated moment magnitude of 8.7-9.2 caused about a 1,000-kilometer rupture from mid-Vancouver Island to northern California. The ocean floor heaved upward approximately 20 feet, and with 10-20 minutes, a giant wave, 30-40 feet high, reached the shore. The earthquake caused a tsunami, which struck the coast of Japan.

1772: Possibly the greatest snowfall ever recorded in the Washington DC area started on this day. When the storm began, Thomas Jefferson was returning home from his honeymoon with his new bride, Martha Wayles Skelton. The newlyweds made it to within eight miles of Monticello before having to abandon their carriage in the deep snow. Both finished the ride on horseback in the blinding snow. The newlyweds arrived home late on the night of January 26th. In Jefferson's "Garden Book," he wrote, "the deepest snow we have ever seen. In Albermarle, it was about 3. F. deep."

1937: The wettest month ever in Cincinnati, Ohio, is January 1937, when 13.68 inches fell. Their average January amount is 3.00 inches of precipitation. The overabundance of precipitation over the Ohio River basin caused near-record to record flooding in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Kentucky. On this day, the river gauge reached 80 feet in Cincinnati, the highest level in the city's history. The Ohio River reached 57 feet in Louisville, Kentucky, on the 27th, setting a new record by ten feet. Seventy percent of the city was underwater at that time.

1978 — A paralyzing blizzard struck the Midwest. One to three feet of snow fell in Michigan, and 20 to 40 inches was reported across Indiana. Winds reached 70 mph in Michigan, and gusted above 100 mph in Ohio. The high winds produced snow drifts twenty feet high in Michigan and Indiana stranding thousands on the interstate highways. Temperatures in Ohio dropped from the 40s to near zero during the storm. (David Ludlum)

1983 — The California coast was battered by a storm which produced record high tides, thirty-two foot waves, and mudslides, causing millions of dollars damage. The storm then moved east and dumped four feet of snow on Lake Tahoe. (22nd-29th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 — A winter storm spread heavy snow across the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast States, with 18 inches reported at Vineland NJ, and wind gusts to 65 mph at Chatham MA. Snow cover in Virginia ranged up to thirty inches following this second major storm in just one week. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — A snowstorm in the northeastern U.S. produced 19 inches at Austerlitz NY and Stillwater NY. A storm in the Great Lakes Region left 16.5 inches at Marquette MI, for a total of 43 inches in six days. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Snow and high winds created blizzard-like conditions in northwestern Vermont. Winds at Saint Albans gusted to 88 mph. In Alaska, the town of Cold Foot (located north of Fairbanks) reported a morning low of 75 degrees below zero. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — A winter storm spread high winds from the northwestern U.S. to Wyoming and Colorado, with heavy snow in some of the high elevations. Stevens Pass WA received 17 inches of snow, half of which fell in four hours. In extreme northwest Wyoming, Togwotee Mountain Lodge received 24 inches of snow. Winds in Colorado gusted to 90 mph at Rollinsville. (National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

The Rewards of Working Well **When we work in a way that honors the Lord,** **we may be surprised by the opportunities that appear.**

Colossians 3:23-24: 23 Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.

Every job has parts that are frustrating or moments that seem unfulfilling. And though the routine may not change, the good news is that our way of thinking can. We can decide to work as if the Lord is our boss—it's a choice that makes all the difference.

Today's passage tells us, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men ... It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."

Treating our job like an extension of our service to the Lord changes our attitude. Pleasing Him will motivate us to do our best and inevitably result in a greater sense of contentment and gratitude (Colossians 3:17). Work may be challenging, frustrating, or boring, but we can be at peace regardless of our circumstances.

A servant heart can impact other employees as well. Service that is rendered with kindness, grace, and humility gets coworkers' attention, which in turn opens up opportunities for ministry to the people with whom we spend hours each day.

Rewards for enthusiastic service on the job can take many forms—including greater personal satisfaction in our work and opportunities to reflect Christ to others. There is also the joy of knowing that our Father is pleased by our efforts.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 22 of 63

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Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 23 of 63



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.23.26

30 42 49 53 66 4

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$285,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 23

DRAW: Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.24.26

4 11 16 33 42 6

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$13,820,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 38 Mins 23

DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.25.26

2 25 27 29 31 13

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 53 Mins 23

DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.24.26

1 2 4 24 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$222,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 53

DRAW: Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.24.26

8 17 29 30 62 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 22 Mins 23

DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

01.24.26

2 16 35 61 63 5

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$30,000,000

NEXT 17 Hrs 22 Mins 23

DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

South Dakota schools participate in National School Choice Week

PIERRE, S.D., Jan. 26, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- National School Choice Week begins today in South Dakota and across the country, focusing on helping parents find the right K–12 schools for their children.

Across the Mount Rushmore State, more than 80 schools are taking part by hosting open houses, information sessions, parent nights, and other events.

Gov. Larry Rhoden is marking the week with a proclamation recognizing Jan. 25–31 as “South Dakota School Choice Week” and highlighting the education options available to families across the state.

Learning choices for South Dakota kids include public, private, online, home, and non-traditional schooling. Parents can access a free guide to school choice in South Dakota at: schoolchoiceweek.com/south-dakota

“South Dakota’s flexible open enrollment policies and tax-credit scholarship program demonstrates how school choice isn’t about public versus private schools, but all options that families want for their children,” said Andrew Campanella, CEO of the National School Choice Awareness Foundation.

National School Choice Week runs until January 31, 2026. Organized by the nonprofit National School Choice Awareness Foundation, the week shines a positive spotlight on all K–12 options available for families.

How a purge of China’s military leadership could impact the army and the future of Taiwan

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China made a major announcement over the weekend, saying it was investigating the army’s top general for suspected serious violations of discipline and law.

Gen. Zhang Youxia was the highest military member just below President Xi Jinping.

The Defense Ministry said Saturday that authorities were investigating Zhang, the senior of the two vice chairs of the powerful Central Military Commission, China’s top military body, and Gen. Liu Zhenli, a lower member of the commission who was in charge of the military’s Joint Staff Department.

The move shakes up virtually the entire commission, chaired by Xi, leaving only one of its six members intact.

“Xi Jinping has completed one of the biggest purges of China’s military leadership in the history of the People’s Republic,” said Neil Thomas, a fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute’s Center for China Analysis.

For the army and China in general, the full impact of the changes is still unknown. But some experts say the moves also might have repercussions on Beijing’s next move on Taiwan, the self-ruled island that Beijing claims as its own territory.

Here are some elements to understand why Gen. Zhang’s removal is important.

What was behind the latest military purge

The Defense Ministry announced the measures Saturday but provided no details on the alleged wrongdoing. The next day, the People’s Liberation Army Daily published an editorial that fell short of explaining the specific reasons, saying only that it was “for suspected serious violations of discipline and law” and showed China’s commitment to punish corruption. That is something Xi has pursued since the early days of his presidency.

Rumors have circulated on social media and there have been some media reports about the changes, but nothing official.

“I do not believe any evidence publicly released or selectively leaked by Chinese authorities would necessarily reflect the core reason for Zhang’s removal,” said K. Tristan Tang, nonresident Vasey Fellow at Pacific Forum. “The critical point is that Xi Jinping decided to move against Zhang; once an investigation is launched, problems are almost inevitably uncovered.”

Analysts have said the purges are designed to reform the military and ensure loyalty to Xi. They are part

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 25 of 63

of a broader anti-corruption drive that has resulted in punishment for more than 200,000 officials since the Chinese leader came to power in 2012.

Before Zhang and Liu's dismissal, the Communist Party expelled the other vice chair of the commission, He Weidong, in October. He was replaced with Zhang Shengmin, who is now the only commission member.

Since 2012, at least 17 Generals from the People's Liberation Army, or PLA, have been removed from their military positions, among them eight who were former top commission members, according to a review of military statements and state media reports made by The Associated Press.

How a top military change can impact moves on Taiwan

Some think the removals could have repercussions for China's decisions on Taiwan, but it is far from clear.

China considers Taiwan its own territory and has threatened to take control of the island by force if necessary. China also has increased military pressure and, last month, launched large-scale military drills around Taiwan for two days after the U.S. government announced a major arms sales to Taiwan.

Thomas, from the Asia Society Policy Institute, said the latest purge "makes China's threat toward Taiwan weaker in the short term but stronger in the long term."

It would make a military escalation against the island riskier in the immediate term because of "a high command in disarray," but in the long term would mean the army has a more loyal and less corrupt leadership with more military capabilities, he said.

Asked if this might reinforce the idea that removing top military brass might show China is not ready for war, Tang from the Pacific Forum said it "does not fundamentally change that assessment".

"That said," he added, "I also do not believe the PLA's combat readiness has been severely disrupted."

Military commission's future remains unclear

With the recent changes, the military commission will operate with only one of six members active and Xi at the top as the chair.

The PLA's Daily editorial said that after the actions against Zhang and Liu, the party is moving to "promote the rejuvenation of the People's Liberation Army, and inject powerful momentum into building a strong military force."

But it's not clear if the five vacant positions will be replaced soon or if Xi will wait until 2027, when there will be a selection of a new Communist Party Central Committee, the body in charge of also appointing the new military commission members.

Tang, from the Pacific Forum, doesn't see any pressure on Xi to fill the positions in the short term.

"Unless the objective is to create an internal counterweight to Zhang Shengmin," the only current member in the commission, he said.

10 years, 3,000 creatives: the uphill battle for Black talent in Italian fashion

By COLLEEN BARRY AP Fashion Writer

MILAN (AP) — A day before an emerging Ghanaian designer made his Milan runway debut, Michelle Francine Ngonmo was troubleshooting how to squeeze more people into the venue to meet demand. Hours before the show, she was up before dawn with her team setting up backstage and the showroom.

Ngonmo, a 38-year-old Cameroonian-Italian, has dedicated her professional life to helping raise the profile of Africans and other people of color in Italian fashion and other creative fields "because there was, let's say, a lack of representation of people like me."

Ngonmo, who founded the Afrofashion Association a decade ago, produces runway shows, mentors talent and recognizes trailblazing achievements through the Black Carpet Awards, launched in 2023. Ngonmo also teaches fashion students and travels regularly to Africa to work with designers there.

In its first decade, the Afrofashion Association has worked with 3,000 people of color, including 92 who are working in creative jobs and "on a sustainable professional path," Ngonmo said.

That number is both a sign of the Afrofashion Association's success, and a measure of how much more work there is to be done.

"Italy is no longer a white Italy, as imagined, but an Italy where there are many colors," Ngonmo said.

The Black Lives Matters movement launched a discussion in Italy about the absence of people of color in Italian fashion's influential design studios, and designers Stella Jean and Edward Buchanan teamed up with Ngonmo to demand fashion houses replace expressions of solidarity with action. The fashion industry won't disclose diversity numbers, but the lack seemed evident as several prominent fashion houses were emerging from scandals over racially insensitive designs or campaigns.

For several seasons, the trio mentored creatives of color under the catchphrase: We Are Made in Italy (WAMI). But slowly the spotlight faded, as diversity and inclusion money dried up and the fashion industry was plunged into an economic crisis.

"At the time there was a reaction, indeed a very strong request to have to deal with creatives, especially Blacks in Italy," Ngonmo said. "And then slowly the curtain closed because the attention was no longer on that."

Ngonmo said she now focuses her attention "on those companies, those institutions that have remained with us during these years, and look at the result we have brought."

That includes the Italian National Fashion Chamber, which backed WAMI and is giving platforms to up and coming Black talents on the Milan Fashion Week calendar. One of them is Ghanaian designer Victor Reginald Bob Abbey-Hart, who heads the brand Victor-Hart and debuted his collection of mostly denim looks earlier this month.

Abbey-Hart, who recently designed a denim collection for Max & Co., has worked with Ngonmo to raise his profile. He has graduated from showing his looks at a Black Carpet Awards ceremony to a presentation during fashion week in September before the runway show.

The designer said his love affair with fashion started when he saw his first Gucci bag back in Ghana.

"I realized I want to go where it was made. So that was the dream," he said, despite many naysayers at home who saw only obstacles. "Coming to Italy really gave me a big door of opportunity to understand what the world really asks for, as a designer."

The Milan fashion chamber's president, Carlo Capasa, joined top fashion editors in the front row for the packed Victor-Hart show, wearing one of the designer's statuesque denim coats.

Capasa said projects with the Afrofashion Association have given visibility and behind-the-scenes support to more than 30 designers of color during recent fashion weeks. Ngonmo has also received support from Condé Nast's Anna Wintour, who has met with Black Carpet Award nominees on the sidelines of Milan fashion weeks.

"There is a lot to do in diversity and inclusion everywhere in the world, for sure also in Italy," Capasa said, adding that Ngonmo's role has been key in helping institutions "understand what were the needs" in underrepresented communities, from mentoring to education.

Abbey-Hart said that finding opportunities as a Black man in Italy, where he has lived for the past nine years, remains hard.

"Sometimes, before you even get to the room for the interview, you've been disqualified already. It's really tough, and I want people to understand," he said. "Take away the color, take away what I represent, just look at the job."

Yemen rebels threaten new Red Sea attack as US aircraft carrier heads toward Iran

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi rebels threatened new attacks on ships traveling through the Red Sea corridor, likely trying to back Iran as it worried Monday about an approaching U.S. aircraft carrier after President Donald Trump threatened military action over its crackdown on nationwide protests.

A short video by the Houthis included previously published images of a ship on fire, with the caption: "Soon." The rebels did not elaborate, but their campaign in the Red Sea saw over 100 ships attacked as

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 27 of 63

part of a campaign the Houthis said pressured Israel over its war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The Houthis halted their fire after a ceasefire in the conflict, though they've repeatedly warned they could resume fire if needed.

The Houthi threat come as the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and other guided missile destroyers with it move toward the region. Trump has said the ships are being moved "just in case" he decides to take action against Iran. Trump already has laid out two red lines for attack — the killing of peaceful protesters and Tehran conducting mass executions of those it has arrested in a massive crackdown over the demonstrations.

Iran renews threats and limits smaller flights

Iranian Defense Ministry spokesperson Gen. Reza Talaei-Nik renewed warnings Monday to both Israel and the U.S. over any possible attack, saying it would "be met with a response that is more painful and more decisive than in the past." Iranian state television quoted Talaei-Nik as adding that threats from the two countries required Iran "to maintain full and comprehensive preparedness."

Iran over the weekend unveiled a new banner in Enghelab Square threatening the Lincoln, showing an aircraft carrier strewn with bodies and streaked with blood with the warning: "If you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind." However, Iran is still reeling from a 12-day war launched by Israel in June that saw its air defense systems broadly destroyed and top military leaders killed, as well as its nuclear enrichment sites bombed by the U.S.

As a sign of concern over its airspace, Iran issued a notice to pilots Sunday that banned small private aircraft from flying in the country, with carveouts for the oil industry and emergency medical flights.

Many Western airlines have started to avoid Iranian airspace entirely due to the tensions, though Gulf Arab carriers flying to Moscow still rely on the route. Iranian air defense troops in 2020 shot down a Ukrainian commercial airliner, killing 176 people on board.

Death toll rises from protest crackdown

The protests in Iran began on Dec. 28, sparked by the fall of the Iranian currency, the rial, and quickly spread across the country. They were met by a violent crackdown by Iran's theocracy, the scale of which is only starting to become clear as the country has faced more than two-week internet blackout — the most comprehensive in the nation's history.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency on Sunday put the death toll at 5,848, with the number expected to increase. It says more than 41,280 people have been arrested.

