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Sunday, Feb. 8

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m. (installation of officers); Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.

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

United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Groton Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

Groton Soccer Association Clinics, 11:30 a.m., Arena.

Soccer Open Gym, 1:30 - 3 p.m. elementary gym.

4th grade BB Practice, 2 p.m., Gym

6th grade BB Practice, 6 pm., Arena



Monday, Feb. 9

Senior Menu: Baked hot ham and cheese, tomato soup, fruit.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Pork chop, rice.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

Senior Citizens meet at 1 p.m. at the Groton Community Center

1st Grade Boys Basketball Practice, 4:30 p.m., elementary gym

Girls basketball hosts Great Plains Lutheran: C at 5 p.m, JV at 6 p.m., varsity to follow.

Kindergarten Boys Basketball, 6 p.m., elementary gym

5th Grade BBB, 6 p.m., HS Gym.

Tuesday, Feb. 10

Senior Menu: Pork loin, roasted potatoes, glazed carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.

School Lunch: Chicken nuggets, sweet potato fries.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, potluck meal, 6 p.m.

4th Grade Girl's Basketball, 4 p.m., elementary gym

Mobridge MS Wrestling Jamboree, 5 p.m.

Pickleball, 5:30 p.m., elementary gym

4th Grade BBB, 6 p.m., arena

Boys basketball vs. Leola/Frederick at Frederick with JV at 6:30 p.m. followed by varsity.

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We the People

The South Dakota Humanities Council is making available a weekly column -- "We the People" -- that focuses on the U.S. Constitution. It is written by David Adler, who is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality, and civic education.



By David Adler

When the Light of Democracy Goes Dark: Arresting Journalists

Freedom of the press is the light of democracy. Without it, all hope for government of, by, and for the people is crushed.

Thomas Jefferson knew this. He once wrote that if he had to choose between a government without newspapers, or newspapers without government, he would not hesitate to choose the latter. That's because he understood that the indispensable condition for the development of a free people in a free society is freedom of the press. Although Jefferson was neither a delegate to the Constitutional Convention nor a member of the First Congress that wrote the Bill of Rights, his rationale for a free press was shared by those who enshrined it in the First Amendment. Freedom of the press, he believed, was the people's right to know. At that juncture in June of 1789, the then novel and democratic theory that freedom of discourse is essential to the existence and security of free government became a pillar of republican thought that governs still.

That's why the Trump Administration's chilling arrest of two journalists—Don Lemon and Georgia Foot—has shaken the foundations of our freedom to the core. Lemon, a veteran journalist and former anchor of CNN, and Foot, a freelance reporter based in Minneapolis, have been charged with conspiring to violate the civil rights of parishioners at Cities Church, and blocking access to a house of worship. The charges are dubious, factually weak and a continuation of President Donald Trump's very public vendetta against Lemon.

Lemon and Foot were, in fact, reporting the interruption of church services by a group of activists, protesting the activities of the pastor, who reportedly serves as the acting director of an ICE field office. The journalists made it clear, while on air, repeatedly, that they were reporting the demonstration, not participating in it. Nevertheless, officials arrested the reporters for practicing journalism. In this arrest, the Trump Administration has criminalized journalism. That's the way of Putin, Orban and other authoritarian leaders who have arrested reporters as a means of silencing an independent press that can hold governmental officials accountable through exposure of corruption and the abuse of power. The authoritarian playbook, scholars tell us, emphasizes the elimination of a free and independent press as one of the first, key steps to concentrating power in the hands of the executive. That is the authoritarian way, not the American way.

Readers will recall President Trump's dangerous and demeaning treatment of journalists since his first campaign for the presidency. Trump has called reporters "human scum" and "the enemy of people." His verbal assaults on female reporters have been particularly nasty: "piggy," "stupid" and "ugly." At campaign stops, he has encouraged violence against reporters. News organizations filing stories that he doesn't like are "fake news." And such networks should "lose their licenses." Trump has made no secret of his dislike for Lemon. Unlike previous presidents, including Ronald Reagan, who occasionally criticized stories written about them, none engaged in Trump's hate mongering, for they recognized the central, indeed, integral importance of freedom of the press to American democracy.

My affection for freedom of the press has been a life-long love affair. Newspaper coverage of the Pentagon Papers represented for me a coming-of-age experience, the revelation by a free press of abuse of

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power, corruption and deceit so profound that the indispensability of an independent press became part of my DNA. The intrepid journalism that broke the Watergate story and brought down a crooked president affirmed those early sensations and deepened the Jeffersonian values that define me still. As a devoted admirer of a free and fiercely independent press that can inform, and thus serve, the citizenry, it is easy to discern in the arrest of Lemon and Foot an imminent disaster. The existence of a free press that can inform the people about the activities of their government, denizens of Russia under Putin and Hungary under Orban will tell you, is an enormous privilege, for it protects the public's right to know, the foundation for self-government. It was with good reason that James Madison described freedom of the press as one of "choicest" of the "great rights of mankind" and sought to secure it in our Constitution. An injury to freedom of the press is an injury to us all. Without a free press, truth and facts become elusive, and the light of democracy goes dark.

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

Lady Tigers Break Through at DAK12/NEC Clash, Defeat Canton

MADISON — The Groton Area Tigers made history Saturday at the DKAD XII / Northeast Conference Clash, knocking off the Canton C-Hawks 51-38 for their first-ever win at the annual event.

Groton Area trailed early but used two decisive scoring runs to pull away, improving to 12-5 on the season.

Canton jumped out to a quick 9-2 lead and held a 12-9 advantage after the first quarter. The Tigers clawed back to tie the game at 12-12 and 14-14 before briefly taking the lead at 16-15. Canton answered once more to go up 17-16, but Groton closed the half on a 9-0 run to take a 25-21 lead into the break.

The C-Hawks again made a push in the third quarter, tying the game at 28-28, before Groton delivered the knockout stretch. The Tigers rattled off a 13-point run to seize control and carried a 41-30 lead into the fourth quarter, then closed out the win from there.

Jaydyn Penning was named Player of the Game after recording a double-double with 13 points and 13 rebounds. Jerica Locke led all scorers with 15 points, adding three rebounds, six assists, and three steals. Taryn Traphagen finished with 11 points, knocking down three three-pointers while pulling down six rebounds. Rylee Dunker added seven points and a game-high 14 rebounds, along with two assists and four steals.



Jaedyn Penning was named the Player of the Game, having her first double-double of the season with 13 points and 13 rebounds. (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Kella Tracy scored three points and grabbed one rebound, while McKenna Tietz chipped in two points, three rebounds, one assist, and one steal. Sydney Locke pulled down two rebounds and handed out two assists.

Groton shot 42% from two-point range (13-of-31), 16% from beyond the arc (5-of-31), and 71% at the free-throw line (10-of-14). The Tigers dominated the glass with a 42-rebound night, committed 13 turnovers, and finished with 12 assists and 10 steals.

For Canton, Camryn Skiles led the way with 15 points, while Mya Anderson added 12. Aubrey Deurmier scored eight points, Callianna Halverson had two, and Norah Devitt added one. The C-Hawks shot 22% from the field (10-of-44) and finished 12-of-20 at the line.

After the game, head coach Matt Locke emphasized the importance of sustained effort and physical play.

"We just need to stay activated for full quarters and quit stacking bad possessions," Locke said. "Once we did that, I thought our physicality really showed, and we rebounded the ball extremely well."

Groton Area will look to keep the momentum going Monday when the Tigers host Great Plains Lutheran. Groton moves to 12-5 on the season while Canton drops to 9-7.



Taryn Traphagen has her eye on the basket as she launches this three-point shot. (Photo

by Jeslyn Kosel)

The game broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Avantara - Groton, Agtegra, Bierman Farm Service, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Heartland Energy and The MeatHouse in Andover. Jeslyn Kosel ran the camera and Paul Kosel did the commentary, stats and technology.

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The Locke sisters time for playing together is winding down. Sophomore Sydney on the left and senior Jerica is pictured on the right. There are only three more regular season games left. (Photos by Jeslyn Kosel)



Game 1 - Madison 45 Bon Homme 41
Player of the Game – Jaya Engels (Madison)

Game 2 – Mobridge-Pollock 65 Dell Rapids 41
Player of the Game – Tegan Konold (Mobridge-Pollock)

Game 3 – Elk Point Jefferson 44 Redfield 34
Player of the Game – Cera Schmitz (EPJ)

Game 4 – Milbank 46 Tri-Valley 44
Player of the Game – Belle Pauli (Milbank)

Game 5 Vermillion 55 Deuel 32
Player of the Game – Taylor Reuvers (DV)

Game 6 West Central 56 Aberdeen Roncalli 53 3OT
Player of the Game – Kacey Jatton (WC)

Game 7 Dakota Valley 61 Sisseton 59
Player of the Game – Katie Betsworth (DV)

Game 8 – Sioux Falls Christian 53 Clark/Willow Lake 29
Player of the Game – Leslei Setzer (SFC)

Game 9 – Groton Area 51 Canton 38
Player of the Game – Jaedyn Penning (Groton)

Game 10 – Hamlin 45 Lennox 42
Player of the Game – Addison Neuendorf (Hamlin)

Grapplers take second at Big Dakota Conference

The Groton Area wrestling team turned in a strong showing at the Big Dakota Conference Tournament on Saturday in Fort Pierre, highlighted by multiple placewinners and a milestone moment from heavyweight Gavin Englund. Englund picked up the 100th win of his high school career on his way to a second-place finish at 285 pounds, while Groton also saw podium finishes from Wyatt Hagen, Kyson Kucker, Aiden Strom, Ben Hoeft, Isaiah Scepaniak, Walker Zoellner, Luke Gauer, and Parker Zoellner as the Tigers finished second overall in the team standings.

At 106 pounds, Preston Hinkelman opened the tournament with a quick pin of Aiden Spotted Horse of McLaughlin in 29 seconds before being pinned in the quarterfinals by Mason Stoeser of Stanley County. Hinkelman later added team points in the consolation rounds but did not place. Also at 106, Bentley Ehresmann dropped his opening match, then rebounded with a consolation-round fall over teammate Hinkelman before being pinned by Hazen Garrett of Stanley County.

Groton earned a third-place finish at 113 pounds from Luke Gauer, who bounced back after an opening-round loss by pinning Hunter Wientjes of Mobridge-Pollock and advancing through the bracket to place third and score 11 team points.

At 120 pounds, Parker Zoellner fought through the consolation bracket to earn fifth place, closing his day with a major decision win over Hunter Oestreich of Todd County. Also at 120, Wyatt Hagen advanced to the championship match after back-to-back technical falls before finishing as the conference runner-up, scoring 19 team points.

Kyson Kucker delivered another big performance at 126 pounds, recording a first-round pin and a semi-final technical fall to reach the finals, where he placed second overall and added 21.5 team points. At 132 pounds, Noah Scepaniak opened with a pin and went on to finish fourth after falling in the third-place match, contributing 11 points.

Groton picked up a third-place finish at 138 pounds from Aiden Strom, who rebounded from an early loss to post three pins, including a fall in the third-place match, to score 17 team points.

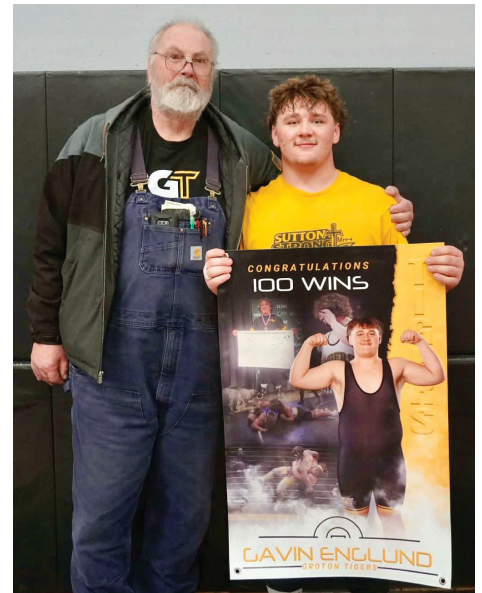
At 144 pounds, Grayson Flores earned a consolation-round pin before being edged in sudden victory, finishing the tournament with three team points. Kason Oswald placed fifth at 150 pounds, collecting five points after navigating the consolation bracket.

Ben Hoeft turned in a strong effort at 165 pounds, battling back with two consolation-round pins to earn third place and 14 team points. At 175 pounds, Isaiah Scepaniak also placed third, highlighted by a major decision in his final match.

Walker Zoellner had an impressive run at 190 pounds, recording three pins and winning his third-place match in sudden victory to score 16 team points. Layne Johnson advanced to the semifinals at 215 pounds with two pins and ultimately placed fourth, adding 18 points to the Groton total.

At 285 pounds, Englund reached the championship match after a semifinal pin, a win that marked the 100th of his career, before finishing as the runner-up in a hard-fought final.

Groton Area totaled 167.5 points to finish second in the team race, trailing Winner, which claimed the conference title. Chamberlain placed third, followed by Miller/Highmore-Harrold and Stanley County to round out the top five.



Gavin Englund is pictured with his grandpa after capturing his 100th win at the Big Dakota Conference Wrestling Tournament. (Photo from Gavin Englund's Facebook page)

Book, Moore Lead Northern State Past MSU Moorhead in Weekend Sweep

Aberdeen, S.D. — A dominant weekend on both ends of the floor propelled the Northern State University men's and women's basketball teams to a home sweep of Minnesota State University Moorhead, highlighted by efficient shooting, strong interior play, and stifling defense.

Men's Basketball

Northern State capped the weekend Saturday night with an 83–69 victory over MSU Moorhead, shooting a blistering 54.5% from the field and 47.6% from three-point range to earn its tenth win of the season and complete the NSIC sweep.

The Wolves scored 38 points in the first half and followed with 45 more after the break, knocking down ten three-pointers while out-rebounding the Dragons 30–26. Northern also forced 12 turnovers, converting them into 13 points, and added 30 points in the paint.

Joshua Book led four Wolves in double figures, pouring in 23 points on 9-of-10 shooting while adding a team-best five assists and two steals. James Glenn followed closely with 21 points, drilling a perfect 7-of-7 from beyond the arc.

Simon Akena chipped in 16 points and six rebounds, while Marshawn Smith finished with 10 points and seven boards. Tobi Obiora matched Smith's team-high seven rebounds, and the bench duo of Nelson Reynolds and Benjamin Bowen combined for nine points.

Northern finished the night with 16 assists, three steals, and a block in front of 2,677 fans at Wachs Arena.

Women's Basketball

Earlier in the day, Northern State's defense set the tone in a 61–41 win over the Dragons, holding MSU Moorhead to just 23 points in the first half and 18 in the second.

The Wolves jumped out quickly with 38 first-half points, then leaned on their defense down the stretch, totaling four steals and six blocks in the game. Northern shot 48.0% from the floor and 42.1% from three in the victory.

Despite fouling out in the fourth quarter, Izzy Moore delivered a standout performance with 22 points and eight rebounds, shooting 75% from the field and a perfect 100% from three-point range.

Taylor Tool added 10 points, while Lily Klein anchored the interior with nine rebounds, four assists, and two blocks. Reagan Rus contributed six points, four rebounds, and a career-high three blocks in 21 minutes.

Up Next

The Wolves now hit the road for another NSIC test, traveling to Bemidji State on Thursday before heading to Minnesota Duluth on Saturday. Tip-offs are set for 5:30 p.m. (women) and 7:30 p.m. (men) Thursday, followed by Saturday afternoon matchups against the Bulldogs.

Grant County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: 452nd Avenue and 147th Street, six miles south east of Ortley, SD

When: 12:24 p.m., Saturday, February 7, 2026

Vehicle 1: 2001 Pontiac Grand Prix

Driver 1: 33-year-old male from Summit, SD, fatal injuries

Seat belt Used: No

Grant County, S.D.- A Summit, SD man died this afternoon in a single vehicle crash six miles south east of Ortley, SD.

The name of the person involved has not been released pending notification of family members.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2001 Pontiac Grand Prix was traveling south on 452nd Avenue near 147th Street when the driver lost control of the vehicle and partially entered the east ditch. The driver over corrected, then rolled, coming to rest in the west ditch.

The driver was not wearing a seat belt and was ejected from the vehicle. He was pronounced deceased at the scene.

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

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



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- Family: \$67.10 per month or \$702.26 per year

MONTH-TO-MONTH

- Student: \$35.15 per month
- Single: \$40.48 per month
- 2-Person: \$59.78 per month
- Family: \$72.43 per month
- Senior/PT: \$20 per month



Call or Text Paul at 605/397-7460
Call or Text Tina at 605/397-7285

Same rates for several years!

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Tina's Baskets

605-397-7285



**Reese's cake with mini Reese's on top
\$35.00**



**Mix candy cake with mini mix on top with
lights on the bottom
\$20.00**



**White heart shape with red roses and Fer-
rero chocolate candy with a bear with it
\$25.00**



**Bear sucker cake with life savers and dum
dum suckers in it
\$15.00**

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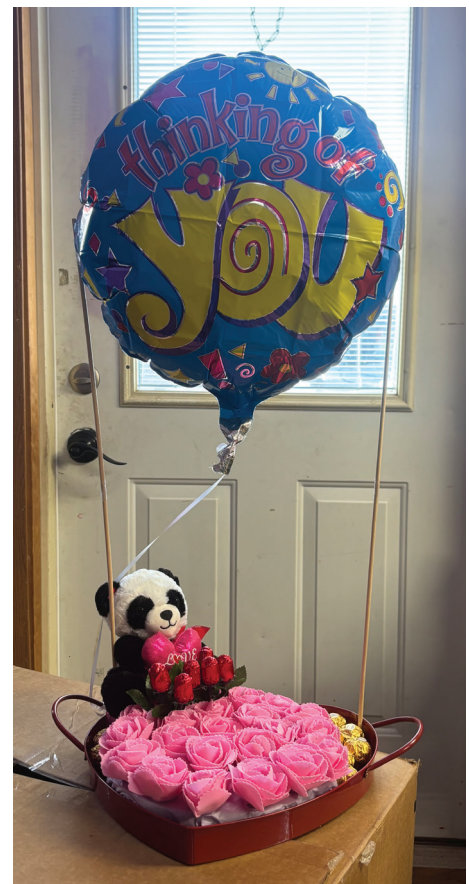
**Hersheys cake with strawberry drops and mini Hersheys on top
\$40.00**



**Laffy Taffy Octopus cake
\$ 15.00**



**Relax and Unwind basket with two wine bottles, blanket, adult coloring books and word finds with crayons and pens and some different chocolates as shown here
\$50.00**



**Thinking of you balloon with bear, red chocolate roses with pink roses and Ferrero Rocher chocolate candy
\$25.00**

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

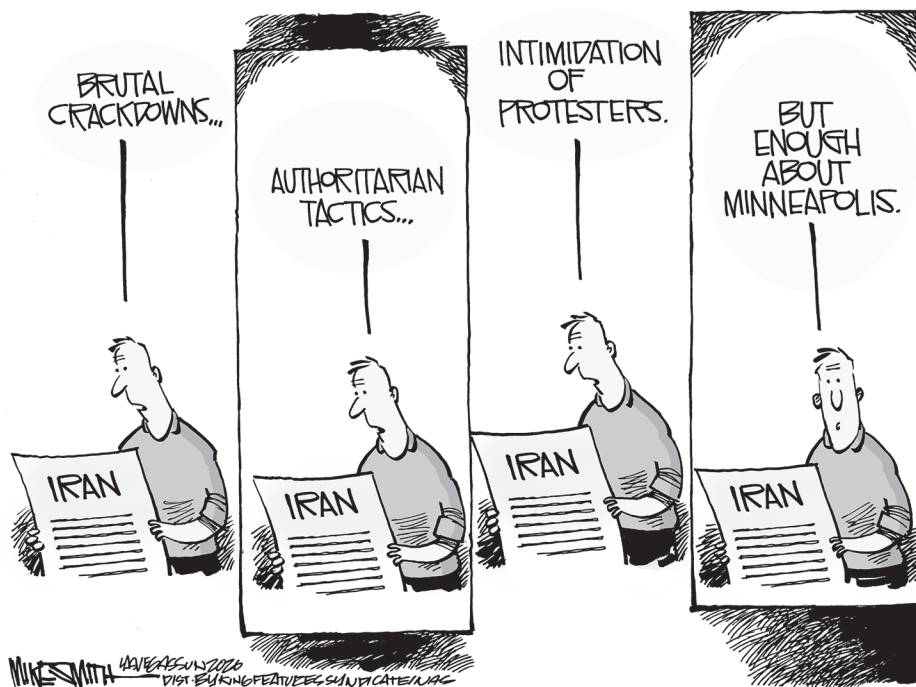
Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call understanding your nearest kin, that they may keep you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words.

Proverbs 7: 4,5



Detail of "Eden Bar" by Max Beckmann (1923)

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BIBLE

TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

1. Is the book of Romans (KJV) in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From Daniel 3, who saw four men walking in the fiery furnace? *Solomon, Job, Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar*

3. In 2 Kings 9, who was thrown from a window and struck the ground dead? *Hezekiah, Jezebel, Joash, Abner*

4. With whom did Lot fully escape the city of Sodom? *Wife, Two daughters, Son, Two friends*

5. From the book of Genesis, who was the wife of Joseph? *Tamar, Rebekah, Asenath, Taphanes*

6. What does "Naomi" mean? *Beautiful star, Holy woman, Pleasant, Righteous*

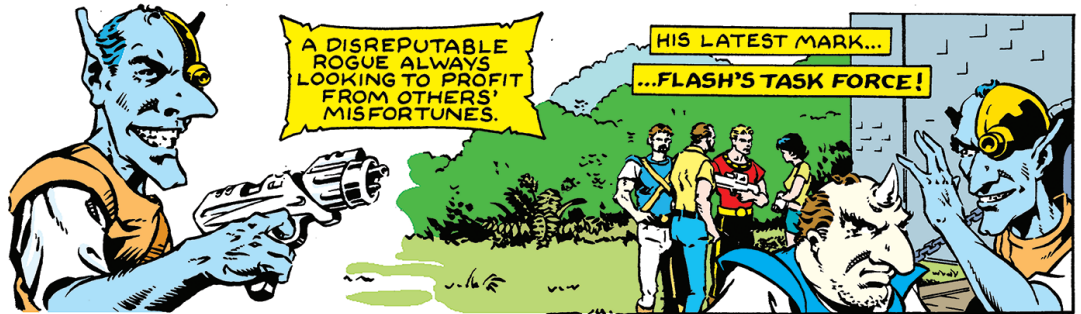
ANSWERS: 1) New, 2) Nebuchadnezzar, 3) Jezebel, 4) Two daughters, 5) Asenath, 6) Pleasant

Find expanded trivia online with Wilson Casey at www.patreon.com/triviaguy. FREE TRIAL!

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FLASH GORDON
Character Profile:
RENSHAW

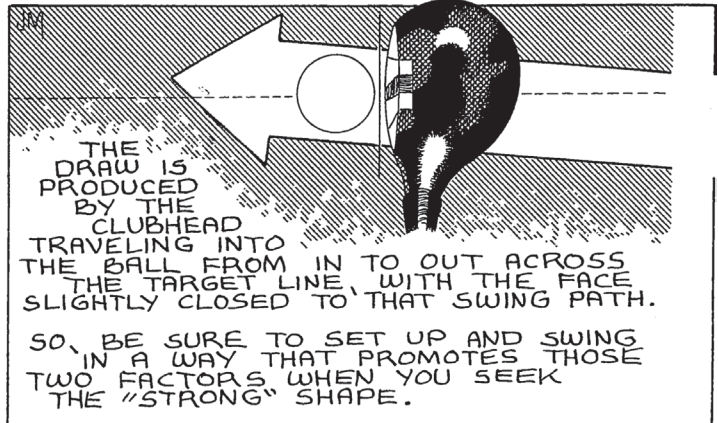
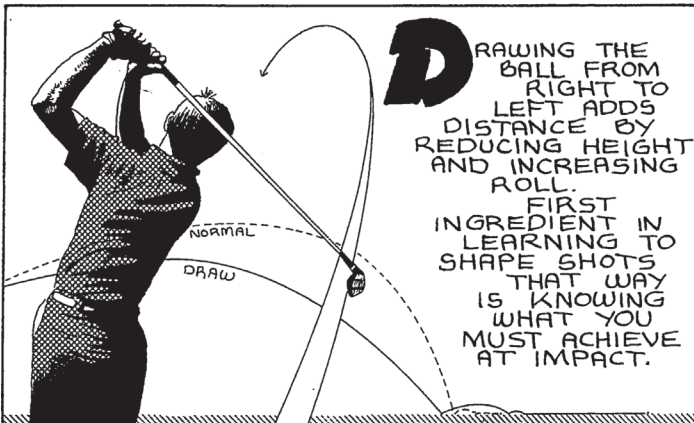


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Learn the Proper Inhaler Technique for Asthma/COPD Medication

DEAR DR. ROACH: In a recent column, you noted that many patients do not properly use their inhaled asthma/chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) medications, but you didn't tell us how to properly use them. I'd hate to think that I've been doing Advair and albuterol incorrectly all these years. A little help, please? -- Anon.

