

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, Feb. 11

Senior Menu: Chicken broccoli bake, mashed potatoes, Mandarin oranges, fruit.

School Breakfast: Omelets.

School Lunch: Pizza crunchers, green beans.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Groton C&MA: Kid's Club, Youth Group, Adult Bible Study, 7 p.m.

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

6th Grade Boys Basketball, 6 p.m., HS Gym

3rd/4th Volleyball Practice, 6 p.m., Arena

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

Thursday, Feb. 12

Senior Menu: Roast beef, mashed potatoes, California blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Chicken patty, mashed potatoes.

Groton Lions Club, 6 p.m., 104 N Main

Parent/Teacher Conferences, 1:30-8 p.m.



2nd Grade BB, 5 p.m., elementary gym

4th Grade BB, 6 p.m., HS Gym

HS Softball, 6 p.m., HS Gym

Friday, Feb 13

NO SCHOOL

Senior Menu: Calico casserole, fruit, whole wheat bread.

3rd Grade Boys Basketball, 3:30 p.m., Elementary Gym

Saturday, Feb. 14

Pickleball, 9:30 a.m., elementary gym

SDHSAA Class B State Boys Wrestling Duals in Pierre

Basketball Double Header: Moberidge-Pollock at Groton Area (Gym: B7th-12, B8th-1, GC-2, Arena: BC-12, JVGBB-1, JVBBB-2, VGBB-3:15, VBBB-4:30)

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1440

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

Breaking news: At least eight people, including the suspect, are dead following a shooting at a high school in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia. Two additional people were found dead at a residence believed to be connected to the attack. At least 25 others were wounded. The suspect's motive remains unclear as of this writing.

Guthrie Abduction Footage

The FBI yesterday released the first surveillance footage of a potential suspect in the presumed kidnapping of Nancy Guthrie, the 84-year-old mother of "Today" show coanchor Savannah Guthrie. As of this writing, a person has reportedly been detained for questioning, though it is unclear whether they are the same individual seen in the footage.

The six images and three videos (watch here) show a masked person, who appears to be carrying a handgun, tampering with Nancy Guthrie's doorbell camera hours before she was reported missing Feb. 1. FBI Director Kash Patel said his agency and local law enforcement worked with the private sector to recover the footage from residual data on back-end systems. The content was not stored on an easily accessible server because Nancy Guthrie did not have a paid subscription for her security cameras.

News outlets have received at least two presumed ransom notes since Nancy Guthrie's disappearance, and her children have posted social media videos saying they would pay a ransom. However, as of Monday, the FBI said it was unaware of any ongoing communication between the Guthrie family and a possible abductor.

History on Skis

US skier Ben Ogden won silver yesterday in the men's cross-country sprint at the Winter Olympics, ending a 50-year US men's medal drought in the sport. The 25-year-old Vermonter is only the second American man to medal in Olympic cross-country skiing, joining 1976 silver medalist Bill Koch. Ogden finished just behind Norway's Johannes Hoesflot Klaebo, who captured his seventh Olympic gold.

Americans Jacqueline Wiles and Paula Moltzan took bronze in the women's team combined skiing event, while the US duo of Breezy Johnson and Mikaela Shiffrin finished fourth—missing the podium by 0.06 seconds. Defending Olympic champion Alex Hall took home silver in the men's slopestyle event. Team USA also secured silver in mixed doubles curling, becoming the first US mixed doubles Olympic medalists. The US women's hockey team beat rival Canada 5-0 in a preliminary matchup. See the current medal count here.

Eight gold medals are up for grabs today, including in figure skating and skiing events. See the full schedule of events here.

Cuba's Fuel Shortage

Cuba's government began cutting off jet fuel to nine airports yesterday, as the country undergoes an acute fuel shortage. Regional flights may not be impacted, but some long-haul flights may be forced to reroute, straining Cuba's travel industry.

Cuba produces about 40% of its oil needs; the majority has historically come from Venezuela and Mexico. However, the US seized Venezuela's oil industry last month, cutting Cuba off from its lead supplier. Trump also issued an executive order last month threatening tariffs on any country that supplies oil to Cuba as the US seeks to end communist rule on the island. Cuba is now expected to run out of reserves by April and has imposed rations. Air Canada this week announced it would suspend flights to Havana, while other airlines may reroute or stock their own fuel on flights.

Cuba's tourism industry once raked in up to \$3B but has since fallen to near-record lows.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Predictions market Kalshi reports over \$1B in trading volume on Super Bowl Sunday, a roughly 2,700% year-over-year increase.

Chappell Roan leaves Wasserman Agency after founder and CEO Casey Wasserman is named in Epstein Files; Chelsea Cutler, Hippo Campus, and others follow suit.

Britney Spears reportedly sells her music catalog in low nine-figure deal.

Universal announces May 19, 2028, release date for fourth installment of "The Mummy" franchise, starring Oscar winners Brendan Fraser and Rachel Weisz.

Science & Technology

Apple and Google agree to make app store rankings and reviews more transparent in concession to UK regulators; changes do not address developers' key concerns about rising commission rates.

Earth's core may contain nine to 45 times more hydrogen than its oceans do; finding suggests Earth acquired the majority of its water as it formed, rather than through later comet impacts on its surface.

Food-deprived mice and mice on standard diets have similar immune responses when exposed to disease, suggesting stress hormones rewire the immune system to maintain infection-fighting capacity during food insecurity.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close mixed (S&P 500 -0.3%, Dow +0.1%, Nasdaq -0.6%).

Vatican Bank makes first foray into equity indexes—one in the US and one in Europe—focused on stocks that align with Catholic principles.

Ford reports first quarterly earnings miss since 2024, largest quarterly earnings miss in four years; shortfall mainly attributed to roughly \$900M tariff hit.

Lyft reports lower-than-expected Q4 revenue, announces \$1B share buyback.

Estée Lauder sues Walmart over allegations that the retailer featured counterfeit beauty products on its online marketplace.

Politics & World Affairs

President Donald Trump threatens to block permit to US-Canada bridge unless Canada accedes to demands, including split ownership; Gordie Howe International Bridge was due to open early this year, connecting Ontario to Michigan.

Rep. Ro Khanna (D, CA-17) and Rep. Thomas Massie (R, KY-4) reveal names of six men whose identities were redacted in newly released Epstein files, including former Victoria's Secret owner Leslie Wexner, DP World CEO Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem; lawmakers call on Justice Department to clarify why names were redacted.

The US will send 200 soldiers to Nigeria to train government forces on fighting Islamist militants; officials say US forces will not participate in combat.

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Name Released in 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: Eliseo Mendez Gomez, 33-year-old male from Summit, SD, fatal injuries

Seat belt Used: No

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

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

Gomez 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.

Tigers Roll Past Titans Behind Defense, Big Second-Quarter Run



Becker Bosma had nine points and nine rebounds in the Tigers win over the Titans. (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

while Jayden Schwan and Asher Johnson each scored two points. Ryder Schelle had two points and a steal, Jordan Schwan added one point and one rebound, Ethan Kroll contributed two rebounds, an assist, and a steal, and Logan Warrington pulled down three rebounds.

Groton shot 34-of-53 on two-point attempts (64%), went 1-of-8 from three-point range (13%), and 4-of-10 at the free-throw line (40%). The Tigers totaled 36 rebounds, 12 assists, 12 steals, and five blocked shots while committing just five turnovers.

"We got to the basket as well as we have all year," Kjellsen said. "I told Karson at halftime they couldn't stop him from driving, and he did a great job. One of these nights we're going to start hitting perimeter shots, and then look out."

Leola-Frederick was led by Quinn Huettl with 10 points and Winston Clark with eight. Jace Thorpe scored four points, Westyn Thorpe and Titus Kippley added two apiece, and Brayden Heuer finished with one point. The Titans shot 14-of-49 from the field (28%), committed 12 turnovers, and were whistled for 16 fouls.