The group's figures have been accurate in previous unrest and rely on a network of activists in Iran to verify deaths. That death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest there in decades, and recalls the chaos surrounding Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. The Associated Press has not been able to independently verify the toll.

Iran's government has put the death toll at a far lower 3,117, saying 2,427 were civilians and security forces, and labeled the rest "terrorists." In the past, Iran's theocracy has undercounted or not reported fatalities from unrest.

Private jet with 8 aboard crashes on takeoff in Maine, FAA says

BANGOR, Maine (AP) — A private aircraft carrying eight people crashed on takeoff Sunday night at Maine's Bangor International Airport, the Federal Aviation Administration said.

The Bombardier Challenger 600 crashed around 7:45 p.m., and there was no immediate word on the conditions of those aboard. The FAA and the National Transportation Safety Board are investigating.

The crash occurred as New England and much of the country grappled with a massive winter storm. Bangor had undergone steady snowfall Sunday along with many other parts of the country.

The airport issued a statement that emergency crews were on the scene at the airport, which was closed after what it described as an incident involving a single aircraft departing the airport.

Bangor International Airport offers direct flights to cities like Orlando, Florida, Washington, D.C., and Charlotte, North Carolina, and is located about 200 miles (320 kilometers) north of Boston.

Throughout the weekend, the vast storm dumped sleet, freezing rain and snow across much of the eastern half of the U.S., halting much air and road traffic and knocking out power to hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses in the Southeast.

Commercial air traffic was also heavily disrupted around much of the U.S.

Some 12,000 flights were canceled Sunday and nearly 20,000 were delayed, according to the flight tracker flightaware.com. Airports in Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, North Carolina, New York and New Jersey were among those impacted.

The Bombardier Challenger 600 is a wide-bodied business jet configured for nine to 11 passengers. It was launched in 1980 as the first private jet with a "walk-about cabin" and remains a popular charter option, according to aircharterservice.com

Gunmen open fire at soccer field in central Mexico, killing 11 and wounding 12

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Gunmen opened fire at a soccer field in central Mexico on Sunday, killing at least 11 people and wounding 12, authorities said.

Salamanca Mayor Cesar Prieto said in a statement posted to social platforms that the gunmen arrived at the end of a soccer match.

Ten people died at the scene and one died later at a hospital. The mayor said a woman and a minor were among the wounded.

Prieto said the attack was part of a "crime wave" in the city and appealed to President Claudia Sheinbaum for help to control the violence.

The Guanajuato state prosecutor's office said it was investigating and coordinating with federal authorities to reinforce security in the area.

Guanajuato had Mexico's highest homicide total last year. A local gang, Santa Rosa de Lima, has been battling the powerful Jalisco New Generation Cartel.

"Unfortunately, there are criminal groups trying to subjugate authorities, something they are not going to achieve," the mayor said.

Overall, Mexico's government says the country's 2025 murder rate was the lowest since 2016 at 17.5 murders per 100,000 inhabitants, although analysts cautioned that the numbers may not fully reflect the country's violence.

Hundreds rescued from deadly ferry disaster in Philippines

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A ferry with more than 350 people on board sank early Monday near an island in the southern Philippines. Rescuers have saved at least 316 passengers and retrieved 15 bodies, officials said.

The M/V Trisha Kerstin 3, an inter-island cargo and passenger ferry, was sailing from the port city of Zamboanga to southern Jolo island in Sulu province with 332 passengers and 27 crew members when it apparently encountered technical problems and sank after midnight, coast guard officials said.

The ferry sank in good weather about a nautical mile (nearly 2 kilometers) from the island village of Baluk-baluk in Basilan province, said coast guard Commander Romel Dua.

"There was a coast guard safety officer on board and he was the first to call and alert us to deploy rescue vessels," Dua said, adding that the safety officer survived.

One of the rescued passengers, Mohamad Khan, said that the ferry abruptly tilted to one side and took on water, hurling people including him and his wife, who was holding their 6-month-old baby, into the sea in the darkness. He and his wife were rescued, but their baby drowned.

"My wife lost hold of our baby and all of us got separated at sea," a distraught Khan told a volunteer rescuer, Gamar Alih, who posted a video of Khan's remarks on Facebook.

As Khan narrated their ordeal, his wife wept.

Alih, a village councilor from Zamboanga city, told The Associated Press that he volunteered to help in the search and rescue because some of his relatives were among the ferry passengers. They all survived.

Coast guard and navy ships, along with a surveillance plane, an air force Black Hawk helicopter and fleets of fishing boats were carrying out search and rescue operations off Basilan, Dua said.

Basilan Governor Mujiv Hataman said several passengers and two bodies were brought to Isabela, the provincial capital, where he and ambulance vans waited.

"I'm receiving 37 people here in the pier. Unfortunately two are dead," Hataman said, speaking by cellphone from the Isabela pier.

The coast guard said 316 passengers had been rescued and at least 15 bodies found.

The cause of the ferry sinking was not immediately clear and there will be an investigation, Dua said, adding that the coast guard cleared the ferry before it left the Zamboanga port and there was no sign of overloading.

Sea accidents are common in the Philippine archipelago because of frequent storms, badly maintained vessels, overcrowding and spotty enforcement of safety regulations, especially in remote provinces.

In December 1987, the ferry Dona Paz sank after colliding with a fuel tanker in the central Philippines, killing more than 4,300 people in the world's deadliest peacetime maritime disaster.

Investigators will detail the causes of the midair collision over Washington and recommend changes

By JOSH FUNK AP Transportation Writer

So many things went wrong last Jan. 29 to contribute to the deadliest plane crash on American soil since 2001 that the National Transportation Safety Board isn't likely to identify a single cause of the collision between an airliner and an Army helicopter near Washington that killed 67 people at its hearing Tuesday.

Instead, their investigators will detail what they found that played a role in the crash, and the board will recommend changes to help prevent a similar tragedy. Last week, the Federal Aviation Administration already took the temporary restrictions it imposed after the crash and made them permanent to ensure planes and helicopters won't share the same airspace again around Reagan National Airport.

Family members of victims hope those suggestions won't be ignored the same way many past NTSB recommendations have been. Tim Lilley, whose son Sam was the first officer on the American Airlines plane, said he hopes officials in Congress and the administration will make changes now instead of waiting until for another disaster.

"Instead of writing aviation regulation in blood, let's start writing it in data," said Lilley, who is a pilot himself and earlier in his career flew Black Hawk helicopters in the Washington area. "Because all the data was there to show this accident was going to happen. This accident was completely preventable."

Over the past year, the NTSB has already highlighted a number of the factors that contributed to the crash including a poorly designed helicopter route past Reagan Airport, the fact that the Black Hawk was flying 78 feet (23.7 meters) higher than it should have been, the warnings that the FAA ignored in the years beforehand and the Army's move to turn off a key system that would have broadcast the helicopter's location more clearly.

The D.C. plane crash was the first in a number of high-profile crashes and close calls throughout 2025 that alarmed the public, but the total number of crashes last year was actually the lowest since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020 with 1,405 crashes nationwide.

Experts say flying remains the safest way to travel because of all the overlapping layers of precautions built into the system, but too many of those safety measures failed at the same time last Jan. 29.

Here is some of what we have learned about the crash:

The helicopter route didn't ensure enough separation

The route along the Potomac River the Black Hawk was following that night allowed for helicopters and planes to come within 75 feet (23 meters) of each other when a plane was landing on the airport's sec-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 30 of 63

ondary runway that typically handles less than 5% of the flights landing at Reagan. And that distance was only ensured when the helicopter stuck to flying along the bank of the river, but the official route didn't require that.

Normally, air traffic controllers work to keep aircraft at least 500 feet (152 meters) apart to keep them safe, so the scant separation on Route 4 posed what NTSB Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy called "an intolerable risk to flight safety."

The controllers at Reagan also had been in the habit of asking pilots to watch out for other aircraft themselves and maintain visual separation as they tried to squeeze in more planes to land on what the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority has called the busiest runway in the country. The FAA halted that practice after the crash.

That night a controller twice asked the helicopter pilots whether they had the jet in sight, and the pilots said they did and asked for visual separation approval so they could use their own eyes to maintain distance. But at the investigative hearings last summer, board members questioned how well the crew could spot the plane while wearing night vision goggles and whether the pilots were even looking in the right spot.

The Black Hawk was flying too high

The American Airlines plane flying from Wichita, Kansas, collided with the helicopter 278 feet (85 meters) above the river, but the Black Hawk was never supposed to fly above 200 feet (61 meters) as it passed by the airport, according to the official route.

Before investigators revealed how high the helicopter was flying, Tim Lilley was asking tough questions about it at some of the first meetings NTSB officials had with the families. His background as a pilot gave him detailed knowledge of the issues.

"We had a moral mandate because we had such an in-depth insight into what happened. We didn't want to become advocates, but we could not shirk the responsibility," said Lilley, who started meeting with top lawmakers in Congress, Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy and Army officials not long after the crash to push for changes.

The NTSB has said the Black Hawk pilots may not have realized how high the helicopter was because the barometric altimeter they were relying on was reading 80 to 100 feet (24 to 30 meters) lower than the altitude registered by the flight data recorder.

Investigators tested out the altimeters of three other Black Hawks of the same model from the same Army unit and found similar discrepancies.

Past warnings and alarming data were ignored

FAA controllers were warning about the risks all the helicopter traffic around Reagan airport created at least since 2022.

And the NTSB found there had been 85 near misses between planes and helicopters around the airport in the three years before the crash along with more than 15,000 close proximity events. Pilots reported collision alarms going off in their cockpits at least once a month.

Officials refused to add a warning to helicopter charts urging pilots to use caution when they used the secondary runway at Reagan the jet was trying to use before the collision.

Rachel Feres said it was hard to hear about all the known concerns that were never addressed before the crash that killed her cousin Peter Livingston and his wife Donna and two young daughters, Everly and Alydia, who were both promising figure skaters.

"It became very quickly clear that this crash should never have happened," Feres said. "And as someone who is not particularly familiar with aviation and how our aviation system works, we were just hearing things over and over again that I think really, really shocked people, really surprised people."

Judge set to hear arguments on Minnesota's immigration crackdown after fatal shootings

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A federal judge will hear arguments Monday on whether she should at least temporarily halt the immigration crackdown in Minnesota that has led to the fatal shootings of two people by government officers.

The state of Minnesota and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul sued the Department of Homeland Security earlier this month, five days after Renee Good was shot by an Immigration and Customs officer. Saturday's shooting by a Border Patrol officer of Alex Pretti has only added urgency to the case.

Since the original filing, the state and cities have substantially added to their original request. They're trying to restore the state of affairs that existed before the Trump administration launched Operation Metro Surge on Dec. 1.

The hearing is set for Monday morning in federal court in Minneapolis. Democratic Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison said he plans to personally attend.

They're asking that U.S. District Judge Kathleen Menendez order federal law enforcement agencies to reduce the numbers of officers and agents in Minnesota to levels before the surge, while allowing them to continue to enforce immigration laws within a long list of proposed limits.

Justice Department attorneys have called the lawsuit "legally frivolous" and said "Minnesota wants a veto over federal law enforcement." They asked the judge to reject the request or at least stay her order pending an anticipated appeal.

Ellison said at a news conference Sunday that he and the cities filed their lawsuit because of "the unprecedented nature of this of this surge. It is a novel abuse of the Constitution that we're looking at right now. No one can remember a time when we've seen something like this."

It wasn't clear ahead of the hearing when the judge might rule.

The case also has implications for other states that have been or could be targets of intensive federal immigration enforcement operations. Attorneys general from 19 states plus the District of Columbia, led by California, filed a friend-of-the-court brief supporting Minnesota.

"If left unchecked, the federal government will no doubt be emboldened to continue its unlawful conduct in Minnesota and to repeat it elsewhere," the attorneys general wrote.

Menendez is the same judge who ruled in a separate case on Jan. 16 that federal officers in Minnesota can't detain or tear gas peaceful protesters who aren't obstructing authorities, including people who are following and observing agents.

An appeals court temporarily suspended that ruling three days before Saturday's shooting. But the plaintiffs in that case, represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Minnesota, asked the appeals court late Saturday for an emergency order lifting the stay in light of Pretti's killing. The Justice Department argued in a reply filed Sunday that the stay should remain in place, calling the injunction unworkable and overly broad.

In yet another case, a different federal judge, Eric Tostrud, late Saturday issued an order blocking the Trump administration from "destroying or altering evidence" related to Saturday's shooting. Ellison and Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty asked for the order to try to preserve evidence collected by federal officials that state authorities have not yet been able to inspect. A hearing in that case is scheduled for Monday afternoon in federal court in St. Paul.

"The fact that anyone would ever think that an agent of the federal government might even think about doing such a thing was completely unforeseeable only a few weeks ago," Ellison told reporters. "But now, this is what we have to do."

Northeast gets last brunt of winter storm that brought ice, snow, cold to much of the US

By KATE BRUMBACK and JULIE WALKER Associated Press

The U.S. work week opened with yet more snow dumping on the Northeast under the tail end of a colossal winter storm that brought ice and power outages, impassable roads, canceled flights and frigid cold to much of the southern and eastern United States.

Deep snow — over a foot (30 centimeters) extending in a 1,300-mile (2,100-kilometer) swath from Arkansas to New England — halted traffic, canceled flights and triggered wide school cancellations Monday.

Up to two feet (60 centimeters) were forecast in some of the harder-hit places.

In Falmouth, Massachusetts, about an hour's drive south of Boston, snow was coming down in sheets and closing down the town.

Local minister Nell Fields had to shovel out just to be able to let her dog outside. Seven inches (18 centimeters) had fallen, with up to that much more still on the way.

"I feel that the universe just put a big, huge pause on us with all the snow," Fields said.

On Manhattan's Upper East Side, January Cotrel enjoyed the fresh snow on a block that always closes during snowstorms for residents to sled, throw snowballs and make snowmen.

"I pray for two feet every time we get a snowstorm. I want as much as we can get," she said. "Let the city just shut down for a day and it's beautiful, and then we can get back to life."

Meanwhile, bitter cold followed in the storm's wake. Overnight Sunday, the entire Lower 48 states were forecast to have their coldest average low temperature — 9.8 degrees (minus 12.3 Celsius) — since January 2014.

Record warmth in Florida was the only thing keeping that average from going even colder, said former National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration chief scientist Ryan Maue, who calculates national averages based on National Weather Service data.

From Montana to the Florida Panhandle, the weather service posted cold weather advisories and extreme cold warnings as temperatures in many places dipped to zero (minus-18 degrees Celsius) and even colder. Wind made conditions even chillier and the overnight cold threatened to refreeze roads early Monday in a cruel reprise of the weekend's lousy travel weather.

Even with precipitation ending in Mississippi, "that doesn't mean the danger is behind us," Gov. Tate Reeves said in a news conference Sunday.

Freezing rain that slickened roads and brought trees and branches down on roads and power lines were the main peril in the South over the weekend. In Corinth, Mississippi, heavy machinery manufacturer Caterpillar told employees at its remanufacturing site to stay home Monday and Tuesday.

It already was Mississippi's worst ice storm since 1994 with its biggest-ever deployment of ice-melting chemicals — 200,000 gallons (750,000 liters) — plus salt and sand to treat icy roads, Reeves said. He urged people not to drive anywhere unless absolutely necessary. "Do please reach out to friends and family," Reeves added.

At one point Sunday morning, about 213 million people were under some sort of winter weather warning, authorities said. Hundreds of thousands of customers were without power, according to poweroutage.us, with Tennessee and Mississippi hit especially hard.