ANSWER: The proper inhaler technique is much more easily demonstrated than it is described. I found a good video showing the proper technique from the American Lung Association at tinyurl.com/inhaler-video, but the ideal way is to have your doctor or nurse watch you use your inhaler.

I have seen people make several common mistakes, including not taking the cap off the inhaler; activating the inhaler, waiting, and then breathing in; and breathing in, then activating the inhaler while breathing out. For it to work, the person needs to breathe in while the inhaler is activated.

DEAR DR. ROACH: When you get a letter from a patient who is really sick, does your response take precedence over other people's emails? -- B.N.

ANSWER: My column is primarily to help educate readers about common and uncommon medical issues. While I hope that I can be of some value to the readers who are writing in, I can't act as their doctor. Furthermore, due to the time that it takes to edit and publish these columns, there are several weeks between when I write my column and when it's published. So, I am often not much help to readers for urgent matters.

There have been a handful of times when a reader has written to me with a concern that has terrified me. Very early on when I started writing this column, a reader wrote in that he had an aortic aneurysm of over 7 centimeters and didn't think that he needed surgery. (The risk of a rupture at this size is very high, and it would likely be immediately fatal.)

This letter came via the postal service, so I had no way to get a hold of him beyond taking my response (for him to please get this repaired as soon as possible) to the post office and mailing it back to him.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am confused by your remark in a recent column about blood thinners being a good thing to take for the rest of your life. My brother was put on them after suffering from a stroke and ended up dying due to esophageal bleeding because of them.

Why can't doctors prescribe a natural way to thin blood without medication? Are there not natural alternatives like apple cider vinegar or something else? This confuses me as I would not take any long-term medication. -- G.B.

ANSWER: Anticoagulants, which reduce the blood's ability to clot, are only a "good thing" to take if you are at a high risk for a dangerous blood clot. In the column that you mention, the reader actually had his heart stop due to a large blood clot in his lung before being brought back by his wife.

In this case, anticoagulants are more likely to keep people alive by preventing a fatal blood clot than they are to cause serious bleeding. I am sorry for the experience of your brother, but physicians always need to weigh the risk of doing something against the risk of not doing something.

Apple cider vinegar has no effect on blood clotting. There are natural products that do. Warfarin (Coumadin) is based on a compound made by a fungus that grows on wet, sweet clover hay. For decades, it was the most common anticoagulant. Newer drugs are safer and more effective for most people, but there are still a few conditions that require warfarin.

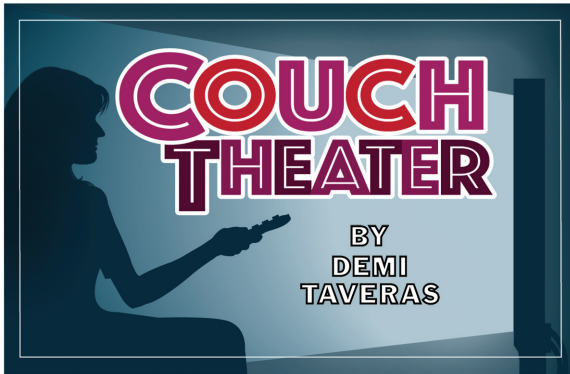
Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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Wagner Moura stars in "The Secret Agent."

(Courtesy of MovieStillsDB)

"Super Bowl LX" (TV-PG) -- Nowadays, we no longer have to set reminders to record our favorite TV programs, including NFL championship games and award shows, because everything's being aired on major streamers! We can rewatch these programs as many times as we want, which is something viewers will definitely want to do this year because of the halftime performance. The big game will be held at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, California, where the Seattle Seahawks square off against the New England Patriots. Charlie Puth delivers his rendition of our national anthem, while Bad Bunny -- who just won Album of the Year at the Grammys -- forces us up from our seats to dance along to his halftime show. Out now! (Peacock)

"Hamnet" (PG-13) -- This historical tragedy film stars two powerhouse actors in the drama genre, Jessie Buckley ("Wicked Little Letters") and Paul Mescal ("Gladiator II"). Mescal and Buckley respectively play William Shakespeare and Agnes Hathaway, with the film recounting the story of their relationship as William becomes a successful playwright. William and Agnes marry quickly, with kids following shortly, including twins named Hamnet and Judith. But with the bubonic plague spreading its deadliness throughout Europe, it's a matter of time until someone catches the disease. And when the disease catches Hamnet at 11 years old, his poor parents are left to cope with the tragedy of his death. Chloe Zhao ("Nomadland") directs this Oscar-nominated film that is out now to rent. (Amazon Prime Video)

"The Secret Agent" (R) -- You might know Wagner Moura from his portrayal as Pablo Escobar in "Narcos" or his role in "Civil War," but his role in this political thriller is what got him a Golden Globe for Best Actor in a Motion Picture (Drama) a month ago. Taking place in 1977 during the Brazilian dictatorship, the film picks up as professor and single father Armando (Moura) returns to his hometown of Recife, Brazil, hoping to reconnect with his son, Fernando, and find some semblance of peace. However, Armando shortly finds out that because of a previous political scuffle with a business executive, a contract killing for him has been ordered, leaving him with very few options and a murky, unknown future. Out now to rent. (Apple TV+)

"A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms" (TV-MA) -- Fans of George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" franchise should be quite happy to receive a third TV-series adaptation based on Martin's immersive books. This new prequel series takes place 90 years before "Game of Thrones" and about 70-80 years after "House of the Dragon." Starring Peter Claffey ("Bad Sisters") and Dexter Sol Ansell ("The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes"), the series follows a lowborn hedge knight named Ser Duncan the Tall (aka Dunk) and his squire, Ageon "Egg" Targaryen. The odd duo wanders throughout Westeros, naturally getting themselves into trouble and into some great adventures indeed. The first four episodes are out now to stream. The remaining two will premiere during the last two Sundays of February. (HBO Max)

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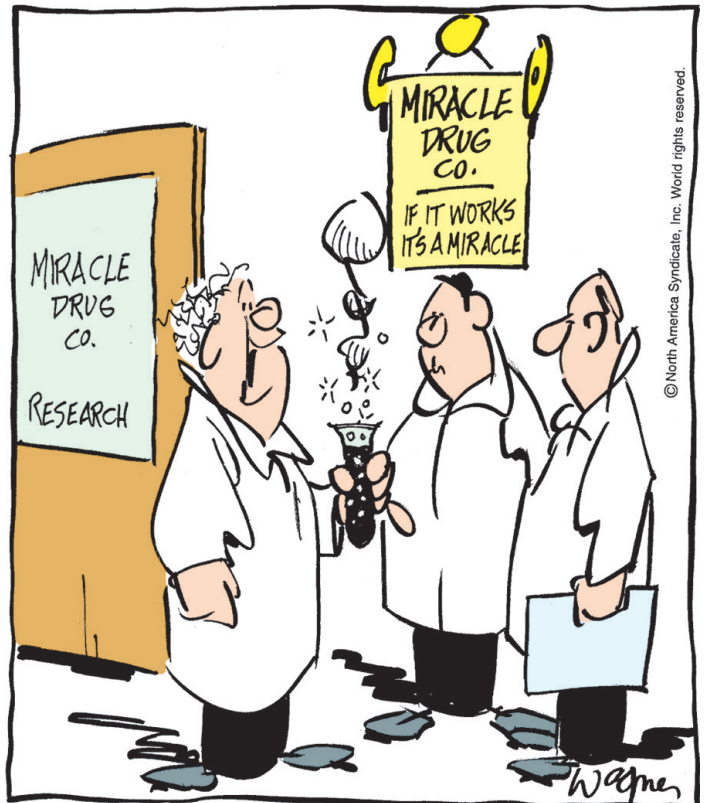
1. How many movies did the Beatles make? Name them in order.
2. Who released "Good Golly, Miss Molly," "Rip It Up" and "Lucille"?
3. Which song did Elvis Presley sing to end his concerts?
4. Who originally released "Your Baby Doesn't Love You Anymore"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Get your motor runnin', Head out on the highway, Lookin' for adventure and whatever comes our way."

Answers

1. There were five films: "A Hard Day's Night" (1964), "Help!" (1965), "Magical Mystery Tour" (1967), "Yellow Submarine" (1968) and "Let It Be" (1970).
2. Little Richard, known as the "Architect of Rock 'n' Roll." Born Richard Wayne Penniman, he had his first chart-topper in 1956 with "Long Tall Sally."
3. "Can't Help Falling in Love." It was originally on his 1961 "Blue Hawaii" album, the soundtrack for the movie of the same name. Over the years, numerous other artists covered the song, including The Lennon Sisters, Andy Williams and Al Martino.
4. Ruby & the Romantics, in 1965.
5. "Born to Be Wild," by Steppenwolf in 1968. The song was used in the 1969 film "Easy Rider," starring Peter Fonda, Dennis Hopper and Jack Nicholson.

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GRIN *and* BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}



"I can't say enough about the side effects!"

Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Tail is smaller. 2. Arms are longer. 3. Pocket is different. 4. Log is different. 5. Earlap is longer. 6. Rabbit's ear is moved.

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* "Jazz up your pancakes by adding pureed frozen blueberries or strawberries. It turns the mix either blue or red, and it's fun for the kiddos." -- V.R. in Florida

* "Purchase colorful laundry baskets for each child in your home. In the evening, you can have the child find all his or her stray items, put them in the basket and then put them away. In our house, the kids also use their basket to hold anything they need for school the next day -- backpack, coats and outerwear, even boots. We stack the baskets by the door and nothing gets left behind." -- P.W. in Missouri

* Tissue boxes have so many uses after they are emptied of tissues. Try lining one with a plastic grocery bag and keeping it in your car for stray trash. Or you can use it to corral all those

plastic grocery bags until you need them, just stuff them in one at a time. Lastly, and probably my favorite, cut out doors and windows to use as a house for a toy. Imagination makes the possibilities endless.

* "To make an eraser for our dry-erase board, I cut a washcloth in half and folded it into a rectangle. Then I used a magnetic chip clip (with a strong magnet) to hold the open ends of the cloth. I can use the magnetic clip as a handle and it's stored right on the board." -- D.I. in Arizona

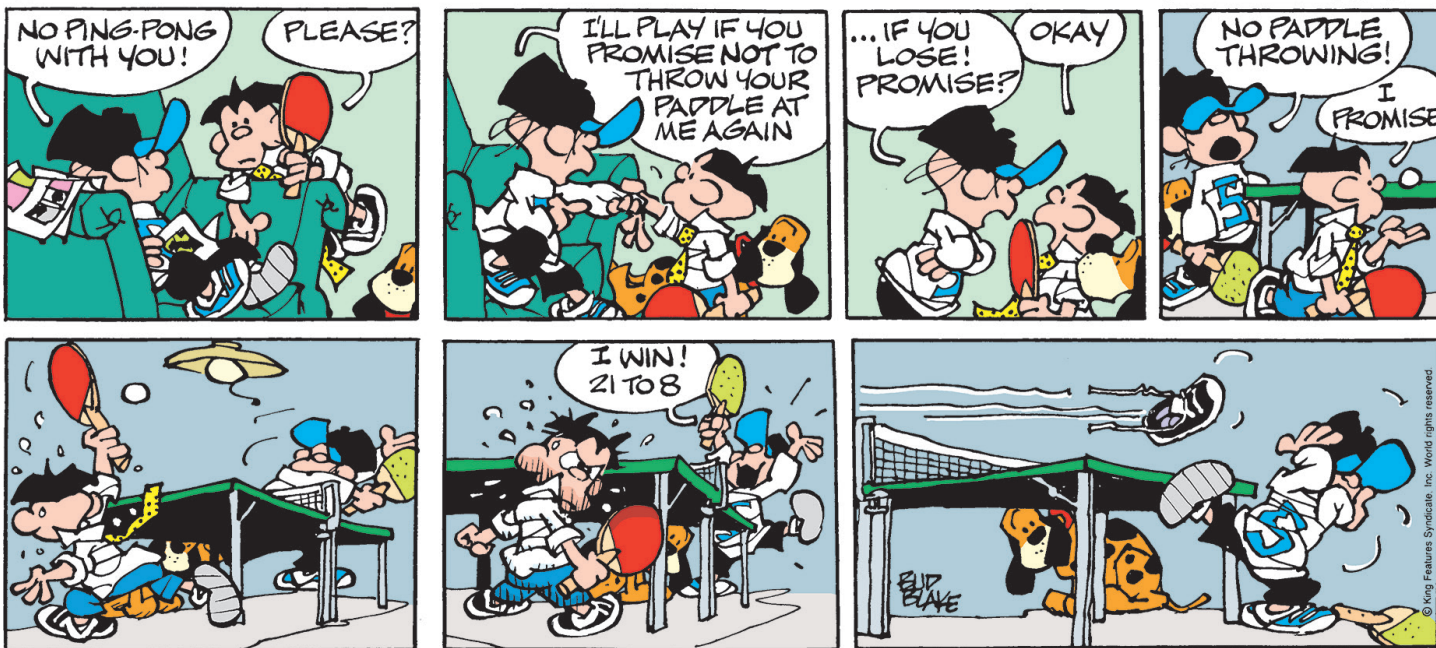
* To distinguish all the cords plugged into a power strip, write the appliance name (TV, game console, etc.) on a plastic bread tab, and attach it to the cord at the plug. A quick look at the power strip and you can unplug any appliance without having to follow the cord through the jungle behind your entertainment center!

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 1800 Pembroke Dr., Suite 300, Orlando, FL 32810.

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TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Canine cry
- 4 Dalai —
- 8 Sultry Horne
- 12 Uncle, to Juan
- 13 Bard's river
- 14 401(k) relatives
- 15 Provider of free groceries
- 17 Lapel jewelry
- 18 Fawn's mom
- 19 Nome resident
- 21 Nuanced
- 24 English cathedral city
- 25 100%
- 26 Poseidon's realm
- 28 Follow

1	2	3		4	5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12				13					14			
15			16						17			
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21	22				23		24					
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46	47	48				49		50				
51					52		53				54	55
56					57					58		
59					60					61		

- 32 L-Q bridge
- 34 Cover
- 36 Gear teeth
- 37 Avid
- 39 Kauai souvenir
- 41 Last (Abbr.)
- 42 Conducted
- 44 Justice Antonin
- 46 Movie promo
- 50 Sprite
- 51 Campus mil. group
- 52 Eats for parakeets
- 56 Jazzy James
- 57 Singer Braxton
- 58 French assent
- 59 Twain hero
- 60 Jazz legend Getz
- 61 ER workers
- 9 Composer Satie
- 10 "Peter Pan" dog
- 11 Professional gp.
- 16 Speck
- 20 Pub pint
- 21 "Ditto"
- 22 Forearm bone
- 23 Snaky fish
- 27 Be sick
- 29 1997 Vanessa Williams film
- 30 Hybrid fruit
- 31 "Como — usted?"
- 33 Louisiana symbol
- 35 — Moines
- 38 Seminary subj.
- 40 Stranded during a blizzard
- 43 Unpaid bills
- 45 TV alien
- 46 Not kosher
- 47 Indian flatbread
- 48 Envelope abbr.
- 49 Funny person
- 53 Genetic letters
- 54 Wilder's "— Town"
- 55 Insult, slangily

DOWN

- 1 Justice Dept. agency
- 2 2016 Olympics city
- 3 Gourmand's online journal
- 4 File stickers
- 5 Director DuVernay
- 6 "— Lisa"
- 7 Bracelet site
- 8 Feign singing

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King Crossword

Answers

Solution time: 25 mins.

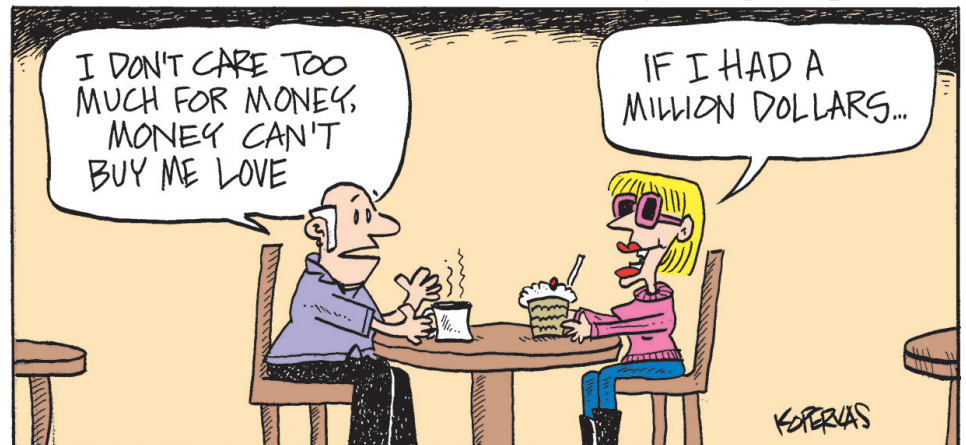
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F	O	O	D	B	A	N	K		P	I	N	S
		D	O	E		A	L	A	S	K	A	N
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A	L			S	E	A		E	N	S	U	E
M	N	O	P		L	I	D		C	O	G	S
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T	R	A	I	L	E	R		E	L	F		
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F	I	N	N		S	T	A	N		D	R	S

Olive



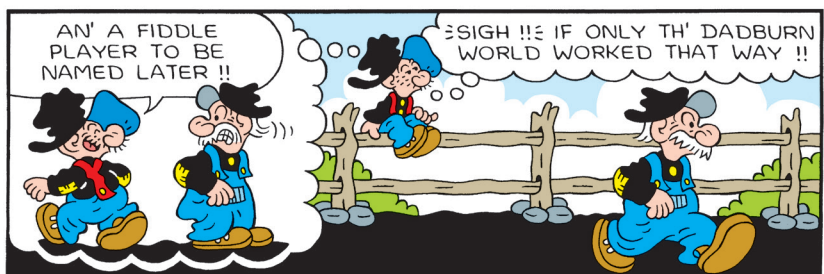
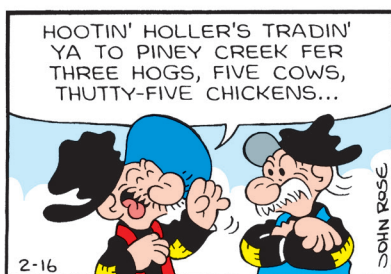
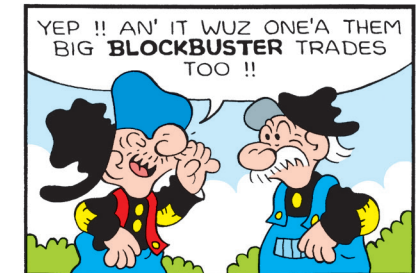
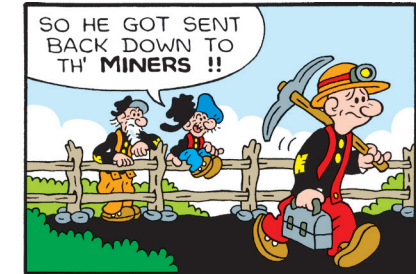
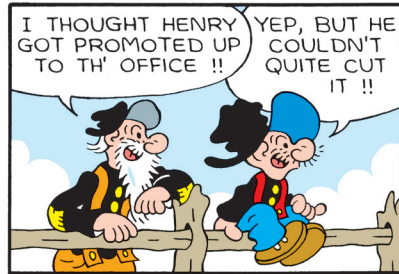
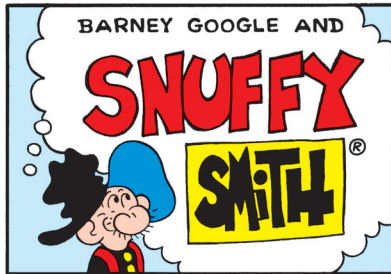
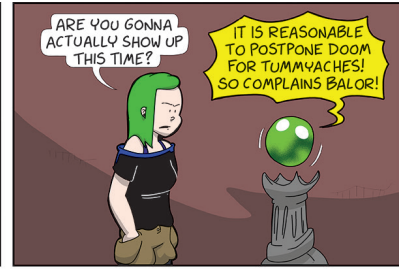
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



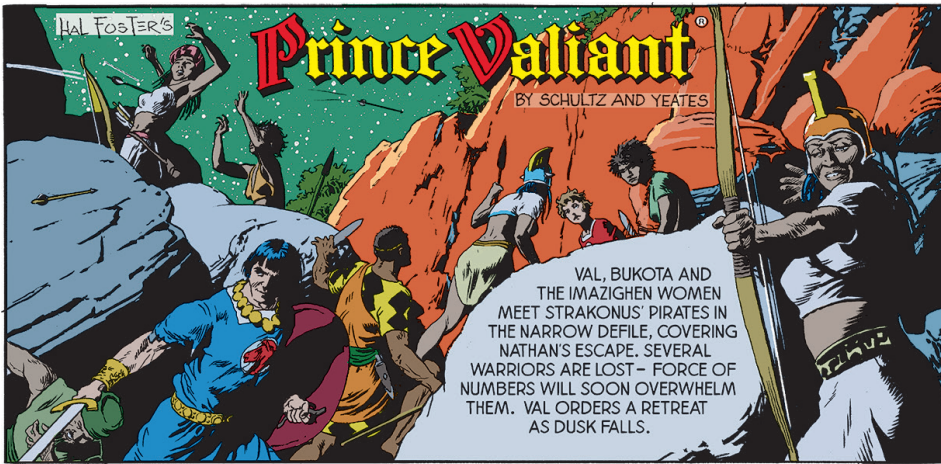
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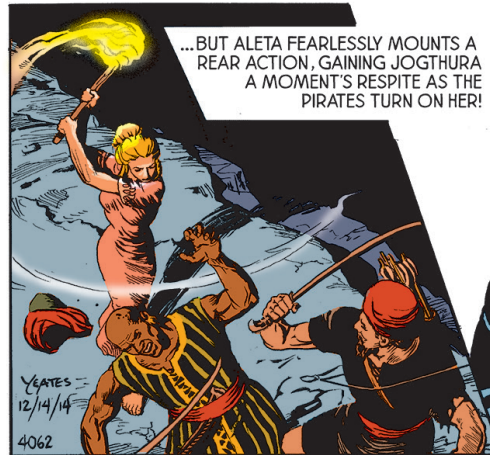


"ZULFA, TAKE YOUR WARRIORS AND DISAPPEAR INTO THE HILLS," COMMANDS VAL. "IT GROWS DARK - STRAKONUS WILL NOT ADVANCE FURTHER UNTIL MORNING. NATHAN WILL LEAD BUKOTA AND ME TO MY CAPTIVE FAMILY."

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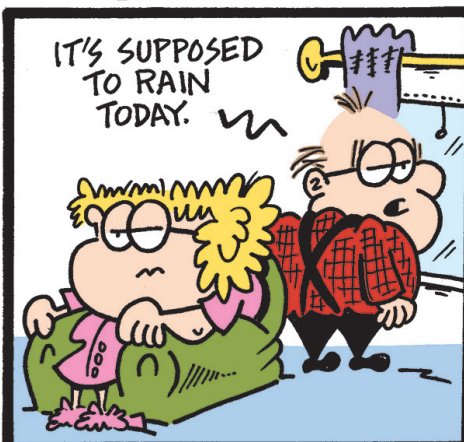


BUT VALS FAMILY AND THEIR COMPANIONS ARE ALREADY ENGAGED IN ESCAPE - THE MYSTERIOUS THANAA HAS TURNED JOGTHURA INTO A RAGING BERSERKER. THE PIRATES DESPERATELY GANG RUSH THE GIANT AND ARE ABOUT TO OVERWHELM HIM...



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Almost hacked!

I received a text message from a company I do a lot of business with, this time thanking me for my recent order and saying the automatic payment would be made that night as soon as I verified one little piece of information. I hear from them frequently, and have for many years. When I heard from them again, in that text message on my phone, I didn't think much about it at first. I went to press the link in the message ...

Wait, I said to myself, that company doesn't have my cellphone number. They only have my email address. They couldn't have sent me the text message. At the last minute I pulled my hand away and did not click that link.

I called the company in question and asked if they had sent me a text message about an order. No, they said. I asked for the fraud department, beginning to panic.

The man on the other end of the call was professional, and fast, firing off a lot of questions, but most especially asking if I had clicked the link. No. After asking several more questions, he determined that I was safe -- this time.

The moral of this little story is, for me, to slow down! I was all too willing to jump right ahead with what I thought was a genuine text message from a company I know. I won't make that mistake again.

Some hints:

Don't do banking or any kind of internet business on your cellphone.

Keep a throwaway email address for the times you are in contact with companies.

And most of all, do not click any links in text messages unless you are one hundred percent certain you know who sent the message.

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Downtown Groton

Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460
Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



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Senior Citizens 65+
Physical Therapy. **\$20 a month**

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1. The women's team tennis competition formerly known as the Federation Cup was renamed in 2020 to honor which tennis great?

2. American publishing conglomerate Doubleday & Company purchased which Major League Baseball team in 1980?

3. Which retired NASCAR driver was among seven people killed in a December 2025 plane crash in North Carolina?

4. What female long-distance runner from Germany won the Boston Marathon three straight times from 1994 to 1996?

5. French soccer great Thierry Henry was named manager of what Major League Soccer club in November 2019?

6. Name the heavyweight boxer who was injured in a 1964 police shooting incident, recovered to fight Muhammad Ali in 1966, and died at age 66 after being struck by a car while walking in Houston in 1999?