Kjellsen emphasized toughness and rebounding as areas still needing improvement despite the lopsided score.

"Every one of our kids was bigger than the guy they were guarding," he said. "There's no reason we shouldn't be getting rebounds. It just takes toughness and desire. If we want to beat good teams,

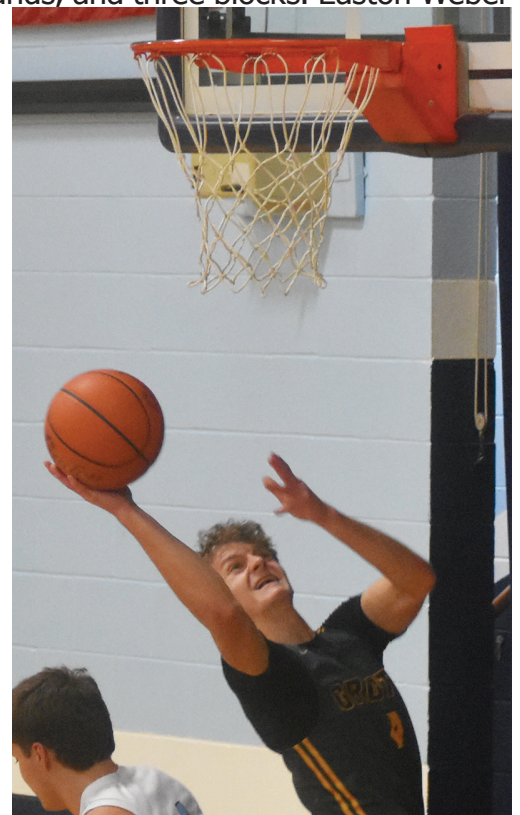
The Groton Area Tigers boys basketball team traveled to Frederick on Tuesday night and delivered a dominant 75-29 win over the Leola-Frederick Titans, fueled by a decisive 23-point run spanning the second and third quarters.

Groton jumped out to a 23-13 lead after the first quarter, extended it to 46-19 by halftime, and pushed the margin to 62-21 after three quarters before cruising to the 46-point victory. The Tigers held Leola-Frederick under 30 points for the game, continuing a strong stretch of defensive performances.

"We win by 45 and you'd think I'd be thrilled, but I really wasn't," head coach Greg Kjellsen said. "When you don't shoot the ball well, it magnifies everything else that doesn't go right. We made one three-pointer, but we were getting the ball inside and getting a lot of easy baskets."

Ryder Johnson led Groton Area with 15 points, adding three rebounds, one assist, and four steals. Karson Zak followed with 14 points, four rebounds, one steal, and one block, while Keegen Tracy chipped in 10 points, two rebounds, two assists, and four steals. Becker Bosma posted a near double-double with nine points, nine rebounds, two assists, one steal, and one block.

Anthony Tracy scored six points with one assist, and Gage Sippel added six points, seven rebounds, and three blocks. Easton Weber finished with four points, two rebounds, and three assists. Jace Johnson recorded four points and one rebound,



Ryder Johnson led the Tigers with 15 points. (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

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Keegen Tracy had 10 points in Groton's win over Leola-Frederick. (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Connor Kroll finished with two.

Quinn Huettl led Leola-Frederick with six points, Preston Sumption scored five, Noah Heuer added two, and Howard Sumption finished with one.

we've got to be tougher."

With the win, Groton Area improves to 12-4 on the season and will host Mobridge-Pollock on Saturday in a double-header. Leola-Frederick falls to 13-3.

JV: Tigers Dominate 53-15

Groton Area also controlled the junior varsity contest, rolling to a 53-15 win after opening the game on a 13-point run. The Tigers led 18-5 after the first quarter, 29-10 at halftime, and 45-13 after three quarters.

Easton Weber led the JV Tigers with 11 points. Jordan Schwan scored eight, while Ethan Kroll and Anthony Tracy added seven points each. Jace Johnson and Ryder Schelle chipped in five points apiece, Asher Johnson scored four, J.J. Muller added four, and



Logan Warrington puts up this shot over Leola-Frederick's Lucas Gulbranson. (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

The varsity games were broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Avantara - Groton, Agtegra, Bierman Farm Service, Bary Keith at Harr Motors, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Dan Richardt at Groton Ford, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Heartland Energy and The MeatHouse in Andover. Rich Bosma and Mike Imrie did the commentary, Jeslyn Kosel ran the camera and Paul Kosel did the stats and technology. The boys junior varsity game was sponsored by Jerry and Becky Johnson. The girls junior varsity was sponsored by grandparents.

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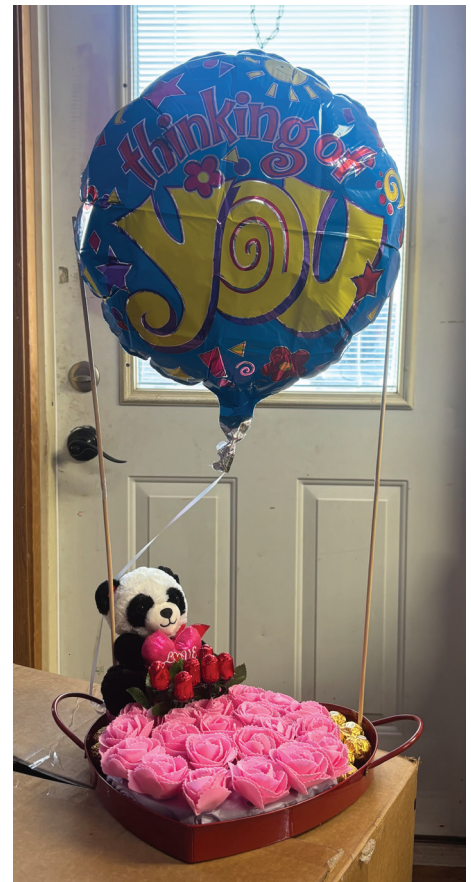
**Hersheys cake with strawberry drops and mini Hersheys on top
\$40.00**



**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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Tonka truck basket \$50.00



Just because or thinking of you Basket \$40.00



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Rhoden said South Dakota is the first state in the nation to remove suppressors from its list of controlled weapons.

The bill was sponsored by Sen. Casey Crabtree, R-Madison, who is running for the Republican nomination for the state's lone U.S. House seat.

"Gun suppressors are hearing protection, not a weapon, and I'm glad that South Dakota will no longer be regulating them," Crabtree said in a statement.

Republican Attorney General Marty Jackley, who is also running for the U.S. House nomination, is another supporter of the legislation. He told a Senate committee last month that regulating silencers "doesn't promote or help public safety."

"It's simply extra government that doesn't achieve any result," Jackley said.

The bill passed through both chambers of the Legislature without any "no" votes. National opponents of silencer deregulation, including the organization Everytown for Gun Safety, say silencers make it harder for bystanders or law enforcement to identify and react quickly to gunshots.

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

COMMENTARY

Pitfalls aplenty await legislators who want to micromanage school districts

by Dana Hess

Since South Dakota has a citizen Legislature, the people who serve us in the House and Senate also have jobs. They are farmers, lawyers, nurses and accountants, among other things. In addition to their role in the Legislature and their day jobs, some of them also seem to think they are part-time public school administrators.

During each legislative session, a raft of bills are put forward for the betterment of education. At this writing, there are already more than 55 education bills for the Legislature to consider with more likely on the way. Some bills may offer needed tweaks in the law. Others may be requested by educators. Others, however, no matter how good they look on the surface, are just legislative interference.

Even bills that look like good ideas can lose their luster when the testimony starts from people who know their way around a classroom. One example is House Bill 1078, which would have allowed students to substitute an agriculture class for a science class.

"I'm very encouraged by the potential this legislation holds for strengthening agriculture education," said the bill's prime sponsor in the House, Mitchell Republican Kaley Nolz, as quoted in a South Dakota Searchlight story.