Some 12,000 flights also were canceled Sunday and nearly 20,000 were delayed, according to the flight tracker flightaware.com. Airports in Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, North Carolina, New York and New Jersey were among those feeling the brunt of the storm with impacts expected to linger into Monday.

In New York City, Mayor Zohran Mamdani said at least five people who died were found outside as temperatures plunged Saturday, though the cause of their deaths remained under investigation. Two men died of hypothermia related to the storm in Caddo Parish in Louisiana, according to the state health department.

In Massachusetts, Fields, the minister, held church services despite the storm, saying in some ways the weather was a gift.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 33 of 63

"I'm sorry it's disrupted things, but it's given us some silence, and maybe we're using this time to think about what's really important, and that's community and taking care of each other," Fields said.

More than 11,400 flights canceled Sunday as massive winter storm sweeps across US

By MAE ANDERSON and RIO YAMAT AP Business Writers

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — A massive winter storm made for a brutal travel day Sunday, with widespread cancellations and delays at some of the nation's busiest airports.

Widespread snow, sleet and freezing rain threatened nearly 180 million people — more than half the U.S. population — in a path stretching from the southern Rocky Mountains to New England, the National Weather Service said Saturday night. After sweeping through the South, the storm moved into the Northeast Sunday, and was expected to dump about 1 to 2 feet (30 to 60 centimeters) of snow from Washington through New York and Boston.

More than 11,400 flights were canceled on Sunday, according to flight-tracking site FlightAware. Aviation analytics firm Cirium said that as of Sunday morning, the storm is the highest experienced cancellation event since the pandemic.

By Sunday afternoon, the majority of flights were canceled at busy airports in the Northeast and elsewhere. LaGuardia Airport in New York closed Sunday afternoon, according to the Federal Aviation Administration. The agency said on its website the busy Queens airport grounded flights until 8 p.m.

In Philadelphia, 94% of flights, 326 flights, were canceled. Ninety-one percent of flights, 436 flights, were canceled at LaGuardia Airport in New York. New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport had 466 flights canceled, about 80% of flights, according to FlightAware.

Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport said on its website that all airlines had canceled departing flights for the day, about 421 flights.

Significant disruptions also hit major airport hubs in Dallas-Fort Worth, Charlotte, Philadelphia and Atlanta, home to the nation's busiest airport.

Allan Lengel of Detroit planned to return Monday from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where the temperature has been in the 80s. But he's staying until Wednesday after Delta suggested he change his reservation because of the weather impact on flights.

"Can't say I'm disappointed. Frankly, I had been thinking of returning later because of frigid weather," Lengel, 71, said, referring to conditions in Michigan.

American Airlines had canceled over 1,790 flights for Sunday, about 55% of its scheduled flights for Sunday, according to FlightAware. Delta Air Lines reported over 1,470 cancellations and Southwest Airlines reported over 1,340 cancellations for the day, while United Airlines had about 1,016. JetBlue had more than 590 canceled flights, accounting for roughly 72% of its schedule for the day.

Vikrant Vaze, a Dartmouth professor specializing in commercial aviation logistics, said recovery from the storm cancellations and delays will take days if not longer. And even for travelers who aren't in areas that were directly affected by weather, cascading delays could still affect their travel plans.

"Because there are so many different airlines involved, I think it's going to come down heavily to the individual airline's network structure, the extent of hit that each of them has had, and just the intrinsic capacity of the airlines to handle these massive disruptions," he said.

What you do if your flight is canceled

If you're already at the airport, get in line to speak to a customer service representative. If you're still at home or at your hotel, call or go online to connect to your airline's reservations staff. Either way, it helps to also research alternate flights while you wait to talk to an agent.

Most airlines will rebook you on a later flight for no additional charge, but it depends on the availability of open seats.

Other carriers' flights aren't always an option

You can, but airlines aren't required to put you on another carrier's flight. Some airlines, including most

of the biggest carriers, say they can put you on a partner airline, but even then, it can be a hit or miss.

You are owed a refund for a cancellation

If your flight was canceled and you no longer want to take the trip, or you've found another way to get to your destination, the airline is legally required to refund your money — even if you bought a non-refundable ticket. It doesn't matter why the flight was canceled.

The airline might offer you a travel credit, but you are entitled to a full refund. You are also entitled to a refund of any bag fees, seat upgrades or other extras that you didn't get to use.

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By MAE ANDERSON and RIO YAMAT AP Business Writers

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American Airlines had canceled over 1,790 flights for Sunday, about 55% of its scheduled flights for Sunday, according to FlightAware. Delta Air Lines reported over 1,470 cancellations and Southwest Airlines reported over 1,340 cancellations for the day, while United Airlines had about 1,016. JetBlue had more than 590 canceled flights, accounting for roughly 72% of its schedule for the day.

Vikrant Vaze, a Dartmouth professor specializing in commercial aviation logistics, said recovery from the storm cancellations and delays will take days if not longer. And even for travelers who aren't in areas that were directly affected by weather, cascading delays could still affect their travel plans.

"Because there are so many different airlines involved, I think it's going to come down heavily to the individual airline's network structure, the extent of hit that each of them has had, and just the intrinsic capacity of the airlines to handle these massive disruptions," he said.

What you do if your flight is canceled

If you're already at the airport, get in line to speak to a customer service representative. If you're still at

home or at your hotel, call or go online to connect to your airline's reservations staff. Either way, it helps to also research alternate flights while you wait to talk to an agent.

Most airlines will rebook you on a later flight for no additional charge, but it depends on the availability of open seats.

Other carriers' flights aren't always an option

You can, but airlines aren't required to put you on another carrier's flight. Some airlines, including most of the biggest carriers, say they can put you on a partner airline, but even then, it can be a hit or miss.

You are owed a refund for a cancellation

If your flight was canceled and you no longer want to take the trip, or you've found another way to get to your destination, the airline is legally required to refund your money — even if you bought a non-refundable ticket. It doesn't matter why the flight was canceled.

The airline might offer you a travel credit, but you are entitled to a full refund. You are also entitled to a refund of any bag fees, seat upgrades or other extras that you didn't get to use.

Iran unveils mural warning of retaliation if US conducts a military strike

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iranian authorities unveiled a new mural on a giant billboard in a central Tehran square on Sunday with a direct warning to the United States to not attempt a military strike on the country, as U.S. warships head to the region.

The image shows a bird's-eye view of an aircraft carrier with damaged and exploding fighter planes on its flight deck. The deck is strewn with bodies and streaked with blood that trails into the water behind the ship to form a pattern reminiscent of the stripes of the American flag. A slogan is emblazoned across one corner: "If you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind."

The unveiling of the mural in Enghelab Square comes as the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and accompanying warships move toward the region. U.S. President Donald Trump has said the ships are being moved "just in case" he decides to take action.

"We have a massive fleet heading in that direction and maybe we won't have to use it," Trump said Thursday.

Enghelab Square is used for gatherings called by the state and authorities change its mural based on national occasions. On Saturday, the commander of Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard warned that his force is "more ready than ever, finger on the trigger."

Tension between the U.S. and Iran has spiked in the wake of a brutal crackdown on nationwide protests that saw thousands of people killed and tens of thousands arrested. Trump had threatened military action if Iran continued to kill peaceful protesters or carried out mass executions of those detained.

There have been no further protests for days and Trump claimed recently that Tehran had halted the planned execution of about 800 arrested protesters — a claim Iran's top prosecutor called "completely false."

But Trump has indicated he is keeping his options open, saying on Thursday that any military action would make last June's U.S. strikes on Iranian nuclear sites "look like peanuts."

U.S. Central Command said on social media that its Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle now has a presence in the Middle East, noting the fighter jet "enhances combat readiness and promotes regional security and stability."

Similarly, the U.K. Ministry of Defense said Thursday that it deployed its Typhoon fighter jets to Qatar "in a defensive capacity."

The protests in Iran began on Dec. 28, sparked by the fall of the Iranian currency, the rial, and quickly spread across the country. They were met by a violent crackdown by Iran's theocracy, which does not tolerate dissent.

The death toll reported by activists has continued to rise since the end of the demonstrations, as information trickles out despite a more than two-week internet blackout — the most comprehensive in Iran's

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 36 of 63

history.

The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency on Sunday put the death toll at 5,848, with the number expected to increase. It says more than 41,280 people have been arrested.

The group's figures have been accurate in previous unrest and rely on a network of activists in Iran to verify deaths. That death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest there in decades, and recalls the chaos surrounding Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. The Associated Press has not been able to independently verify the toll.

Iran's government has put the death toll at a far lower 3,117, saying 2,427 were civilians and security forces, and labeled the rest "terrorists." In the past, Iran's theocracy has undercounted or not reported fatalities from unrest.

Massive winter storm dumps sleet, freezing rain and snow around much of US

By KATE BRUMBACK and JULIE WALKER Associated Press

A massive winter storm dumped sleet, freezing rain and snow across much of the U.S. on Sunday, bringing subzero temperatures and halting air and road traffic. Tree branches and power lines snapped under the weight of ice, and hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses in the Southeast were left without electricity.

The ice and snowfall were expected to continue into Monday followed by very low temperatures which could cause "dangerous travel and infrastructure impacts" for days, the National Weather Service said.

Heavy snow was falling from the Ohio Valley to the Northeast, while "catastrophic ice accumulation" threatened from the Lower Mississippi Valley to the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast.

"It is a unique storm in the sense that it is so widespread," weather service meteorologist Allison Santorelli said in a phone interview. "It was affecting areas all the way from New Mexico, Texas, all the way into New England, so we're talking like a 2,000-mile spread."

President Donald Trump approved emergency declarations for at least a dozen states by Saturday. The Federal Emergency Management Agency had rescue teams and supplies in numerous states, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said.

In New York, communities near the Canadian border saw record-breaking subzero temperatures, with Watertown registering minus 34 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 37 degrees Celsius) and Copenhagen minus 49 F (minus 45 C), Gov. Kathy Hochul said.

Coping with the storm

Freezing rain that slickened roads and brought trees and branches down on roads and power lines were the main peril in the South. In Corinth, Mississippi, heavy machinery manufacturer Caterpillar told employees at its remanufacturing site to stay home Monday and Tuesday.

"May God have mercy on Corinth, MS! ... The sound of the trees snapping, exploding & falling through the night have been unnerving to say the least," resident Kathy Ragan wrote on Facebook.

In Clarksdale, Mississippi, Sanford Johnson said enough snow and sleet fell that few motorists ventured out.

"I had to break it to my youngest daughter that the play date she scheduled likely won't happen today. We have no plans on driving," Johnson said.

It already was Mississippi's worst ice storm since 1994 with its biggest-ever deployment of ice-melting chemicals — 200,000 gallons (750,000 liters) — plus salt and sand on roads, Gov. Tate Reeves said at a news conference.

He urged people not to drive anywhere unless absolutely necessary. "Do please reach out to friends and family," Reeves added.

In Nashville, Tennessee, Jami Joe, 41, feared her electricity might not last as ice-heavy limbs from oak and pecan trees continued to crash around her house. "It's only a matter of time if a limb strikes a power

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 37 of 63

line," she said.

Because of icy roads, Josh Martin figured he and his wife, Misti, were "locked in" for a while at their home on a steep hill in Columbia, Tennessee.

"Getting in and out of the neighborhood is not an option," Martin said. "I can get down because gravity will take me, but I could not get back up."

Elsewhere, deep snow — over a foot (30 centimeters) in a 1,300-mile (2,100-kilometer) swath from Arkansas to New England — halted traffic and canceled flights.

On Manhattan's Upper East Side, January Cotrel enjoyed the fresh snow on a block that always closes during snowstorms for residents to sled, throw snowballs and make snowmen.

"I pray for two feet every time we get a snowstorm. I want as much as we can get," she said. "Let the city just shut down for a day and it's beautiful, and then we can get back to life."

Storm knocks out power and snarls flights

As of Sunday morning, about 213 million people were under some sort of winter weather warning, Santorelli said. Hundreds of thousands of customers were without power according to poweroutage.us, with Tennessee and Mississippi hit especially hard.

Some 12,000 flights were canceled Sunday and nearly 20,000 were delayed, according to the flight tracker flightaware.com. Airports in Philadelphia, Washington, Baltimore, North Carolina, New York and New Jersey were among those impacted.

Bitter cold makes things worse

The danger will continue after the ice and snow, Santorelli warned.

"Behind the storm it's just going to get bitterly cold across basically the entirety of the eastern two-thirds of the nation, east of the Rockies," she said. That means ice and snow won't melt as fast, which could hinder efforts to restore power.

In New York City, Mayor Zohran Mamdani said at least five people who died were found outside as temperatures plunged Saturday, though the cause of their deaths remained under investigation. He urged people to stay inside and off the roads: "We want every single New Yorker to make it through this storm."

Two men died of hypothermia related to the storm in Caddo Parish in Louisiana, according to the state health department.

Across the affected areas, schools and universities announced that classes would be canceled or held remotely Monday.

Recovery could take time

In Oxford, Mississippi, police appealed for residents to stay home. Utility crews were also pulled from their jobs during the overnight hours.

"Due to life-threatening conditions, Oxford Utilities has made the difficult decision to pull our crews off the road for the night," the utility company posted on Facebook early Sunday. "Trees are actively snapping and falling around our linemen while they are in the bucket trucks."

Oxford city officials posted dramatic photos on social media of slick roads and ice-coated trees sagging or breaking under the added weight.

In Tennessee, emergency officials urged motorists to give crews space to treat roads as drivers have been crashing into them.

Icy roads also made travel dangerous in north Georgia, where the Cherokee County Sheriff's office posted on Facebook, "You know it's bad when Waffle House is closed!!!" along with a photo of a shuttered restaurant. Whether the chain's restaurants are open — known as the Waffle House Index — has become an informal way to gauge the severity of weather disasters across the South.

A man is under arrest for allegedly assaulting US Rep. Maxwell Frost at the Sundance Film Festival

By LINDSEY BAHR AP Film Writer

PARK CITY, Utah (AP) — A man was arrested Friday night at a party during the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah, for allegedly assaulting a Florida congressman.

Democratic U.S. Rep. Maxwell Frost wrote on X on Saturday that he was punched in the face by a man who told Frost that President Donald Trump was going to deport him. The altercation occurred at a private party hosted by talent agency CAA at the High West Distillery, a popular venue for festival-adjacent events.

"He was heard screaming racist remarks as he drunkenly ran off," Frost wrote. "The individual was arrested and I am okay."

Frost, the first Gen Z member of Congress, thanked the venue security and the Park City Police Department for their help. A Park City Police Department representative said officers arrived on the scene just after midnight.

Christian Joel Young, 28, was arrested on charges of aggravated burglary, assaulting an elected official and assault and transported to Summit County Jail, according to court records.

Young appeared to have crashed the party by jumping a fence and had a Sundance Film Festival pass that was not issued in his name, according to the police affidavit.

It was unclear if Young had an attorney who could speak on his behalf. The Associated Press left messages with the Summit County Sheriff's office and Utah courts in an attempt to request comment from Young or a lawyer.

The Sundance Film Festival representatives released a statement saying that they "strongly condemn" the incident, noting that while it occurred at a non-affiliated event that the behavior is "against our values of upholding a welcoming and inspiring environment for all our attendees."

"The safety and security of our festival attendees is always our chief concern, and our thoughts are with Congressman Frost and his continued well-being," the statement read. "We encourage anyone with additional information on this matter to contact the Park City Police Department."

County Judge Richard Mrazik ordered Young held without bail, on the grounds that he would constitute, "a substantial danger to any other individual or to the community, or is likely to flee the jurisdiction of the court if released on bail." Young has a prior misdemeanor conviction, according to court records.

Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, a Republican, denounced the alleged attack and said he won't let tensions over immigration enforcement in places like Minneapolis spill into Utah.

"Political or racially charged violence of any kind is unacceptable in Utah," Cox said in a statement. "I'm grateful to local law enforcement for swiftly apprehending the assailant and pursuing justice for Rep. Maxwell Frost."

Federal immigration enforcement efforts are "welcome and necessary," he added.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries wrote on X that he was horrified by what had happened and that "the perpetrator must be aggressively prosecuted."

"Hate and political violence has no place in our country," Jeffries continued.

Messages seeking comment were left for representatives for CAA.

Republican calls are growing for a deeper investigation into the fatal Minneapolis shooting

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A growing number of Republicans are pressing for a deeper investigation into federal immigration tactics in Minnesota after a U.S. Border Patrol agent fatally shot a man in Minneapolis, a sign that the Trump administration's accounting of events may face bipartisan scrutiny.

House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Andrew Garbarino sought testimony from leaders at Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection and U.S. Citizenship and Immigra-

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 39 of 63

tion Services, saying "my top priority remains keeping Americans safe."

A host of other congressional Republicans, including Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas and Sens. Thom Tillis of North Carolina, Bill Cassidy of Louisiana, Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, pressed for more information. Their statements, in addition to concern expressed from several Republican governors, reflected a party struggling with how to respond to Saturday's fatal shooting of Alex Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care nurse at a VA hospital.

Trump administration officials were quick to cast Pretti as the instigator. Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem was among those who said Pretti "approached" immigration officers with a gun and acted violently. Videos from the scene show Pretti being pushed by an officer and then a half-dozen agents descend on him. During the scuffle, he is holding a phone but is never seen brandishing the 9mm semi-automatic handgun police say he was licensed to carry.

The killing has raised uncomfortable questions about the GOP's core positions on issues ranging from gun ownership to states' rights and trust in the federal government.

Cassidy, who is facing a Trump-backed challenger in his reelection bid, said on social media that the shooting was "incredibly disturbing" and that the "credibility of ICE and DHS are at stake." He pushed for "a full joint federal and state investigation." Tillis, who is not seeking reelection, urged a "thorough and impartial investigation" and said "any administration official who rushes to judgment and tries to shut down an investigation before it begins are doing an incredible disservice to the nation and to President Trump's legacy."

Murkowski called for an investigation and added that "ICE agents do not have carte blanche in carrying out their duties." Collins, the only incumbent Republican senator facing reelection in a state Democrat Kamala Harris carried in 2024, said a probe is needed "to determine whether or not excessive force was used in a situation that may have been able to be diffused without violence."

While calling for protesters to "keep space" from law enforcement and not interfere, Collins said federal law enforcement must "recognize both the public's right to protest and the highly charged situation they now face."

Even Sen. Pete Ricketts, a staunch ally of President Donald Trump, called for a "prioritized, transparent investigation."

"My support for funding ICE remains the same," the Nebraska Republican, who is up for reelection, said online. "But we must also maintain our core values as a nation, including the right to protest and assemble."

Trump and other administration officials remained firm in their defense of the hard-line immigration enforcement tactics in Minneapolis, blaming Democrats in the state along with local law enforcement for not working with them. Many Republicans either echoed that sentiment or stayed silent.

In a lengthy social media post on Sunday evening, Trump called on Minnesota's Democratic leadership to "formally cooperate" with his administration and pressed Congress to ban so-called sanctuary cities.

The White House will likely face at least some GOP pushback

Trump has enjoyed nearly complete loyalty from fellow Republicans during his first year back in the White House. But the positions staked out in the wake of the shooting signal the administration will face at least some pushback within the party in its swift effort to define Pretti, who protested Trump's immigration crackdown, as a violent demonstrator.

Deputy White House chief of staff Stephen Miller issued social media posts referencing an "assassin" and "domestic terrorist" while Noem said Pretti showed up to "impede a law enforcement operation."

At a minimum, some Republicans are calling for a de-escalation in Minneapolis.

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt told CNN's "State of the Union" that the shooting was a "real tragedy" and Trump needs to define an "end game."

"Nobody likes the feds coming to their states," Stitt said. "And so what is the goal right now? Is it to deport every single non-U.S. citizen? I don't think that's what Americans want."

Vermont Gov. Phil Scott said the shooting was "not acceptable."

"At best, these federal immigration operations are a complete failure of coordination of acceptable public safety and law enforcement practices, training and leadership," he said in a post. "At worst, it's deliberate

federal intimidation and incitement of American citizens.”

Echoing criticism that local law enforcement isn't cooperating with federal officials, Rep. James Comer, R-Ky., suggested the administration focus its immigration efforts elsewhere.

“If I were President Trump, I would almost think about if the mayor and the governor are going to put our ICE officials in harm's way and there's a chance of losing more innocent lives or whatever, then maybe go to another city and let the people of Minneapolis decide do we want to continue to have all these illegals?” he told “Sunday Morning Futures” on the Fox News Channel. “I think the people of Minnesota would rebel against their leadership.”

A sensitive moment for the GOP

Pretti's killing comes at a sensitive moment for the GOP as the party prepares for a challenging midterm election year. Trump has fomented a sense of chaos on the world stage, bringing the NATO alliance to the brink last week. Domestically, Trump has struggled to respond to widespread affordability concerns.

Meanwhile, approval of his handling of immigration — long a political asset for the president and the GOP — has tumbled. Just 38% of U.S. adults approved of how Trump was handling immigration in January, down from 49% in March, according to an AP-NORC poll.

The killing spurred notable tension with the GOP's long-standing support for gun rights. Officials say Pretti was armed, but no bystander videos that have surfaced so far appear to show him holding a weapon. The Minneapolis police chief said Pretti had a permit to carry a gun.

Yet administration officials, including Noem and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, have questioned why he was armed. Speaking on ABC's “This Week” Bessent said that when he has attended protests, “I didn't bring a gun. I brought a billboard.”

Such comments were notable for a party where support for the Second Amendment's protection of gun ownership is foundational. Indeed, many in the GOP, including Trump, lifted Kyle Rittenhouse into prominence when the then-17-year-old former police youth cadet shot three men, killing two of them, during a 2020 protest in Wisconsin against police brutality. He was acquitted of all charges after testifying that he acted in self defense.

In the wake of Pretti's killing, gun rights advocates noted that it is legal to carry firearms during protests.

“Every peaceable Minnesotan has the right to keep and bear arms — including while attending protests, acting as observers, or exercising their First Amendment rights,” the Minnesota Gun Owners Caucus said in a statement. “These rights do not disappear when someone is lawfully armed.”

In a social media post, the National Rifle Association said “responsible public voices should be awaiting a full investigation, not making generalizations and demonizing law-abiding citizens.”

Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., who is often critical of the White House, said “carrying a firearm is not a death sentence.”

“It's a Constitutionally protected God-given right,” he said, “and if you don't understand this you have no business in law enforcement or government.”

The second-ranking Justice Department official said he was aware of reports that Pretti was lawfully armed.

“There's nothing wrong with anybody lawfully carrying firearms,” Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said on “Meet the Press” on NBC. “But just make no mistake about it, this was an incredibly split-second decision that had to be made by ICE officers.”

Democrats vow to oppose homeland security funds after Minnesota shooting as shutdown risk grows

By KEVIN FREKING and MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic senators are vowing to oppose a funding bill for the Department of Homeland Security following the shooting death of a 37-year-old Minnesota man, a stand that increases the prospect of a partial government shutdown by the end of the week.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer, in a social media post hours after the Saturday shooting,

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 41 of 63

said that what is happening in Minnesota is "appalling" and that Democrats "will not provide the votes to proceed to the appropriations bill if the DHS funding bill is included."

Six of the 12 annual spending bills for the current budget year have been signed into law by President Donald Trump. Six more are awaiting action in the Senate, despite a revolt from House Democrats and mounting calls for Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem's impeachment.

If senators fail to act by midnight Friday, funding for Homeland Security and the other agencies covered under the six bills will lapse.

"Democrats sought common sense reforms in the Department of Homeland Security spending bill, but because of Republicans' refusal to stand up to President Trump, the DHS bill is woefully inadequate to rein in the abuses of ICE," said Schumer, D-N.Y. "I will vote no."

The White House reached out to Senate Democrats late Sunday, as have Republicans, according to a Senate Democratic leadership aide who insisted on anonymity to discuss the private talks.

But they have not yet raised any realistic solutions, the aide said.

Republicans will need some Democratic support to pass the remaining spending bills in time to avoid a partial shutdown. That support was already in question after Renee Good, a mother of three, was fatally shot and killed earlier this month by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent in Minneapolis. But the fatal shooting Saturday of Alex Pretti, an intensive care unit nurse, quickly prompted Democrats to take a more forceful stand.

On Sunday, House and Senate Democrats convened separate conference calls as they privately assess next steps and press to restrain the Trump administration's immigration enforcement operations.

A deal begins to unravel

Washington Sen. Patty Murray, the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee and key negotiator on the funding package, had been pushing her colleagues to vote for the homeland security bill, arguing that Democrats had successfully fought off major increases to the ICE budget.

But in the wake of the shooting, Murray said Sunday on X that "I will NOT support the DHS bill as it stands."

"Federal agents cannot murder people in broad daylight and face zero consequences," Murray wrote.

Federal officials have defended the actions of the agents involved in the Good and Pretti shootings as justified. Democrats said video released of both shootings showed otherwise. Republicans are increasingly challenged, with some calling for thorough investigations while others stand with federal officials.

"The events in Minneapolis are incredibly disturbing," Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., posted on X. "The credibility of ICE and DHS are at stake. There must be a full joint federal and state investigation. We can trust the American people with the truth."

Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., wants a "thorough and impartial investigation" into the shooting and said "any administration official who rushes to judgment and tries to shut down an investigation before it begins are doing an incredible disservice to the nation and to President Trump's legacy."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. said Democrats should reconsider their threat to not support DHS funding and work with him to "end the mess created by sanctuary city policies."

"Now is not the time to defund one of our major national security priorities: border protection," Graham said on X.

Funding puzzle will be hard to solve

The growing backlash from Democrats puts Republican leaders in the Senate in a difficult position.

Much of the government, including the Department of Defense, continues to operate on a short-term bill that provides funding only through Friday.

Republican leaders had hoped to avoid another shutdown after last fall's 43-day closure that revolved around Democrats' insistence on extending federal subsidies that make health coverage more affordable for those enrolled in the Affordable Care Act marketplace.

Before Pretti's death, many Democrats felt the same way about a potential shutdown, lending support in the House to most of the remaining appropriations bills — with DHS the exception.

House Democrats largely rejected the homeland security portion last week with just a handful joining

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 42 of 63

Republicans to ensure its passage. More than 100 House Democrats called for Noem's impeachment.

The House sent the six funding bills to the Senate as a package, and that makes it exceedingly difficult to strip out the homeland security portion which Democrats are demanding.

Despite the procedural hurdles, Schumer said Sunday that Republicans should work with Democrats to advance the other five bills and rewrite the DHS bill. "This is the best course of action, and the American people are on our side," Schumer said.

The path ahead is uncertain. The Senate is not scheduled to return to session until Tuesday, due to the snowstorm. The House plans to be out of session this week and would have to pass the funding package again if it is changed.

Democrats are pushing for policy changes to be added to the homeland security spending bill that would force ICE agents to use warrants for immigration arrests, mandate strengthened training, require agents to identify themselves and have Border Patrol agents stay on the border rather than assisting ICE with immigration raids in the interior of the country.

Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy, the top Democrat on the subcommittee that oversees homeland security funding, told CNN's "State of the Union" on Sunday that Congress cannot fund a department "that is murdering American citizens, that is traumatizing little boys and girls across the country in violation of the law."

One by one, Democrats stake out opposition

Democratic senators discussed the options on Sunday evening's call but without changes from Republicans, they appeared headed toward a shutdown. On the morning call with House Democrats, they heard from Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and the state's attorney general, Keith Ellison, both former congressmen.

Several other Democratic senators announced they would vote "no" on homeland security money, including some who had helped Republicans end the record shutdown last year.

"The abuses of power we are seeing from ICE in Minneapolis and across the country are un-American and cannot be normalized," Sen. Jacky Rosen, D-Nev., said in a post on X. Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, D-Nev., also said she opposes that portion of the package.

Minnesota's Democratic senators also indicated they will oppose the DHS funding bill.

"For those asking where we go from here: Not voting to fund ICE is a great place for us to start," Sen. Tina Smith wrote on X.

"We oppose the ICE funding bill. We call for a full and transparent investigation with state officials," Sen. Amy Klobuchar said. "And we call on our Republican colleagues to stand up. They know this is wrong."

Why the entire government wouldn't shut down

The progress that Congress has made so far on spending bills means that much of the federal government's work would continue even if lawmakers are unable to complete the job.

A bill that Trump signed Friday funds the departments of Justice, Commerce and the Interior, the Environmental Protection Agency, NASA, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers through the end of the budget year in September.

The Department of Agriculture was funded from a previous measure, which means a shutdown shouldn't stop food assistance this time.

But other critical operations of the government would be disrupted.

Federal and state officials both claim moral high ground in immigration crackdown after shooting

By SARAH RAZA, STEVE KARNOWSKI and GIOVANNA DELL'ORTO Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — In dueling news conferences, federal and state officials offered starkly different messages Sunday about the immigration crackdown that has swept across Minneapolis and surrounding cities, with both claiming the moral high ground after another shooting death by federal agents.

"Which side do you want to be on?" Gov. Tim Walz asked the public. "The side of an all-powerful federal government that could kill, injure, menace and kidnap its citizens off the streets, or on the side of a nurse at the VA hospital who died bearing witness to such government?" — a reference to Saturday's shooting

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 43 of 63

of Alex Pretti in Minneapolis.

In a federal office building about 20 miles (32 kilometers) away, Border Patrol senior official Greg Bovino, the public face of the crackdown, again blamed the shooting on Pretti.

"When someone makes the choice to come into an active law enforcement scene, interfere, obstruct, delay or assault law enforcement officer and — and they bring a weapon to do that. That is a choice that that individual made," he told reporters.

The competing comments emerged as local leaders and Democrats across the country demanded federal immigration officers leave Minnesota after Pretti's shooting, which set off clashes with protesters in a city already shaken by another shooting death weeks earlier.

Video contradicts administration statements

Video shot by bystanders and reviewed by The Associated Press appears to contradict statements by President Donald Trump's administration, which said agents fired "defensively" against Pretti, a 37-year-old intensive care nurse, as he approached them.

Pretti can be seen with only a phone in his hand as he steps between an immigration agent and a woman on the street. No footage appears to show him with a weapon. During the scuffle, agents appear to disarm him after discovering he is carrying a 9 mm semiautomatic handgun, and then open fire several times. Pretti was licensed to carry a concealed weapon.

In the hours after the shooting, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said Pretti attacked officers, and Bovino said he wanted to "massacre law enforcement."

Bovino was more restrained Sunday, saying he would not speculate about the shooting and that he planned to wait for the investigation.

Relatives say they are heartbroken

Pretti's family said they were "heartbroken but also very angry" at authorities. Relatives were furious at federal officials' description of the shooting.

"The sickening lies told about our son by the administration are reprehensible and disgusting. Alex is clearly not holding a gun when attacked by Trump's murdering and cowardly ICE thugs. He has his phone in his right hand, and his empty left hand is raised above his head while trying to protect the woman ICE just pushed down all while being pepper sprayed," the family statement said. "Please get the truth out about our son."