7. Motorsports legend Craig Breedlove set five world land speed records from 1963 to 1965 driving turbojet-powered vehicles, all known by what name? (Hint: The Beach Boys recorded a song about it.)



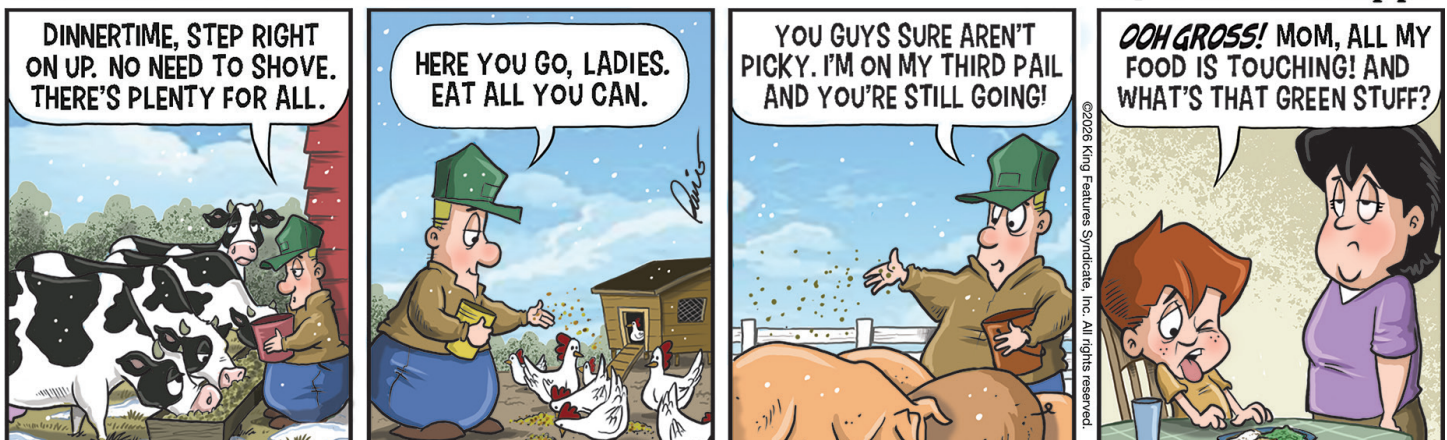
Answers

1. Billie Jean King.
2. The New York Mets.
3. Greg Biffle.
4. Uta Pippig.
5. The Montreal Impact.
6. Cleveland Williams.
7. "Spirit of America."

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Spotting a cat's toothache

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: In the past few days, my cat "Albert" hasn't been eating much food, and he's avoiding hard kibble. He also doesn't like being picked up and meows loudly when I try to pet his head, scratches and tries to get away. This is different behavior for him. Could it be because he recently had a spat with "Jake," my other cat? -- Harry in Sioux Falls

DEAR HARRY: A profound behavioral change could signal a hidden injury or an infection. It may or may not have been caused by a fight with another cat, so don't treat Jake any differently because of their disagreement.

Because Albert isn't eating much and is sensitive to being petted on the head, he could also have a toothache. His eating pattern is in line with a dental problem, but don't rule out a possible injury. Regardless, a call to the veterinarian is the best step to take at this point.

The vet will be able to take a closer look at Albert and perform blood, urine and stool tests to see if an infection is present or if something else is going on. If they suspect a tooth problem, Albert will undergo a dental cleaning and evaluation (under anesthesia) and the vet will design a treatment plan for him. Afterward, a prevention regimen of daily brushing and/or special cat chews will help both Albert and Jake keep their teeth healthy.

You can find a list of toothache symptoms in cats here: vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/dental-pain-in-cats. Because cats instinctively hide their illness or injury, it's important to watch for subtle signs that they are suffering. You did this, and it'll be a huge help for Albert because he will get timely treatment and be feeling better quickly.

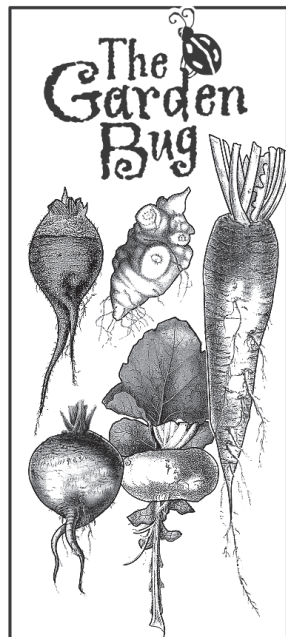
Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

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Strange BUT TRUE

- * A newborn blue whale gains about 200 pounds a day during its first year.
 - * Jim Henson made his first Kermit puppet using his mother's old coat and two halves of a ping-pong ball.
 - * Sometimes it snows on Mars, but the snowflakes are made out of carbon dioxide, not water. The flakes don't fall, but create a fog-like effect.
 - * Australia is home to approximately 170 kinds of snakes, including some of the world's most venomous. The good news? Snake bites aren't common and are rarely fatal. One study estimated that snake bites account for just two deaths per year in Australia.
 - * Scottish band the Bay City Rollers chose their name after sticking a pin in a map of America, which landed on the city Michigan.
 - * Actor Benedict Cumberbatch is the second cousin, 16 times removed, of King Richard III, whom he portrayed in the 2016 BBC miniseries "The Hollow Crown."
 - * Members of the Secret Service's Presidential Protection Division always travel with bags of blood in the motorcade in the event a transfusion is needed.
 - * Wisdom teeth serve no purpose. They're left over from hundreds of thousands of years ago. As early humans' brains grew bigger, mouth space was reduced, crowding out this third set of molars.
 - * One of Walt Disney's first art jobs was drawing cartoons for a local barber in exchange for haircuts.
- ***

Thought for the Day: "Friends are the siblings God never gave me." -- Mencius
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Southern start

In Texas, Georgia, Florida and other southern states, February is the start of garden season.

- It's time for southerners to plant root vegetables, including carrots, beets, and onions sets. Plant your peas if you haven't already, and get your cabbages, kales, and broccoli in the ground.
- Cut back ornamental grasses and dead stalks on perennials.
- Transplant snapdragons and pansies. Direct seed poppies and sweet peas.
- Give the compost pile a flip. - Brenda Weaver

Source: www.bhg.com



by Freddy Groves

Two very different scammers

Scammers come with varying motives, intelligence levels -- and with different intentions.

While it's disturbing that anyone steals from the VA, it's twice as bad when the scammer is a veteran. Here is a guy, a veteran, who claimed he was disabled and couldn't work due to service-connected injuries; he therefore received VA disability benefits.

You'd think he would stay home, being so disabled, but instead he used his benefit money on luxury international vacations, worked out several times a week, ran his own business and had a very active lifestyle.

His scam netted him nearly a quarter of a million dollars before he was stopped. After pleading guilty to 10 counts of theft, he was only sentenced to 18 months in prison (not long enough) and will have to pay back the money as well as a \$20,000 fine.

Then there's the young computer hacker who broke into the U.S. Supreme Court 25 times, as well as the VA health system computers and AmeriCorps, by using stolen login credentials. Bragging about what he'd done, he took screenshots of someone's personal information and posted it all online. Then, using other stolen credentials, he got into the VA's "MyHealthEVet" website and grabbed his victim's personal information -- and posted it online.

Among other pieces of information, he got the victim's name, email address, phone number, home address, date of birth and the answers to three security questions. For other victims he was also able to get (and post) information about citizenship status, Social Security number, veteran status, blood type and list of medications prescribed.

For all this fraud against others, leaving them shocked and feeling violated and at risk for identity theft, he could get a mere one year in prison (not long enough) and a \$100,000 fine. It appears that he didn't try to sell the information, that he only wanted the bragging rights for his hacking.

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Wishing Well®

7	5	8	5	7	8	3	2	4	3	4	7	8
Y	J	Y	O	O	O	F	A	B	O	E	U	U
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A	R	Y	T	E	I	N	S	O	S	R	O	A
6	4	7	4	7	2	8	4	5	7	2	6	4
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4	7	8	7	3	2	8	2	6	5	3	2	5
S	I	A	D	H	V	D	E	H	D	E	N	A
2	5	3	5	3	5	2	5	2	5	2	5	5
T	Y	A	S	D	A	U	H	R	E	E	A	D

HERE IS A PLEASANT LITTLE GAME that will give you a message every day. It's a numerical puzzle designed to spell out your fortune. Count the letters in your first name. If the number of letters is 6 or more, subtract 4. If the number is less than 6, add 3. The result is your key number. Start at the upper left-hand corner and check one of your key numbers, left to right. Then read the message the letters under the checked figures give you.

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1. GEOGRAPHY: What is the capital of Honduras?
2. FOOD & DRINK: What is the name of the Pillsbury Doughboy?
3. TELEVISION: In which state is the sitcom "Roseanne" set?
4. PSYCHOLOGY: What is the fear represented in the condition called arachibutyrophobia?
5. MUSIC: Which 1992 Radiohead song has the lyric "I wish I was special"?
6. MOVIES: Who is Indiana Jones' nemesis in "Raiders of the Lost Ark"?
7. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Which president is known for giving the longest inauguration speech to date?
8. LITERATURE: "Cry, the Beloved Country" is a novel set in which country?
9. HISTORY: Which organization was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1917?
10. ANATOMY: Which element is a primary component of bones?

Answers

1. Tegucigalpa.
2. Poppin' Fresh.
3. Illinois.
4. Fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of one's mouth.
5. "Creep."
6. Dr. Rene Belloq.
7. William Henry Harrison, 1 hour and 45 minutes.
8. South Africa.
9. International Committee of the Red Cross.
10. Calcium.

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South Dakota Governor



Larry Rhoden



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Openness and Transparency

Being open and honest isn't hard to do. It may seem tough, but it's actually far easier to be direct and truthful. I'm a pretty straight shooter. Who has time to talk around an issue? The people of South Dakota deserve a Governor who's open, transparent, and honest – and that's what I aim to be every single day.

We recently had the annual News Media Day at the Capitol, the one day a year that a couple dozen extra reporters from small towns across South Dakota come to Pierre to meet with the Legislature. Every year, it's on a Thursday, because that's the day we have our weekly press conferences. I took the opportunity to have an honest discussion about how my administration is doing on openness and transparency.

I reminded the media that a year ago, I pledged that openness and responsiveness would be pillars of my administration. And then I put the question to them – what's going well, and where could we improve? And they offered meaningful feedback.

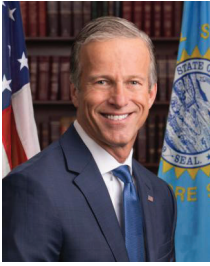
I appreciated that they told me that things are going well overall in this regard. Even more so, I appreciated the couple points of feedback for ways that my administration can still improve. We'll implement some of their suggestions, like working with agencies to get back to reporters more promptly – and when we can't implement those suggestions, we explained why. And that's how it should be.

That commitment extends far beyond the press. It extends to the people of South Dakota. I am not hard to find. I enjoy getting out into our communities and hearing from South Dakotans, like I did on my Open for Opportunity tour, and like I'm doing with my property tax town halls. By the way, we have more of those events coming to a community near you – check out Americans for Prosperity – South Dakota's Facebook page for details.

One more thing: when we communicate openly and responsively, we must also do so civilly. In my State of the State Address earlier this year, I asked the Legislature to join me in once again pledging to be civil in our discourse. None of us are perfect, but even when we disagree, we should do so without being disagreeable.

I had a recent lunch with legislative leadership in both chambers, and the conversation got somewhat direct on disagreement over some processes and policies. But even when we disagree, both sides listened to each other, and both sides felt comfortable sharing what we had to say. We even came to a far better understanding on some important points.

That kind of communication is a crucial part of our American political process, and it's only possible if we trust each other to be civil, open, and responsive. It's how we reach understanding, compromise when appropriate, and deliver the best possible results for the people of South Dakota. And in so doing, we will keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free.



JOHN THUNE
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

Tax Relief for Hardworking South Dakotans

Tax season is underway, and as South Dakotans file their taxes, they're starting to see the impact of the Working Families Tax Cuts. They're seeing smaller tax bills and bigger refunds, and that adds up to more money in their pockets. Most people will benefit from lower rates, a higher standard deduction, and an increased child tax credit, among other provisions, and there's an additional boost for those who can now deduct tips and overtime pay on their taxes.

Roughly six million Americans claimed income from tips on their taxes last year. It's fair to say that for many of these hardworking people, no tax on tips is a gamechanger. A lot of people who earn tips worry about what they will owe on their taxes every year. Many of them put money aside in case of a big tax bill – and that tax bill can be significant. But thanks to the Working Families Tax Cuts, those days are behind them. Now tipped workers can plan to save their money and put it toward their day-to-day expenses, planning for their future, or raising their families.

The Working Families Tax Cuts also created a new deduction for overtime pay, which can be a significant portion of a lot of Americans' incomes. For police and other law enforcement officers, firefighters and paramedics, nurses and many other professions, overtime is a routine part of their job. But up until now, the impact of extra hours and wages was muted by federal taxes. Thanks to Republicans' landmark bill, these hardworking Americans will now be able to keep more of the money they earn when they spend extra hours at work.

No tax on tips and overtime offers South Dakotans hundreds of dollars in tax savings, and that comes on top of other tax relief in the Working Families Tax Cuts. With this landmark bill, Republicans secured permanently lower tax rates, permanently raised the standard deduction, and increased the child tax credit to \$2,200 and linked it to inflation so it keeps pace with the actual cost of raising a child. For seniors, there's an additional \$6,000 deduction to offer more breathing room for folks on a fixed income. Then there's relief for small businesses, farms, and ranches that will help grow our economy and create good-paying jobs in South Dakota and across the country.

Republicans had working people in mind when we wrote this bill. For the last several years, the American people have suffered through an affordability crisis, and I know affordability is still an issue for a lot of people. Affordability starts when you have more money in your pocket, and thanks to the Working Families Tax Cuts, hardworking Americans are going to be able to keep more of their hard-earned money. I encourage you to learn more about the tax relief that's available for you this tax season thanks to the Working Families Tax Cuts – it will make a big difference for so many folks across our state.

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January 26 - February 1,
2026

Welcome back to another Weekly Round[s] Up. It was a cold and icy week here in DC but that didn't stop us from getting right back to work. For context, it snowed about 6 inches on Sunday, January 25 and DC city government simply doesn't have the snow removal tools to properly clean the streets. Schools

are finally open without delay on Tuesday, February 3. In South Dakota, we would have dealt with that in a matter of hours!

On Friday, the Senate passed a package of five appropriation bills for Fiscal Year 2026. The legislation is now heading to President Trump's desk for him to sign. I am pleased to have secured \$145.7 million in funding for projects in South Dakota to improve in our rural health care facilities, expand our regional airports and invest in affordable housing. You can read more about the bill and our wins here. In addition, this legislation included a continuing resolution for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations through February 13. After getting out of DC late Friday night after votes, I was able to attend the Black Hills Stock Show and Rodeo on Saturday. It's always a good time getting to meet with folks from around the state. Click here to watch my recap on the weekend. More on this in the rest of my week in the Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota groups I visited with: Ismael Collazo with the National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota; South Dakota Head Start Programs; South Dakota Wheat Growers Association; José-Marie Griffiths, President of Dakota State University; and Mike McKelvey, CEO and Vice President of Institutional Advancement, Dakota State University Foundation.

Met with South Dakotans from: Brookings, Madison, Pierre and Webster.

Other meetings: Steve Ryan, CEO of Trinity Cyber; Vice Admiral Robert Gaucher, Direct Reporting Portfolio Manager for Submarines; Brandon Williams, Administrator at National Nuclear Security Administration; LTG Christopher Eubank, and Philip Alcorn, Director of Army Cyber Technology and Innovation Center (ArCTIC).

Hearings: I attended a hearing this week for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. It was a nomination hearing for Lieutenant General Joshua M. Rudd, USA, to be Director of the National Security Agency (NSA). You can watch me question him here. Additionally, I chaired a Cybersecurity Subcommittee hearing, to hear receive testimony on the Department's cyber force generation plan.

Briefings: I attended one closed Senate Select Committee on Intelligence briefing.

Senate Prayer Breakfast: On Wednesday I joined my colleagues for Senate Prayer Breakfast. Senator Katie Britt from Alabama was this week's speaker.

Votes taken: 10 - As stated above, the Senate passed five appropriation bills for Defense; Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS); Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies (T-HUD); Financial Services and General Government (FSGG); and National Security, Department of State and Related Programs. This legislation also includes a continuing resolution for the DHS appropriations through February 13. The House of Representatives passed the legislation and it is on its way to President Trump to be signed into law.

In addition to the votes related to the appropriation bills, I also voted Yea on the Pregnant Students' Rights Act.

Steps taken: 61,827 steps or 28.33 miles.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

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What Happened to Global Warming?

For 30 years, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I have lived here in Florida, enjoying the beautiful weather. The other morning, I got up, got my coffee, and sat down to begin the day.

No sooner had I sat down than I felt cold and began to shiver, as I hadn't shivered in a long time. The temperature was below my appreciation. I don't like it when it is cold. The only cold I like is in my iced tea and ice cream.

About that time, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage came into the room and said, "What happened to Global Warming?"

I was thinking the same thing at the time. We have heard about Global Warming for all this time, and now, all over the country, it is freezing, and snow is at an all-time high. If this is Global Warming, I need to see a psychiatrist.

Really, I do not understand what this Global Warming is all about. I hear it through the media, but I've reached a point where I question it. They will report one thing one day, and by the next day, it will be completely the opposite.

Handling cold weather is something I'm not very good at. I grew up in Pennsylvania, where we had lots of snow and cold weather. I loved it back then, but I was younger and could handle cold much better than I can today.

One result of getting older is that you can't handle cold. That's why people move to Florida. At least that is why we moved to Florida to get away from all that cold weather and snow.

A relative of mine who still lives up north asked me if I missed the cold, wintry, snowy weather. I told them, "Yes, I do miss all of that cold weather, and I plan to miss it the rest of my life."

In getting older, I have noticed that handling cold weather becomes more challenging. I heard it said here in Florida that when the temperature drops below your age, it is cold. When I first heard that, I chuckled, but I'm beginning to think it's somewhere close to being true.

Where people get the idea of a change in the weather is beyond me. This year, I'll turn 75, and as I look back through those years, there has been constant climate change. Spring leads into summer and summer into fall and fall into winter. That hasn't changed.

What has changed is my ability to handle cold weather. Once, I could handle 32°, but now I struggle with 50°. It can never be too hot for me, but it sure can be too cold.

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As The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I were sitting together, we had a shivering contest. I think she thought she could outshiver me, but I won that one. I can shiver like nobody you've ever seen. My shivering is to tell the cold to go north, where it belongs.

It puzzles me why these scientific organizations spend all their money and time on figuring out how old the Earth is, and that the climate is changing. Don't they have something better to spend their time and money on?

As we were shivering together, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and I reflected on our times up north, where we experienced all the cold and snow. She grew up in New York, where there was much more snow than in Pennsylvania.

One thing I have learned about running away from the cold is that it is healthier for me to stay warm than to get cold. I love to be warm. But I don't love shivering in the cold as though I have nothing else to do.

Maybe one of these days I'll become accustomed to the cold here in Florida. But until that time, I'm not a very happy camper with all of this cold.

I want to sue the weather broadcasters because I think it's their responsibility for all of this cold weather that I'm experiencing. Why can't they get on their media platform and say, "It's going to be a perfect day to day, enjoy it." But no, they have to say it's going to be colder today than yesterday.

Why can't all these weather broadcasters across the country get together and plan perfect weather every day? No more cold, or snow, or rain, but everything would be absolutely perfect. I could handle that.

Of course, I know that if the weather were perfect every day, all of those people would lose their job. However, I'm willing to take the chance.

I'm old enough to know nothing is perfect, except The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Besides her, nothing in this world is perfect.

If everything in the world were perfect, what would I have to complain about?

As I shivered in my chair over a cup of hot coffee, I was reminded of a verse in the Bible.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

EARTHTALK

India Doubles Wild Tiger Population In 10 Years by Pravit Kochar

Dear EarthTalk: How did India double its wild tiger population in just a decade and what can conservationists learn from this success story?
-- Patsy Wilson, New York, NY

India's doubling its wild tiger population in just 10 years is one of the most significant conservation success stories in modern history. In 2006, India's tiger population had fallen to just 1,411 individuals. By 2022, that number had climbed to more than 3,000, due to a coordinated, multi-level strategy combining law enforcement, habitat protection, community participation, and science-based management—an approach that offers important lessons for conservation efforts worldwide.

A cornerstone of this success is Project Tiger, launched in 1973, which established a nationwide network of protected areas dedicated to tiger conservation. Today, India has 53 tiger reserves covering over 75,000 square kilometers. Buffer zones and wildlife corridors help reduce human-wildlife conflict, allowing tigers to move between habitats, reducing inbreeding and strengthen genetic diversity across populations.

Poaching has historically been one of the greatest threats to tigers, but India has made major gains in combating it. The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 imposed strict penalties for wildlife crimes, and enforcement continues to intensify. Authorities now rely on camera traps, drones and real-time monitoring systems to detect illegal activity. As the BBC has reported, tiger deaths from poaching have declined significantly due to these strengthened measures.

Recognizing that conservation cannot succeed without public support, India has involved local communities directly. Villagers are reimbursed for livestock lost to tiger attacks, reducing the incentive for retaliation. Eco-tourism has expanded around tiger reserves, creating jobs and linking local livelihoods to wildlife protection. In some areas, families have voluntarily relocated to safer zones with financial assistance and access to services. Science plays a central role in guiding policy. Radio collars, GPS tracking and DNA sampling monitor tiger movement and health. Regular national censuses allow tracking of individual animals and adapting strategies in real time.

Despite its progress, challenges remain. Human-tiger conflict persists in some regions, and expanding infrastructure continues to fragment habitats. Sustained funding, political commitment and careful planning will be essential to maintaining momentum. India's tiger recovery shows that species decline is reversible. By integrating enforcement, habitat conservation, community engagement and scientific monitoring, other countries can apply similar strategies to protect their own endangered wildlife.



India's doubling its wild tiger population in just 10 years is one of the most significant conservation success stories in modern history. Credit: Pexels.com.