Department of Education officials said the bill was unneeded since the department already has ways for career and technical education classes, like agriculture, to take the place of the credits required in core classes like science, math and fine arts.

Nolz should know that there's more to agriculture than science. A future farmer's curriculum should also include economics, accounting and shop. The passage of such a bill may actually do more harm than good attracting new farmers, as students learn that a career in agriculture will make them subject to the whims of fickle markets, uncooperative weather patterns and government intrusion.

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Another example of a seemingly good idea that fades under scrutiny is HB 1008, which would allow high school athletes to get credit for competing in prep sports so they wouldn't have to take gym class.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Kathy Rice, a Black Hawk Republican, brought in Rapid City student-athletes to testify that it's redundant for them to spend time away from class going to athletic events only to have to attend a gym class when they're at school. No matter what their reasoning, it's hard not to be cynical about a high school student trying to get out of gym class.

Education officials cautioned that many school districts have to rely on volunteers to coach their teams. A student getting class credit for participating in a sport would be getting that credit thanks to someone who doesn't have a teaching certificate, a profound break with South Dakota's education standards.

Despite hearing about the pitfalls of these bills, they made so much sense that they both passed through the House Education Committee. In the full House, cooler heads prevailed and both bills were defeated.

Headed for the Senate Education Committee is Senate Bill 198, which restricts cellphone use by students during the school day. Sponsored by Sen. Chris Karr, a Sioux Falls Republican, the bill says students may use a cell phone if there is a medical or educational purpose or in the event of an emergency. Local boards will decide the discipline students will face for noncompliance.

Once again, this seems like a good idea on the surface. Students are there to learn, after all, not to scroll. But passage of the bill flies in the face of local control for school boards. While SB 198 leaves it up to local boards to decide on discipline and what constitutes a school day, it takes away their power to decide on the use of cellphones in a one-size-fits-all policy.

The beauty of local school boards is that they reflect the wants and needs of their communities. Some have students squirrel away their phones all day. Others give students access to their phones during lunch. Still others use the freedom for students to have a phone during the school day as a lesson in responsibility.

Banning student cellphone use in schools sounds good on the surface. So did substituting ag classes for science classes and allowing athletes to substitute sports participation for a gym credit. Whenever the Legislature gets into the business of micromanaging school districts, there are pitfalls aplenty.

Lawmakers have enough on their plates without trying to be part-time school administrators. They should leave classroom policies to the educators who deal with them every day.

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

School cellphone ban stays alive in South Dakota Legislature

Committee also advances bill defining nonpublic schools

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

PIERRE — A bill aiming to ban student cellphone use in South Dakota schools has a chance to be debated on the state Senate floor after the Senate Education Committee voted 5-2 on Tuesday to send it there without recommendation.

The legislation, introduced by Sen. Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, would ban student cellphone use at public school campuses during the day, unless in a health emergency or for educational purposes.

Currently, 38 states and Washington, D.C., have enacted some form of statewide restriction or requirement for districts to limit student phone use. Of those, roughly 18 states and the district have full-day bans or comprehensive statewide restrictions (including during classroom and noninstructional time), according to Stateline.

Most school districts in South Dakota have implemented a policy regarding cellphone use among students during the school day, but those policies vary.

According to a South Dakota Searchlight survey last year, about 60% of districts do not allow cellphones for at least part of the school day, although in some schools, students can keep the devices in their backpacks or lockers. About one-third of the districts in the state remove or lock away high school students' cellphones for at least part of the school day.

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Karr told lawmakers the existing policies aren't enough, since they vary by school district and don't all address use in the hallways or lunch room. He added that banning cellphones as a statewide standard would improve student mental health, focus, education and sociability.

South Dakota Department of Education Secretary Joe Graves told lawmakers that although he agreed with the "general premise" of Karr's bill, he believes most schools are moving toward stricter policies anyway.

"Given that, why violate local control? This is a problem already on its way to a complete solution," Graves said.

If signed into law, the department would include the policy requirement in its school accreditation process, Graves said. The department wouldn't monitor students or schools to ensure it would be enforced.

Lawmakers voted to move the bill forward without recommendation after motions to approve and reject the bill failed. Bills with no recommendation need a motion supported by a majority of the Senate to be placed on the calendar for debate.

Committee endorses 'nonpublic school' definition

The Senate Education Committee also recommended Senate approval of a bill to define a "nonpublic school" in state law. The bill passed with a 4-3 vote.

Administrative rules define a nonpublic school, but Sen. Lauren Nelson, R-Yankton, said the definition should be codified and extended to non-state-accredited nonpublic schools. The rules currently define a nonpublic school as a private school recognized and accredited by the state, such as Christian or tribal schools.

She added that the separate educational category of alternative instruction currently includes organized and staffed schools with students in the hundreds, as well as online, hybrid and microschools that are unaccredited, or accredited by an entity other than the state. That is "fundamentally different" from homeschooling, Nelson said, and "treating them as somehow equal defies common sense."

Those schools should be recognized as unaccredited, nonpublic education, said Nelson, who was an administrator for the Missouri Valley Christian Academy. The school is an unaccredited alternative instruction program.

"We are schools. We're not public schools. We're not accredited nonpublic schools," Nelson said. "We're unaccredited. We have a place, but we're not homeschooling."

Alternative instruction lobbyists, including South Dakota Director of Americans for Prosperity Jennifer Beving, opposed the bill. She said nonpublic schools should be "defined at some point," but that the proposal could limit students' ability to get an education from a range of public and alternative sources, including online courses or unaccredited, private schools.

"I believe there are a number of unintended ways that it could roll back the rights that homeschoolers fought for in 2021," Beving said, referencing legislation that made it easier to enroll students in alternative instruction.

Graves also spoke against the bill, saying that it could complicate the state's efforts to participate in President Donald Trump's federal education tax credit program.

Under the program, South Dakotans who owe federal income taxes can either send up to \$1,700 to the federal government, or they can donate that \$1,700 to a government-recognized scholarship granting organization for public, private or homeschool entities in the state. The program starts in 2027.

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

Republicans on US House Homeland panel defend immigration tactics at tense hearing

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — The head of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement declined during a U.S. House hearing Tuesday to apologize to the families of Alex Pretti and Renee Good, the victims of fatal shootings by immigration officers in Minneapolis last month.

Top Trump administration officials, including Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, had said both Minneapolis residents engaged in "domestic terrorism." Good was a poet and mother of three and Pretti was an intensive care unit nurse.

ICE acting Director Todd Lyons demurred when asked by California Democrat Eric Swalwell if he would apologize for that characterization.

"I'm not going to speak to any ongoing investigation," Lyons said.

Lawmakers on the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee grilled Lyons, Customs and Border Protection Commissioner Rodney Scott and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Director Joseph Edlow during Tuesday's hearing, following the fatal shootings of Good on Jan. 7 and Pretti on Jan. 24. The deportation campaign in Minneapolis began more than two months ago.

Following the shootings, Democrats have pushed for policy changes to the appropriations bill that funds the agency for fiscal year 2026, scrambling a bipartisan agreement on the measure.

If lawmakers don't reach a deal by Friday, funding for much of DHS will run out. Funding for immigration enforcement will remain due to provisions in Republicans' tax cuts and spending law last year.

Scott called the thousands of protestors and legal observers in Minnesota "paid agitators." There is no evidence of that.

Noem, who Democrats are pushing to impeach, was not at the hearing.

The chair of the committee, Rep. Andrew Garbarino of New York, acknowledged that the country was at an "inflection point" and called the deaths of Good and Pretti "unacceptable and preventable."

But he otherwise largely defended federal immigration officials and the Trump administration's enforcement tactics.

The top Democrat on the committee, Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, said the Trump administration was weaponizing DHS against Americans.