A 2024 video posted to social media showed Pretti reading a salute for veteran Terrance Lee Randolph, who died at the VA hospital where Pretti worked.

"Today we remember that freedom is not free," Pretti, wearing navy blue scrubs, says in the video. "We have to work for it, nurture it, protect it, and even sacrifice for it."

Walz denounced as "despicable beyond all description" the comments that federal officials made about Pretti.

"And I would say, President Trump, you can end this today. Pull these folks back. Do humane, focused, effective immigration control," he said.

The White House kept up its attacks on the governor, with press secretary Karoline Leavitt posting on X that Walz "does NOT believe in law and order" and accusing him of encouraging "left-wing agitators to stalk and record federal officers in the middle of lawful operations."

At the federal news conference, Marcos Charles of Immigration and Customs Enforcement said one of their agents permanently lost a part of his finger when a protester bit it off Saturday in Minneapolis.

"This kind of violence is not a coincidence," Charles said. "When sanctuary politicians, activists and the media work hard to create chaos and fear instead of using their platforms to reassure their communities, this is the result."

Pretti was shot just over a mile from where an ICE officer killed 37-year-old Renee Good on Jan. 7, sparking widespread protests.

Federal officials, who are leading the investigation into the shooting, have thwarted local attempts to participate.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 44 of 63

Drew Evans, superintendent of the state's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, which investigates police shootings, told reporters Saturday that federal officers had blocked his agency from the scene of the shooting even after it obtained a signed judicial warrant. Bureau officers were working at the scene Sunday morning.

A federal judge has already issued an order blocking the Trump administration from "destroying or altering evidence" related to the shooting, after state and county officials sued.

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison said the lawsuit filed Saturday is meant to preserve evidence collected by federal officials that state authorities have not yet been able to inspect. A hearing is scheduled for Monday in federal court in St. Paul.

Assistant Homeland Security Secretary Tricia McLaughlin dismissed the lawsuit, saying claims that the federal government would destroy evidence are "a ridiculous attempt to divide the American people and distract from the fact that our law enforcement officers were attacked — and their lives were threatened."

The Minnesota National Guard temporarily assisted local police at Walz's direction, officials said, with troops sent to the shooting site and a federal building where officers have squared off daily with demonstrators.

But Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara said Sunday morning on CBS' "Face the Nation" that "it's back to just the Minneapolis police responding to calls."

No evidence that Pretti brandished gun

O'Hara said he had seen no evidence that Pretti brandished the pistol, and that the crackdown was exhausting his department.

"This is taking an enormous toll, trying to manage all this chaos on top of having to be the police department for a major city. It's too much," he said.

Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York was among several Democratic lawmakers demanding that federal immigration authorities leave Minnesota.

In a statement, former President Barack Obama called Pretti's death a "heartbreaking tragedy" and warned that "many of our core values as a nation are increasingly under assault."

Federal officials, meanwhile, have repeatedly questioned why Pretti was armed during the confrontation. But gun rights groups noted that it's legal to carry firearms during protests.

Video footage shows pushing and then shooting

When the Saturday confrontation began, bystander video shows protesters blowing whistles and shouting profanities at federal officers on a commercial street in south Minneapolis.

The videos show Pretti stepping in after an immigration officer shoves a woman. Pretti appears to be holding his phone toward the officer, but there's no sign he's holding a weapon.

The officer shoves Pretti in his chest and pepper sprays him and the woman.

Soon, at least seven officers force Pretti to the ground. Several officers try to bring his arms behind his back as he appears to resist. An officer holding a canister strikes him near his head several times.

A first shot is fired by a Border Patrol officer. There's a slight pause, and then the same officer fires several more times into Pretti's back. Multiple officers back off. Within seconds, Pretti is motionless on the street.

If Saturday was marked by clashes, with angry protesters blockading streets and agents firing canisters of tear gas, Sunday was marked by sadness.

Police cars with flashing lights have closed traffic to the block where the shooting occurred, and a constant flow of people came and went Sunday, gathering near the spot where Pretti was shot. There were 100 or so people at the scene Sunday night. Some sang, some prayed, some brought flowers or lit candles. TV news crews set up on the periphery of the crowd, and a man was giving away hand warmers with temperatures hovering just above 0 Fahrenheit (minus 18 degrees Celsius).

Brett Williams, 37, came from the city's suburbs to attend a vigil there earlier Sunday.

"I stand in solidarity with a brother whose life was taken too soon," he said. "He's standing up for immigrants. We're all immigrants."

Trump, unbowed by backlash to Minneapolis shooting, blames Democrats for 'chaos'

By MICHELLE L. PRICE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The fatal shooting of a Minneapolis protester by a federal immigration officer touched off a fierce national debate and prompted some fellow Republicans to question President Donald Trump's hard-line immigration crackdown, but the president on Sunday night continued to blame Democratic officials.

After remaining relatively quiet on Sunday, the Republican president in two lengthy social media posts said that Democrats had encouraged people to obstruct law enforcement operations. He also called on officials in Minnesota to work with immigration officers and "turn over" people who were in the U.S. illegally.

"Tragically, two American Citizens have lost their lives as a result of this Democrat ensued chaos," Trump wrote on his Truth Social media network.

Trump's refusal to back away from his pledge to carry out the largest deportation program in history and the surge of immigration officers to heavily Democratic cities came as more Republicans began calling for a deeper investigation and expressing unease with some of the administration's tactics.

Trump also told The Wall Street Journal in an interview Sunday that his administration was "reviewing everything," but he refused to say whether the officer who shot 37-year-old Alex Pretti acted appropriately.

"We're looking, we're reviewing everything and will come out with a determination," Trump said.

The White House did not answer questions about whether Trump watched the videos of the shooting in Minnesota, which seemed to contradict the account of what happened by members of his administration, or whether he planned to speak to Minnesota's Democratic Gov. Tim Walz, who had appealed to the president to help bring calm to the city.

Instead, Trump on Sunday night said he would call on Congress to pass legislation banning so-called sanctuary cities. His administration has sought to apply the label to communities based on their cooperation with federal immigration enforcement efforts, among other factors.

His push for action by lawmakers comes even as outrage over the shooting has raised the possibility of a partial government shutdown in a week because of a standoff over additional funding for immigration enforcement.

Trump's initial reaction to the shooting of Pretti came hours after it took place on Saturday. In a post on his Truth Social network, he questioned why Pretti had a firearm and accused Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey of inciting "Insurrection, with their pompous, dangerous, and arrogant rhetoric."

But throughout the weekend, Trump, who rarely lets a major moment go without comment, did not make any public appearances or express any dismay over Pretti's death.

Instead, he posted online complaining about Canada and efforts to stop him from building an expansive ballroom at the White House, calling a lawsuit to block its construction "devastating to the White House, our Country, and all concerned."

He also posted messages praising U.K. troops after his comments about them earlier in the week were widely interpreted as a grave insult and praising guests appearing on Fox News Channel.

When he finally weighed in again Sunday night as criticism grew, Trump was unbowed.

He called on Walz and Frey, also a Democrat, to turn over for deportation anyone in the country illegally who was held in state prisons or local jails, along with anyone who has a warrant out for their arrest or a criminal history.

In his comments to The Wall Street Journal, Trump criticized Pretti for carrying a gun.

"I don't like any shooting. I don't like it," Trump said. "But I don't like it when somebody goes into a protest and he's got a very powerful, fully loaded gun with two magazines loaded up with bullets also. That doesn't play good either."

He said that immigration enforcement officers will leave Minneapolis "at some point" but did not offer a time frame.

Members of his administration, meanwhile, were quick to say the shooting, the second killing of a U.S.

citizen in Minneapolis by immigration officers in recent weeks, was a case of an armed man provoking violence.

Deputy White House chief of staff Stephen Miller said in a post on social media, without offering any evidence, that Pretti was "an assassin" who "tried to murder federal agents."

Vice President JD Vance shared Miller's post. He issued other ones blaming local officials and describing what was happening in Minneapolis as "engineered chaos" that was "the direct consequence of far left agitators, working with local authorities."

Mavericks' flights grounded by winter storm as NBA postpones games in Memphis and Milwaukee

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (AP) — The NBA postponed games in Memphis and Milwaukee on Sunday because of a massive winter storm that is creating dangerous travel conditions across much of the U.S.

The Dallas Mavericks tried twice to fly to Milwaukee for their Sunday night game against the Bucks, but conditions didn't allow it. A decision to postpone was announced a few hours before tipoff. Food that had been prepared for the game was donated to shelters in the Milwaukee area.

Earlier Sunday, a game between the Denver Nuggets and Memphis Grizzlies was postponed about three hours before tipoff.

Reschedule dates were not announced.

The league also changed the start times for two games on Monday: Philadelphia 76ers at Charlotte Hornets will tip off at 3 p.m. ET instead of 7 p.m., and the Indiana Pacers at Atlanta Hawks at 1:30 p.m. instead of 7:30 p.m.

The Memphis area was experiencing a mixture of snow, sleet and freezing rain that began falling early Saturday morning and continued Sunday morning. South and east of Memphis, freezing rain collected on power lines and trees, causing widespread outages and blocked roads. Authorities had recommended people stay off the streets as the wintry mix and frigid temperatures caused a refreeze.

The Nuggets said they planned to fly out at some point Sunday, depending on the conditions at Memphis International Airport. They are scheduled to play at home Tuesday against the Detroit Pistons.

The Grizzlies are scheduled to be in Houston for a game against the Rockets on Monday.

An NBA G League game scheduled for Monday between the Memphis Hustle and Stockton Kings in Southaven, Mississippi, was postponed and rescheduled for Feb. 19.

At least two college women's basketball games were postponed: No. 17 Tennessee's visit to No. 18 Mississippi on Monday and Tulane's visit to Memphis on Tuesday. Reschedule dates were not announced.

In men's basketball, a game featuring Tennessee at No. 21 Georgia was pushed back a day from Tuesday to Wednesday. Purdue Fort Wayne and IU Indianapolis, and Southern Illinois and Evansville had Sunday games postponed without make-up dates announced.

The schedule changes come after dozens of games were moved around earlier in the week in anticipation of the storm.

Separately, on Saturday, the NBA postponed a game between the Warriors and Timberwolves to "prioritize the safety and security of the Minneapolis community" after the fatal shooting of a man by a federal officer in a district located less than two miles away from where the Timberwolves play.

Israel launches 'large-scale operation' to locate last hostage in Gaza

By NATALIE MELZER Associated Press

NAHARIYA, Israel (AP) — Israel said Sunday its military was conducting a "large-scale operation" to locate the last hostage in Gaza, as Washington and other mediators pressure Israel and Hamas to move into the next phase of their ceasefire.

The statement came as Israel's Cabinet met to discuss the possibility of opening Gaza's key Rafah border

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 47 of 63

crossing with Egypt, and a day after top U.S. envoys met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about next steps.

The return of the remaining hostage, Ran Gvili, has been widely seen as removing the remaining obstacle to moving ahead with opening the Rafah crossing and proceeding with the U.S.-brokered ceasefire's second phase.

Late Sunday, Netanyahu's office in a statement said: "Upon completion of this operations, and in accordance with what has been agreed upon with the United States, Israel will open the Rafah crossing." It gave no details on how long that would be, but Israeli military officials were quoted in local media as saying the operation could take days to complete.

The return of all remaining hostages, alive or dead, has been a central part of the first phase of the ceasefire that took effect on Oct. 10. Before Sunday, the previous hostage was recovered in early December.

While Israel has carried out search efforts before for Gvili, more detail than usual was released about this one. Israel's military said it was searching a cemetery in northern Gaza near the Yellow Line, which marks off Israeli-controlled parts of the territory.

Separately, an Israeli military official said Gvili may have been buried in the Shijaiya-Tuffah area of Gaza City, and that rabbis and dental experts were on the ground with specialized search teams. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were discussing an operation still under way.

Gvili's family has urged Netanyahu's government not to enter the ceasefire's second phase until his remains are returned.

But pressure has been building, and the Trump administration has already declared in recent days that the second phase is under way.

Israel has repeatedly accused Hamas of dragging its feet in the recovery of the final hostage. Hamas in a statement Sunday said it had provided all the information it had about Gvili's remains, and accused Israel of obstructing efforts to search for them in areas of Gaza under Israeli military control.

A U.N. agency office is set ablaze

The shuttered headquarters of the U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees in east Jerusalem was set ablaze overnight, days after Israeli bulldozers demolished parts of the compound.

It was not known who started the fire. Israeli settlers were observed at night looting the main building for furniture, said Roland Friedrich, the agency's West Bank director. He said multiple holes were cut in the fence.

Israel's fire department said it sent teams to prevent the blaze from spreading. In May 2024, UNRWA said it was closing its compound after settlers set fires to its fence.

Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini of the agency, also known as UNRWA, told The Associated Press the incident was the "latest attack on the U.N. in the ongoing attempt to dismantle the status of Palestine refugees."

UNRWA's mandate is to provide aid and services to some 2.5 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the Israeli-occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, as well as 3 million more refugees in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. But its operations were curtailed last year when Israel's Knesset passed legislation severing ties and banning it from functioning in what it defines as Israel, including east Jerusalem.

Israel has long railed against the agency, accusing it of being infiltrated by Hamas and alleging that some of its employees were involved in the 2023 attack that triggered Israel's two-year war in Gaza. UNRWA leaders have said they took swift action against the employees accused of taking part in the attack, and have denied allegations that the agency tolerates or collaborates with Hamas.

Trump says US used secret weapon to disable Venezuelan equipment in Maduro raid

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said the U.S. used a secret weapon he called "The Discombobulator" to disable Venezuelan equipment when the U.S. captured Nicolás Maduro. Trump also renewed his threat to conduct military strikes on land against drug cartels, including in Mexico.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 48 of 63

Trump made the comments in an interview Friday with the New York Post.

The Republican president was commenting on reports that the U.S. had a pulsed energy weapon and said, "The Discombobulator. I'm not allowed to talk about it."

He said the weapon made Venezuelan equipment "not work."

"They never got their rockets off. They had Russian and Chinese rockets, and they never got one off," Trump said in the interview. "We came in, they pressed buttons and nothing worked. They were all set for us."

Trump had previously said when describing the raid on Maduro's compound that the U.S. had turned off "almost all of the lights in Caracas," but he didn't detail how they accomplished that.

The president also indicated the U.S. will continue its campaign of military strikes and could extend it from South America into North America as the administration tries to target drug cartels.

"We know their routes. We know everything about them. We know their homes. We know everything about them," Trump said. "We're going to hit the cartels."

When asked if the strikes could occur in Central America or Mexico, Trump said: "Could be anywhere."

The U.S. on Friday carried out a strike on an alleged drug-trafficking boat in the eastern Pacific Ocean, the first such action since Maduro's capture.

It marks at least 36 known strikes on boats in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific since early September that have killed at least 117 people.

Trump said the U.S. has removed the oil aboard seven oil tankers connected to Venezuela that it has seized but wouldn't reveal where the ships are now.

"I'm not allowed to tell you," Trump said. "But let's put it this way, they don't have any oil. We take the oil."

During the interview, the president also said that he was still trying to figure out where to hang the Nobel Peace Prize that was awarded to Venezuelan opposition leader María Corina Machado, which she gave to him earlier this month. The prize was leaning against a statue in the Oval Office.

Trump also told the newspaper that the framework of an Arctic security deal he struck with NATO chief Mark Rutte would give the U.S. ownership of the land where American bases are located.

"We'll have everything we want," Trump said. "We have some interesting talks going on."