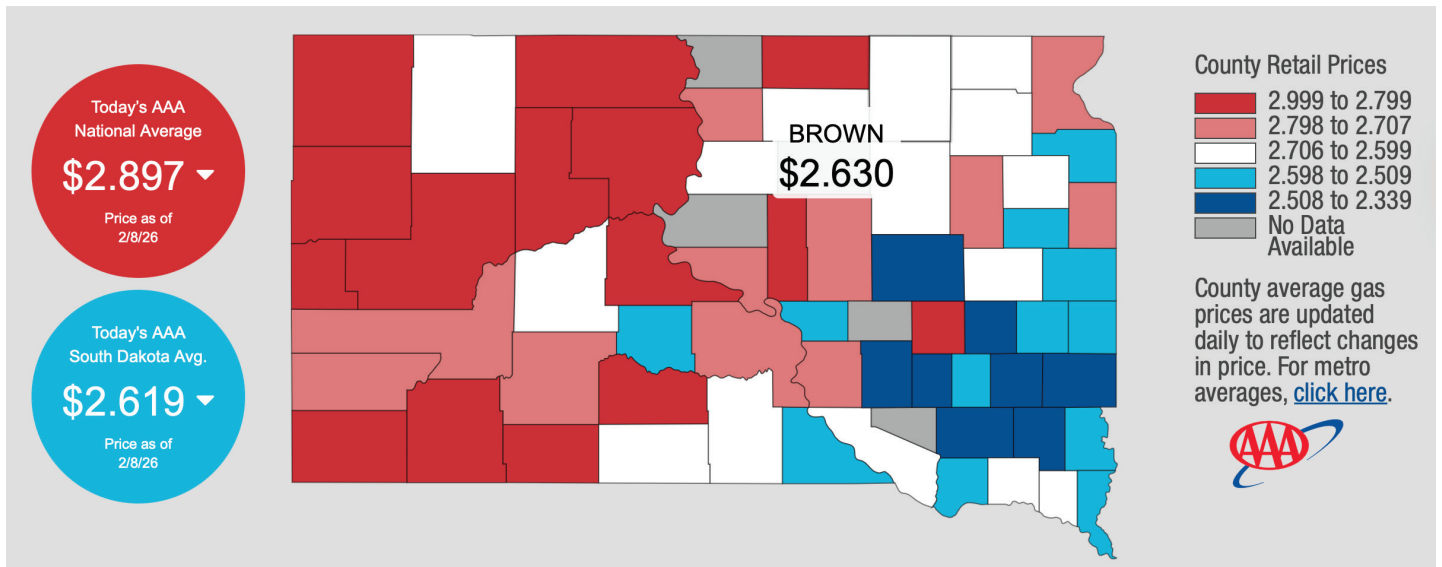
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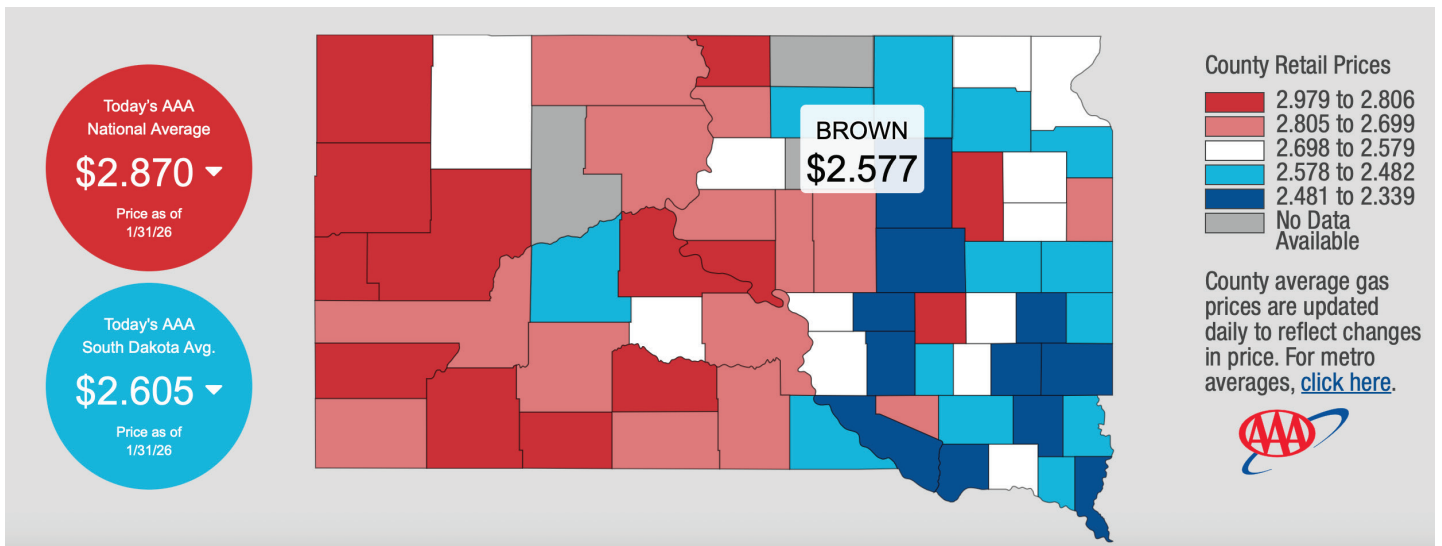
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$2.619	\$2.799	\$3.272	\$3.335
Yesterday Avg.	\$2.631	\$2.812	\$3.268	\$3.346
Week Ago Avg.	\$2.589	\$2.769	\$3.275	\$3.369
Month Ago Avg.	\$2.563	\$2.739	\$3.196	\$3.131
Year Ago Avg.	\$2.966	\$3.140	\$3.578	\$3.446

This Week



Last Week



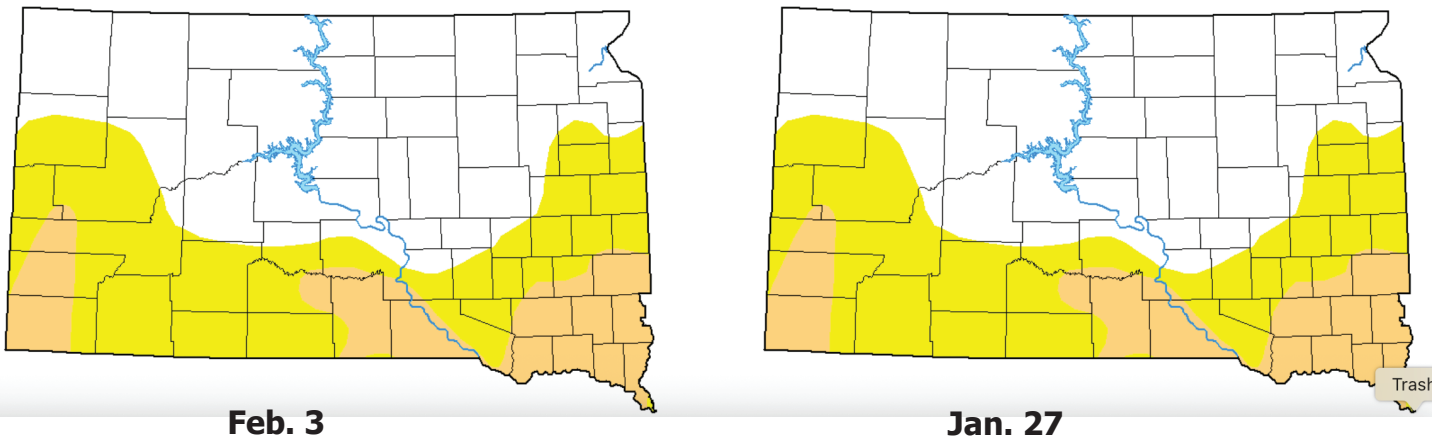
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Drought Classification

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)
- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

Drought Monitor



Conditions across the central and northern High Plains were mostly unchanged this week, as most of the region received little to no meaningful precipitation. Cold temperatures persisted, and where snow did fall, it remained largely frozen in place, limiting short-term benefits to soils or hydrologic conditions. Conditions across the Wyoming and Colorado Plains continued to deteriorate. Snow water equivalent (SWE) remains well below average, with SNOTEL data showing values generally in the 50 to 70 percent of median range, reflecting how snowpack continues to fall short for this time of year despite recent snowfall. Severe drought (D2) expanded from southeastern Wyoming into northeastern Colorado and a little into the Nebraska Panhandle. Abnormal dryness (D0) and moderate drought (D1) also expanded across portions of Kansas.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

COMMENTARY

Founders would be shocked by religious resolution, but not for the reason lawmaker said by Rick Snedeker

Republican state Rep. Phil Jensen of Rapid City was right to think America's Founding Fathers would be "rolling over in their grave" because the state's legislators recently debated whether to pass a formal resolution urging South Dakotans to invoke God to rescue the state from its most intractable problems.

But he was wrong about why he was right.

The Founders certainly would be aghast to learn that modern American elected representatives would insert religion directly into the lawmaking process — but not, as Rep. Jensen insists, because the Founders were foursquare in favor of such theological devotion and would be alarmed its necessity even needed a debate. The opposite is true: The Founders, although largely Christian (as most colonists at the time), were acutely aware of the catastrophic dangers of religious dominance of governments, which had led directly to disastrous, murderous wars between European Catholic and Protestant states in the Middle Ages. Armed with that hard knowledge, they sought to carve such overweening sectarian influences out of their new democratic republic's governance.

As one iconic founder, Thomas Jefferson, wrote in "Notes on the State of Virginia" in 1785: "It does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg."

Jefferson was stressing that a person's theological beliefs, or none, had no place in the crafting of practical laws in America's unique, secularly governed republic.

In other words, government and religion, to paraphrase Stephen Jay Gould, should be "non-overlapping magisteria," which is to say government and religion should be effectively separate from each other, walled-off, as it were. Gould wrote that science and religion were entirely separate — non-overlapping — realms of knowledge, as, in my and the Founders' view, government and religion should be.

That's one key purpose of religious freedom guaranteed in the First Amendment of the American Bill of Rights — not to allow religious ideology to run rampant in government but to allow the government to operate free of the overt, domineering, destructive influence theological ideology has so terribly enjoyed in past eras. More importantly, it allowed and still allows all Americans to believe in whatever deities they choose — or none at all — and have full confidence that our government cannot contradict or penalize those beliefs.

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We are in an era where theological-political activists — e.g., conservative Christian nationalists — have for years been trying (and often succeeding) in shoehorning their theological ideas into the American body politic and the nation's laws. American life and governance is being infiltrated by a spreading unconstitutional miasma of religion, whether it be evangelical Christian Bible classes in public schools; Supreme Court rescinding, due to Christian ideology, of decades-old laws legally allowing abortions; designated congressional Christian prayer weeks and chaplains, and other corruptions of church-state separation.

Rep. Jensen's "rolling over in their grave" comment came during recent passage in both legislative chambers of Resolution 604, sponsored by Republican Rep. Tony Randolph of Rapid City, "urging the people of the state of South Dakota to return to the Lord Most High, the Almighty and Uncreate, and plead for His mercy upon the state."

The resolution is nonbinding, meaning only symbolic, merely expressing a toothless opinion that is not law or formal policy.

Yet, Rep. Randolph insisted resolutely during the resolution debate that, "We are in the lowest moral state, probably, in the history of our nation. How do we deal with that? I say we go back to the root of what made this nation great and call on Him."

The measure's official text states that the nation was founded on "trust in the all-merciful, all-powerful hand of Providence," adding, "... we hold that only a continual submission to the sovereignty of the Almighty and wholly Righteous God ... will allow us to protect the liberties that have been given to us by the Almighty, from all forces that are intent on advancing an agenda that seeks to turn us away from rightly loving God and our neighbors."

Those protections, though, do not pertain to our Buddhist, atheist and other non-monotheist neighbors, apparently, of which there are arguably thousands in South Dakota and millions in the U.S.

Nonetheless, the resolution easily passed, 22-11 in the state Senate on Jan. 27 and 42-23 in the House of Representatives two days later.

Yes, I suspect the Founders would roll over in their graves to know that so many American lawmakers in South Dakota today are injecting sectarian religion into the sacred secular machinery of government.

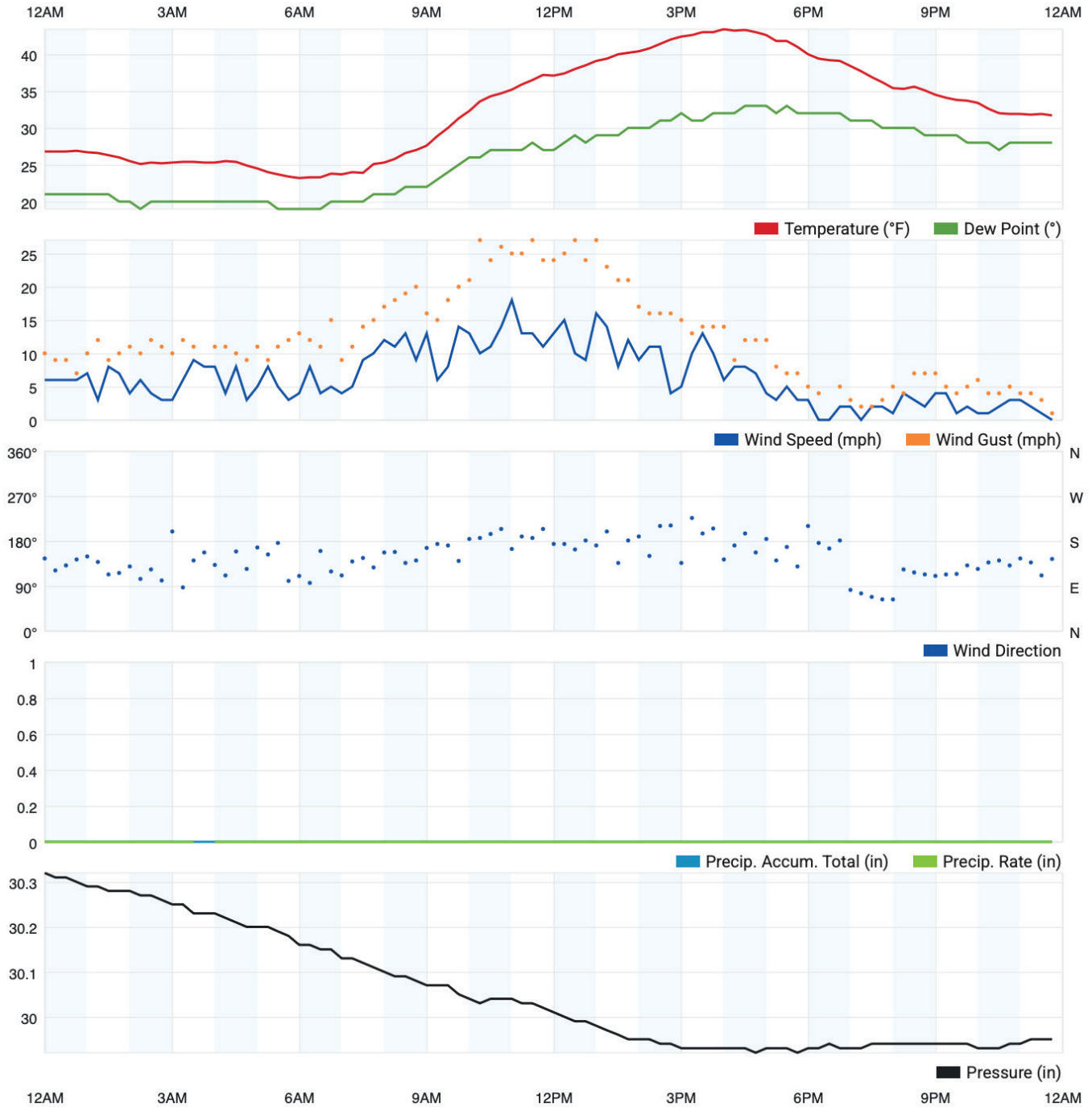
Rick Snedeker, a retired journalist living in Mitchell, is the author of a 2020 memoir about growing up in a Saudi oil camp in the 1950s, "3,001 Arabian Days," and a 2022 historical overview of Christianity's coercive evolution in America, "Holy Smoke."

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

February 7, 2026



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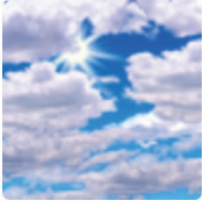
Today

Tonight

Monday

Monday Night

Tuesday



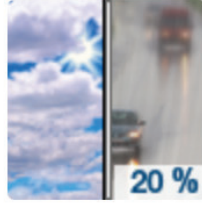
High: 45 °F

Decreasing
Clouds



Low: 32 °F

Increasing
Clouds



High: 44 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance Rain



Low: 26 °F

Decreasing
Clouds



High: 43 °F

Mostly Sunny

Today

Feb 8th, 2026



Highs 36 to 64 °F

Warmest west of the Missouri River and in south central SD. Coldest in far northeastern SD and in west central MN

Monday



40 to 53 °F

15-20% chance for some sprinkles of rain through the day over mainly north central SD



February 8, 2026

3:46 AM



Today will be rather warm for this time of the year. High temperatures will be between 36 to 64 degrees, with the warmest temperatures in areas west of the Missouri River and in south central SD. Monday will see fairly warm temperatures as well, though there is a 15-20% chance for some sprinkles of rain through the day mainly over north central SD.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 43 °F at 3:59 PM

Low Temp: 23 °F at 5:55 AM

Wind: 29 mph at 11:46 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 62 in 2000

Record Low: -46 in 1895

Average High: 27

Average Low: 4

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.16

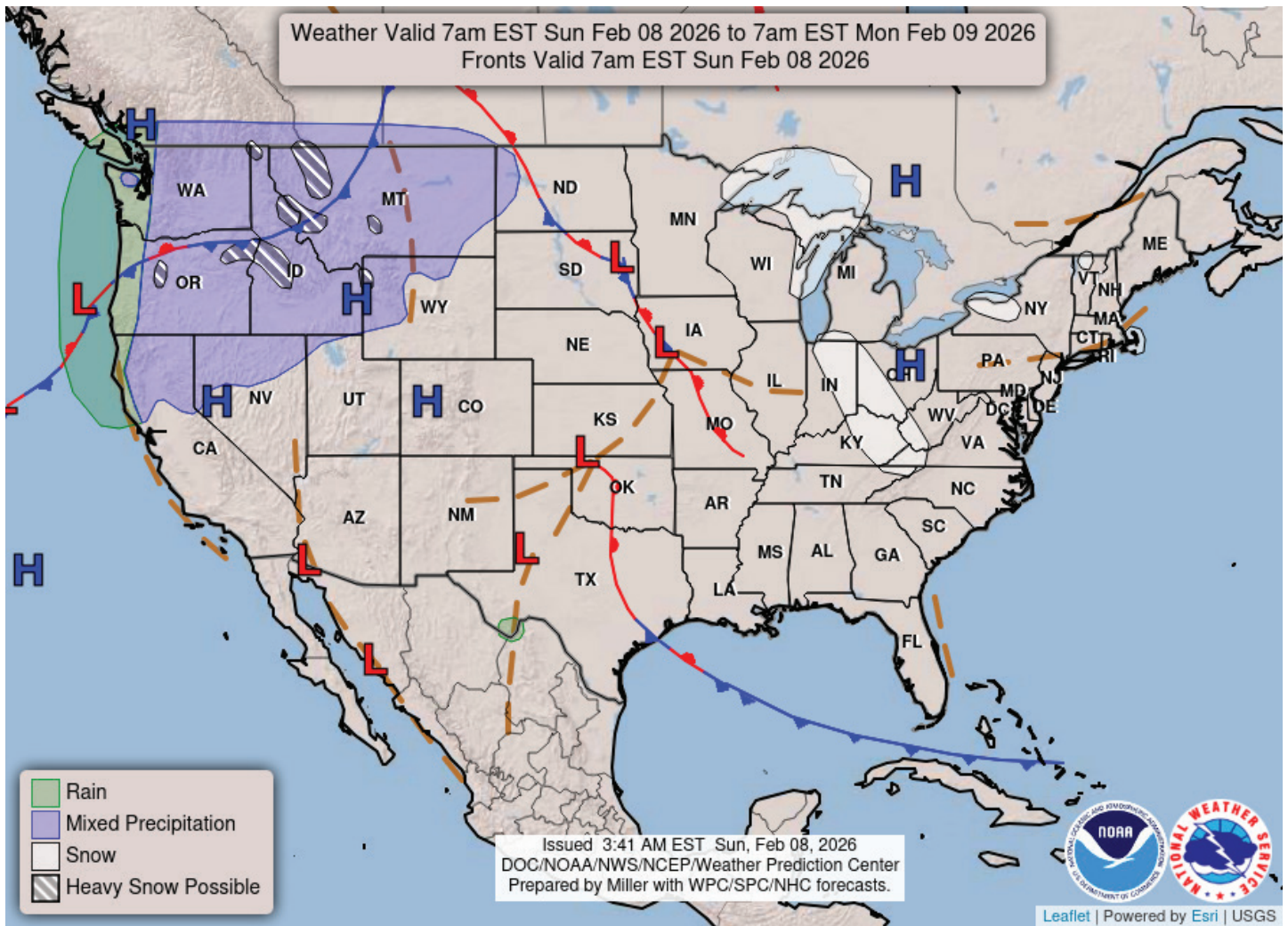
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 0.71

Precip Year to Date: 0.00

Sunset Tonight: 5:48 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:43 am



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Today in Weather History

February 8-9, 1909: Sioux Falls and the surrounding area experienced one of the largest snowfalls on record. Officially the storm dropped 21" of snow in Sioux Falls. Unfortunately, the snowfall was accompanied by high winds, which created large drifts.

February 8, 2000: A very warm air mass was over central and northeast South Dakota, where record highs were set in Aberdeen, Pierre, and Sisseton. Aberdeen rose to 62 degrees, Sisseton rose to 53 degrees, and Pierre rose to a warm 69 degrees.

1835 — A severe cold wave gripped the southeastern U.S. The mercury dipped to 8 above at Jacksonville FL, and to zero at Savannah GA. Orange trees were killed to the roots. (David Ludlum)

1936 — The temperature at Denver CO plunged to a record 30 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1956: From February 1-8, heavy snow fell over the Panhandle of Texas. Snowfall amounts include 43 inches in Vega, 24 inches in Hereford, and 14 inches in Amarillo. The storm caused 23 deaths and numerous injuries. It snowed continuously for 92 hours in some locations.

1968: The highest 1-day snow at the Savannah Airport in South Carolina occurs on this date when 3.6 inches of snow fell. Records began in 1871.

1985 — Blue Canyon, CA, set a 24-hour February snowfall record by receiving 42 inches of snow from February 7th-8th.

1987 — A powerful storm produced blizzard conditions in the Great Lakes Region. Winds gusted to 86 mph at Janesville WI and Cleveland OH received 12 inches of snow. North winds of 50 to 70 mph raised the water level of southern Lake Michigan two feet, and produced waves 12 to 18 feet high, causing seven million dollars damage along the Chicago area shoreline. It was the most damage caused by shoreline flooding and erosion in the history of the city of Chicago. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Arctic air invaded the north central U.S. Hibbing MN reported a morning low of 30 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — A winter storm over California produced snow from the beaches of Malibu to the desert canyons around Palm Springs, and the snow created mammoth traffic jams in the Los Angeles Basin. Sixteen cities in the western U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Marysville CA reported an all-time record low reading of 21 degrees above zero. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — Unseasonably mild weather prevailed across the south central and eastern U.S. Twenty-two cities, including five in Michigan, reported record high temperatures for the date. The afternoon high of 53 degrees at Flint MI surpassed their previous record by ten degrees, and the high of 66 degrees at Burlington IA exceeded their old record by eight degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

2005: Snow falls on the Jordanian capital and surrounding regions, blocking roads and closing schools. Parts of northern Iran and Tehran were paralyzed after being hit by several days of record snowfall, with dozens of flights canceled and critical roads also cut off.

2009 — Snow falls at levels above elevations of 11,000 feet on the Big Island's Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea in Hawaii. <http://islandnet.com/~see/weather/almanac/diaryfeb.htm>>The Weather Doctor

2013 — A nor'easter produced heavy snowfall over the New England states. In Boston, Massachusetts, total snowfall reached 24.9 inches, the fifth-highest total ever recorded in the city. New York City officially recorded 11.4 inches of snow at Central Park, and Portland, Maine, set a record of 31.9 inches. Hamden, Connecticut, recorded the highest snowfall of the storm at 40 inches.



Daily Devotion

How to Rekindle the Fire

Our spiritual condition matters—for us and everyone in our circle of influence.

Luke 10:26-28: 26 And He said to him, ``What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?"

27 And he answered, ``YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

28 And He said to him, ``You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE."

The Lord created us to live passionately for Him—not only for the joys we will experience in a relationship with the Creator but also for the benefit to those around us. Just as the warmth and beauty of flames draw people toward a hearth, God uses our passion to draw others to Himself (Matthew 5:16).

So we must be careful not to let our fervor fade. Thankfully, the indwelling Holy Spirit nudges believers who start to head in the wrong direction. If you sense this happening, you can take several steps to realign yourself with Him.

First, evaluate where you are spiritually—ask God whether your fire has dwindled to embers. Second, acknowledge any distance you've allowed to separate you from your heavenly Father, and repent. Third, refocus your attention on Jesus, and meditate on how He teaches His followers to live. Spend quality time in Scripture daily, asking the Lord to speak to you through His Word. Cry out earnestly, seeking God's guidance and wisdom. Fourth, rely upon the Holy Spirit to guide you back to an intimate and exciting relationship with the Father. Finally, love and serve God by worshipping Him and loving others.

If your spiritual passion has diminished, ask the Lord to help you renew it. Living closely with Him is well worth the effort.

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

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



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.06.26

13 21 25 52 62 19

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$366,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.07.26

7 22 26 38 41 1

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$15,030,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.07.26

8 30 31 37 38 5

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 12 Hrs 48 Mins
48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.07.26

9 12 18 20 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$263,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.07.26

28 37 38 48 63 14

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.07.26

25 36 42 51 58 6

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$113,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 63, Webster 53
Beresford 67, Alcester-Hudson 48
Brandon Valley 65, Rapid City Stevens 44
Bridgewater-Emery 68, Howard 38
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 61, Winner 58
Estelline-Hendricks 66, James Valley Christian School 62
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Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

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

Lindsey Vonn clips gate and crashes in Winter Olympic downhill, taken away by helicopter

By ANDREW DAMPF and PAT GRAHAM AP Sports Writers

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy (AP) — Lindsey Vonn 's defiant bid to win the Winter Olympic downhill at the age of 41, on a rebuilt right knee and a badly injured left knee, ended Sunday in a frightening crash that saw her taken to safety by a rescue helicopter for the second time in nine days.

Vonn lost control within moments of leaving the starting gate, clipping a gate with her right shoulder and pinwheeling down the slope before ending up awkwardly on her back, her skis crisscrossed below her and her screams ringing out soon after medical personnel arrived. She was treated for long, anguished minutes as a hush fell over the crowd waiting far below at the finish line.

She was strapped to a gurney and flown away, possibly ending the skier's storied career. Her condition was not immediately known, with the U.S. Ski Team saying simply she would be evaluated.

"She'll be OK, but it's going to be a bit of a process," said Anouk Patty, chief of sport for U.S. Ski and Snowboard. "This sport's brutal and people need to remember when they're watching (that) these athletes are throwing themselves down a mountain and going really, really fast."

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Breezy Johnson, Vonn's teammate, became only the second American woman to win the Olympic downhill after Vonn did it 16 years ago. The 30-year-old Johnson held off Emma Aicher of Germany and Italy's Sofia Goggia on a bittersweet day for the team.

"I don't claim to know what she's going through, but I do know what it is to be here, to be fighting for the Olympics, and to have this course burn you and to watch those dreams die," said Johnson, whose injury in Cortina in 2022 ruined hopes of skiing in the Beijing Olympics. "I can't imagine the pain that she's going through and it's not the physical pain -- we can deal with physical pain -- but the emotional pain is something else."