Body cameras, masks and roving patrols

Democrats questioned Scott and Lyons on a handful of policy proposals that Democrats are pushing for in the DHS appropriations bill.

The Democrats' proposals include mandating body cameras for immigration agents and requiring those officers to identify themselves and not wear masks.

Thompson asked Lyons how many body cameras ICE officers have. Noem earlier this month announced DHS would be sending body cameras to all ICE officers across the country.

Lyons said about 3,000 ICE officers currently have body cameras with another 6,000 cameras on the way.

Scott said that about 10,000 Border Patrol agents have body cameras out of 20,000 agents.

Democratic Rep. Tim Kennedy of New York asked Lyons if he would commit to instructing ICE agents to stop wearing face coverings and masks in enforcement actions.

"No," Lyons said.

Kennedy then asked Lyons if he believed Noem should resign, given the deadly shootings of Good and Pretti.

"I'm not going to comment on that," Lyons said.

GOP Rep. Michael McCaul, a former chair of the committee who is retiring next year, said some of the roving patrols should be kept at the southern border, rather than in residential areas.

"I've called for de-escalation after the two deaths, the two shootings that took place," McCaul said. "I believe that these roving patrols should be done at the border rather than in the major cities of the United

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States.”

Democrats are also calling for an end to those roving patrols in enforcement in the interior of the U.S. McCaul added that federal immigration agents “are not trained to effectuate crowd control.”

“They are trained to move in surgically, go in and remove these dangerous, violent criminals from the United States of America,” he said.

Judgment day, Klan invoked

The hearing had a few heated exchanges between Democrats and the administration officials.

New Jersey Democratic Rep. LaMonica McIver, who is facing federal charges after a clash with immigration officers at a detention facility in Newark where she tried to conduct an unannounced oversight visit, asked Lyons if he considered himself a religious person.

Lyons said he did and McIver asked him how he thought “judgment day would work for you with so much blood on your hands.”

“I’m not going to entertain the question,” Lyons said.

She asked Lyons if he thought he was “going to hell.”

Garbarino quickly shut down her line of questioning.

Democratic Rep. Delia Ramirez of Illinois criticized the officials before her, and called for ICE to be abolished.

“I have as much respect for you as I do for the last white men who put on masks to terrorize communities of color. I have no respect for the inheritors of the Klanhood and the slave patrol,” she said. “Those activities were criminal and so are yours.”

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

Utility company leader tells audience that data centers will extend fossil fuel usage

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

SIOUX FALLS — The rapid growth of electricity-hungry data centers will extend the life of existing fossil-fuel power plants and result in more being built, according to NorthWestern Energy President and CEO Brian Bird.

“So those folks against that are going to find everything they can to go after data centers,” he said.

Speaking Monday to the Downtown Sioux Falls Rotary Club, Bird acknowledged the potential environmental and climate-change impacts of data centers, but he also described them as an opportunity for utilities after years of relatively flat electricity demand.

Rooms or buildings full of computer servers have been storing cellphone pictures, emails and social media accounts for years. What’s new are 100- to 1,000-acre warehouses full of servers for artificial intelligence and cryptocurrency. Those massive data centers, which can require up to 1,000 megawatts of power, can have an electricity consumption equivalent to that of up to 800,000 residential customers. South Dakota’s largest data center consumes 30 megawatts, but much larger data centers have been proposed.

Data centers make up 4.4% of annual U.S. electricity consumption, a figure that could triple by the end of the decade, according to a Congressional Research Service report.

NorthWestern, which is headquartered in Sioux Falls, delivers natural gas and electricity to customers in the western two-thirds of Montana and eastern South Dakota. The company also has gas service in Nebraska and provides electricity to Yellowstone National Park. NorthWestern is in the midst of a merger with Black Hills Energy, motivated in part by the need to meet greater demand from data centers.

Bird said meeting data center needs will require on-demand power. He said that will largely come from

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coal and natural gas plants rather than from intermittent resources such as wind and solar.

He said emerging battery storage technologies are useful for short-term needs but don't address reliability concerns in a region where demand spikes during extreme cold. He said batteries also perform worse in low temperatures.

Data center development could accelerate interest in nuclear power, he said, which is an industry that does not currently exist in South Dakota. That would provide a less carbon-intensive, on-demand energy source. Though he said if battery storage advances to around 100 hours of storage capacity, wind and solar paired with those batteries could create an environment where "maybe nuclear doesn't even get that much attraction." He said industrial-scale batteries have about four hours of storage currently.

Following the discussion, Bird told South Dakota Searchlight the demand for data centers will almost certainly be met somewhere, whether South Dakota welcomes them or not. He said that makes the increased fossil fuel use all but inevitable. And if not in the U.S., they could be built in a country with less stringent environmental standards.

Bird said the state should seek to capture the benefits of data centers, including jobs and millions in revenue from electricity sales taxes and property taxes.

Data center developers will not build in the state without a sales tax exemption on their software and hardware, Bird said. A state House Committee recently defeated a bill to provide exemptions, 9-3.

"There are some folks that think they can do maybe without the sales tax, but I haven't found those people," Bird said, referencing data center developers. "I've heard they're out there."

A spokesperson for a proposed 430-megawatt data center in South Dakota's Deuel County estimated that, under the failed legislation, its facility would have received approximately \$500 million in sales tax relief each time it updated its billions of dollars' worth of hardware and software.

Wildfire mitigation

During the Rotary meeting, Bird also discussed pending state legislation that would provide utilities with wildfire liability protections, in exchange for filing a wildfire mitigation plan.

Under the bill, private utilities could submit mitigation plans to the state Public Utilities Commission, while electric cooperatives and municipal utilities could submit plans to their boards or city councils. The utilities that do so would have to file annual compliance reports.

The bill requires that plans include identification of high-risk areas, inspection and operating standards, vegetation management strategies, and coordination with the appropriate wildfire agencies.

Bird said utilities should and will continue to pay for proven economic damages when their equipment causes a fire, if the bill becomes law. But he said large punitive awards drive up customer rates and can threaten a company's financial stability, pointing to wildfires in California.

Bird described the issue as increasingly urgent as wildfire risks grow.

That risk is also being felt by utility customers. A January 2025 analysis from the U.S. Department of the Treasury reports that homeowners are paying more for coverage in areas facing higher risks driven by climate change, including more frequent and severe wildfires.

The department examined about 250 million homeowners' policies from 2018 to 2022 and found that policyholders in the 20% of ZIP codes with the highest expected losses from climate-related perils (like wildfires) paid 82% more than the average in the lowest-risk 20%.

The wildfire liability bill passed the state Senate 29-4 and awaits a hearing by the House Commerce and Energy Committee.