Much of the potential deal remains unclear. Leaders of Denmark and Greenland have said the island's sovereignty was non-negotiable and a NATO spokesperson said Rutte, in his conversations with Trump, did not propose any "compromise to sovereignty."

The president said he would not go to the Super Bowl and called it a "terrible choice" for Bad Bunny and Green Day to perform at the game. He attended last year's Super Bowl in New Orleans.

Minnesota CEOs issue joint letter urging de-escalation in Minnesota after shooting

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — More than 60 CEOs of Minnesota-based companies including Target, Best Buy and UnitedHealth signed an open letter posted on the Minnesota Chamber of Commerce website on Sunday calling for state, local and federal officials to work together, as businesses grapple with how to address tensions in the state and across the country following two fatal shootings by federal agents amid a massive immigration enforcement operation that has spurred protests.

"With yesterday's tragic news, we are calling for an immediate deescalation of tensions and for state, local and federal officials to work together to find real solutions," the open letter reads.

CEOs that signed the letter included 3M CEO William Brown, Best Buy CEO Corie Barry, General Mills CEO Jeff Harmening, Target incoming CEO Michael Fiddelke, UnitedHealth Group CEO Stephen Helmsley, and others.

Before the letter, most of the biggest Minnesota-based companies had not issued any public statements about the enforcement surge and unrest.

But the issue has become more difficult to avoid. Over the past two weeks protesters have targeted some

businesses they see not taking a strong enough stand against federal law enforcement activity, including Minneapolis-based Target. Earlier in January a Minnesota hotel that wouldn't allow federal immigration agents to stay there apologized and said the refusal violated its own policies after a furor online.

Meanwhile, the state of Minnesota and the Twin Cities cited devastating economic impacts in a lawsuit filed this month imploring a federal judge to halt the immigration operations. The lawsuit asserted that some businesses have reported sales drops up to 80%.

"In this difficult moment for our community, we call for peace and focused cooperation among local, state and federal leaders to achieve a swift and durable solution that enables families, businesses, our employees, and communities across Minnesota to resume our work to build a bright and prosperous future," the letter reads.

Row erupts within UK's governing Labour Party after popular mayor blocked from upcoming election

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — A row erupted Sunday within Britain's governing Labour Party after the ambitious mayor of Manchester was prevented from trying to re-enter Parliament at a special election in the city, with critics claiming Prime Minister Keir Starmer did not want to see a potentially dangerous rival back in the House of Commons.

Andy Burnham, who has been in charge of the Greater Manchester region since 2017 and has expressed interest in being Labour leader in the future, made a request to the party's governing committee on Saturday to stand as the candidate in the upcoming election for the Gorton and Denton constituency.

The request stoked speculation that Burnham wants to be in place in Parliament for a possible challenge to Starmer's leadership if a raft of elections this May — Britain's equivalent to the midterms — go as badly as many in Labour are fearing.

If current opinion polls are any guide, Labour is expected to lose Wales for the first time since the legislature was created in 1999, fall way short of reclaiming power in Scotland and get battered in local elections in England.

Other parties, including the anti-immigration Reform U.K. and the Greens, have been the main beneficiaries of Labour's apparent drop in support.

Burnham, 56, voiced his disappointment at the decision to block him in a post on X and his concerns about "its potential impact on the important elections ahead of us."

He said his "full focus" will be on his current job and defend "everything we have built" over many years.

"I decided to put myself forward to prevent the divisive politics of Reform from damaging that," he said. "We are stronger together and let's stay that way."

Burnham, who served in Labour governments in the 2000s, is widely known as the "King of the North" in reference to his electoral popularity and the television fantasy show "Game of Thrones." He has twice before fought for the Labour leadership.

If he had been allowed to run in the traditionally safe Labour seat and won, he would have to stand down from his job as mayor, meaning there would be another special election there. Burnham's third term ends in May 2028.

The cost associated with that potential campaign was one of the main reasons why the party's executive body blocked Burnham.

Labour said the 10-strong group of Labour's National Executive Committee, which included Starmer himself, had decided to deny Burnham permission to stand in order to avoid "an unnecessary election" for Manchester mayor that "would have a substantial and disproportionate impact on party campaign resources."

Since winning July 2024's general election by a landslide, Labour has seen its poll ratings tank, partly because of a series of policy missteps, which have been directly linked to Starmer's decision-making.

Though Burnham insisted he would be a team player in his request on Saturday, many Starmer allies

appear unconvinced given he has expressed several views that put him at odds with the prime minister, notably on economic policy.

Labour lawmaker John Slinger said the "quick and clear decision" meant the party could "move on from the damaging introspection and psychodrama of the last week" and "pull together" behind the eventual candidate.

Others, particularly from the more left-leaning side of the party, were aghast at the decision.

Former Cabinet minister Louise Haigh said it was "incredibly disappointing" and called for the NEC to "change course and make the right decision."

'Mercy' unseats 'Avatar: Fire & Ash' atop the box office on snow-blanketed weekend in theaters

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — With a winter storm blanketing a large swath of the country, Hollywood had its quietest weekend of the year at the box office. The Amazon MGM sci-fi thriller "Mercy" dethroned "Avatar: Fire and Ash" from the No. 1 spot with \$11.2 million in North America, according to studio estimates Sunday.

Some 250 theaters were forced to close, from Texas to Maine, according to data firm Comscore. More than 140 million Americans were under winter storm warnings, depressing moviegoing.

But the weekend was never going to be a blockbuster one, anyway. "Mercy," a \$60 million thriller starring Chris Pratt as a man in a near-future standing trial before an AI judge, was the top new release. It arrived with withering reviews (20% fresh on Rotten Tomatoes) and an equally poor reception (a "B-" CinemaScore) from audiences.

That was still enough to finally dislodge James Cameron's third Pandora epic from its monthlong perch atop the box office. "Avatar: Fire and Ash" slid to second place with \$7 million. While The Walt Disney Co. release is starting to peter out domestically, it remains a top draw overseas. It took in \$28.1 million internationally in its sixth weekend.

"Avatar: Fire and Ash" isn't going to come close to the box-office heights of the previous two "Avatar" movies. The 2009 original grossed \$2.9 billion and the 2022 sequel, "The Way of Water," tapped out at \$2.3 billion. "Fire and Ash" has now cleared \$1 billion internationally, but its domestic haul (\$378.5 million) is well off the pace of the other two films.

The "Oscar bump" that films once saw following nomination is largely a thing of the past. The lead movies in Thursday's nominations — "Sinners" and "One Battle After Another" — long ago completed their theatrical runs. But a handful of nominees saw strong business.

Chloé Zhao's "Hamnet," nominated for eight Oscars including best picture, collected \$2 million in its first weekend of wide release. The Shakespeare drama, starring Jessie Buckley and Paul Mescal, has been in theaters for two months, steadily increasing its theatrical footprint. It's up to \$17.6 million domestically and \$42.1 million worldwide.

Josh Safdie's "Marty Supreme," nominated for nine Oscars, earned \$3.5 million in its sixth weekend of release. The A24 title, starring Timothée Chalamet, this week crossed \$100 million globally. It's made \$86.2 million domestically thus far.

But newer releases struggled. "Return to Silent Hill," the third installment in a horror series kick-started with 2006's "Silent Hill," opened with \$3.2 million. Though Sony released the 2006 film and Open Road distributed the 2012 follow up, the low-budget "Return to Silent Hill" was put out by Iconic Events.

In its second week of release, "28 Years Later: The Bone Temple" dropped swiftly. The Sony release, directed by Nia DaCosta, opened last week to a disappointing \$13.3 million in sales despite good reviews. But its second weekend was even worse, dropping 71% with \$3.6 million.

Other new releases flopped. Roadside Attractions' "H Is For Hawk," starring Claire Foy, took in just \$150,000 from 472 theaters. Sony's "Clika," about a migrant worker with music aspirations, managed only \$1.2 million in 522 locations.

Top 10 movies by domestic box office

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

1. "Mercy," \$11.2 million.
2. "Avatar: Fire and Ash," \$7 million.
3. "Zootopia 2," \$5.7 million.
4. "The Housemaid," \$4.2 million.
5. "28 Years Later: The Bone Temple," \$3.6 million.
6. "Marty Supreme," \$3.5 million.
7. "Return to Silent Hill," \$2.7 million.
8. "Hamnet," \$2 million.
9. "Lord of the Rings," \$2 million.
10. "Primate," \$1.7 million.

Dr. William Foege, leader in smallpox eradication, dies

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — Dr. William Foege, a leader of one of humanity's greatest public health victories — the global eradication of smallpox — has died.

Foege died Saturday in Atlanta at the age of 89, according to the Task Force for Global Health, which he co-founded.

The 6-foot-7 inch Foege literally stood out in the field of public health. A whip-smart medical doctor with a calm demeanor, he had a canny knack for beating back infectious diseases.

He was director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and later held other key leadership roles in campaigns against international health problems.

But his greatest achievement came before all that, with his work on smallpox, one of the most lethal diseases in human history. For centuries, it killed about one-third of the people it infected and left most survivors with deep scars on their faces from the pus-filled lesions.

Smallpox vaccination campaigns were well established by the time Foege was a young doctor. Indeed, it was no longer seen in the United States. But infections were still occurring elsewhere, and efforts to stamp them out were stalling.

Working as a medical missionary in Nigeria in the 1960s, Foege and his colleagues developed a "ring containment" strategy, in which a smallpox outbreak was contained by identifying each smallpox case and vaccinating everyone who the patients might come into contact with.

The method relied heavily on quick detective work and was born out of necessity. There simply wasn't enough vaccine available to immunize everyone, Foege wrote in "House on Fire," his 2011 book about the smallpox eradication effort.

It worked, and became pivotal in helping rid the world of smallpox for good. The last naturally occurring case was seen in Somalia in 1977. In 1980, the World Health Organization declared smallpox eradicated from the Earth.

"If you look at the simple metric of who has saved the most lives, he is right up there with the pantheon. Smallpox eradication has prevented hundreds of millions of deaths," said former CDC director Dr. Tom Frieden, who consulted with Foege regularly.

Foege was born March 12, 1936. His father was a Lutheran minister, but he became interested in medicine at 13 while working at a drugstore in Colville, Washington.

He got his medical degree from the University of Washington in 1961 and a master's in public health from Harvard in 1965.

He was director of the Atlanta-based CDC from 1977 to 1983, then held other international public health leadership roles, including stints as executive director at The Carter Center and senior fellow at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

In 2012, President Barack Obama presented Foege with the Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest

civilian honor. In 2016, while awarding Foege an honorary degree, Duke University President Richard Brodhead called him "the Father of Global Health."

"Bill Foege had an unflinching commitment to improving the health of people across the world, through powerful, purpose-driven coalitions applying the best science available," Task Force for Global Health CEO Dr. Patrick O'Carroll said in a statement. "We try to honor that commitment in every one of our programs, every day."

France detains captain of suspected Russian 'shadow fleet' tanker seized in Mediterranean

PARIS (AP) — The captain of a tanker intercepted in the Mediterranean Sea by the French navy on suspicion of shipping oil in violation of sanctions against Russia was being held in custody on Sunday for questioning.

The ship's Indian captain, 58, was handed to judicial authorities following the diversion of the oil tanker, Grinch, and its arrival at anchorage in the Gulf of Fos-sur-Mer, the Marseille prosecutor's office said in a statement.

The investigation is being conducted by the Maritime Gendarmerie's Investigation Unit in Toulon, jointly with the Marseille Ship Safety Centre, on charges of failure to fly a valid flag, according to the statement, which added that the crew, also of Indian nationality, was being kept on board.

"The purpose of the investigation is to verify the validity of the flag flown by the tanker and the documents required for its navigation," the statement said.

The Grinch came from Murmansk in northwestern Russia and is suspected of being part of the sanctioned Russian "shadow fleet." A video provided by the French military showed members of the navy boarding the ship from a helicopter earlier this week.

Russia is believed to be using a fleet of over 400 ships to evade sanctions over its war on Ukraine. France and other countries have vowed to crack down.

The fleet comprises aging vessels and tankers owned by nontransparent entities with addresses in non-sanctioning countries, and sailing under flags from such countries.

Last September, French naval forces boarded another oil tanker off the French Atlantic coast that President Emmanuel Macron also linked to the shadow fleet. Putin denounced that interception as an act of piracy.

That tanker's captain will go on trial in February over the crew's alleged refusal to cooperate, according to French judicial authorities.

Scotty James win a fifth straight Winter X title, matches Shaun White with his eighth gold there

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

Snowboarder Scotty James parlayed a never-before-landed trick combination into his fifth straight X Games title on the halfpipe on Saturday and tied Shaun White with eight overall gold medals at the biggest event this side of the Olympics.

In the final major contest before next month's Milan Cortina Games, the 31-year-old Australian capped off his winning run with two straight backside 1440-degree jumps. That's two tricks spinning with his back facing down the hill to start, one while riding forward, the other riding backward — or "switch." They are among the toughest on the halfpipe.

James briefly put his hand onto the snow to stay upright after the second jump, but the judges rewarded him anyway. His score of 95 easily beat second-place finisher Haku Shimasaki of Japan.

"I felt I wanted to do something for myself and for halfpipe and to push backside riding as much as I can," said Scott, who wore his trademark red boxing gloves and celebrated by crowd surfing into the hundreds of fans who watched the action in Aspen, Colorado. "Tonight, I think it always was the plan. I wanted to come out and do the first back-to-back backside 14s, and I'm pumped."

James is looking like the favorite heading into the Milan Cortina Olympics. Last week, he won the Laax Open in Switzerland — a contest in which defending Olympic champion Ayumu Hirano suffered a nasty fall and broke bones in his face, throwing his status for the Olympic halfpipe contest into limbo.

James has Olympic silver and bronze medals. In a documentary on his life that dropped earlier this Winter, he made no secret that he needs the Olympic gold to round out an otherwise impeccable career.

James has also shown a triple cork — three head-over-heels flips — as part of his repertoire this season, though the back-to-back 1440s was something nobody had seen.

He said he has always admired groundbreakers, such as slopestyler Mark McMorris, 2014 Olympic halfpipe champion Iouri Podladtchikov (the iPod) and White, and wanted to use this latest X Games performance to add something new.

"I get a chip on my shoulder every year, thinking maybe I wouldn't be expected to show up and try again and win again," he said. "I managed to do that today, and I'm speechless, honestly."

American rock climber Alex Honnold reaches top of Taipei 101 skyscraper without ropes

By KATIE TAM Associated Press

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — American rock climber Alex Honnold ascended the Taipei 101 skyscraper on Sunday without any ropes or protective equipment.

Cheers erupted from a street-level crowd as he reached the top of the spire of the 508-meter (1,667-foot) tower about 90 minutes after he started. Wearing a red short-sleeve shirt, Honnold waved his arms back and forth over his head.

"It was like what a view, it's incredible, what a beautiful day," he said afterward. "It was very windy, so I was like, don't fall off the spire. I was trying to balance nicely. But it was, what an incredible position, what a beautiful way to see Taipei."

Honnold, known for his ropeless ascent up Yosemite National Park's El Capitan, climbed up one corner of Taipei 101 using small L-shaped outcroppings as footholds. Periodically, he had to maneuver around and clamber up the sides of large ornamental structures that jut out from the tower, pulling himself up with his bare hands.

The building has 101 floors, with the hardest part being the 64 floors of the middle section — the "bamboo boxes" that give the building its signature look. Divided into eight, each segment has eight floors of steep, overhanging climbing followed by balconies, where he took short rests as he made his way upward.