Vonn had family in the stands, including her father, Alan Kildow, who stared down at the ground while his daughter was being treated after just 13 seconds on the course where she holds a record 12 World Cup titles. Others in the crowd, including rapper Snoop Dogg, watched quietly as the star skier was finally taken off the course. Fellow American star Mikaela Shiffrin posted a broken heart emoji on social media.

Vonn's crash was "tragic, but it's ski racing," said Johan Eliasch, president of the International Ski and Snowboard Federation.

"I can only say thank you for what she has done for our sport," he said, "because this race has been the talk of the games and it's put our sport in the best possible light."

All eyes had been on Vonn, the feel-good story heading into the Olympics. She had returned to elite ski racing last season after nearly six years, a remarkable decision given her age but she also had a partial titanium knee replacement in her right knee, too. Many wondered how she would fare as she sought a gold medal to join the one she won in the downhill at the 2010 Vancouver Games.

The four-time overall World Cup champion stunned everyone by being a contender almost immediately. She came to the Olympics as the leader in the World Cup downhill standings and was a gold-medal favorite before her crash in Switzerland nine days ago, when she suffered her latest knee injury. In addition to a ruptured ACL, she also had a bone bruise and meniscus damage.

Still, no one counted her out even then. In truth, she has skied through injuries for three decades at the top of the sport. In 2006, ahead of the Turin Olympics, Vonn took a bad fall during downhill training and went to the hospital. She competed less than 48 hours later, racing in all four events she'd planned, with a top result of seventh in the super-G.

Cortina has had many treasured memories for Vonn beyond the record wins. She is called the queen of Cortina, and the Olympia delle Tofana is a course that had always suited Vonn. She tested out the knee twice in downhill training runs over the past three days before the awful crash on Sunday in clear, sunny conditions.

"This would be the best comeback I've done so far," Vonn said before the race. "Definitely the most dramatic."

News of the crash spread quickly, including to the fan zone down the mountain in Cortina.

"It's such a huge loss and bummer," American Megan Gunyou said. "I feel like hearing her story and just like the redemption of her first fall and like fighting to come back to the Olympics this year, I mean, I feel so sad for her."

Iran's top diplomat strikes a hard line on US talks, saying Tehran's power comes from saying 'no'

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran's top diplomat insisted Sunday that Tehran's strength came from its ability to "say no to the great powers," striking a maximalist position just after negotiations with the United States over its nuclear program and in the wake of nationwide protests.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking to diplomats at a summit in Tehran, signaled that Iran would stick to its position that it must be able to enrich uranium — a major point of contention with President Donald Trump, who bombed Iranian atomic sites in June during the 12-day Iran-Israel war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to travel to Washington this week, with Iran

expected to be the major subject of discussion, his office said.

While Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian praised the talks Friday in Oman with the Americans as “a step forward,” Araghchi’s remarks show the challenge ahead. Already, the U.S. moved the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, ships and warplanes to the Middle East to pressure Iran into an agreement and have the firepower necessary to strike the Islamic Republic should Trump choose to do so.

“I believe the secret of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s power lies in its ability to stand against bullying, domination and pressures from others,” Araghchi said. “They fear our atomic bomb, while we are not pursuing an atomic bomb. Our atomic bomb is the power to say no to the great powers. The secret of the Islamic Republic’s power is in the power to say no to the powers.”

‘Atomic bomb’ as rhetorical device

Araghchi’s choice to explicitly use an “atomic bomb” as a rhetorical device likely wasn’t accidental. While Iran has long maintained its nuclear program is peaceful, the West and the International Atomic Energy Agency say Tehran had an organized military program to seek the bomb up until 2003.

Iran had been enriching uranium up to 60% purity, a short, technical step to weapons-grade levels of 90%, the only non-weapons state to do so. Iranian officials in recent years had also been increasingly threatening that the Islamic Republic could seek the bomb, even while its diplomats have pointed to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s preachings as a binding fatwa, or religious edict, that Iran wouldn’t build one.

Pezeshkian, who ordered Araghchi to pursue talks with the Americans after likely getting Khamenei’s blessing, also wrote on X on Sunday about the talks.

“The Iran-U.S. talks, held through the follow-up efforts of friendly governments in the region, were a step forward,” the president wrote. “Dialogue has always been our strategy for peaceful resolution. ... The Iranian nation has always responded to respect with respect, but it does not tolerate the language of force.”

It remains unclear when and where, or if, there will be a second round of talks. Trump, after the talks Friday, offered few details but said: “Iran looks like they want to make a deal very badly — as they should.”

Aircraft carrier in the Arabian Sea

During Friday’s talks, U.S. Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, the head of the American military’s Central Command, was in Oman. Cooper’s presence was apparently an intentional reminder to Iran about U.S. military power in the region. Cooper later accompanied U.S. special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump’s son-in-law, to the Lincoln out in the Arabian Sea after the indirect negotiations.

Araghchi appeared to be taking the threat of an American military strike seriously, as many worried Iranians have in recent weeks. He noted that after multiple rounds of talks last year, the U.S. “attacked us in the midst of negotiations.”

“If you take a step back (in negotiations), it is not clear up to where it will go,” Araghchi said.

Gaza’s Rafah crossing reopens, allowing limited travel as Palestinians claim delays and mistreatment

By SAMY MAGDY and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — A limited number of Palestinians were able to travel between Gaza and Egypt on Sunday, after Gaza’s Rafah crossing reopened after a two-day closure, Egyptian state media reported.

The vital border point opened last week for the first time since 2024, one of the main requirements for the U.S.-backed ceasefire. The crossing was closed Friday and Saturday because of confusion about reopening operations.

Egypt’s Al Qahera television station said that Palestinians began crossing in both directions around noon on Sunday. Israel didn’t immediately confirm the information.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to travel to Washington this week, though the major subject of discussion will be Iran, his office said.

Delays and mistreatment accusations

Over the first four days of the crossing’s opening, just 36 Palestinians requiring medical care were allowed

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to leave for Egypt, plus 62 companions, according to U.N. data, after Israel retrieved the body of the last hostage held in Gaza and several American officials visited Israel to press for the opening.

Palestinian officials say nearly 20,000 people in Gaza are seeking to leave for medical care that isn't available in the territory. Those who have succeeded in crossing described delays and allegations of mistreatment by Israeli forces and other groups involved in the crossing, including an Israeli-backed Palestinian armed group, Abu Shabab.

A group of Palestinian patients and wounded gathered Sunday morning in the courtyard of a Red Crescent hospital in Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis, before making their way to the Rafah crossing with Egypt for treatment abroad, family members told The Associated Press.

Amjad Abu Jedian, who was injured in the war, was scheduled to leave Gaza for medical treatment on the first day of the crossing's reopening, but only five patients were allowed to travel that day, his mother, Raja Abu Jedian, said. Abu Jedian was shot by an Israeli sniper while he doing building work in the central Bureij refugee camp in July 2024, she said.

On Saturday, his family received a call from the World Health Organization notifying them that he is included in the group that will travel on Sunday, she said.

"We want them to take care of the patients (during their evacuation)," she said. "We want the Israeli military not to burden them."

The Israeli defense branch that oversees the operation of the crossing didn't immediately confirm the opening.

Heading back to Gaza

A group of Palestinians also arrived Sunday morning at the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing to return to the Gaza Strip, Egypt's state-run Al-Qahera News satellite television reported.

Palestinians who returned to Gaza in the first few days of the crossing's operation described hours of delays and invasive searches by Israeli authorities and Abu Shabab. A European Union mission and Palestinian officials run the border crossing, and Israel has its screening facility some distance away.

The crossing was reopened on Feb. 2 as part of a fragile ceasefire deal to halt the Israel-Hamas war.

The Rafah crossing, an essential lifeline for Palestinians in Gaza, was the only one in the Palestinian territory not controlled by Israel before the war. Israel seized the Palestinian side of Rafah in May 2024, though traffic through the crossing was heavily restricted even before that.

Restrictions negotiated by Israeli, Egyptian, Palestinian and international officials meant that only 50 people would be allowed to return to Gaza each day and 50 medical patients — along with two companions for each — would be allowed to leave, but far fewer people have so far crossed in both directions.

Hamas negotiations

A senior Hamas official, Khaled Mashaal, said the militant group is open to discuss the future of its arms as part of a "balanced approach" that includes the reconstruction of Gaza and protecting the Palestinian enclave from Israel.

Mashaal said the group has offered multiple options, including a long-term truce, as part of its ongoing negotiations with Egyptian, Qatari and Turkish mediators.

Hamas plans to agree to a number of "guarantees," including a 10-year period of disarmament and an international peacekeeping force on the borders, "to maintain peace and prevent any clashes," between the militants and Israel, Mashaal said at a forum in Qatar's capital, Doha.

Israel has repeatedly demanded a complete disarmament and destruction of Hamas and its infrastructure, both military and civil.

Mashaal accused Israel of financing and arming militias, like the Abu Shabab group which operates in Israeli military-controlled areas in Gaza, "to create chaos" in the enclave.

In the forum, Mashaal was asked about Hamas' position from U.S. President Donald Trump's Board of Peace. He didn't offer a specific answer, but said that the group won't accept "foreign intervention" in Palestinian affairs.

"Gaza is for the people of Gaza. Palestinians are for the people of Palestine," he said. "We will not ac-

cept foreign rule.”

Paul Thomas Anderson wins at 78th Directors Guild Awards for ‘One Battle After Another’

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Paul Thomas Anderson won the top prize at the 78th Directors Guild Awards, putting the “One Battle After Another” filmmaker on course to potentially win his first Oscar.

The DGA Awards, held Saturday night at the Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California, is among the most reliable Academy Awards precursors. In the last 10 years, nine DGA winners have gone on to win best director at the Oscars. In the guild’s nearly eight-decade history, only eight times has the guild not predicted the Oscar winner.

The award adds to a virtual awards-season sweep for “One Battle After Another,” which has won with critics groups, the Gotham Awards and the Golden Globes. It’s considered the favorite for best picture at the March 15 Oscars. Academy voting begins Feb. 26.

The other nominees were Ryan Coogler (“Sinners”), Guillermo Del Toro (“Frankenstein”), Josh Safdie (“Marty Supreme”) and Chloé Zhao (“Hamnet”).

As he’s often done through awards season, Anderson in his brief speech paid tribute to late assistant director Adam Somner, who died in 2024. “Obviously,” he said, “we are up here minus one.”

The awards, hosted by Kumail Nanjiani, were the first presided over by new Directors Guild of America president Christopher Nolan. He began the ceremony acknowledging “very hard times” for filmmakers.

“In 2024, our employment in our guild was down about 40%, and that was followed by another decline in ‘25,” said Nolan. “The amount of money that people spend on our work, on entertainment, is very, very stable. Audiences are invested in us, we have to be sure that we’re able to repay that investment.”

Other winners Saturday included “The Plague” filmmaker Charlie Polinger for first-time director; “2000 Meters to Andriivka” director Mstyslav Chernov for best documentary filmmaking; and “The Studio” directors Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg for comedy series.

Takaichi’s ruling party on path to winning a majority in Japan’s lower house vote, exit polls say

By MARI YAMAGUCHI and FOSTER KLUG Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi’s governing party is almost certain to win a single-party majority in a key parliamentary election Sunday, NHK public television and other major networks say, citing their exit polls.

NHK says Takaichi’s governing coalition led by her Liberal Democratic Party could also win more than two-thirds of the 465-seat lower house, the more powerful of the country’s two-chamber parliament. That’s a level that would allow the governing bloc to dominate house committee chairs to steer policy and budget bills.

NHK, citing results of early vote counts, said the LDP alone secured 244 seats, surpassing a majority at 233.

The huge jump from the pre-election share may allow Takaichi to make progress on a right-wing agenda that aims to boost Japan’s economy and military capabilities as tensions grow with China and she tries to nurture ties with the United States.

Takaichi is hugely popular, but the governing LDP, which has ruled Japan for most of the last seven decades, has struggled with funding and religious scandals in recent years. She called Sunday’s early election only after three months in office, hoping to turn that around while her popularity is high.

A popular leader

The ultraconservative Takaichi, who took office as Japan’s first female leader in October, pledged to “work, work, work,” and her style, which is seen as both playful and tough, has resonated with younger fans.

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The opposition, despite the formation of a new centrist alliance and a rising far-right, is seen as too splintered to be a real challenger. The new opposition alliance of LDP's former coalition partner, Buddhist-backed dovish Komeito, and the liberal-leaning Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, is projected to sink to half of their combined pre-election share of 167 seats.

Takaichi was betting with this election that her LDP party, together with its new partner, the Japan Innovation Party, would secure a majority.

Pushing right-wing policies

Takaichi wants to push forward a significant shift to the right in Japan's security, immigration and other policies. The LDP's right-wing partner, JIP leader Hirofumi Yoshimura, said his party will serve as an "accelerator" for this push.

Japan has recently seen far-right populists gain ground, such as the anti-globalist and surging nationalist party Sanseito. Exit polls projected a big gain for Sanseito.

Takaichi has pledged to revise security and defense policies by December to bolster Japan's offensive military capabilities, lifting a ban on weapons exports and moving further away from the country's postwar pacifist principles.

She has been pushing for tougher policies on foreigners, anti-espionage and other measures that resonate with a far-right audience, but ones that experts say could undermine civil rights.

Takaichi also wants to increase defense spending in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's pressure for Japan to loosen its purse strings.

Divisive policies

Though Takaichi said that she's seeking to win support for policies seen as divisive in Japan, she largely avoided discussing ways to fund soaring military spending, how to fix diplomatic tension with China and other issues.

In her campaign speeches, Takaichi enthusiastically talked about the need for proactive government spending to fund "crisis management investment and growth," such as measures to strengthen economic security, technology and other industries. Takaichi also seeks to push tougher measures on immigration, including stricter requirements for foreign property owners and a cap on foreign residents.

Sunday's election "underscores a problematic trend in Japanese politics in which political survival takes priority over substantive policy outcomes," said Masato Kamikubo, a Ritsumeikan University politics professor. "Whenever the government attempts necessary but unpopular reforms ... the next election looms."

Impact of snow and younger voters

Sunday's vote coincided with fresh snowfall across the country, including in Tokyo. Record snowfall in northern Japan over the past few weeks blocked roads and was blamed for dozens of deaths nationwide.

Kazuki Ishihara, 54, said that she voted for the LDP for stability and in hopes for something new under Takaichi.

"I have some hope that she could do something" her predecessors could not, Ishihara said.

Voters are worried about the cost of housing. But Trump wants home prices to keep climbing

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump wants to keep home prices high, bypassing calls to ramp up construction so people can afford what has been a ticket to the middle class.

Trump has instead argued for protecting existing owners who have watched the values of their homes climb. It's a position that flies in the face of what many economists, the real estate industry, local officials and apartment dwellers say is needed to fix a big chunk of America's affordability problem.

"I don't want to drive housing prices down. I want to drive housing prices up for people that own their homes, and they can be assured that's what's going to happen," Trump told his Cabinet on Jan. 29.

That approach could bolster the Republican president's standing with older voters, a group that over time has been more likely to vote in midterm elections. Those races in November will determine whether

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Trump's party can retain control of the House and Senate.

"You have a lot of people that have become wealthy in the last year because their house value has gone up," Trump said. "And you know, when you get the housing — when you make it too easy and too cheap to buy houses — those values come down."

But by catering to older baby boomers on housing, Trump risks alienating the younger voters who expanded his coalition in 2024 and helped him win a second term, and he could wade into a "generational war" in the midterms, said Brent Buchanan, whose polling firm Cygnal advises Republicans.

"The under-40 group is the most important right now — they are the ones who put Trump in the White House," Buchanan said. "Their desire to show up in an election or not is going to make the difference in this election. If they feel that Donald Trump is taking care of the boomers at their expense, that is going to hurt Republicans."

The logic in appealing to older voters

In the 2024 presidential election, 81% of Trump's voters were homeowners, according to AP VoteCast data. This means many of his supporters already have mortgages with low rates or own their homes outright, possibly blunting the importance of housing as an issue.

Older voters tend to show up to vote more than do younger people, said Oscar Pocasangre, a senior data analyst at liberal think tank New America who has studied the age divide in U.S. politics. "However, appealing to older voters may prove to be a misguided policy if what's needed to win is to expand the voting base," Pocasangre said.

Before the 2026 elections, voters have consistently rated affordability as a top concern, and that is especially true for younger voters with regard to housing.

Booker Lightman, 30, a software engineer in Highlands Ranch, Colorado, who identifies politically as a libertarian Republican, said the shortage of housing has been a leading problem in his state.

Lightman just closed on a home last month, and while he and his wife, Alice, were able to manage the cost, he said that the lack of construction is pushing people out of Colorado. "There's just not enough housing supply," he said.

Shay Hata, a real estate agent in the Chicago and Denver areas, said she handles about 100 to 150 transactions a year. But she sees the potential for a lot more. "We have a lack of inventory to the point where most properties, particularly in the suburbs, are getting between five and 20 offers," she said, describing what she sees in the Chicago area.

New construction could help more people afford homes because in some cases, buyers qualify for discounted mortgage rates from the builders' preferred lenders, Hata said. She called the current situation "very discouraging for buyers because they're getting priced out of the market."

But pending construction has fallen under Trump. Permits to build single-family homes have plunged 9.4% over the past 12 months in October, the most recent month available, to an annual rate of 876,000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Trump's other ideas to help people buy houses

Trump has not always been against increasing housing supply.

During the 2024 campaign, Trump's team said he would create tax breaks for homebuyers, trim regulations on construction, open up federal land for housing developments and make monthly payments more manageable by cutting mortgage rates. Advisers also claimed that housing stock would open up because of Trump's push for mass deportations of people who were in the United States illegally.

As recently as October, Trump urged builders to ramp up construction. "They're sitting on 2 Million empty lots, A RECORD. I'm asking Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to get Big Homebuilders going and, by so doing, help restore the American Dream!" Trump posted on social media, referring to the government-backed lenders.

But more recently, he has been unequivocal on not wanting to pursue policies that would boost supply and lower prices.

In office, Trump has so far focused his housing policy on lobbying the Federal Reserve to cut its benchmark interest rates. He believes that would make mortgages more affordable, although critics say it could

spur higher inflation. Trump announced that the two mortgage companies, which are under government conservatorship, would buy at least \$200 billion in home loan securities in a bid to reduce rates.

Trump also wants Congress to ban large financial institutions from buying homes. But he has rejected suggestions for expanding rules to let buyers use 401(k) retirement accounts for down payments, telling reporters that he did not want people to take their money out of the stock market because it was doing so well.

There are signs that lawmakers in both parties see the benefits of taking steps to add houses before this year's elections. There are efforts in the Senate and House to jump-start construction through the use of incentives to change zoning restrictions, among other policies.

One of the underlying challenges on affordability is that home prices have been generally rising faster than incomes for several years.

This makes it harder to save for down payments or upgrade to a nicer home. It also means that the places where people live increasingly double as their key financial asset, one that leaves many families looking moneyed on paper even if they are struggling with monthly bills.

There is another risk for Trump. If the economy grows this year, as he has promised, that could push up demand for houses — as well as their prices — making the affordability problem more pronounced, said Edward Pinto, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a center-right think tank.

Pinto said construction of single-family homes would have to rise by 50% to 100% during the next three years for average home price gains to be flat — a sign, he said, that Trump's fears about falling home prices were probably unwarranted.

"It's very hard to crater home prices," Pinto said.

France's former culture minister resigns over Epstein-linked tax fraud probe

PARIS (AP) — France's former Culture Minister Jack Lang has resigned as head of a Paris cultural center over alleged past financial links to convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein that prompted a tax investigation.

He is the highest-profile figure in France impacted by the release of Epstein files on Jan. 30 by the U.S. Department of Justice. He is known for his role as a culture minister under Socialist President François Mitterrand in the 1980s and 1990s.

Lang, 86, was summoned to appear at the French Foreign Ministry, which oversees the Arab World Institute, on Sunday, but he submitted his resignation.

He "is very sad and deeply hurt to be leaving a position he loves," his lawyer Laurent Merlet said Sunday on RTL radio. "He put the interests of the Arab World Institute first," Merlet said, adding that his client denied the allegations and called them inaccurate.

The Foreign Ministry confirmed his resignation Saturday evening.

The financial prosecutors' office said it had opened an investigation into Lang and his daughter, Caroline, over alleged "aggravated tax fraud laundering."

French investigative news website Mediapart reported last week on alleged financial and business ties between the Lang family and Jeffrey Epstein through an offshore company based in the U.S. Virgin Islands in the Caribbean Sea.

Jack Lang's name was mentioned more than 600 times in the Epstein files, showing intermittent correspondence between 2012 and 2019. His daughter was also in the released files.

Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot has "taken note" of Lang's resignation and began the process to look for his successor, the foreign ministry said.

Lang headed the Arab World Institute since 2013.

Thailand counts votes in early election with 3 main parties vying for power

By GRANT PECK and JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — Vote counting was underway in Thailand's early general election on Sunday, seen as a three-way race among competing visions of progressive, populist and old-fashioned patronage politics.

The battle for support from 53 million registered voters came against a backdrop of slow economic growth and heightened nationalist sentiment. While more than 50 parties contested the polls, only three — the People's Party, Bhumjaithai, and Pheu Thai — have the nationwide organization and popularity to gain a winning mandate.

A simple majority of the 500 elected lawmakers selects the next prime minister.

No outright winner expected

Local polls consistently project that no single party will gain a majority, necessitating the formation of a coalition government.

Although the progressive People's Party is seen as favored to win a plurality, its reformist politics aren't shared by its leading rivals, which may freeze it out by joining forces to form a government.

The People's Party, led by Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut, is the successor to the Move Forward Party, which won the most seats in the House of Representatives in 2023, but was blocked from forming a government by conservative lawmakers and then forced to dissolve.

"I think we will get the mandate from the people, and we promised the people that we will form the people's government to bring policies that benefit all, not a few in the country," Natthaphong told reporters after casting his ballot in Bangkok.

Reformist party softens its pitch

His party's platform continues to promise sweeping reforms of the military, police and judiciary, appealing to youth and urban voters. Legal constraints have led it to set aside demands for reform of a law that metes out harsh penalties for criticism of the monarchy, while putting new emphasis on economic issues.

Softening its politics risks weakening its core support, already at risk because the last election had positioned it squarely as the alternative to nine previous years of military-led government, a situation it can't fruitfully exploit this time.

At the same time, its positions critical of the military can be a political liability with the surge of patriotism that emerged during last year's border clashes with Cambodia, said Napon Jatusripitak, director of the Center for Politics and Geopolitics at Thailand Future, a Bangkok-based think tank.

The Bhumjaithai Party, headed by incumbent Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, is seen as the main defender and preferred choice of the royalist-military establishment.

Anutin has been prime minister only since last September, after serving in the Cabinet of his immediate predecessor, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, who was forced out of office for an ethics violation regarding mishandling relations with Cambodia. He dissolved parliament in December to call a new election after he was threatened with a no-confidence vote.

Subsequent border clashes with Cambodia allowed Anutin to recast himself as a wartime leader after his popularity initially slipped because of floods and financial scandals. His campaign focuses on national security and economic stimulus.

"We have done everything that we had to, but we cannot force the mind of the people. We can only present ourselves, and hope that the people will have faith in us," Anutin said after casting ballots in northeastern Buriram province, his party's stronghold.

Bhumjaithai, seen as the likeliest party to form the next government, benefits from an electoral strategy employing old-style patronage politics and a machine skilled at grassroots organizing in the vote-rich northeast.

Thaksin's political machine

The Pheu Thai Party is the latest political vehicle for billionaire former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Thaksin-backed parties staged repeated electoral comebacks, only to be ousted by conservative-leaning

courts and state watchdog agencies.

It softened its politics enough by the 2023 election to be returned to power after being judged by the previously hostile royalist-military establishment as an acceptable alternative to the more progressive Move Forward party.

The conservative court system rounded on it anyway — ousting two of its prime ministers over two years and ordering Thaksin imprisoned on old charges. The party now campaigns on economic revival and populist pledges like cash handouts, nominating Thaksin's nephew, Yodchanan Wongsawat, as its lead candidate for prime minister.

"I'm excited, because I think today will be another busy day for the country's democracy," Yodchanan told reporters after voting.

Sunday's voting includes a referendum asking voters whether Thailand should replace its 2017 military-drafted constitution.

The vote isn't on a proposed draft, but rather to decide whether to authorize parliament to begin a formal drafting process, which would require many further steps before coming to fruition.

Pro-democracy groups view a new charter as a critical step toward reducing the influence of unelected institutions such as the military and judiciary, while conservatives warn that it could cause instability.

Drake Maye and the Patriots take on Sam Darnold and the Seahawks in Super Bowl 60

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — It's almost time to crown an NFL champion.

After two weeks of hype and anticipation, the New England Patriots and Seattle Seahawks will face off in Super Bowl 60 at Levi's Stadium on Sunday.

Will Drake Maye and the Patriots (17-3) capture their seventh Lombardi Trophy? Or will Sam Darnold and the Seahawks (16-3) earn their second?

The matchup features two stingy defenses, two balanced offenses and two quarterbacks who've taken vastly different routes to get here.