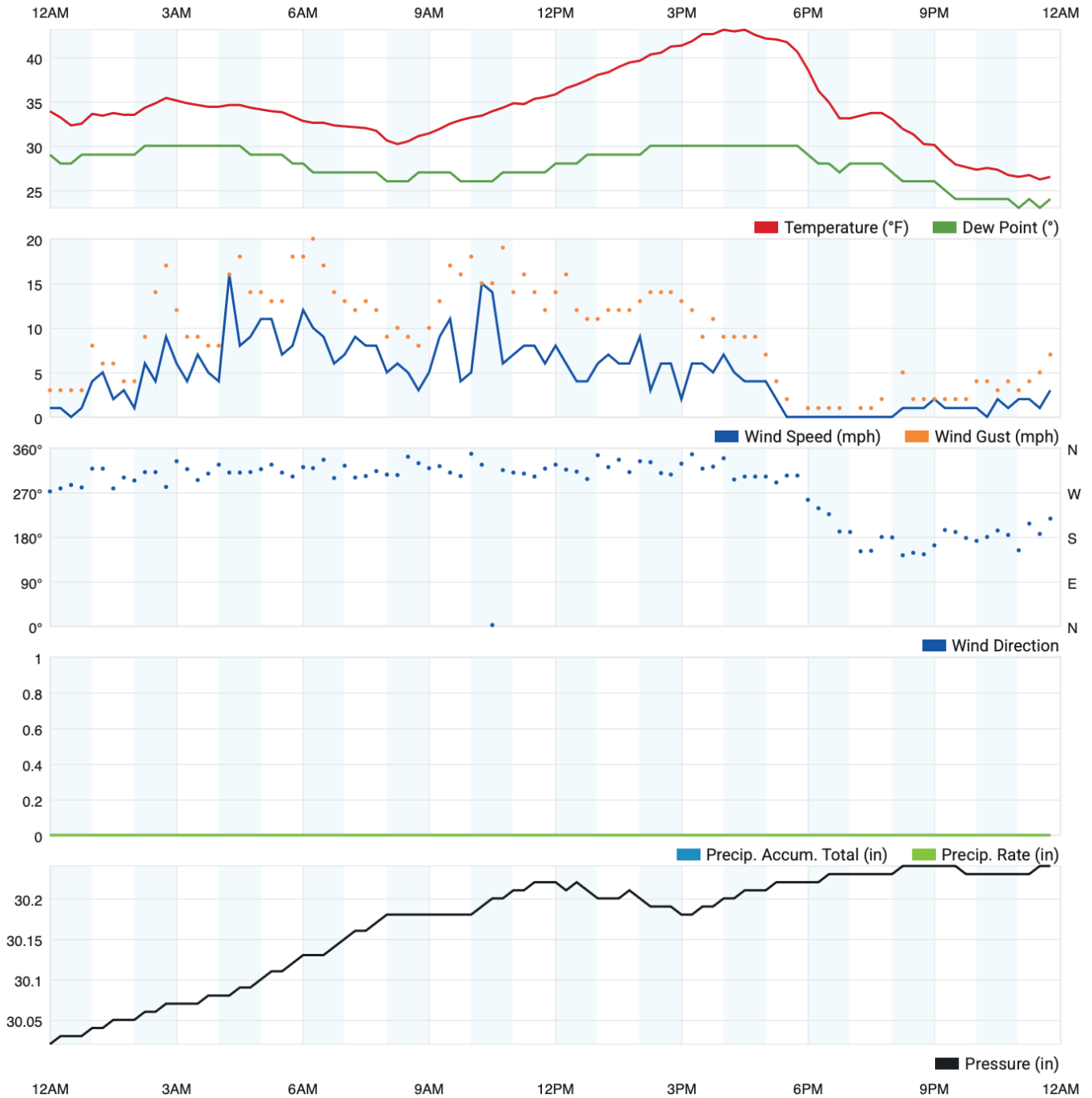
Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

February 10, 2026



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Today



High: 49 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 27 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Thursday



High: 49 °F

Sunny

Thursday
Night



Low: 26 °F

Mostly Clear

Friday



High: 51 °F

Mostly Sunny



Staying Mild Through End of the Week

February 11, 2026
3:54 AM

High Temperatures 15 to 25 degrees above average

Today



High:

43-53°

Overnight low:

23-30°

Wind:

SW to SE 5-15 mph

Thursday



High:

45-53°

Overnight low:

25-30°

Wind:

Variable 5-10 mph

Friday



High:

47-57°

Overnight low:

27-33°

Wind:

SW 5-15 mph



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Above normal temperatures in the 40s and 50s will continue through the end of the week and into the weekend. Conditions will remain mostly dry across central and northeast SD into west central MN, along with generally light winds.

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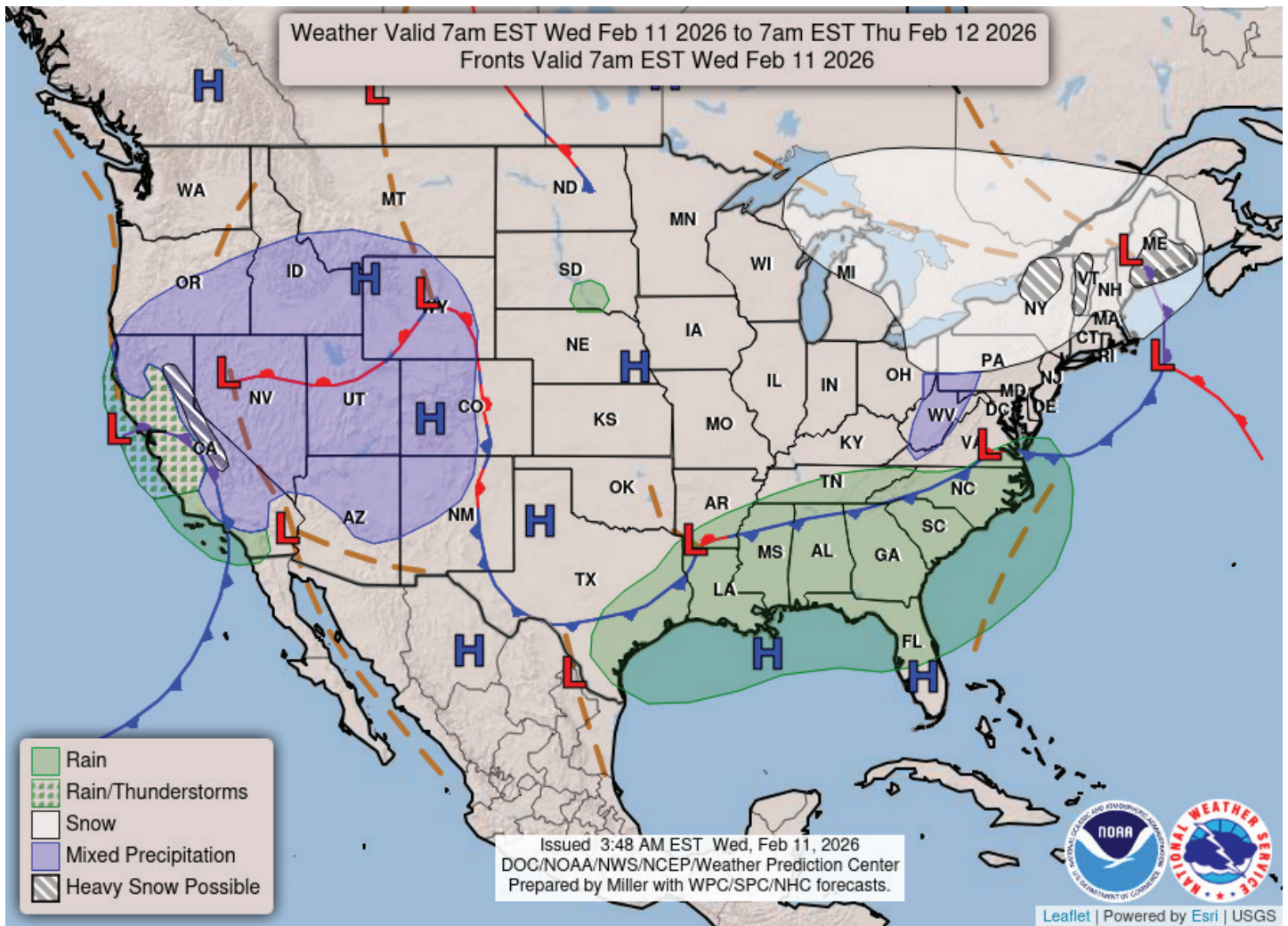
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 43 °F at 4:08 PM
Low Temp: 26 °F at 11:29 PM
Wind: 20 mph at 6:13 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 58 in 2005
Record Low: -35 in 1988
Average High: 27
Average Low: 5
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.22
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.77
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:53 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:38 am



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Today in Weather History

February 11, 2002: High winds of 35 to 45 mph gusting to 60 to 65 mph affected central and northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota through the afternoon and into the evening hours. The high winds caused some spotty tree and roof damage, along with a few power outages. In addition, a few downed power lines in Aberdeen resulted in a short power outage for some people. Some wind gusts included 55 mph at Wheaton, 58 mph at McLaughlin, 59 mph at Pierre, 61 mph at Sisseton and Aberdeen, 62 mph at Mobridge, and 63 mph at Graceville, Minnesota.