Honnold's free solo climb of the iconic building in Taiwan's capital city was broadcast live on Netflix with a 10-second delay. The ascent, originally scheduled for Saturday, was delayed for 24 hours due to rain.

Having a cheering crowd was unusual and a bit unnerving at first for Honnold, whose climbs are usually in remote areas.

"When I was leaving the ground, you're like oh it's kind of intense, there's so many people watching," he said. "But then honestly, they're all wishing me well. I mean basically it just makes the whole experience feel almost more festive, all these nice people are out supporting me and having a good time."

The climb drew both excitement and concern over the ethical implications of attempting such a high-risk endeavor on live broadcast.

Honnold isn't the first climber to ascend Taipei 101, but he is the first to do so without a rope. French rock climber Alain Robert scaled the building on Christmas Day in 2004 as part of the grand opening of what was then the world's tallest building.

Rescuers recover more bodies from landslide in Indonesia, with 72 still missing

BANDUNG, Indonesia (AP) — Improved weather on Sunday helped rescuers on Indonesia's main island of Java recover more bodies as they dug through mud and debris in search of scores of missing in a land-

slide that killed more than two dozen villagers.

The predawn landslide on the slopes of Mount Burangrang in West Java province on Saturday buried some 34 houses in Pasir Langu village. On Sunday, 72 people remained missing, many feared buried under tons of mud, rocks and uprooted trees. About 230 residents living near the site were evacuated to government shelters.

A 250-member search team on Sunday collected victims' remains, including body parts, in 14 body bags, bringing the total recovered to 25, said Ade Dian Permana, who heads the local search and rescue office. They will be released to relatives once they are identified by forensic experts.

Videos released by the search agency showed rescuers using farm tools and bare hands to pull a body from the mud. Permana said that loose ground on the slope prevented heavy equipment from being deployed. He estimated mounds of mud were to be up to 5 meters (16 feet) high, saying "our teams must move carefully."

"Some homes are buried up to the roof level," he added.

The head of the National Search and Rescue Agency, Mohammad Syafii, said teams were also using drones and K-9s to locate bodies along the landslide that stretched more than 2 kilometers (1.2 miles).

Visiting the area on Sunday, Indonesian Vice President Gibran Rakabuming Raka pledged that authorities would take measures to prevent similar disasters. He urged the local authorities in West Bandung district to "address the issue of land conversion in disaster-prone areas," including ways to reduce risks.

Environmental activists previously have said the deadly landslide in West Bandung district was not simply a natural disaster triggered by heavy rain, but the result of years of environmental degradation due to land conversion for development that violated land-use rules in the region.

Wahyudin Iwang of Walhi West Java, an Indonesian environmental group, said Saturday's landslide — which struck while residents were asleep — reflected longstanding neglect of spatial-planning regulations in the North Bandung Area, or KBU, a conservation zone spanning about 38,543 hectares across four cities and regencies in West Java, including West Bandung.

He said the protected highland area functions as a critical water-catchment zone and environmental buffer for the Bandung Basin, one of Indonesia's most densely populated regions.

"This landslide is the accumulation of activities that were not in line with spatial planning and environmental functions," Iwang said.

At a makeshift relief center, villagers gathered, reading updated lists of the missing and waiting for news on relatives. Rescue officials said the operation will continue nonstop as long as conditions allow, but warned that more rain could further destabilize the slope.

Seasonal rains and high tides from about October to April frequently cause flooding and landslides in Indonesia, an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands where millions of people live in mountainous areas or near fertile floodplains.

Sleep-tracking devices have limits. Experts want users to know what they are

By R.J. RICO and EMILIE MEGNIEN Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — Your watch says you had three hours of deep sleep. Should you believe it?

Millions of people rely on phone apps and wearable devices like rings, smartwatches and sensors to monitor how well they're sleeping, but these trackers don't necessarily measure sleep directly. Instead, they infer states of slumber from signals like heart rate and movement, raising questions about how reliable the information is and how seriously it should be taken.

The U.S. sleep-tracking devices market generated about \$5 billion in 2023 and is expected to double in revenue by 2030, according to market research firm Grand View Research. As the devices continue to gain popularity, experts say it is important to understand what they can and cannot tell you, and how their data should be used.

Here's a look at the technology — and why one expert thinks its full potential has yet to be realized.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 55 of 63

What your sleep tracker actually measures

Whether it's an Apple Watch, a Fitbit, an Oura Ring or one of innumerable other competitors, health and fitness trackers largely take the same basic approach by recording the wearer's movements and heart rate while at rest, according to Daniel Forger, a University of Michigan math professor who researches the science behind sleep wearables.

The algorithms used by major brands have become highly accurate for determining when someone is asleep, Forger said. The devices are also somewhat helpful for estimating sleep stages, though an in-lab study would be more precise, he said.

"If you really want to know definitively how much non-REM sleep you're having versus REM sleep, that's where the in-lab studies really excel," Forger said.

The sleep numbers that matter most

Dr. Chantale Branson, a neurologist and professor at the Morehouse School of Medicine, said she frequently has patients showing up with sleep scores from fitness trackers in hand, sometimes fixated on granular details such as how much REM sleep they got on a certain night.

Branson says those patients are taking the wrong approach: the devices help highlight trends over time but should not be viewed as a definitive measure of one's sleep health. Nor should any single night's data be seen as significant.

"We would have believed them with or without the device and worked on trying to figure out why they can't sleep — and that is what the wearables do not do," she said.

Branson said she thinks people who check their sleep statistics every morning would be better served by spending their efforts on "sleep hygiene" such as creating a relaxing bedtime routine, avoiding screens before bed and making sure their sleep environment is comfortable. She advises those concerned about their sleep to consult a clinician before spending money on a wearable.

Forger takes a more favorable view toward the devices, which he says help keep the overlooked importance of sleep front of mind. He recommends them even for people without significant sleep issues, saying they can offer insights that help users fine-tune their routines and feel more alert during the day.

"Seeing if your biological clock is in sync is a huge benefit because even if you're giving yourself the right amount of time, if you're sleeping at the wrong times, the sleep won't be as efficient," Forger said.

How sleep data can drive better habits

Kate Stoye, an Atlanta-area middle school teacher, bought an Oura Ring last summer, having heard positive things from friends who used it as a fertility tracker: "It's so accurate," she said. Stoye found the ring to be just as helpful with tracking her sleep. After noticing that the few nights she drank alcohol coincided with poorer sleep quality, she decided to give up alcohol.

"I don't see much reason to drink if I know that it's going to affect how I feel," said Stoye, who always wears her device except when she is playing tennis or needs to charge it.

Another trend she says she detected in the ring's data: the importance of not eating too late if she wants to get good rest.

"I always struggle with going to bed, and it's often because I eat late at night," Stoye said. "I know that about myself, and it knows it too."

When sleep tracking becomes a problem

Mai Barreneche, who works in advertising in New York City, used to wear her Oura Ring constantly. She said it helped her develop good sleep habits and encouraged her to maintain a daily morning exercise regimen. But as a metric-driven person, she became "obsessed" enough with her nightly sleep scores that it began to cause her anxiety — a modern condition that researchers have dubbed "orthosomnia."

"I remember I would go to bed thinking about the score I was going to get in the morning," Barreneche said.

Barreneche decided not to wear her ring on a beach vacation a few years ago, and when she returned home, she never put it back on. She said she has maintained the good habits the device pointed her toward, but no longer wants the stress of monitoring her nightly scores.

Branson, of the Morehouse School of Medicine, said she's observed similar score-induced anxiety as a recurring issue for some patients, particularly those who set goals to achieve a certain amount of REM sleep or who shared their nightly scores with friends using the same device. Comparing sleep types and stages is ill-advised since individual needs vary by age, genetics and other factors, she said.

"These devices are supposed to help you," Branson said. "And if you feel anxious or worried or frustrated about it, then it's not helpful, and you should really talk to a professional."

The future of wearables

Forger thinks the promise of wearables has been underestimated, with emerging research suggesting the devices could one day be designed to help detect infections before symptoms appear and to flag sleep pattern changes that may signal the onset of depression or an increased risk of relapse.

"The body is making these really interesting and really important decisions that we're not aware of to keep us healthy and active and alert at the right times of day," he said. "If you have an infection, that rhythm very quickly starts to disappear because the body goes into overdrive to start fighting the infection. Those are the kind of things we can pick up."

The technology could be particularly useful in low-resource communities, where wearables could help health issues to be identified more quickly and monitored remotely without requiring access to doctors or specialized clinics, according to Forger.

"There's this really important story that's about to come out: About just how understanding sleep rhythms and sleep architecture is going to generally improve our lives," he said.

Protests inside churches are unusual despite long history of civil disobedience in the US

By PETER SMITH and TIFFANY STANLEY Associated Press

American religious history is rife with protest movements and civil disobedience. Yet it is rare for political protests to happen inside a house of worship.

That is part of what makes the new case against anti-ICE protesters in St. Paul, Minnesota, unusual. The group interrupted a service last Sunday at Cities Church, a Southern Baptist congregation, where one of its pastors works for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Three of the protesters were arrested on federal charges Thursday.

Charles C. Haynes, a senior fellow for religious liberty at the Freedom Forum, a nonprofit group advocating for First Amendment rights, said disrupting a worship service is against the law – and that was likely the point.

Civil disobedience is by nature violating the law to bring attention to a cause. Famously, civil disobedience by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and others led to landmark legislation during the Civil Rights Movement.

Before her arrest Thursday, civil rights attorney Nekima Levy Armstrong, who describes herself as a Christian, depicted the protest in religious terms on Facebook: "It's time for judgment to begin and it will begin in the House of God!!!"

Haynes said, "Absolutely, in my view, civil rights law should be invoked when people interfere with the religious freedom of others in their house of worship." At the same time, he noted that protesters typically feel their cause is too urgent not to take drastic action.

More common are protests outside houses of worship, such as recent anti-Israel demonstrations outside synagogues in New York City or a Kansas church's picketing of military funerals. Courts and politicians have struggled to balance the rights of protesters and worshippers.

With such regulations "the devil (no religious pun intended) will be in the details," legal scholars Vikram Amar and Alan Brownstein wrote in a recent analysis in the online journal *Verdict of laws* regarding protest-free buffer zones around houses of worship and other sensitive places.

AIDS activists notably interrupted Mass in New York

Though unusual, worship disruptions have a long pedigree.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 57 of 63

Radical Quakers in colonial America disrupted services of established churches they considered illegitimate. The African Methodist Episcopal Church traces its 18th century origins to a walkout by Black worshippers from a white church where they experienced discrimination.

Civil rights activists staged "kneel-ins" at segregated churches in the 1960s.

One of the most dramatic actions in recent memory was the 1989 "Stop the Church" demonstration, organized by members of AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP).

The organization – which used civil disobedience to protest the government and the Catholic Church for what it saw as a weak response to the AIDS crisis — disrupted a Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York with shouting, lying in the aisles and in one case desecrating a Communion wafer. They faced minor charges under state law, according to news accounts.

"There was a lot of pushback," Haynes said. "But for ACT UP, it was life or death for them at the time."

In 1984, protesters disrupted services at wealthy churches in Pittsburgh, citing the plight of workers idled by the collapse of the steel industry. The protesters – targeting churches with influential corporate executives and board members – drew diverse reactions, with some admiring their courage and others saying they did their cause more harm than good.

Some protesters tactically keep within the law while relying on provocative messaging and shock value.

The Kansas-based Westboro Baptist Church conducted controversial protests condemning America for tolerating homosexuality, even targeting the funerals of fallen troops. But protesters stayed outside of sanctuaries, and the U.S. Supreme Court upheld their right to protest, though states enacted laws limiting when and where funeral protests could take place.

"The First Amendment doesn't protect us from disturbance if it's a peaceful protest and it's far enough away," Haynes said.

Protesters against Israel's actions in Gaza have recently targeted synagogues in New York City, leading to proposed legislation keeping protests 25 feet from the property line of houses of worship. Such buffer zones are common, as are some limits on free speech, including location.

Little support for protest inside a church

While many religious groups have denounced the ICE surge in Minnesota, the protest inside Cities Church has received relatively little support. For example, the Minnesota Council of Churches, which joined in calls for a Friday boycott of shopping, school and work, declined to comment on the arrests of the in-church protesters.

About three dozen protesters entered the Cities Church in St. Paul during last Sunday's service. Some walked right up to the pulpit. Others loudly chanted "ICE out" and "Renee Good," referring to the woman who was fatally shot on Jan. 7 by an ICE officer in Minneapolis.

One of the church's pastors, David Easterwood, works for ICE.

"No cause — political or otherwise — justifies the desecration of a sacred space or the intimidation and trauma inflicted on families gathered peacefully in the house of God," said Kevin Ezell, president of the Southern Baptists' North American Mission Board, in a statement.

Even among clergy who oppose current immigration enforcement tactics, there is discomfort with such protests.

Brian Kaylor, a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship-affiliated minister and leader of the Christian media organization Word&Way, has criticized the Trump administration's treatment of immigrants. But he said he was "very torn" by the protest in a church.

"It would be very alarming if we come to see this become a widespread tactic across the political spectrum," he said.

Bishop Mariann Budde, the Episcopal bishop of Washington, D.C., was rebuffed by President Donald Trump after she asked him to show mercy to immigrants and LGBTQ+ people at an inaugural prayer service last year. She traveled this week to protest ICE in Minnesota, where she served as a priest for 18 years. Her response to the arrests of the church protesters was measured.

"No one should fear for their safety or security in a house of worship — whether they are members of Cities Church or immigrants afraid to enter for fear of detention," Budde said in a statement. "We must

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 58 of 63

protect the sanctity of every sacred space and the safety of all who gather in prayer.”

Religious congregations have tightened security protocols in recent years as deadly attacks on houses of worship and safety concerns have intensified.

Many faith leaders were dismayed when the government announced last January that federal immigration agencies can make arrests in churches, schools and hospitals, ending the protection of people in sensitive spaces.

No immigration raids during church services have been reported. Some churches have posted notices saying no federal immigration officers are allowed inside; others have reported a drop in attendance, particularly during enforcement surges.

Protesters could face severe penalties

The penalties can be severe. Federal officials said the three protesters are charged under a law originally enacted after the Civil War to counter vigilante groups like the Ku Klux Klan, who had been targeting newly freed slaves. It has been revised since and applied to a wide range of violations of constitutional rights.

The law carries a penalty of up to 10 years in prison -- or more if it involves injury, death or destruction of property.

How Americans are using AI at work, according to a new Gallup poll

By MATT O'BRIEN and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

American workers adopted artificial intelligence into their work lives at a remarkable pace over the past few years, according to a new poll.

Some 12% of employed adults say they use AI daily in their job, according to a Gallup Workforce survey conducted this fall of more than 22,000 U.S. workers.

The survey found roughly one-quarter say they use AI at least frequently, which is defined as at least a few times a week, and nearly half say they use it at least a few times a year. That compares with 21% who were using AI at least occasionally in 2023, when Gallup began asking the question, and points to the impact of the widespread commercial boom that ChatGPT sparked for generative AI tools that can write emails and computer code, summarize long documents, create images or help answer questions.

Home Depot store associate Gene Walinski is one of the employees embracing AI at work. The 70-year-old turns to an AI assistant on his personal phone roughly every hour on his shift so he can better answer questions about supplies that he is not “100% familiar with” at the store’s electrical department in New Smyrna Beach, Florida.

“I think my job would suffer if I couldn’t because there would be a lot of shrugged shoulders and ‘I don’t know’ and customers don’t want to hear that,” Walinski said.