Led by defensive tackle Leonard Williams, linebacker Ernest Jones, cornerback Devon Witherspoon and rookie safety Nick Emmanwori, the Seahawks allowed the fewest points in the NFL and have standout players at every level.

The Patriots advanced to a record 12th Super Bowl because their defense has been dominant in the playoffs, allowing only 8.7 points per game.

Darnold has All-Pro wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba, veteran wideout Cooper Kupp and running back Kenneth Walker around him.

Running backs TreVeyon Henderson and Rhamondre Stevenson and wide receiver Stefon Diggs give Maye plenty of support on New England's offense.

The 23-year old Maye will be the second-youngest quarterback to start a Super Bowl. He's aiming to become the youngest to win it.

The Patriots won six rings with coach Bill Belichick and Tom Brady. AP NFL Coach of the Year Mike Vrabel, who was a linebacker on three of those teams, is seeking his first as a head coach.

Seahawks coach Mike Macdonald is only in his second season and first with Darnold, who's on his fifth team in eight years in the NFL. The 2018 No. 3 overall pick has finally found a home after bouncing around the league.

This is a rematch of the Super Bowl 11 years ago. Brady and the Patriots won that one, 28-24, after Russell Wilson's pass from the 1-yard line in the final minute was intercepted by Malcolm Butler.

According to BetMGM Sportsbook, the Patriots are 4 1/2-point underdogs against Seattle.

Hard hats and dummy plates: Reports of ICE ruses add to fears in Minnesota

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — For days, Luis Ramirez had an uneasy feeling about the men dressed as utility workers he'd seen outside his family's Mexican restaurant in suburban Minneapolis.

They wore high-visibility vests and spotless white hard hats, he noticed, even while parked in their vehicle. His search for the Wisconsin-based electrician advertised on the car's doors returned no results.

On Tuesday, when their Nissan returned to the lot outside his restaurant, Ramirez, 31, filmed his confrontation with the two men, who hide their faces as he approaches and appear to be wearing heavy tactical gear beneath their yellow vests.

"This is what our taxpayer money goes to: renting these vehicles with fake tags to come sit here and watch my business," Ramirez shouts in the video.

A spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement did not respond to inquiries about whether the men were federal immigration officers. But encounters like Ramirez's have become increasingly common.

As the sweeping immigration crackdown in Minnesota continues, legal observers and officials say they have received a growing number of reports of federal agents impersonating construction workers, delivery drivers and in some cases anti-ICE activists.

Not all of those incidents have been verified, but they have heightened fears in a state already on edge, adding to legal groups' concerns about the Trump administration's dramatic reshaping of immigration enforcement tactics nationwide.

"If you have people afraid that the electrical worker outside their house might be ICE, you're inviting public distrust and confusion on a much more dangerous level," said Naureen Shah, the director of immigration advocacy at the American Civil Liberties Union. "This is what you do if you're trying to control a populace, not trying to do routine, professional law enforcement."

A 'more extreme degree' of deception

In the past, immigration authorities have sometimes used disguises and other deceptions, which they call ruses, to gain entry into homes without a warrant.

The tactics became more common during President Donald Trump's first term, attorneys said, prompting an ACLU lawsuit accusing immigration agents of violating the U.S. Constitution by posing as local law enforcement during home raids. A recent settlement restricted the practice in Los Angeles. But ICE deceptions remain legal elsewhere in the country.

Still, the undercover operations reported in Minnesota would appear to be a "more extreme degree than we've seen in the past," said Shah, in part because they seem to be happening in plain sight.

Where past ruses were aimed at deceiving immigration targets, the current tactics may also be a response to the Minnesota's sprawling networks of citizen observers that have sought to call attention to federal agents before they make arrests.

At the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building in Minneapolis, the city's central hub of ICE activity, activists told The Associated Press they had seen agents leaving in vehicles with stuffed animals on their dashboards or Mexican flag decals on their bumpers. Pickups with lumber or tools in their beds were also frequently spotted.

In recent weeks, federal agents have repeatedly shown up to construction sites dressed as workers, according to Jose Alvillar, a lead organizer for the local immigrant rights group, Unidos MN.

"We've seen an increase in the cowboy tactics," he said, though he noted the raids had not resulted in arrests. "Construction workers are good at identifying who is a real construction worker and who is dressing up as one."

Using vintage plates

Since the start of the operation in Minnesota, local officials, including Democratic Gov. Tim Walz, have said ICE agents had been seen swapping license plates or using bogus ones, a violation of state law.

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Candice Metrailler, an antiques dealer in south Minneapolis, believes she witnessed such an attempt firsthand.

On Jan. 13, she received a call from a man who identified himself as a collector, asking if her store sold license plates. She said it did. A few minutes later, two men in street clothes entered the shop and began looking through her collection of vintage plates.

"One of them says, 'Hey, do you have any recent ones?'" Metrailler recalled. "Immediately, an alarm bell went off in my head."

Metrailler stepped outside while the men continued browsing. A few doors down from the shop, she saw an idling Ford Explorer with blacked out windows. She memorized its license plate, then quickly plugged it into a crowdsourced database used by local activists to track vehicles linked to immigration enforcement.

The database shows an identical Ford with the same plates had been photographed leaving the Whipple building seven times and reported at the scene of an immigration arrest weeks earlier.

When one of the men approached the register holding a white Minnesota plate, Metrailler said she told him that the store had a new policy against selling the items.

Metrailler said she had reported the incident to Minnesota's attorney general. A spokesperson for DHS did not respond to a request for comment.

A response to obstruction

Supporters of the immigration crackdown say the volunteer army of ICE-tracking activists in Minneapolis has forced federal agents to adopt new methods of avoiding detection.

"Of course agents are adapting their tactics so that they're a step ahead," said Scott Mechkowski, former deputy director of ICE enforcement and operations in New York City. "We've never seen this level of obstruction and interference."

In nearly three decades in immigration enforcement, Mechkowski said he also hadn't seen ICE agent disguising themselves as uniformed workers in the course of making arrests.

Earlier this summer, a spokesperson for DHS confirmed a man wearing a high-visibility construction vest was an ICE agent conducting surveillance. In Oregon, a natural gas company published guidance last month on how customers could identify their employees after reports of federal impersonators.

In the days since his encounter, Ramirez, the restaurant worker, said he has been on high alert for undercover agents. He recently stopped a locksmith who he feared might be a federal agent, before quickly realizing he was a local resident.

"Everybody is on edge about these guys, man," Ramirez said. "It feels like they're everywhere."

Washington Post publisher Will Lewis says he's stepping down, days after big layoffs at the paper

By DAVID BAUDER AP Media Writer

Washington Post publisher Will Lewis said Saturday that he's stepping down, ending a troubled tenure three days after the newspaper said that it was laying off one-third of its staff.

Lewis announced his departure in a two-paragraph email to the newspaper's staff, saying that after two years of transformation, "now is the right time for me to step aside." The Post's chief financial officer, Jeff D'Onofrio, was appointed temporary publisher.

Neither Lewis nor the newspaper's billionaire owner Jeff Bezos participated in the meeting with staff members announcing the layoffs on Wednesday. While anticipated, the cutbacks were deeper than expected, resulting in the shutdown of the Post's renowned sports section, the elimination of its photography staff and sharp reductions in personnel responsible for coverage of metropolitan Washington and overseas.

They came on top of widespread talent defections in recent years at the newspaper, which lost tens of thousands of subscribers following Bezos' order late in the 2024 presidential campaign pulling back from a planned endorsement of Kamala Harris, and a subsequent reorienting of its opinion section in a more conservative direction.

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Martin Baron, the Post's first editor under Bezos, condemned his former boss this week for attempting to curry favor with President Donald Trump and called what has happened at the newspaper "a case study in near-instant, self-inflicted brand destruction."

The British-born Lewis was a former top executive at The Wall Street Journal before taking over at The Post in January 2024. His tenure has been rocky from the start, marked by layoffs and a failed reorganization plan that led to the departure of former top editor Sally Buzbee.

His initial choice to take over for Buzbee, Robert Winnett, withdrew from the job after ethical questions were raised about both he and Lewis' actions while working in England. They include paying for information that produced major stories, actions that would be considered unethical in American journalism. The current executive editor, Matt Murray, took over shortly thereafter.

Lewis didn't endear himself to Washington Post journalists with blunt talk about their work, at one point saying in a staff meeting that they needed to make changes because not enough people were reading their work.

This week's layoffs have led to some calls for Bezos to either increase his investment in The Post or sell it to someone who will take a more active role. Lewis, in his note, praised Bezos: "The institution could not have had a better owner," he said.

"During my tenure, difficult decisions have been taken in order to ensure the sustainable future of The Post so it can for many years ahead publish high-quality nonpartisan news to millions of customers each day," Lewis said.

The Washington Post Guild, the union representing staff members, called Lewis' exit long overdue.

"His legacy will be the attempted destruction of a great American journalism institution," the Guild said in a statement. "But it's not too late to save The Post. Jeff Bezos must immediately rescind these layoffs or sell the paper to someone willing to invest in its future."

Bezos did not mention Lewis in a statement saying D'Onofrio and his team are positioned to lead The Post into "an exciting and thriving next chapter."

"The Post has an essential journalistic mission and an extraordinary opportunity," Bezos said. "Each and every day our readers give us a roadmap to success. The data tells us what is valuable and where to focus."

D'Onofrio, who joined the paper last June after jobs at the digital ad management company Raptive, Google, Zagat and Major League Baseball, said in a note to staff that "we are ending a hard week of change with more change."

"This is a challenging time across all media organizations, and The Post is unfortunately no exception," he wrote. "I've had the privilege of helping chart the course of disrupters and cultural stalwarts alike. All faced economic headwinds in changing industry landscapes, and we rose to meet those moments. I have no doubt we will do just that, together."

'We will pay,' Savannah Guthrie says in desperate video plea to potential kidnappers of her mother

By CHRISTOPHER WEBER and TY ONEIL Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Savannah Guthrie told the potential kidnappers of her mother Nancy Guthrie on Saturday that the family is prepared to pay for her safe return, as the frantic search for the 84-year-old Arizona resident has entered a seventh day.

"We received your message, and we understand. We beg you now to return our mother to us so that we can celebrate with her," she said in a video posted on social media, flanked by her siblings. "This is the only way we will have peace. This is very valuable to us, and we will pay."

The "Today" show host was referencing a message that was sent to the Tucson-based television station KOLD on Friday afternoon, according to Kevin Smith, a spokesperson for the FBI office in Phoenix.

KOLD said it received an email related to the Guthrie case on social media that day but declined to share specific details about its contents as the FBI conducted its review.

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The station was one of multiple press outlets that received alleged ransom letters during the week. At least one letter made monetary demands and established Thursday evening and the following Monday evening as deadlines.

In a news conference Thursday, law enforcement officials declined to affirm that the letters were credible but said all tips were being investigated seriously. They also said one letter referenced Nancy Guthrie's Apple watch and a specific feature of her property.

The video released Saturday was the third this week that pleaded with potential kidnappers.

No suspects identified

Investigators think Nancy Guthrie was taken against her will from her home just outside Tucson last weekend. DNA tests showed blood on Guthrie's front porch was a match to her, Pima County Sheriff Chris Nanos has said. Authorities have not identified any suspects or ruled anyone out.

The sheriff said Friday that he was frustrated that a camera at Nancy Guthrie's home was not able to capture images of anyone the day she went missing.

Investigators have found that the home's doorbell camera was disconnected early Sunday and that software data recorded movement at the home minutes later. But Nancy Guthrie did not have an active subscription, so none of the images were able to be recovered.

"It is concerning, it's actually almost disappointing, because you've got your hopes up," Nanos told The Associated Press in an interview. "OK, they got an image. 'Well, we do, but we don't.'"

President Donald Trump, speaking on Air Force One on Friday, said the investigation was going "very well."

"We have some clues that I think are very strong," Trump said, while en route to his Florida estate. "We have some things that may be coming out reasonably soon."

Investigators return to scene

They were back in Nancy Guthrie's neighborhood on Friday.

The sheriff's department posted on social media to say access was restricted to the road in front of the home to give investigators space. Journalists staked out there were directed to move.

The Catalina Foothills Association, a neighborhood group, told residents in a letter that authorities were resuming searches in the area immediately.

"I know we all stand together in our collective disbelief and sadness and greatly appreciate your willingness to speak with law enforcement, share camera images and allow searches of your properties," the association president said in the letter.

The sheriff said Thursday that investigators have not given up on trying to retrieve camera recordings.

"I wish technology was as easy as we believe it is, that here's a picture, here's your bad guy. But it's not," Nanos told the AP. "There are pieces of information that come to us from these tech groups that say 'this is what we have and we can't get anymore.'"

The sheriff also said he had no new information about the note to the TV station or other purported ransom letters sent to some media outlets, saying the FBI is handling that side of the investigation.

Meanwhile concern about Nancy Guthrie's health condition has grown, because authorities say she needs vital daily medicine. She is said to have a pacemaker and have dealt with high blood pressure and heart issues, according to sheriff's dispatcher audio on broadcastify.com.

"Her conditions, I would imagine, are worsening day by day," Nanos said. "She requires medication. And I have no way of knowing whether they're getting that medication to her."

The kidnapping has captured the attention of Americans, including Trump, who said he was directing federal authorities to help investigate.

Appeals court affirms Trump policy of jailing immigrants without bond

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE Associated Press

President Donald Trump's administration can continue to detain immigrants without bond, marking a major legal victory for the federal immigration agenda and countering a slew of recent lower court deci-

sions across the country that argued the practice is illegal.

A panel of judges on the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled on Friday evening that the Department of Homeland Security's decision to deny bond hearings to immigrants arrested across the country is consistent with the constitution and federal immigration law.

Specifically, circuit judge Edith H. Jones wrote in the 2-1 majority opinion that the government correctly interpreted the Immigration and Nationality Act by asserting that "unadmitted aliens apprehended anywhere in the United States are ineligible for release on bond, regardless of how long they have resided inside the United States."

Under past administrations, most noncitizens with no criminal record who were arrested away from the border had an opportunity to request a bond hearing while their cases wound through immigration court. Historically, bond was often granted to those without criminal convictions who were not flight risks, and mandatory detention was limited to recent border crossers.

"That prior Administrations decided to use less than their full enforcement authority under" the law "does not mean they lacked the authority to do more," Jones wrote.

The plaintiffs in the two separate cases filed last year against the Trump administration were both Mexican nationals who had both lived in the United States for over 10 years and weren't flight risks, their attorneys argued. Neither man had a criminal record, and both were jailed for months last year before a lower Texas court granted them bond in October.

The Trump White House reversed that policy in favor of mandatory detention in July, reversing almost 30 years of precedent under both Democrat and Republican administrations.

Friday's ruling also bucks a November district court decision in California, which granted detained immigrants with no criminal history the opportunity to request a bond hearing and had implications for noncitizens held in detention nationwide.

Circuit Judge Dana M. Douglas wrote the lone dissent in Friday's decision.

The elected congress members who passed the Immigration and Nationality Act "would be surprised to learn it had also required the detention without bond of two million people," Douglas wrote, adding that many of the people detained are "the spouses, mothers, fathers, and grandparents of American citizens."

She went on to argue that the federal government was overriding the lawmaking process with DHS' new immigration detention policy that denies detained immigrants bond.

"Because I would reject the government's invitation to rubber stamp its proposed legislation by executive fiat, I dissent," Douglas wrote.

Douglas' opinion echoed widespread tensions between the Trump administration and federal judges around the country, who have increasingly accused the administration of flouting court orders.

U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi celebrated the decision as "a significant blow against activist judges who have been undermining our efforts to make America safe again at every turn."

"We will continue vindicating President Trump's law and order agenda in courtrooms across the country," Bondi wrote on the social media platform X.

Italians collect medals on a feel-good first day for the hosts at the Milan Cortina Olympics

By KEN MAGUIRE AP Sports Writer

MILAN (AP) — The 2026 Winter Games are off to a promising start for host nation Italy with gold, silver and bronze on the first day of medal events.

But it was Switzerland's Franjo Von Allmen who captured the first gold medal of the Milan Cortina Olympics on Saturday.

There were no Americans on the podium, though Lindsey Vonn impressed in her second training run ahead of the women's downhill on Sunday.

Birthdays gold for Lollobrigida

Italian speedskater Francesca Lollobrigida celebrated her 35th birthday by winning the host nation's first

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gold medal of these Olympics — in the 3,000 meters. It's also Italy's first gold in women's speedskating at any Winter Games.

Competing in her fourth Olympics, Lollobrigida outskated Ragne Wiklund of Norway for her first Olympic gold after winning silver and bronze in Beijing four years ago.

Her great aunt was the late Gina Lollobrigida, a star actress of the 1950s and '60s.

Von Allmen strikes gold on Olympic debut

Italy had a strong day on the slopes, as well, with Alpine skiers Giovanni Franzoni and Dominik Paris taking silver and bronze, respectively, in the men's downhill — the first medal event of the Games.

However, neither could beat Von Allmen's time of 1 minute, 51.61 seconds in Bormio.

The 24-year-old Swiss skier was the leader after his downhill run, but the wait for his rivals to finish was nerve-racking.

"I tried to enjoy the moment, but I didn't quite realize what was going on today," von Allmen said after his first Olympic race.

Paris, 36, was delighted with his bronze after coming away empty-handed in his four previous Olympics.

"It's my fifth Olympics, and getting the first medal in front of the home crowd, that's really special," Paris said.

Lindsey Vonn feeling 'good' ahead of women's downhill

In Cortina, Lindsey Vonn completed another downhill training run and was set for Sunday's medal race despite tearing her left ACL a little more than a week ago.

The 41-year-old American crossed the line in third position and told The Associated Press "all good."

She has been wearing a large brace on her injured knee.

Kagiyama stuns Malinin in figure skating team event

Yuma Kagiyama landed near-perfect quads and scored 108.67 points in his short program to help Japan put pressure on the defending champion U.S. in the figure skating team event.

Malinin, the two-time reigning world champion, was second with 98.00.

But a brilliant free skate by Madison Chock and Evan Bates pushed the U.S. score to 44 points — five more than Japan ahead of the men's, women's and pairs free skates to decide the medals Sunday.

Disappointment for Jessie Diggins in skiathlon

Jessie Diggins, the most decorated American cross-country skier ever, finished eighth in the 20-kilometer women's skiathlon in Tesero. She finished more than 2 minutes behind winner Frida Karlsson of Sweden.

"I had a crash on the first lap, where my tip just disappeared in the slush, and unfortunately it was a tough spot where you lose all your momentum," the 34-year-old Minnesota native said.

JD Vance and Jake Paul attend US women's hockey game

U.S. Vice President JD Vance sat with influencer and boxer Jake Paul as they watched the U.S. women's hockey team beat Finland 5-0 on Saturday. Paul's fiancée, Jutta Leerdam, is a speedskater for the Netherlands.

Finland played two days after the team's game against Canada had to be postponed because of a stomach virus affecting players. Switzerland played Canada a day after announcing that one of its players tested positive for the norovirus. Canada won 4-0.

Norwegian upsets Slovenian favorite in women's ski jumping

Norway — the nation with the most medals in Winter Olympics history — got its first gold of the Games in the women's ski jumping. It was unexpected.

Anna Odine Stroem of Norway won the normal hill competition ahead of Slovenian favorite Nika Prevc, who has dominated the sport this season. Nozomi Maruyama of Japan won bronze.

Gold and silver for Japan in men's snowboarding

Kira Kimura won Japan's first gold medal at these Games — in men's snowboarding big air in Livigno. His teammate, Ryoma Kimata, picked up the silver medal.

Defending champion Su Yiming of China took bronze, keeping 17-year-old American Oliver Martin off the podium.

Big air consists of one single jump off a huge ramp, where the rider varies spins, flips and holds of the board.

Health costs are fueling voter stress and powering Democratic campaigns

By ALI SWENSON and JEFF AMY Associated Press

COLLEGE PARK, Ga. (AP) — President Donald Trump's second term has presented an array of opportunities for political opponents, from immigration crackdowns and lingering inflation to attacks on independent institutions and friction with overseas allies.

Many Democrats, however, are staying focused on health care, an issue that was once a political liability but has become foundational for the party in recent elections. They insist their strategy will help the party regain control of Congress in the November elections and fare better than chasing headlines about the latest outrages out of the White House.

Republicans last year cut about \$1 trillion over a decade from Medicaid and declined to extend COVID-era subsidies that had lowered the cost of health plans under the Affordable Care Act.

Democrats are filming campaign spots outside struggling hospitals, spotlighting Americans facing spiking insurance premiums and sharing their own personal health care stories.

U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff of Georgia, one of the party's most endangered incumbents this year, said at a rally Saturday attended by more than 1,000 people in an Atlanta suburb that health care is part of Trump's abandonment of working people.

"While prices are going up and jobs are getting harder to find, they decided to let health insurance premiums double for more than 20 million Americans, including more than a million Georgians," said Ossoff, the only Democratic senator seeking reelection this year in a state that Trump won in 2024. He said 200,000 people in Georgia had lost their coverage.

Brad Woodhouse, a Democratic strategist and executive director of advocacy group Protect Our Care, said health care is "a banger of an issue for Democrats."

"I think it will be part of every single campaign, up and down the ballot," he said.

Republicans defend their votes as reining in ballooning health spending and cracking down on what they call waste, fraud and abuse. Trump recently launched a website to help patients buy discounted prescription drugs.

"They are working every single day to make sure that we bring affordability to the people," said Joe Gruters, chairman of the Republican National Committee.

But the party, despite controlling both chambers of Congress, has been unable so far to pass comprehensive legislation to offset Americans' health costs.

Ron Bonjean, a Republican strategist, said the issue would remain his party's "Achilles' heel" until its leaders draft realistic proposals that can become law.

Public opinion on health care wasn't always in Democrats' favor

Health care was once seen as a political liability for the left.

In 2010, Democrats lost their U.S. House majority after President Barack Obama's signature health policy, the ACA, passed without a single Republican vote. In 2014, they gave up the U.S. Senate a year after his administration fumbled the rollout of Healthcare.gov.

Those tides turned when Trump "touched the stove" during his first term, Woodhouse said, by supporting unsuccessful efforts to repeal and replace the health overhaul, known as "Obamacare," potentially leaving millions of people uninsured and making it harder for those with preexisting medical conditions to get coverage.

Last year Republicans passed legislation to reduce spending on federal health programs and food assistance, largely by imposing work requirements on people receiving aid and by shifting certain costs onto the states.

Republicans said that would stave off abuse of the Medicaid program, and added a \$50 billion investment

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in rural health to offset losses.

Unrig Our Economy, a left-wing group, said it has funneled more than \$12 million into ads criticizing Republicans on health care since early 2025.

Democrats saw another opportunity to win voters' support last year as enhanced ACA tax credits headed toward expiration and they forced a government shutdown over the issue. The funding wasn't restored but the party believes it gained political leverage going into this year's campaigns.

"Republicans own it now," said Eric Stern, a Democratic media strategist. "You better believe Democrats are going to be talking about that."

Candidates highlight emotional stories

Stef Feldman, a Democratic consultant who was an aide to former President Joe Biden, said she is hearing from candidates that voters care about health affordability "more than just about anything else."

A recent poll from the health care research nonprofit KFF backs that observation. It found that about one-third of U.S. adults are "very worried" about the cost of health care, compared with about one-quarter who feel the same way about the cost of groceries, housing or utilities.

For Iowa state Sen. Zach Wahls, who is running for the U.S. Senate this year, tapping into those concerns has meant visits to vulnerable hospitals and tours of pharmacies. For Rebecca Cooke, a U.S. House candidate in Wisconsin, it has meant meetings with hospital leaders and telling personal stories, including about her dad's expensive prostate cancer drugs and the \$200 jump in her own ACA premiums.

Ossoff has called health care "a life-or-death question."

Teresa Acosta, who frequently campaigns for Democratic candidates, said her ACA policy, which covers herself and two teenagers, including a son with Type 1 diabetes, now costs \$520 a month, seven times more than before expanded subsidies went away.

"Ultimately, Trump and congressional Republicans refused to act," Acosta said at the Ossoff rally. "They refused to stand up for the care that me and over 1 million Georgians rely on."

ACA plans are heavily relied upon in Georgia, one of the 10 states that didn't expand Medicaid. Advocates have warned that the expiration of the expanded subsidies could leave Georgia residents uninsured. Recent federal data shows about 14% fewer Georgians have signed up for plans in 2026 compared with last year, although those numbers aren't yet final.

Republicans say they don't want to throw money at a 'broken system'

U.S. Reps. Mike Collins and Buddy Carter, two of Ossoff's top Republican opponents, voted in January against a temporary ACA tax-credit extension that passed the House but languished in the Senate. Both deride the ACA as the "Unaffordable Care Act," a phrase used by Trump, and favor a narrower Republican alternative.

Carter, who worked as a pharmacist, said an extension amounted to "throwing more money at a broken system, riddled with waste, fraud and abuse, without addressing the root cause of skyrocketing costs."

U.S. Rep. Derrick Van Orden, the Wisconsin Republican fending off a challenge from Cooke, was one of 17 Republicans who voted for the temporary extension. He said he did not support the subsidies but had to vote that way to protect his constituents. He noted that Democrats set the expiration date in the first place.