1895: The low temperature was 11 degrees below zero at Moline, Illinois, marking the last of 16 consecutive days on which the low temperature was at or below zero. During the first 11 days of February, Moline's highest temperature was only 13 degrees above zero. Their current average high temperature for early February is in the lower 30s.

1899 — Perhaps the greatest of all arctic outbreaks commenced on this date. The temperature plunged to 61 degrees below zero in Montana. At the same time a "Great Eastern Blizzard" left a blanket of snow from Georgia to New Hampshire. The state of Virginia took the brunt of the storm, with snowfall totals averaging 30 to 40 inches. (David Ludlum)

1935: The lowest recorded temperature on the continent of Africa occurred on this date in 1935. A bitterly cold 11 degrees below zero was registered at the Atlas Mountains village of Ifrane, Morocco.

1962: A powerful F3 tornado struck Holstebro in Denmark, causing devastating damage. More than 100 houses were severely damaged or destroyed, making this event the most devastating tornado in Denmark's history. The tornado could have been a low-end F4.

1983: Called the "Megalopolitan blockbuster snowstorm," this major snowstorm impacted the Mid-Atlantic and southern New England. Snowfall up to 25 inches fell at Allentown, Pennsylvania. Snowfall amount of 35 inches occurred in parts of the Blue Ridge Mountains of West Virginia at Glen Cary. Windsor Locks, Connecticut, recorded a record 19 inches in 12 hours. A ship sunk off the Virginia/Maryland coast, killing 33. There were 46 total storm-related fatalities. New 24-hour snowfall records were set in Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Allentown, Pennsylvania, and Hartford, Connecticut. Five inches of snow in one hour was recorded at Allentown and Hartford.

1987 — Denver, CO, reported only their third occurrence of record of a thunderstorm in February. Ten cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Huron SD reported February temperatures averaging 19 degrees above normal. Williston ND reported readings averaging 24 degrees above normal for the month. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Bitter cold air gripped the north central U.S. Morning lows of 35 degrees below zero at Aberdeen SD, Bismarck ND and International Falls MN were records for the date. Bemidji MN was, officially, the cold spot in the nation with a low of 39 degrees below zero, however, a reading of 42 degrees below zero was reported at Gettysburg SD. In the Northern High Plains Region, Baker MT warmed from 27 degrees below zero to 40 above. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 — While much of the continental U.S. enjoyed sunshine and seasonable temperatures, a strong weather system over the Hawaiian Islands deluged Honolulu with 2.5 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — A winter storm produced up to ten inches of snow in Vermont, and up to nine inches of snow in Aroostook County of northeastern Maine. A three day snowstorm began to overspread Oregon, and the winter storm produced 29 inches of snow at Bennett Pass. Mild weather continued in the central U.S. La Crosse WI reported a record forty-seven consecutive days with temperatures above normal. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 — North Dakota Governor John Hoeven declares a snow emergency as winds gusting over 70 mph along with heavy snow produces low visibilities and drifts up to 20 feet in northwestern North Dakota. Amtrak train service is interrupted in the region. [The Weather Doctor](http://islandnet.com/~see/weather/almanac/diaryfeb.htm)

2006 — Snowfall records fell in Philadelphia and Allentown, Pennsylvania, Bridgeport and Hartford, Connecticut, Newark, New Jersey, and Worcester and Boston, Massachusetts. The highest total reported was 30.2 inches at Fairfield, CT. New York City set a record one-day snowfall record of 26.9 inches in Central Park.



Our Treasure

All that we have belongs to God; we are simply His managers.

Matthew 6:19-21; 19 ``Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

20 ``But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal;

The way we regard our treasure reveals who we are and what we truly value. The question is, What do we treasure most?

No matter how we acquire our belongings—by working, investing, saving, or receiving gifts—the correct perspective on money and property is that the Lord owns it all. We are simply the managers.

Here's another way to think about your resources: See them as a way to meet people's needs and a means of serving God's kingdom (Ephesians 4:28; Malachi 3:10). When we give to others or to kingdom work, we are immediately transferring our treasure from earth to heaven.

The Lord's blessings can certainly be used to help us reach any goals He gives us. When we're walking in God's will and bringing our requests to Him, our preferences become aligned with the desires He has for us. Then we can know He approves of investing our resources in those areas.

Let us always consider the eternal value of our pursuits. The bottom line is that we should trust the Lord with every ounce of our time, talent, and treasure because He will use them to accomplish truly amazing things.

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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The Groton Independent

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.10.26

5 25 30 36 68 6

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$385,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 24 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.09.26

2 7 26 28 34 1

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$15,180,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 39 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.10.26

13 18 25 27 30 16

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 54 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.07.26

9 12 18 20 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$263,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 54 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.09.26

2 33 49 51 64 26

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 23 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.09.26

6 19 22 28 48 24

Power Play: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$126,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 23 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 57, Mitchell 52
Aberdeen Christian 39, Ipswich 38, OT
Avon 42, Emery 39
Beresford 58, Garretson 40
Brandon Valley 65, Sioux Falls Washington 60, OT
Burke 45, Bon Homme 38
Canton 57, Alcester-Hudson 48
Castlewood 42, Florence-Henry 32
Chester 62, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 26
Clark-Willow Lake 64, Britton-Hecla 24
Colman-Egan 46, Howard 27
Corsica/Stickney 61, Kimball-White Lake 25
Crofton, Neb. 61, Elk Point-Jefferson 25
Custer 61, Newcastle, Wyo. 47
Elkton-Lake Benton 54, Baltic 38
Ethan 61, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 43
Faulkton 46, Gettysburg 37
Flandreau 44, De Smet 33
Freeman 52, Hanson 49
Gregory 37, Platte-Geddes 34
Hamlin 50, Aberdeen Roncalli 36
Harding County 71, Dupree 22
Hill City 56, Douglas 18
Hot Springs 41, Pine Ridge 33
Huron 58, T F Riggs High School 36
Irene-Wakonda 36, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 35
Jones County 56, Philip 30
Lakota Tech 106, Little Wound 37
Lemmon High School 61, Faith 33
Lower Brule 64, White River 52
Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 64, St Thomas More 25
McIntosh High School def. Tiospaye Topa, forfeit
Milbank 49, Sisseton 41
North Central 45, Stanley County 30
Northwestern 43, Webster 36
Rapid City Christian 55, Belle Fourche 28
Scotland/Menno 32, Canistota 21
Sioux Falls Christian 67, Tri-Valley 48
Sioux Falls Jefferson 59, Watertown 26
Sioux Falls O'Gorman 62, Sioux Falls Lincoln 15
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 55, Brookings 47
Sioux Valley 52, Deuel 19
Spearfish 48, Sturgis Brown High School 35
Tea 43, Harrisburg 37
Vermillion 51, Dakota Valley 46

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Viborg-Hurley 44, Parker/Marion 31
Wagner 51, Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 41
Warner 44, Redfield 29
Waubay/Summit 63, Estelline-Hendricks 46
Waverly-South Shore 41, Wilmot 17
West Central 70, McCook Central-Montrose 37
Wolsey-Wessington 48, Iroquois-Lake Preston 33