AI at work for many in technology, finance and education

While frequent AI use is on the rise with many employees, AI adoption remains higher among those working in technology-related fields.

About 6 in 10 technology workers say they use AI frequently, and about 3 in 10 do so daily.

The share of Americans working in the technology sector who say they use AI daily or regularly has grown significantly since 2023, but there are indications that AI adoption could be starting to plateau after an explosive increase between 2024 and 2025.

In finance, another sector with high AI adoption, 28-year-old investment banker Andrea Tanzi said he uses AI tools every day to synthesize documents and data sets that would otherwise take him several hours to review.

Tanzi, who works for Bank of America in New York, said he also makes use of the bank’s internal AI chatbot, Erica, to help with administrative tasks.

In addition, majorities of those working in professional services, at colleges or universities or in K-12 education, say they use AI at least a few times a year.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 59 of 63

Joyce Hatzidakis, 60, a high school art teacher in Riverside, California, started experimenting with AI chatbots to help "clean up" her communications with parents.

"I can scribble out a note and not worry about what I say and then tell it what tone I want," she said. "And then, when I reread it, if it's not quite right, I can have it edited again. I'm definitely getting less parent complaints."

Another Gallup Workforce survey from last year found that about 6 in 10 employees using AI are relying on chatbots or virtual assistance when they turn to AI tools. About 4 in 10 AI users at work reported using AI to consolidate information or data, to generate ideas or to learn new things.

Hatzidakis started with ChatGPT and then switched to Google's Gemini when the school district made that its official tool. She has even used it to help with recommendation letters because "there's only so many ways to say a kid is really creative."

The benefits and drawbacks of AI adoption

The AI industry and the U.S. government are heavily promoting AI adoption in workplaces and schools. More people and organizations will need to buy these tools in order to justify the huge amounts of investment into building and running energy-hungry AI computing systems. But not all economists agree on how much they will boost productivity or affect employment prospects.

"Most of the workers that are most highly exposed to AI, who are most likely to have it disrupt their workflows, for good or for bad, have these characteristics that make them pretty adaptable," said Sam Manning, a fellow at the Centre for the Governance of AI and co-author of new papers on AI job effects for the Brookings Institution and the National Bureau of Economic Research.

Workers in those mostly computer-based jobs that involve a lot of AI usage "usually have higher levels of education, wider ranges of skill sets that can be applied to different jobs, and they also have higher savings, which is helpful for weathering an income shock if you lose your job," Manning said.

On the other hand, Manning's research has identified some 6.1 million workers in the United States who are both heavily exposed to AI and less equipped to adapt. Many are in administrative and clerical work, about 86% are women and they are older and concentrated in smaller cities, such as university towns or state capitals, with fewer options to shift careers.

"If their skills are automated, they have less transferable skills to other jobs and they have a lower savings, if any savings," Manning said. "An income shock could be much more harmful or difficult to manage."

Few workers are concerned about AI replacing them

A separate Gallup Workforce survey from 2025 found that even as AI use is increasing, few employees said it was "very" or "somewhat" likely that new technology, automation, robots or AI will eliminate their job within the next five years. Half said it was "not at all likely," but that has decreased from about 6 in 10 in 2023.

Not worried about losing his job is the Rev. Michael Bingham, pastor of the Faith Community Methodist Church in Jacksonville, Florida.

A chatbot fed him "gibberish" when he asked about the medieval theologian Anselm of Canterbury, and Bingham said he would never ask a "soulless" machine to help write his sermons, relying instead on "the power of God" to help guide him through ideas.

"You don't want a machine, you want a human being, to hold your hand if you're dying," Bingham said. "And you want to know that your loved one was able to hold the hand of a loving human being who cared for them."

Reported AI usage is less common in service-based sectors, such as retail, health care or manufacturing.

Home Depot did not ask Walinski to use AI when he got a job at the store last year, after a decades-long career in the car business. But the home improvement giant also did not try to stop him and he is "not at all worried" that AI will replace him.

"The human interface part is really what a store like mine works on," Walinski said. "It's all about the people."

Getting to 'no': Europe's leaders find a way to speak with one voice against Trump

By LAURIE KELLMAN Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — No more fawning praise. No more polite workarounds and old-style diplomacy. And no one is calling Donald Trump “daddy” now.

European leaders who scrambled for a year to figure out how to deal with an emboldened American president in his second term edged closer to saying “no,” or something diplomatically like it, to his disregard for international law and his demands for their territory. Trump’s vow to take over Greenland and punish any country that resists, seems to have been the crucible.

“Red lines” were deemed to have been crossed this year when Trump abruptly revived his demand that the United States “absolutely” must rule Greenland, the semiautonomous region that is part of NATO ally Denmark. That pushed even the most mild-mannered diplomats to issue sharp warnings against Trump, whom they had flattered with royal treatment and fawning praise.

“Britain will not yield” its support for Greenland’s sovereignty, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said. Several of the continent’s leaders said “Europe will not be blackmailed” over Greenland.

“Threats have no place among allies,” said Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre.

The tough diplomatic talk around the showdown last week in Davos, Switzerland, was not the only factor pressuring Trump. U.S. congressional elections are approaching in November amid a sinking stock market and wilting approval ratings. European leaders also are not the first to stand in Trump’s way during his second term — see Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell.

But the dramatic turnabout among Europe’s elite, from “appeasing” Trump to defying him, offers clues in the ongoing effort among some nations of how to say “no” to a president who hates hearing it and is known to retaliate.

“We want a piece of ice for world protection, and they won’t give it,” Trump told his audience at the World Economic Forum. “You can say yes, and we will be very appreciative. Or you can say no, and we will remember.”

Lesson 1: Speak as one

In recent days, Europe offered abundant refusals to go along with Trump, from his Greenland demand and joining his new Board of Peace and even to what Canada’s Mark Carney called the “fiction” that the alliance functions for the benefit of any country more than the most powerful. The moment marked a unity among European leaders that they had struggled to achieve for a year.

“When Europe is not divided, when we stand together and when we are clear and strong also in our willingness to stand up for ourselves, then the results will show,” Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said. “I think we have learned something.”

Federiksen herself exemplified the learning curve. A year ago, she and other leaders were on their heels and mostly responding to the Trump administration. She found it necessary to tell reporters in February 2025, “We are not a bad ally,” after Vice President JD Vance had said Denmark was “not being a good ally.”

Trump is transactional. He has little use for diplomacy and no “need (for) international law,” he told The New York Times this month. Therein lay the disconnect between typically collaborative European leaders and the Republican president when he blazed back into the White House saying he wanted the U.S. to take over Greenland, Panama and perhaps even Canada.

“In Trump’s first term, Europe didn’t know what to expect and tried to deal with him by using the old rules of diplomacy, with the expectation that, if they kept talking to him in measured terms, that he would change his behavior and move into the club,” said Mark Shanahan, associate professor of political engagement at the University of Surrey.

“It’s very hard for other leaders who deal with each other through the niceties of a rules-based system and diplomatic conversation,” Shanahan said. “It is hard for them to change.”

Five months after Trump’s inauguration last year, with his Greenland threat in the air, European leaders had gotten their heads around Trump management enough to pull off a meeting of NATO nations in the

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 61 of 63

Netherlands. NATO members agreed to contribute more and widely gave Trump credit for forcing them to modernize.

Secretary-General Mark Rutte, known as the coalition's "Trump whisperer," likened the president's role quieting the Iran-Israel war to a "daddy" intervening in a schoolyard brawl.

Lesson 2: Consider saying no — and make choices accordingly

Traditional diplomacy exists to preserve possibilities of working together. That often means avoiding saying a flat "no" if possible. But Trump's Greenland gambit was so stark a threat from one NATO member to another that Greenland's prime minister actually said the word.

"Enough," Jens-Frederik Nielsen said in a statement shortly after Trump's remarks Jan. 5. "No more pressure. No more hints. No more fantasies about annexation."

That played a part in setting the tone. Denmark's leader said any such invasion of Greenland would mark the end of NATO and urged alliance members to take the threat seriously.

They did, issuing statement after statement rejecting the renewed threat. Trump responded last weekend from his golf course in Florida with a threat to charge a 10% import tax within a month on goods from eight European nations — Denmark, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Finland. The rate, he wrote, would climb to 25% on June 1 if no deal was in place for "the Complete and Total purchase of Greenland" by the United States.

Lesson 3: Reject Trump's big-power paradigm

Trump's fighting words lit a fire among leaders arriving in Davos. But they seemed to recognize, too, that the wider Trump world left him vulnerable.

"Trump was in a fairly weak position because he has a lot of other looming problems going on," domestically, including an upcoming U.S. Supreme Court decision on his tariffs and a backlash to immigration raids in Minnesota, said Duncan Snidal, professor emeritus of international relations at Oxford University and the University of Chicago.

Canada's Carney said no by reframing the question not as being about Greenland, but about whether it was time for European countries to build power together against a "bully" — and his answer was yes.

Without naming the U.S. or Trump, Carney spoke bluntly: Europe, he said, should reject the big power's "coercion" and "exploitation." It was time to accept, he said, that a "rupture" in the alliance, not a transition, had occurred.

Unsaid, Snidel pointed out, was that the rupture was very new, and though it might be difficult to repair in the future, doing so under adjusted rules remains in U.S. and European interests beyond Trump's presidency. "It's too good a deal for all of them not to," Snidel said.

Lesson 4: Exercise caution

Before Trump stepped away from the podium in Davos, he had begun to back down.

He canceled his threat to use "force" to take over Greenland. Not long after, he reversed himself fully, announcing "the framework" for a deal that would make his tariff threat unnecessary.

Trump told Fox Business that "we're going to have total access to Greenland," under the "framework," without divulging what that might mean.

Frederiksen hit the warning button again. In a statement, she said, "We cannot negotiate on our sovereignty."

In other words: "No."

Aryna Sabalenka beats 19-year-old Mboko, faces 18-year-old Jovic in Australian Open quarterfinals

By JOHN PYE AP Sports Writer

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — TikTok influencer and top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka is having to work her way through some rising teenage stars in her bid for a third Australian Open title in four years.

Sabalenka, who has drawn praise from fans and other players for her posts on the social media platform about matters on and off the court, held off 19-year-old Vicky Mboko 6-1, 7-6 (1) at Rod Laver Arena on

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 62 of 63

Sunday. She'll play 18-year-old Iva Jovic in the quarterfinals.

The 29-seeded Jovic overwhelmed Yulia Putintseva 6-0, 6-1 in 53 minutes at John Cain Arena — with six service breaks and winning the first 10 games — to secure a spot in the last eight of a Grand Slam for the first time.

"Obviously, she's No. 1 for a reason and had so much success at this tournament," Jovic said of Sabalenka. "But that's what I want — I said it last year, I hope to be able to play her this year, because you definitely want to play the best and see how it goes."

Coco Gauff, who was still a teenager when she won her first major title in 2023, is back into the quarterfinals in Australia for the third consecutive year after a 6-1, 3-6, 6-3 win over No. 19 Karolina Muchova. She'll next face No. 12 Elina Svitolina, who closed play on Day 8 with a 6-2, 6-4 win over 18-year-old, eighth-seeded Mirra Andreeva.

No. 1-ranked Carlos Alcaraz is also in the last 8 for the third straight year, continuing his bid for a career Grand Slam at age 22 with a 7-6 (6), 6-4, 7-5 win over No. 19-seeded Tommy Paul.

He's never gone past the last eight at Melbourne Park, the only one of the four Grand Slam venues where he hasn't won the title. That's a statistic he's determined to rectify, to the point where he's reworking his serve to a look a little bit more in style with 10-time Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic.

He's unlikely to have the crowd behind him in the quarterfinals, where he'll meet local hope and sixth-seeded Alex de Minaur, a 6-4, 6-1, 6-1 winner over No. 10 Alexander Bublik.

No. 3 Alexander Zverev, the runner-up in Melbourne last year, beat Francisco Cerundolo 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 and will next meet 20-year-old Learner Tien, the youngest men's quarterfinalist in Australia since Nick Kyrgios in 2015. Tien, who needed treatment for a bloody nose after the third game, beat three-time Australian Open runner-up Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 6-0, 6-3.

Djokovic's Walkover

The 38-year-old Djokovic got a walkover into the quarterfinals after Jakub Mensik withdrew 24 hours ahead of their scheduled fourth-round match with an abdominal injury.

Djokovic's influence

Jovic has been getting some good advice from Djokovic, a 24-time major winner, during the tournament. He said he's been happy to help an up-and-coming star with Serbian heritage.

Jovic made it clear last year that she wanted a chance to play the World No. 1. Now she'll get that chance.

Sabalenka, who has joked about waiting for a formal invitation to partner Djokovic in mixed doubles at a major, breezed through the first set in 31 minutes against Mboko but had some difficulty in the second.

Mboko saved match points and played well enough to beat many players, but not the two-time Australian Open champion.

"What an incredible player for such a young age," Sabalenka said of Mboko. "It's incredible to see these kids coming up on Tour. I can't believe I say that. I feel like I'm a kid!"

"She pushed me so much, and I'm happy to be through," Sabalenka added in her on-court TV interview.

Sabalenka led the second set 4-1, and then failed to convert three match points while leading 5-4. Mboko slowly took momentum and forced a tiebreaker only for Sabalenka to dominate.

It was the 20th straight tiebreaker victory — a record — for Sabalenka.

"I try to — not to think this is a tiebreak and play point by point," said Sabalenka, who won back-to-back titles in Australia in 2023 and '24 before losing last year's final to Madison Keys. "I guess that's the key to consistency."

Doubling up

Jovic and Mboko combined later Sunday in the doubles and had match points before the No. 4-seeded Elise Mertens and Zhang Shuai duo clung on in the super tiebreaker to win 7-5, 4-6, 7-6 (10).

"They're both very young, very talented," Mertens said. "It was a really tough match."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, January 26, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 236 ~ 63 of 63

Today in History: January 26

Kobe Bryant, daughter Gianna and 7 others die in helicopter crash

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, Jan. 26, the 26th day of 2026. There are 339 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Jan. 26, 2020, NBA legend Kobe Bryant, his 13-year-old daughter Gianna and seven others were killed when their helicopter plunged into a steep hillside in dense fog in Southern California; the former Lakers star was 41.

Also on this date:

In 1887, groundbreaking began for the construction of the Eiffel Tower; the tower would be completed just over two years later.

In 1905, the Cullinan Diamond, at 3,106 carats (621.2 grams) the largest diamond ever found, was discovered in South Africa.

In 1915, President Woodrow Wilson signed the act establishing Rocky Mountain National Park.

In 1950, the Constitution of India took effect, making the country the world's largest democratic republic.

In 1993, Václav Havel (VAHTS'-lahv HAH'-vel) was elected president of the newly formed Czech Republic.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton forcefully denied having an affair with a former White House intern, telling reporters, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky."

In 2023, Israeli forces killed at least nine Palestinians and wounded several others in a large-scale raid on the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank, the deadliest single operation in the territory in two decades.

Today's birthdays: Actor David Strathairn (streh-THEHRN') is 77. Football Hall of Famer Jack Youngblood is 76. Singer-songwriter Lucinda Williams is 73. Singer Anita Baker is 68. Hockey Hall of Famer Wayne Gretzky is 65. Musician Andrew Ridgeley (Wham!) is 63. Gospel singer Kirk Franklin is 56. Actor Gilles Marini is 50. Basketball Hall of Famer Vince Carter is 49. Actor Sara Rue is 47. Race car driver Sergio Pérez is 36. Pro wrestler Mercedes Moné is 34. Actor Joseph Quinn is 32.