But Van Orden was also critical of his own party for allowing the tax credits to expire without another solution in place.

"For the last 15 years, when you said health care, they'd dive out the window and barrel roll into a bush and hide," Van Orden said. "We're the party of good policy, and so we should be writing policy, and we need to embrace this."

Los Angeles mayor's race kicks off amid homelessness, raids and fallout from deadly 2025 wildfire

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass is heading into a challenging reelection bid as she

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continues to suffer fallout from last year's devastating wildfire and ongoing criticism of City Hall on issues from street paving to homelessness.

The deadline is Saturday for candidates to enter the contest ahead of the June 2 primary election. Bass — a first-term Democrat and the first Black woman to hold the post — already is facing challenges from tech entrepreneur and nonprofit founder Adam Miller; reality television personality Spencer Pratt, who lost his home to the deadly Palisades Fire; and community organizer Rae Huang. A late entry was city council member Nithya Raman, a onetime Bass supporter who will now be trying to oust her.

Although the contest is officially nonpartisan, it is breaking along sharp political lines.

Pratt is a Republican in a heavily Democratic city who was endorsed by Steve Hilton, a Republican candidate for governor, and Richard Grenell, an ally of President Donald Trump. Raman was the first council member elected with the backing of the Democratic Socialists of America. Huang has positioned herself to the political left of Bass, who while in the U.S. House was a member of the Congressional Progressive Caucus.

Homelessness, cost of living to be major issues

Bass greeted Raman to the race with a pointed jab: "The last thing Los Angeles needs is a politician who opposed cleaning up homeless encampments and efforts to make our city safer," Bass campaign adviser Douglas Herman said in a statement.

The race is unfolding at an unsettled time for the city of nearly 4 million.

Complaints about the cost of living — whether for rent, taxes or groceries — are a constant refrain. Dirty, pocked streets and sidewalks abound. Hollywood jobs have been decamping for years for more affordable locales.

Ongoing Trump administration immigration raids have shaken the city. Despite studies showing a slight decline in the homeless population, encampments remain commonplace. And recovery from the Palisades Fire, which killed 12 people and destroyed much of the tony seaside neighborhood in January 2025, continues at a pace that some say is too slow.

In an upbeat speech this month laying out her vision for the city's future, Bass talked of the upcoming 2028 Olympics in the city and plans to spruce up busy thoroughfares.

"Even in this difficult chapter in our history, great events, moments of unity, are possible," Bass said. "And they are coming."

Los Angeles-based Democratic consultant Bill Carrick sees the race as wide-open. Under California's primary rules, all candidates appear on the same ballot and the top two finishers advance to the November general election — a system that can lead to unpredictable outcomes. A candidate can win the mayoralty outright by capturing more than 50% of the primary vote, but that appears unlikely with a large field that is also expected to include a string of little-known contenders.

Voters are "kind of unhappy with city government, and I think the Palisades Fire certainly contributed enormously with that feeling," Carrick said.

Controversy over handling of fire

The mayor, who was on a trip to Ghana as part of a presidential delegation when the fire began raging through the Palisades neighborhood, has been on the defensive for her actions during and after the blaze.

The Los Angeles Times has published a series of reports, based on public records requests, showing that drafts of the Los Angeles Fire Department's after-action report included deletions and revisions intended to soften the failures of city and department officials.

This week Bass' office forcefully denied allegations in a Times story, based on anonymous, secondhand sources, that she pushed for changes in the report before publication to shield City Hall from potential legal action. She told reporters that the account was "completely fabricated."

Officials have said the deadly blaze was ignited by remnants of a Jan. 1 fire that continued to smolder underground. In October, a 29-year-old man was arrested and charged with sparking the earlier fire. The LAFD has faced scrutiny over whether it properly extinguished the New Year's Day blaze.

On his website, Pratt — who rose to reality-TV fame alongside his wife, Heidi Montag, on "The Hills" —

said he watched his home burn "because the system failed us."

"We don't need more government programs," Pratt added. "We need common sense, accountability, and a mayor that shows up for everyone."

Miller, a Democrat running as an outsider with the ability to invest in his own campaign, poses a new challenge for Bass, who defeated billionaire Rick Caruso in her 2022 election. Miller founded Cornerstone OnDemand, a global education company, and later cofounded the Better Angels nonprofit to address homelessness.

"Los Angeles has extraordinary potential but too often City Hall hasn't been there for the people who call it home," Miller said in a statement.

Two potential rivals stay out of the race

Bass also avoided two potential strong opponents in the contest.

Caruso decided not to run again after months of equivocation, and Los Angeles County Supervisor Lindsey Horvath announced late Friday that she, too, would not enter the race. Both have been outspoken critics of the mayor's handling of homelessness and the fire and were widely seen as possible contenders.

"It's clear you want a different kind of leadership and you are ready to see change in your city," Horvath said in a video posted on the social platform X, but she added that her work on the county board was not finished.

Israel says Netanyahu will meet with Trump on Wednesday about Iran talks

By NATALIE MELZER Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will meet with U.S. President Donald Trump in Washington on Wednesday about American talks with Iran, his office said Saturday, while Iran's foreign minister threatened U.S. military bases in the region a day after the discussions.

"The prime minister believes that all negotiations must include limiting the ballistic missiles, and ending support for the Iranian axis," Netanyahu's office said in a brief statement, referring to Tehran's support for militant groups, including Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories. Trump and Netanyahu last met in December.

There was no immediate White House comment.

The U.S. and the Islamic Republic of Iran held indirect talks on Friday in Oman that appeared to return to the starting point on how to approach discussions over Tehran's nuclear program.

Trump called the talks "very good" and said more were planned for early next week. Washington was represented by Middle East special envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law.

Trump has repeatedly threatened to use force to compel Iran to reach a deal on its nuclear program after sending the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln and other warships to the region amid Tehran's crackdown on nationwide protests that killed thousands.

Gulf Arab nations fear an attack could spark a regional war, with memories fresh of the 12-day Israel-Iran war in June.

For the first time in negotiations with Iran, the U.S. on Friday brought its top military commander in the Middle East to the table. U.S. Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, head of the military's Central Command, then visited the USS Abraham Lincoln on Saturday with Witkoff and Kushner, the command said in a statement.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told journalists Friday that "nuclear talks and the resolution of the main issues must take place in a calm atmosphere, without tension and without threats." He said that diplomats would return to their capitals, signaling that this round of negotiations was over.

On Saturday, Araghchi told the Al Jazeera satellite news network that if the U.S. attacks Iran, his country doesn't have the ability to strike the U.S. "and therefore has to attack or retaliate against U.S. bases in the region."

He said there is "very, very deep distrust" after what happened during the previous talks, when the U.S. bombed Iranian nuclear sites during last year's Israel-Iran war.

Araghchi also said the "missile issue" and other defense matters are "in no way negotiable, neither now nor at any time in the future."

Tehran has maintained that these talks will be only on its nuclear program.

However, Al Jazeera reported that diplomats from Egypt, Turkey and Qatar offered Iran a proposal in which Tehran would halt enrichment for three years, send its highly enriched uranium out of the country and pledge to "not initiate the use of ballistic missiles."

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Wednesday that the talks needed to include all those issues.

Israel, a close U.S. ally, believes Iran is pursuing a nuclear weapon and wants its program scrapped, though Iran has insisted that its atomic plans are for peaceful purposes. Israel also wants a halt to Iran's ballistic missile program and its support for militant groups in the region.

Araghchi, speaking at a forum in Qatar on Saturday, accused Israel of destabilizing the region, saying that it "breaches sovereignties, it assassinates official dignitaries, it conducts terrorist operations, it expands its reach in multiple theaters." He criticized Israel's treatment of Palestinians and called for "comprehensive and targeted sanctions against Israel, including an immediate arms embargo."

Francesca Lollobrigida hugs her son after winning Italy's first gold of the Milan Olympics

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP National Writer

MILAN (AP) — Finally an Olympic champion on the day she turned 35, Italian speedskater Francesca Lollobrigida couldn't wait to run over to hug her 2 1/2-year-old son, Tommaso, after winning the women's 3,000 meters at the Milan Cortina Games on Saturday.

She was just a tad disappointed she wasn't allowed to carry him to the top step of the podium when she went to collect her prize after clocking an Olympics-record 3 minutes, 54.28 seconds, more than two seconds ahead of runner-up Ragne Wiklund of Norway. Valerie Maltais of Canada was third.

It was important to Lollobrigida — yes, if that last name sounds familiar, it's because her great aunt was the late actress Gina — to claim that medal, of course, particularly after a tough season in which she struggled with a virus. It also was significant to hear the on-their-feet spectators' roars as she earned the host country's first gold of these Olympics and Italy's first gold in women's speedskating at any Winter Games.

What meant the most, she said between peals of excited laughter and occasional coughs Saturday, was that she could do it with her child in the arena.

"Aside from doing this for me, I did it for him, so one day he will be proud of me," Lollobrigida said. "Not just for being an Olympic champion, but because of the full journey we've lived together."

Plus, she explained: "This was to show the people that you can be a mom and come back to be much stronger."

Later, she described the months of dealing with an illness, which she thought might have been picked up by Tommaso at kindergarten, as giving her a "black mind" and contributing to her "crying after every race."

"In the beginning of the season, I really wanted to give up," Lollobrigida said. "But then the people who really believed in me said, 'No, you really need to fight.'"

She collected two medals at Beijing four years ago: a silver in the 3,000 and a bronze in the mass start. Those were celebrated with a tattoo on her right arm, and a ring and necklace with Olympic symbols.

This time, she said afterward, she would have been satisfied with another bronze.

On Saturday, as one might expect, she was greeted by a big cheer during the introductions before her heat, and Lollobrigida responded with a big smile and a big wave with both arms overhead, before covering her chest with her hands.

"Finally, the fans were on our side," Italian coach Maurizio Marchetto said with a smile. "Usually, they're supporting the Dutch," a country in which speedskating is a passion.

Racing with Maltais, Lollobrigida trailed at the first checkpoint. But the Italian kept gaining ground and, perhaps boosted by the loud support from her countrymen in the seats, surged on the final lap, arms

swinging behind her.

"It was a competition at home (for her)," Maltais said, "and I was expecting her to do something strong."

How fast was Lollobrigida? Her time was not only much better than anyone else on the ice Saturday, it was more than 2 1/2 seconds faster than the Olympic mark set by Irene Schouten when she claimed the 3,000 gold at the 2022 Beijing Games.

There were four more skaters left to go after Lollobrigida was done. One was Wiklund, who saw Lollobrigida's performance and would say later, "I thought, 'Wow.'"

Said Lollobrigida: "Imagine my reaction when I read the time."

As Lollobrigida waited to find out if that time would stand up, she actually didn't want to watch much, frequently covering her eyes with her hands.

Lollobrigida is from Frascati, a hill town just outside Rome well-known for its white wine, and was participating in her fourth Olympics.

She grew up aware of the fame of Gina Lollobrigida, a star movie actress of the 1950s and '60s. And the skater wanted to make a name for herself.

"She would really be proud of (me)," Francesca said. "She was just a diva, but I'm trying, in my little world, to be a diva in sports."

Drone attack by paramilitary group in Sudan kills 24, including 8 children, doctors' group says

By SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — A drone attack by a notorious paramilitary group hit a vehicle carrying displaced families in central Sudan on Saturday, killing at least 24 people, including eight children, a doctors' group said, a day after a World Food Program aid convoy was targeted.

Saturday's attack by the Rapid Support Forces took place close to the city of Rahad in North Kordofan province, said the Sudan Doctors Network, which tracks the country's ongoing war. The vehicle was transporting displaced people who fled fighting in the Dubeiker area, the group said in a statement. Among the dead children were two infants.

Several others were wounded and taken for treatment in Rahad, which suffers severe medical supplies shortages, like many areas in the Kordofan region, the statement said.

The doctors' group urged the international community and rights organizations to "take immediate action to protect civilians and hold the RSF leadership directly accountable for these violations."

There was no immediate comment from the RSF, which has been at war against the Sudanese military for control of the country for about three years.

Sudan plunged into chaos in April 2023 when a power struggle between the military and the RSF exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, and elsewhere in the country, leaving tens of thousands dead and millions displaced.

WFP aid convoy attacked

A drone attack on Friday on a WFP aid convoy in North Kordofan province killed one and wounded several others, said Denise Brown, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator in Sudan.

Brown said the convoy was heading to deliver "life-saving food assistance" to displaced people in the city of Obeid in North Kordofan when it was struck. The attack burned the trucks and destroyed the aid, she said.

"Attacks on aid operations undermine efforts to reach people facing hunger and displacement," she said in a statement.

Last week, a drone strike hit close to a WFP facility in the Blue Nile province, wounding a WFP worker, Brown also said.

Emergency Lawyers, an independent group documenting atrocities in Sudan, blamed the RSF for the attack, while the Sudan Doctors Network called it a "flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and amounts to a full-fledged war crime."

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Massad Boulos, a U.S. adviser for African and Arab affairs, condemned the attack on X and called for holding those responsible accountable.

"Destroying food intended for people in need and killing humanitarian workers is sickening," he said. "The Trump Administration has zero tolerance for this destruction of life and of U.S.-funded assistance; we demand accountability."

The British minister for international development and Africa, Jenny Chapman, called the attack on the WFP convoy "disgraceful."

"Civilians are starving," she wrote Saturday on X. "Aid workers and humanitarian operations bringing vital food should never be targeted."

In a strongly worded statement Saturday, Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry blasted the RSF for its recent drone strikes, including on the vehicle of displaced families, the WFP convoy and on a hospital in Kordofan that killed 22 people.

The Saudi statement called for the RSF to stop their attacks on civilians and aid convoys, and called out foreign parties that continue to "deliver illegal arms, mercenaries and foreign fighters" — an apparent reference to the United Arab Emirates, which has been accused by rights groups and U.N. experts of arming the paramilitary group. The UAE has denied the accusations.

Famine report portrays a grim picture

In recent months, Kordofan has become a flashpoint in the war and the army managed to break the RSF siege of two major cities in the region earlier this year.

The devastating war has so far killed more than 40,000 people, according to U.N. figures, but aid groups say that is an undercount and the true number could be many times higher.

It created the world's largest humanitarian crisis with over 14 million people forced to flee their homes. It has fueled disease outbreaks and pushed parts of the country into famine that still spreads as the war shows no sign of abating.

In a report released Thursday, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC, said famine was found in two more areas in the western region of Darfur where famine was confirmed for the first time in a displacement camp in August 2024.

The report warned that acute malnutrition is expected to worsen in 2026, with a 13.5% increase in cases of acute malnutrition in children under five and pregnant and breastfeeding women — from 3.7 million children and women in 2025 to nearly 4.2 million in 2026.

Severe acute malnutrition, the most dangerous and deadly form of malnutrition, is expected to increase to 800,000 cases, up 4% from 2025, it said.

Mohamad Abdiladif, country director for Save the Children in Sudan, said children were already dying from hunger-related causes in many part of Sudan.

"Every day we hear devastating stories of parents selling the last of what they own simply to keep their children alive from one day to the next," he said.

What to know about Nancy Guthrie's kidnapping and the race to find her

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — It's been a week since "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie's mother disappeared from her home in Arizona in what authorities say was a kidnapping.

Investigators have been examining ransom notes and looking for evidence but have not named a suspect. On Friday, officers returned to 84-year-old Nancy Guthrie's home near Tucson and to the surrounding neighborhood to continue their search.

Here's what to know about the case:

The disappearance

Family members told officials they last saw Guthrie at 9:48 p.m. on Jan. 31 when they dropped her off at home after they ate dinner and played games together. The next day, family learned she didn't attend church. They reported her missing after they went to check on her.

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Guthrie has a pacemaker and needs daily medication. Her family and authorities are worried her health could be deteriorating by the day.

Collecting evidence

Authorities think Guthrie was taken against her will from her home in an upscale neighborhood that sits on hilly, desert terrain. DNA tests showed blood on Guthrie's front porch matched hers, the county sheriff has said.

Investigators found her doorbell camera was disconnected early Sunday and that software data recorded movement at the home minutes later. But investigators haven't been able to recover the footage because Guthrie didn't have an active subscription to the service.

Pima County Sheriff Chris Nanos told The Associated Press in an interview that investigators have not given up on trying to access those images.

"I wish technology was as easy as we believe it is, that here's a picture, here's your bad guy. But it's not," Nanos told the AP on Friday. "There are pieces of information that come to us from these tech groups that say 'This is what we have and we can't get anymore.'"

The president of the Catalina Foothills Association, a neighborhood group, thanked residents in a letter for being willing to speak with law enforcement, share camera images and allow their properties to be searched.

Ransom notes

At least three media organizations reported receiving purported ransom notes, which they handed over to investigators. Authorities made an arrest after one ransom note turned out to be fake, the sheriff said.

It's unclear if all of the notes were identical. Heith Janke, the FBI chief in Phoenix, said details included a demand for money with a Thursday evening deadline and a second deadline for Monday if the first one wasn't met. At least one note mentioned a floodlight at Guthrie's home and an Apple watch, Janke said.

Investigators said they are taking the notes seriously.

On Friday, KOLD-TV in Tucson said it received a new message, via email, tied to the Guthrie case. The station said it couldn't disclose its contents. The FBI said it was aware of a new message and was reviewing its authenticity.

Family appeals

Concern about Guthrie's condition is growing because authorities say she needs daily medicine that's vital to her health. She has a pacemaker, high blood pressure and heart issues, according to sheriff's dispatcher audio on broadcastify.com.

Guthrie's children recorded two separate video messages to their mother's abductor and posted them publicly on social media.

Savannah Guthrie filmed a sometimes emotional message on Wednesday asking the kidnapper for proof their mother was alive. She noted that technology today allows for the easy manipulation of voices and images and the family needed to know "without a doubt" that she is alive and in the abductor's hands.

Police have not said that they have received any deepfake images of Nancy Guthrie.

Savannah Guthrie described her mother as a "kind, faithful, loyal, fiercely loving woman of goodness and light" and said she was funny, spunky and clever.

"Talk to her and you'll see," she said.

She spoke some words directly to her mom, saying she and her siblings wouldn't rest until they're all together again.

Trump's involvement

The FBI has offered a \$50,000 reward for information about Guthrie's whereabouts.

The White House said President Donald Trump called and spoke with Savannah Guthrie on Wednesday. He posted on social media that he was directing federal authorities to help where they can.

On Friday night, he told reporters flying with him to his Florida estate on Air Force One that the investigation was going "very well" and investigators had some strong clues.

Famous kidnappings

The kidnapping is the latest abduction to attract the American public's attention. Other notorious kidnappings in U.S. history have included the son of singer Frank Sinatra, the granddaughter of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst and the 9-year-old girl for whom the AMBER Alert was named.

US gave Ukraine and Russia a June deadline to reach agreement to end war, Zelenskyy says

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — The U.S. has given Ukraine and Russia a June deadline to reach a deal to end the nearly four-year war, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told reporters, as Russian strikes on energy infrastructure forced nuclear power plants to cut output on Saturday.

If the June deadline is not met, the Trump administration will likely put pressure on both sides to meet it, he added.

"The Americans are proposing the parties end the war by the beginning of this summer and will probably put pressure on the parties precisely according to this schedule," Zelenskyy said, speaking to reporters on Friday. Zelenskyy's comments were embargoed until Saturday morning.

"And they say that they want to do everything by June. And they will do everything to end the war. And they want a clear schedule of all events," he said.

He said the U.S. proposed holding the next round of trilateral talks next week in their country for the first time, likely in Miami, Zelenskyy said. "We confirmed our participation," he added.

Zelenskyy said Russia presented the U.S. with a \$12 trillion economic proposal — which he dubbed the "Dmitriev package" after Russian envoy Kirill Dmitriev. Bilateral economic deals with the U.S. form part of the broader negotiating process.

Russian strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure continued with over 400 drones and about 40 missiles launched overnight Saturday, Zelenskyy said in a post on X. Targets included the energy grid, generation facilities and distribution networks.

Ukrenergo, the state energy transmission operator, said the attack was the second mass strike on energy infrastructure since the start of the year, forcing nuclear power plants to reduce output. Eight facilities in eight regions came under attack, it said in a statement.

"As a result of missile strikes on key high-voltage substations that ensured the output of nuclear power units, all nuclear power plants in the territories under control were forced to reduce their load," the statement said.

It said the power deficit in the country has increased "significantly" as a result of the attacks forcing an extension of hourly power outages in all regions of Ukraine.

The latest deadline follows U.S.-brokered trilateral talks in Abu Dhabi that produced no breakthrough as the warring parties cling to mutually exclusive demands. Russia is pressing Ukraine to withdraw from the Donbas, where fighting remains intense — a condition Kyiv says it will never accept.

"Difficult issues remained difficult. Ukraine once again confirmed its positions on the Donbas issue. 'We stand where we stand' is the fairest and most reliable model for a ceasefire today, in our opinion," Zelenskyy said. He reiterated that the most challenging topics would be reserved for a trilateral meeting between leaders.

Zelenskyy said no common ground was reached on managing the Russian-held Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant and expressed skepticism about a U.S. proposal to turn the Donbas region, coveted by Russia, into a free economic zone as a compromise.

"I do not know whether this can be implemented, because when we talked about a free economic zone, we had different views on it," he said.

He said in the last round of talks the negotiators discussed how a ceasefire would be technically monitored. He added that the U.S. has reaffirmed it would play a role in that process.

Repeated Russian aerial assaults have in recent months focused on Ukraine's power grid, causing black-

outs and disrupting the heating and water supply for families during a bitterly cold winter, putting more pressure on Kyiv.

Zelenskyy said the U.S. again proposed a ceasefire banning strikes on energy infrastructure. Ukraine is ready to observe such a pause if Russia commits; but he added that when Moscow previously agreed to a one-week pause suggested by the U.S., it was violated after just four days.

Patriots-Seahawks Super Bowl is not so much of a rematch as it is a matchup of contrasts

By ANDREW DESTIN and KYLE HIGHTOWER AP Sports Writers

SANTA CLARA, Calif. (AP) — A heralded defense vs. an underrated one. A celebrated second-year quarterback vs. a veteran QB who has gone from perceived bust to beloved. An All-Pro wide receiver vs. one of the NFL's best young cornerbacks.

This year's Super Bowl matchup between the New England Patriots (17-3) and Seattle Seahawks (16-3) is all about contrasts.

And it starts with the coaches who will lead their teams onto the field.

Being a part of the final game of the NFL season is nothing new for Patriots coach Mike Vrabel, who won three Super Bowls as a player with New England.

Vrabel, 50, can become the fifth person in NFL history to win the Super Bowl as both a player and a head coach, joining Pro Football Hall of Famers Mike Ditka, Tony Dungy and Tom Flores as well as Doug Pederson.

He'll match wits with 38-year-old Seahawks coach Mike Macdonald, who is in his first Super Bowl in just his second year in Seattle.

When the Patriots have the ball

New England wouldn't be here without the play of Drake Maye. After showing flashes of his potential to develop into a franchise quarterback as a rookie, Maye has solidified that status in Year 2 under offensive coordinator Josh McDaniels.

He finished second in MVP voting and led the NFL by completing 72% of his passes this season. He threw for 4,394 yards and 31 touchdowns with only eight interceptions thanks to production from a group of receivers led by veteran Stefon Diggs.

It's the main reason that Maye could become the fifth quarterback to win the Super Bowl in his first or second season, joining Tom Brady, Ben Roethlisberger, Hall of Famer Kurt Warner and Russell Wilson.

But he'll have to find a way to put points on the board against a Seattle defense that finished in the top seven in the league in sacks and interceptions.

Maye is the first quarterback in history to win three games against top-five defenses in a single playoffs — the Chargers (No. 5), Texans (No. 1) and Broncos (No. 2). The Seahawks are No. 6.

The Patriots also are in good position because of a defense that finished the regular season ranked in the top 10 in total defense, rush defense, pass defense and points allowed. New England's defense has allowed just two touchdowns this postseason.

That has helped silence voices from the outside that were critical of New England's regular-season schedule, which ranked as the easiest in the NFL, with opponents finishing with a combined 113-176 record.

When the Seahawks have the ball

Seattle's offense, which ranked fifth in the NFL in points per game, is a multidimensional unit, even though it is led by the league's leading receiver in Jaxon Smith-Njigba. Offensive coordinator Clint Kubiak — who is expected to land a job as head coach of the Las Vegas Raiders — has put a system in place that brings out the best in its players, both in the run and passing games.

Quarterback Sam Darnold is fresh off his second Pro Bowl season and has shown that he is not afraid of slinging the ball downfield or even making a few mistakes. During the regular season, Darnold led all NFL quarterbacks in turnovers, but he displayed some of his best football in the playoffs, including when he played through an oblique injury and completed 25 of 36 passes for 346 yards with three touchdowns

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and no turnovers in the NFC championship game.

The Seahawks' run game is surging, too, led by running back Kenneth Walker III, who is in a contract year and could be playing his final game in a Seattle uniform. Walker has a penchant for running outside the tackles and busting runs around the right and left sides of the offensive line.

And then there's veteran wide receiver Cooper Kupp, who continues to lead on and off the field in his first season with the Seahawks after eight standout ones with the Los Angeles Rams.