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

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Christian 63, Ipswich 26
Alcester-Hudson 64, Canton 61
Baltic 71, Elkton-Lake Benton 43
Bon Homme 57, Burke 48
Brandon Valley 65, Sioux Falls Washington 60, OT
Bridgewater-Emery 56, Avon 38
Castlewood 59, Florence-Henry 28
Chamberlain 62, Crow Creek Tribal School 38
Chester 51, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 41
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 85, McLaughlin 29
Clark-Willow Lake 64, Britton-Hecla 29
Cody-Kilgore, Neb. 81, Oelrichs 43
Corsica/Stickney 50, Kimball-White Lake 48
Custer 64, Newcastle, Wyo. 45
Dakota Valley 74, Vermillion 65
DeSmet 72, Flandreau 34
Deubrook 69, Great Plains Lutheran 42
Douglas 65, Hot Springs 40
Emery 56, Avon 38
Estelline-Hendricks 51, Waubay/Summit 33
Ethan 72, Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 58
Freeman 54, Hanson 38
Garretson 79, Beresford 63
Groton 75, Leola-Frederick High School 29
Hamlin 72, Aberdeen Roncalli 40
Hitchcock-Tulare 59, Highmore-Harrold 48
Howard 45, Colman-Egan 42
Huron 54, T F Riggs High School 39
Madison 69, McCook Central-Montrose 56
Milbank 67, Sisseton 43
Mitchell 54, Aberdeen Central 34
New Underwood 79, Kadoka 59
Platte-Geddes 55, Gregory 45
Rapid City Christian 74, Belle Fourche 43
Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 54, Wagner 43
Sioux Falls Jefferson 92, Watertown 73
Sioux Falls Lincoln 69, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 67
Sioux Falls Roosevelt 73, Brookings 61

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Sioux Valley 69, Deuel 40
Spearfish 60, Sturgis Brown High School 31
St Thomas More 64, Mahpiya Luta Red Cloud 34
Sully Buttes 61, Herreid-Selby 45
Tea 71, Harrisburg 65, 2OT
Timber Lake 60, Bison 31
Todd County 66, Bennett County 59
Tripp-Delmont-Armour 57, Irene-Wakonda 48
Viborg-Hurley 78, Parker/Marion 67
Warner 57, Redfield 49
Webster 55, Northwestern 53
West Monona, Iowa 66, Elk Point-Jefferson 64
Winner 60, St. Francis Indian 30

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

Iran commemorates 1979 revolution as nation is squeezed by anger over crackdown and tensions with US

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran marked the 47th anniversary of its 1979 Islamic Revolution on Wednesday as the country's theocracy remains under pressure, both from U.S. President Donald Trump who suggested sending another aircraft carrier group to the Middle East and a public angrily denouncing Tehran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests.

The commemoration represented a spit-screen view of life in Iran, with state television showing hundreds of thousands of people across the country attending pro-government rallies, which included the burning of American flags and cries of "Death to America!" The night before, as government-sponsored fireworks lit the dark sky, witnesses heard shouts from people's homes in the Iranian capital, Tehran, of "Death to the dictator!"

Meanwhile, President Masoud Pezeshkian got on stage at Azadi Square in Tehran and insisted that Iran is willing to negotiate over its nuclear program as fledgling nuclear talks talks with America hang in the balance.

Whether the talks succeed remains an open question — and Mideast nations fear their collapse could plunge the region into another regional war. A top Iranian security official traveled Qatar on Wednesday after earlier visiting Oman, which has mediated this latest round of negotiations. Just before the official's arrival, Qatar's ruling emir received a phone call from Trump.

In his speech at the anniversary ceremony, Pezeshkian also insisted that his nation was "not seeking nuclear weapons. ... and are ready for any kind of verification." However, the United Nations' nuclear watchdog — the International Atomic Energy Agency — has been unable for months to inspect and verify Iran's nuclear stockpile.

"The high wall of mistrust that the United States and Europe have created through their past statements and actions does not allow these talks to reach a conclusion," Pezeshkian said.

Yet moments later, he added: "At the same time, we are engaging with full determination in dialogue aimed at peace and stability in the region alongside our neighboring countries."

Commemoration overshadowed by crackdown

On Iranian state TV, authorities broadcast images of people taking to the streets across the country Wednesday to support the theocracy and its 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Others criticized Iran's exiled crown prince, Reza Pahlavi, who had been calling for anti-government protests.

"I am here to say we don't stop supporting our leader and our country as the Americans and Israelis are increasingly threatening" us, said Reza Jedi, a 43-year-old participant.

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Iranian missiles were on display, as were fragments that authorities described as being from downed Israeli drones. Fake coffins draped in the American flag could also be seen, one bearing the picture of U.S. Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, the head of the American military's Central Command.

Among Iran's 85 million people, there is a hard-line element of support for Iran's theocracy, including members of the country's powerful paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which crucially put down the protests last month in a bloody suppression that killed thousands and saw tens of thousands detained, according to activists.

Also, many Iranians often take part in pro-theocracy demonstrations as they are government employees or turn up to enjoy the carnival atmosphere of a government-sponsored holiday. Iran has 2.5 million government employees, with a fifth in Tehran alone.

While not directly addressing the bloodshed by authorities, Pezeshkian acknowledged the crackdown that began in earnest on Jan. 8 had "caused great sorrow."

"We are ashamed before the people, and we are obligated to assist all those who were harmed in these incidents," he said. "We are not seeking confrontation with the people."

One man sadly watched the commemoration from a sidewalk in Tehran, not taking part.

"I regularly participated in the rally in past years," said the man, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisal. "But how can I do that now as the streets' asphalt were bloodied last month?"

A senior Iran official visits Qatar

As the commemoration took place, senior Iranian security official Ali Larijani left Oman for Qatar, a Middle East nation that hosts a major U.S. military installation and one that Iran attacked in June after the U.S. bombed Iranian nuclear sites during the 12-day Iran-Israel war.

Qatar has also been a key negotiator in the past with Iran, with which it shares a massive offshore natural gas field in the Persian Gulf. Its state-run Qatar News Agency reported that ruling emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani spoke with Trump about "the current situation in the region and international efforts aimed at de-escalation and strengthening regional security and peace," without elaborating.

Speaking to the Russian state channel RT, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran still does "not have full trust for the Americans."

"Last time we negotiated, last June we were in the middle of negotiation then they decided to attack us and that was a very very bad experience for us," Iran's top diplomat said. "We need to make sure that that scenario is not repeated and this is mostly up to America."

Despite that concern, Araghchi said it could be possible "to come to a better deal than Obama," referencing the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers Iran reached when former U.S. President Barack Obama was in office. Trump in his first term unilaterally withdrew America from the accord.

Trump suggests sending another carrier to Mideast

The U.S. has 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.

Already, U.S. forces have shot down a drone they said got too close to the Lincoln and came to the aid of a U.S.-flagged ship that Iranian forces tried to stop in the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf.

Trump told the news website Axios that he was considering sending a second carrier to the region, noting, "We have an armada that is heading there and another one might be going."

It remains unclear what carrier could go. The USS George H.W. Bush has left Norfolk, Virginia, according to U.S. Navy Institute News. The USS Gerald R. Ford remains in the Caribbean after the U.S. military raid that captured Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro.

Shootings at school and home in British Columbia, Canada, leave 10 dead including suspect

By JIM MORRIS and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — A shooting at a school in British Columbia left seven people dead, while two more were found dead at a nearby home, Canadian authorities said Tuesday. A woman who police believe to be the shooter also was killed.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police said more than 25 people are injured, including two who were airlifted to hospital with life-threatening injuries, after the shooting at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School.

School shootings are rare in Canada.

The town of Tumbler Ridge in the Canadian Rockies is more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) north of Vancouver, near the border with Alberta. The provincial government website lists Tumbler Ridge Secondary School as having 175 students from Grades 7 to 12.

British Columbia Premier David Eby told reporters that police officers reached the school within two minutes.

A video showed students walking out of the school with their hands raised as police vehicles surrounded the building and a helicopter circled overhead.

Police found six people dead, a statement said. A suspect appeared to have died of a "self-inflicted injury." An eighth person died while being transported to a hospital, and two more were found dead at a home the authorities believe was connected to the attack.