Even if Seattle's offense struggles, it should be buoyed by a defense that is arguably its greatest strength. No team allowed fewer points per game (17.2) this season, and Seattle finished in the top seven in the league in sacks and interceptions.

Special teams

If Sunday's game is dominated by defense, this matchup could be key.

The Patriots always have a chance to get into the end zone when returning punts, thanks to the explosiveness of Marcus Jones. He had punt returns of 94 and 87 yards this season while finishing tied with Tennessee Titans receiver Chimere Dike with a 17.3-yard punt return average.

Rookie kicker Anthony Borregales also has been dependable, connecting on 27 of 32 field-goal attempts, including all four of 50-plus yards.

But the Seahawks are anything but slouches when it comes to special teams, led by second-year coordinator Jay Harbaugh. Including these playoffs, Seattle has scored five special teams touchdowns, four of them on returns.

Speedy wide receiver Rashid Shaheed, whom the Seahawks acquired from the New Orleans Saints in November, returned the opening kickoff for a touchdown in the divisional round against the San Francisco 49ers. The Seahawks also have quite the weapon in kicker Jason Myers. In his 11th season, Myers set the NFL record for most points by a kicker in a single season with 171, surpassing David Akers' 166.

Coaching

Vrabel's biggest attribute this season was inspiring a locker room that before this season had only 18 players who'd ever appeared in a playoff game.

He trusts his coaching staff and has benefited from having an offensive coordinator in McDaniels, who was around for each of New England's six Super Bowl wins.

Regardless of how Super Bowl 60 shakes out, the Seahawks' coaching staff is not expected to stay together as currently configured for much longer. Kubiak appears to be on his way to Las Vegas, and it's unclear who may follow the offensive coordinator.

Either way, it's a star-studded coaching staff led by Macdonald, whose focus on defense has made him a perfect fit for the Seahawks.

Intangibles

While this technically is a rematch of Super Bowl 49, won by the Patriots in dramatic fashion thanks to Malcolm Butler's interception of Russell Wilson, this is certainly a new era for both teams.

New England's season has a Cinderella-like feel to it, but the belief and trust that Vrabel's players have in him is very real. They feel like they are taking the field with a guy who gets what they've gone through.

And that could be the thing that gets this Patriots team over the hump.

The Seahawks, meanwhile, dominated this season in a way that they expected of themselves. En route to rattling off the most regular-season wins in franchise history, Seattle nicknamed its defense the "Dark Side."

The confidence this group exudes is abundantly clear, whether it be in practices, games or media availabilities.

For Seattle, this Super Bowl is not a shot at redemption for 11 years ago; rather, it is a chance to separate itself as one of the best teams in franchise history.

JD Vance and Jake Paul watch U.S. women's hockey team together at the Winter Olympics

By JAMES ELLINGWORTH AP Sports Writer

MILAN (AP) — U.S. Vice President JD Vance sat with influencer and boxer Jake Paul as they watched the U.S. women's hockey team ease to a 5-0 win over Finland at the Winter Olympics on Saturday.

Vance and his family entered during the intermission at the end of the first period, with the U.S. leading 1-0. Paul joined them shortly after. Paul's fiancée Jutta Leerdam is a speedskater for the Netherlands at the Milan Cortina Games.

Vance sat with his youngest child, daughter Mirabel, on his lap. Usha Vance, wearing a sweatshirt with "USA" in big letters, clapped along to Queen's "We Will Rock You," before the second period started.

The vice president and his wife stood and clapped when the U.S. women's team scored a goal. They were back on their feet cheering a few minutes later when the U.S. women scored again.

Among those seated near Vance were 2010 Olympic figure skating gold medalist Evan Lysacek and hockey's twin sisters, Hall of Famers Jocelyne Lamoureux-Davidson and Monique Lamoureux-Morando. They were members of the U.S. gold medal-winning team at the 2018 Winter Games.

It's the second time that Vance has watched the U.S. women's team at the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics. He was also at the Milano Rho Ice Hockey Arena on Thursday, when the U.S. beat Czechia 5-1 in its opening game of the preliminary round.

U.S. player Taylor Heise said it was "awesome" to hear that Vance and Paul were at the rink, but she wasn't aware during the game.

"I know (teammate) Abbey Murphy wants to meet Jake Paul, so we'd love to set that up," she said.

"None of us knew that they were here, actually," Heise added. "Just happy to be playing, and whoever's there gets to watch the show, because I think we're pretty good."

The U.S. players are especially familiar with Paul through his relationship with Leerdam, who competes in speedskating against U.S. hockey captain Hilary Knight's girlfriend Brittany Bowe.

"I know his fiancée, Jutta, we've watched her work out. She's phenomenal. We're excited to go and watch her and obviously we're cheering on Brit Bowe," Heise said.

Trump aims to hold the first meeting of his new Board of Peace in Washington this month

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump plans to convene the first meeting of his Board of Peace this month in Washington to raise money for the reconstruction of Gaza.

The meeting, proposed for Feb. 19, would include both world leaders who accepted Trump's invitation in January to join the board as well as members of an executive committee for Gaza that will oversee the specifics of the territory's governance, security and redevelopment, two Trump administration officials said Saturday.

It was not immediately clear how many leaders would accept the Republican president's invitation, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because the meeting has not yet been formally announced and details of its agenda were still being determined.

One official said the administration expected "robust" participation.

A copy of the invitation that was sent late Friday to invited participants and obtained by The Associated Press, says the meeting will be held at the U.S. Institute of Peace, now known as the Donald J. Trump U.S. Institute of Peace, pending an ongoing legal battle with the former leadership of the nonprofit think tank. The administration seized the facility last year and fired almost all the institute's staff.

Trump's new board was first seen as a mechanism focused on ending the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. But it has taken shape with his ambition for a far broader mandate of resolving global crises and appears to be the latest U.S. effort to sidestep the United Nations as Trump aims to reset the post-World War II

international order.

Many of America's top allies in Europe and elsewhere have declined to join what they suspect may be an attempt to rival the Security Council.

Franjo von Allmen of Switzerland wins men's downhill, first gold medal of Milan Cortina Olympics

By PAT GRAHAM AP Sports Writer

BORMIO, Italy (AP) — Swiss racer Franjo von Allmen brought home the first gold medal at the Milan Cortina Games by winning the downhill on Saturday. It's his first Olympic crown in his very first Olympic race.

Not so long ago, it wasn't clear if there would be anymore "firsts" for him in ski racing. As a teenager, and after the death of his father, von Allmen didn't have the money for racing — until a crowdfunding project helped out.

Now, the 24-year-old is king of the downhill.

On a picture-perfect day in Bormio, von Allmen powered through the challenging Stelvio course in 1 minute, 51.61 seconds to keep the Olympic downhill title in the Swiss family. His time was good enough to withstand the charge of Italy's Giovanni Franzoni, who finished .20 seconds back to claim the silver medal. Franzoni's teammate, 36-year-old Dominik Paris, had a fast run to take bronze and knock Marco Odermatt of Switzerland off the podium.

"I had fun with the skiing today," von Allmen said.

His skiing career was almost derailed at 17. Through crowdfunding he raised money and qualified for the national C team. He showed his vast promise by winning three silver medals, including one in downhill, at the 2022 junior worlds in Canada.

That particular time, however, was not something he wanted to revisit after the race.

"For me that chapter is closed," he said through a translator. "I prefer to concentrate on what's yet to come and what's happening now."

Aksel Lund Svindal, the 2018 Olympic downhill champion from Norway, considered von Allmen a favorite. Svindal was impressed with the young racer's performance during a downhill win in Switzerland leading into the Games.

"It's the skiing of someone that's really in form so I'm not surprised," Svindal said from Cortina, where he's coaching Lindsey Vonn. "Very good skiing, obviously."

The Swiss skier sometimes goes under the radar of his compatriot Odermatt, who's won four straight overall World Cup titles. They're fast friends and friendly rivals. They share course information but hold a little back, too. Turns out, von Allmen had the better inside track on the demanding hill.

"It's really (crap), to be fourth in the Olympics," Odermatt said through a translation. "That's the stupidest place that you can have."

This has been quite a run for von Allmen, who won the downhill at the world championships in Austria last winter. He's using the same ski technician that Swiss racer Beat Feuz relied on to win the downhill at the 2022 Beijing Games before retiring.

"It feels like a movie," von Allmen said. "How could you imagine the Olympics better than to start with a gold medal? Amazing. It's difficult to describe it in words."

Home favorites

The stands were packed with flag-waving fans. Some of the biggest cheers were reserved for Italy's Franzoni and Paris, who went back-to-back.

This is a breakout season for the 24-year-old Franzoni, who's from Manerba del Garda, located about 200 kilometers south of Bormio. More specifically, it's been a breakout 22 or so days. He won a World Cup super-G in Wengen, Switzerland, on Jan. 16 and followed that up with a downhill victory in Kitzbühel, Austria, the following week.

To share a podium with Paris, well, that's something Franzoni voiced into reality. He mentioned to Paris in December how nice being podium on the same podium would be — the veteran and the mentor. It just

so happened to be at the Olympics.

"I don't know if he'll continue racing next year but this is the biggest stage to share," Franzoni said. "He gives me a lot of tips during this season. He's such a strong guy, a legend, and it's an honor for me to be on this team."

Paris knows this course well, having won seven World Cup races at the venue. Shortly after receiving his medal, he glanced up at the hill.

"It's a beautiful, tough mountain," said Paris, who hails from Val d'Ultimo.

It was Paris' first Olympic medal in his fifth Winter Games. He now becomes a bronze medalist in addition to being the vocalist of a heavy metal band called "Rise of Voltage."

"I'm, for sure, a better skier," Paris cracked. "But if you listen to metal, I'm not so bad."

The 27th racer to take the course, Kyle Negomir found a fast line and vaulted into 10th place for the top American finish.

"My goal was to put down something where I could stand in the finish and say I didn't have any regrets," Negomir said.

How aggressive free agency moves led the Patriots and Seahawks to the Super Bowl

By JOSH DUBOW AP Pro Football Writer

SAN JOSE, Calif. (AP) — Winning the headlines during free agency in March doesn't typically lead to success in January and February in the NFL.

This season, that hasn't been the case.

Two of the most aggressive teams during the free agency period last offseason ended up in the Super Bowl, with the big-spending New England Patriots taking on the Seattle Seahawks.

"We felt like we needed a total culture shift," New England general manager Eliot Wolf said. "We spent a lot of time doing work on the type of people that we brought in, and it's crazy to say, but I don't know that we missed on a person. Not every player has been the greatest free agent signing ever, but all the people that brought in during free agency have been phenomenal."

The Patriots handed out the most money on the unrestricted free agent market, with more than \$364 million in contracts — nearly \$100 million more than the next-highest team — handed out to 19 free agents, according to Spotrac. New England also led in guaranteed money spent, with nearly \$175 million of those deals fully guaranteed.

The Patriots won a bidding war for star defensive tackle Milton Williams with a four-year, \$104 million contract and added several other key defensive players like cornerback Carlton Davis, edge rushers Harold Landry and K'Lavon Chaisson, and linebacker Robert Spillane.

New England also got No. 1 receiver Stefon Diggs on a three-year, \$63.5 million deal, along starting offensive linemen Morgan Moses and Garrett Bradbury and receiver Mack Hollins.

"I think you just have to be very intentional with the people that you're bringing in," coach Mike Vrabel said. "I think sometimes free agency, you have to be able to use it. People use it in different ways. It's a part of our business. It's another way to acquire players and player acquisition. Understand that you have to be convicted on the person that you're bringing in as a player, and also the impact that they're going to make in the locker room, around the building and in the community."

The Seahawks came in fourth in free agency spending at more than \$205 million, led by a three-year, \$100.5 million deal for quarterback Sam Darnold as well as smaller contracts to edge rusher DeMarcus Lawrence and receiver Cooper Kupp. General manager John Schneider also hit on several budget deals for players, with tight end Eric Saubert and tackle Josh Jones helping Seattle reach the Super Bowl.

While the free agent moves were important, none of this would have been possible without the draft. Schneider has been on a recent draft heater helped by the acquisition of extra picks thanks to the trade of quarterback Russell Wilson in 2022.

The recent run comes after years of poor picks eroded the roster strength as the Seahawks added players

like Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Devon Witherspoon, Kenneth Walker, Charles Cross, Byron Murphy, Riq Woolen and A.J. Barner in recent years before using their top two picks in April on immediate impact players Grey Zabel on the offensive line and versatile defender Nick Emmanwori.

"It was a master class by John and our personnel folks," coach Mike Macdonald said of his balance of draft and free agency. "A lot of coaches have a lot of input, especially through free agency. ... When you have a shared alignment about what type of team you want to have, what type of people you want in your building. I think that streamlines that process."

Shrewd moves in free agency helped fuel Philadelphia's title run last season, when the Eagles signed AP NFL Offensive Player of the Year Saquon Barkley to a three-year, \$37.5 million deal and safety C.J. Gardner-Johnson to a three-year \$27 million contract, and got All-Pro linebacker Zack Baun and key offensive linemen Mekhi Becton on one-year deals.

Philadelphia also handed out a big-money contract to edge rusher Bryce Huff, who made almost no impact, but the Eagles likely wouldn't have won it all without an aggressive March.

The Patriots needed to be aggressive because of some poor drafting at the end of coach Bill Belichick's tenure following the 2023 season, but Wolf doesn't plan to follow this path too often.

"I don't think it's going to be a rule for us," Wolf said. "I don't want to say it's unique, but in some ways it is. It's been really rewarding and I'm just really happy for these guys. They've kind of come together and bought into Coach Vrabel's culture and here we are."

She filmed Iran's violent crackdown on protesters. Now she is afraid to go outside

By SARAH EL DEEB Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — As tear gas canisters landed among protesters filling the wide boulevard, the 37-year-old beautician and her friends ran for cover. They sheltered among trees, concealed in darkness pierced only by the glow of streetlights and small fires behind them in the western Iranian city of Karaj.

Then gunfire rang out, audible in the video she was taking on her phone.

"Don't be afraid," she screamed repeatedly, her voice breaking. The crowd joined at the top of their lungs: "Don't be afraid. We are all together."

"Are they using live bullets?" she cried out. "Shameless! Shameless!" Others joined in the chant, along with cries of "Death to the dictator!"

It was a moment of collective boldness on Jan. 8, the night hundreds of thousands of Iranians across the country took to the streets against the cleric-led theocracy that has ruled for nearly 50 years. But after the bloodshed of that night, the beautician, like countless others, has retreated into terrified isolation. She moved in with her mother, afraid to be alone, and has huddled there, anxious and unable to sleep.

A blanket of fear has settled over Iran, she said, and a sense of grief and quiet rage has taken over.

"When you look at people in the street, it feels like you are seeing walking corpses, people with no hope left to continue living," she said in a text message in late January.

Her videos and messages provide a raw account of the exuberance that protesters felt taking to the streets last month — and the shock that has paralyzed many after the bloodiest crackdown ever inflicted by the Islamic Republic. The beautician expressed despair that change can happen and a sense of abandonment by the world.

She saw little hope in Iran-U.S. nuclear talks that were held Friday even as they trade warnings of war. She feared Iran's leaders will outlast Trump's pressure and "become entrenched and all those people who died will have died in vain," she wrote.

Monitoring groups say at least 6,854 were killed, most on Jan. 8 and 9, but they say the full number could be triple that. The clampdown since has also been unprecedented. A monthlong internet blackout has hidden the full extent of what happened, even as more than 50,000 people have been reported detained.

The Associated Press received more than a dozen videos as well as text messages the beautician sent

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to a relative of hers in Los Angeles during sporadic openings in the internet shutdown. The beautician gave permission for the material to be shared.

The AP is withholding the names of the beautician and her relative for their security. The AP verified the location and authenticity of her videos, which corresponded with known features of the area around Samandehi Park in Karaj. The AP could not verify all details in her account, but it broadly conforms with accounts from other protesters documented by the AP and rights groups.

Taking to the streets

The beautician struggled in Iran's economy, crippled by decades of corruption and mismanagement and international sanctions. With jobs hard to find, she chose to work for herself as a nail technician, believing she could make a better living, said the relative, who has long been close to her and was in frequent contact even before the protests.

She gave up on having a family or children, the relative said. Everything was too expensive, and it was too repressive in Iran to bring up kids.

She had little faith in Iranian politicians claiming to be moderates and reformers, the relative said. But she joined protests. The power of a popular movement fueled her sense that change in Iran was possible.

She participated in the 2022 protests ignited by the death of Mahsa Amini, who died after being arrested for not wearing her headscarf to the liking of authorities. But she was disillusioned by the violence that followed. Over 500 were believed killed and over 22,000 detained.

Her desire changed "from saving her country to saving herself," the relative said. Her family looked for opportunities for her to leave Iran, but they never materialized.

When protests triggered by the plunging value of Iran's currency began in late December, she didn't take part at first.

But when she found she could hardly even afford cooking oil, it was the last straw. She told her relative that she made the equivalent of only \$40 in December, down from an already paltry \$300-\$400 average for the past year.

On Jan. 8, she made plans with her friends to join the protests.

Iranians poured into the streets on Jan. 8

That night, Iranians poured into the streets of at least 192 cities across Iran's 31 provinces, according to the U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency. These were quite possibly the biggest anti-government rallies since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The diversity of the crowds across social and economic classes was greater than past marches.

The beautician's videos show protesters filling a main boulevard in Karaj. Their confidence bolstered by their numbers, they walk unhurriedly among the trees. Women, men and children chant, "Death to Khamenei," referring to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Some chanted in support of the exiled crown prince Reza Pahlavi, the son of Iran's last shah, who had called for the public to turn out. Some set up bonfires and formed protest circles around them.

It is not clear from her videos how the violence began.

One video shows protesters lined up outside a police station, cheering, while a fire burned inside.

From inside the station, police fired tear gas and shotgun pellets, the beautician said in a message. Live ammunition quickly followed.

The beautician wrote to her relative that she saw nearly 20 people shot in her immediate circle. The parents of a family friend were shot and killed as they tried to help a wounded person. Another friend's father was killed, and authorities later made his daughter pay the equivalent of \$4,500 to release his body.

In one video, a group huddled over a wounded protester, her leg covered in blood. They frantically looked for a way to stop the bleeding.

"Do you have a scarf? A headscarf, anything?" one person shouted. Another said: "We can't go to the hospital," apparently out of fear of being detained. Another interjected, in a panic: "Tie it tight and fasten it."

The government has put the death toll from the wave of nationwide protests at more than 3,000, and Khamenei has denounced them as "a coup."

'We are all in mourning'

The next night, rights groups say shooting continued in Karaj, with snipers on rooftops and more dead. The beautician stepped out of the house but quickly returned, filming nothing, her relative said.

She has hardly left since.

"We have seen so many horrific scenes of people being killed before our eyes that we are now afraid to leave our homes," she wrote in a message.

She fears security agents will come to her building, she wrote. She and her neighbors agreed not to let in anyone who rings the bells.

She takes tranquilizers "but I don't truly sleep," she wrote. "Everyone I talk to says they cannot sleep at night, stressed that at any moment they might come and attack our homes."

One night in late January, she went out briefly to withdraw money from the bank sent by her relative. But the bank had no cash.

Over all the years of repression, "we always kept going, strong," she wrote.

Not this time.

"We are all in mourning, filled with anger that we no longer even dare to shout out, for fear of our lives. Because they have no mercy."

Pakistan arrests 4 suspects in mosque bombing that killed 31 in the capital

By MUNIR AHMED and MUHAMMAD YOUSAF Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistani security forces raided multiple locations and arrested four suspects, including the alleged mastermind, behind a suicide bombing at a Shiite mosque on the outskirts of the capital that killed 31 people, the interior minister said Saturday.

The announcement by Mohsin Naqvi came a day after a regional affiliate of the Islamic State group, identifying itself as Islamic State in Pakistan, claimed responsibility in a statement carried by its Amaq News Agency. The statement said the attacker on Friday opened fire on security guards who tried to stop him at the main gate before detonating his explosive vest after reaching the mosque's inner gate.

The IS group suggested it viewed the Pakistani Shiites as legitimate targets, calling them a "human reservoir" that provided recruits to Shiite militias fighting IS in Syria.

Friday's mosque bombing that also wounded 169 people was the deadliest in Islamabad since a 2008 suicide bombing at the Marriott Hotel that killed 63 people and wounded more than 250. In November, a suicide bomber struck outside a court in the capital, killing 12 people.

Pakistan arrests suspects linked to attack

Naqvi described the suspected mastermind of the bombing as an Afghan linked to IS. He alleged the attack was planned and the bomber trained in Afghanistan with financial backing from India— claims for which he provided no immediate evidence. There was no immediate comment from New Delhi and Kabul.

Naqvi also alleged that several militant groups were operating from the Afghan territory to launch attacks against Pakistan and urged the international community to take notice, warning that instability could spread beyond the region.

Addressing public concerns about security lapses, he said, "If one blast happens, 99 others are being foiled as well."

Funerals for the victims

Earlier, more than 2,000 grief-stricken mourners gathered as coffins of those killed were brought to the same mosque for funerals of about a dozen victims, joined by Shiite community leaders and senior government officials. Funerals of other victims were to be held in their hometowns.

IS is a Sunni group that has targeted Pakistan's Shiite minority in the past, apparently seeking to stoke sectarian divisions in the majority Sunni country. In 2022, it claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing that struck a Shiite Muslim mosque in Pakistan's northwestern city of Peshawar, killing at least 56 and wounding 194.

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Pakistan's Defense Minister Khawaja Mohammad Asif told reporters Friday that the attack signaled that Pakistan-based militants operating from Afghanistan could strike even in the capital. His remarks drew a sharp response from Afghanistan's Taliban government.

In a statement, Afghanistan's Defense Ministry condemned the mosque attack in Islamabad but said the Pakistani defense minister had "irresponsibly" linked it to Afghanistan. Pakistan has frequently accused Afghanistan, where the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, of harboring militants, including members of the Pakistani Taliban. Kabul denies the accusations.

Attack draws international condemnation

The attack drew condemnation from the wider international community, including the United States, Russia and the European Union.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said he was grateful for the messages of sympathy and support received "from across the globe" following what he called the "heart-wrenching suicide attack in Islamabad." He said international support remained critical to Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts and vowed the perpetrators would be brought to justice.

Although Pakistan's capital has seen relatively few attacks compared with other regions, the country has experienced a recent rise in militant violence. Much of it has been blamed on Baloch separatists and the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, or TTP, which is a separate group but allied with Afghanistan's Taliban.

Today in History: February 8, the Orangeburg Massacre

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, Feb. 8, the 39th day of 2026. There are 326 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Feb. 8, 1968, three Black students were killed and 28 wounded as state troopers opened fire on demonstrators at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg in the aftermath of protests over a whites-only bowling alley. The event would become known as the Orangeburg Massacre.

Also on this date:

In 1587, Mary, Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay Castle in England after she was implicated in a plot to murder her cousin, Queen Elizabeth I.

In 1693, a charter was granted for the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg in the Virginia Colony.

In 1904, Japan launched a surprise attack on the Russian Navy at Port Arthur (now Dalian, China), marking the start of the Russo-Japanese War.

In 1910, the Boy Scouts of America organization was incorporated by William D. Boyce, who drew inspiration from the British Boy Scout movement.

In 1924, the first U.S. execution using lethal gas took place at the Nevada State Prison in Carson City as Chinese immigrant Gee Jon was put to death for a murder conviction.

In 1936, the first NFL draft was held at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Philadelphia.

In 1949, Roman Catholic Cardinal József Mindszenty was sentenced to life in prison for his opposition to the fascist and later communist Hungarian governments; released during the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, he sought asylum at the U.S. Embassy when the Soviet Union invaded, living there for 15 years. Mindszenty left Hungary in 1971 and died in exile in Vienna in 1975.

In 1960, work began on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, located on Hollywood Boulevard and Vine Street in Los Angeles.

In 1971, NASDAQ, the world's first electronic stock exchange, held its first trading day.

In 1993, an Iranian airliner with 132 people on board collided with an air force jet after takeoff from Tehran and exploded, leaving no survivors.

In 2013, a massive two-day snowstorm began dumping up to 3 feet (1 meter) of snow around the U.S. Northeast, causing widespread power outages and leavening several people dead. The storm struck some areas with hurricane-force winds and coastal flooding.

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In 2020, a soldier angry about a land dispute went on a 16-hour shooting rampage in Thailand, killing at least 29 people and wounding dozens. Police and military personnel hunted the gunman overnight and shot him dead.

Today's birthdays: Composer-conductor John Williams is 94. Broadcast journalist Ted Koppel is 86. Actor Nick Nolte is 85. Comedian Robert Klein is 84. Actor-rock musician Creed Bratton is 83. Actor Mary Steenburgen is 73. Author John Grisham is 71. Hockey Hall of Famer Dino Ciccarelli is 66. Rock singer Vince Neil (Mötley Crüe) is 65. Basketball Hall of Famer Alonzo Mourning is 56. Actor Seth Green is 52. Actor William Jackson Harper is 46. Actor-comedian Cecily Strong is 42. Hip-hop artist Anderson Paak is 40. Professional surfer Bethany Hamilton is 36. Actor Kathryn Newton is 29.