RCMP Superintendent Ken Floyd told reporters that investigators had identified a female suspect but would not release a name, and that the shooter's motive remained unclear. He added that police are still investigating how the victims are connected to the shooter.

Tumbler Ridge Mayor Darryl Krakowka said the whole community is grieving.

"I broke down," he said, saying it was "devastating" to learn how many had died in the community of 2,700, which he called a "big family."

"I have lived here for 18 years," Krakowka said "I probably know every one of the victims."

The Rev. George Rowe of the Tumbler Ridge Fellowship Baptist Church went to the recreation center where the victims' families were awaiting more information.

"It was not a pretty sight. Families are still waiting to hear if it's their child that's deceased and because of protocol and procedure the investigating team is very careful in releasing names," Rowe said. "The big thing tonight was my having to walk away and the families still waiting to find out. It is so difficult. Other pastors and counselors are there so they are not alone."

Rowe once taught at the high school and his three children graduated from there.

"To walk through the corridors of that school will never be the same again," he said.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said in a social media post that he was devastated by the shooting in Tumbler Ridge.

"I join Canadians in grieving with those whose lives have been changed irreversibly today, and in gratitude for the courage and selflessness of the first responders who risked their lives to protect their fellow citizens," he wrote.

Carney's office said he is suspending a planned trip to Halifax, Nova Scotia and Munich, Germany. He was set to announce a long-awaited defense industrial strategy in Halifax on Wednesday before heading to Europe for the Munich Security Conference.

Eby, the province's premier, told reporters he had spoken to Carney after what he called the "unimaginable tragedy."

"I know it's causing us all to hug our kids a little bit tighter tonight," he said. "I'm asking the people of British Columbia to look after the people of Tumbler Ridge tonight."

Canada's government has responded to previous mass shootings with gun control measures, including a recently broadened ban on all guns it considers assault weapons.

Tuesday's shootings were Canada's deadliest rampage since 2020, when a gunman in Nova Scotia killed 13 people and set fires that left another nine dead.

Russian drone kills a father and 3 children in Ukraine, pregnant mother badly injured

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — A Russian drone smashed into a home in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region overnight, killing a father and his three small children and seriously wounding their mother who is 35 weeks pregnant, officials said Wednesday.

The strike completely destroyed the brick house and set it on fire, with the family trapped under the rubble, according to the Kharkiv regional prosecutor's office.

The 34-year-old father and his three children — twin boys aged 2 and their 1-year-old sister — were killed, while rescue workers pulled the mother alive from the rubble, prosecutors said. She sustained blast injuries, a traumatic brain injury, burns and hearing loss, they said.

During the almost four years since Russia invaded its neighbor, and despite a new push over the past year in U.S.-led peace efforts, Ukrainian civilians have endured constant aerial attacks.

Last year was the deadliest for civilians in Ukraine since 2022 as Russia intensified its aerial barrages behind the front line, according to the U.N. Human Rights Monitoring Mission in the country.

The war killed 2,514 civilians and injured 12,142 in Ukraine in 2025 — 31% higher than in 2024, it said.

The drone that struck the Kharkiv town of Bohodukhiv was identified as a Geran-2, a Russian-made version of an Iranian Shahed drone.

"We lost what is most precious — our future," Bohodukhiv mayor Volodymyr Bielyi wrote on his Facebook page. "There are no words to console the family; there is no prayer that could heal the heart of a mother who has lost her children."

Bielyi said the mother is fighting for her life in hospital and announced three days of mourning, when national flags will be lowered and all entertainment and organized public events will be cancelled.

"We will endure. We will remember. We will never forgive this horror on our land," Bielyi wrote.

Bohodukhiv had a pre-war population of 15,000. It is located some 22 kilometers (13 miles) from the Russian border. It wasn't immediately clear whether there was any Ukrainian military infrastructure near the house.

"Each such Russian strike undermines trust in everything being done through diplomacy to end this war, and again and again proves that only strong pressure on Russia and clear security guarantees for Ukraine are the real key to stopping the killings," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said on social media.

Ukraine has accused Russian forces of committing countless war crimes since the start of the war, and European institutions have made efforts to hold Russia accountable.

The International Criminal Court in The Hague has multiple outstanding arrest warrants for Russian officials for war crimes. They include President Vladimir Putin, who is accused of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine.

Zelenskyy said late Tuesday that Ukraine is making "many changes" in the way it fights Russia's aerial attacks, especially with short-range air defenses. Training and replenishing new troops are also key issues, he said.

Ukraine has been short-handed against Russia's bigger army, though Moscow's forces have made only creeping progress in their invasion.

Wide-scale desertions and 2 million draft-dodgers are among a raft of challenges for Ukraine, Defense Minister Mykhailo Fedorov said last month.

Zelenskyy has also pressed Western partners to provide more sophisticated air defense systems and missiles to help defend Ukraine.

Military aid sent to Kyiv dropped by 13% last year compared with the annual average between 2022 and 2024, as U.S. President Donald Trump stopped sending American weapons, according to Germany's Kiel Institute, which tracks such support.

However, European countries have taken up much of the slack, increasing their military aid by 67% compared with the 2022-2024 period, the institute said in a report Wednesday.

Foreign humanitarian and financial aid to Ukraine fell by 5% last year in comparison with the previous three years, it said.

Ukraine's Air Force says Russia launched 129 long-range drones at Ukraine last night.

Meanwhile, a Ukrainian drone attack caused a fire at an industrial plant in the city of Volgograd, authorities said.

Volgograd region's Gov. Andrei Bocharov said that drone fragments also damaged an apartment building. Eight Russian airports briefly suspended flights overnight because of drone attacks, officials said.

Investigators searching a location in Arizona in disappearance of Nancy Guthrie

By TY O'NEIL, JOHN SEEWER and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

RIO RICO, Ariz. (AP) — A person was detained for questioning Tuesday in the kidnapping of Nancy Guthrie, hours after the FBI released surveillance videos of a masked person wearing a handgun holster outside Guthrie's front door the night she vanished from her Arizona home.

Deputies detained the person during a traffic stop south of Tucson, according to the Pima County Sheriff's Department. It did not immediately provide details about the person or the location. The FBI referred questions to the sheriff's office.

A Phoenix, Arizona, television station, KNXV-TV, interviewed a delivery man who said he had been detained by police on suspicions of kidnapping Guthrie. He said he was innocent and that police released him after several hours. Local and federal authorities have not confirmed that the person who they had detained was released.

The department and the FBI were conducting a court-authorized search Tuesday night at a location in Rio Rico, about an hour's drive south of Tucson, the department said in a statement. It was expected to take several hours.

Guthrie disappeared on Feb. 1 and since then the case has gripped the nation. Until Tuesday, it seemed authorities were making little headway in determining what happened to the 84-year-old mother of "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie or finding who was responsible.

Savannah Guthrie and her two siblings have released a series of video statements pleading for the return of their mother and indicating a willingness to pay a ransom. Authorities have described Nancy Guthrie as mentally sound but with limited mobility. She takes several medications and there was concern from the start that she could die without them, Pima County Sheriff Chris Nanos has said repeatedly.

The community of Rio Rico — population 20,000 — is roughly an hour's drive from Guthrie's home and about 15 miles (24 kilometers) north of the U.S.-Mexico border.

The videos released earlier Tuesday show a person wearing a ski mask and a backpack. At one point, they tilt their head down and away from a doorbell camera while approaching Guthrie's front door. The footage also shows the person holding a flashlight in their mouth and trying to cover the camera with a gloved hand and part of a plant ripped from the yard.

The videos — less than a combined minute in length — gave investigators and the public their first glimpse of who was outside Guthrie's home in the foothills outside Tucson. But the images did not show what happened to her or help determine whether she is still alive.

FBI Director Kash Patel said the "armed individual" appeared to "have tampered with the camera." It was not entirely clear whether there was a gun in the holster.

The videos were pulled from data on "back-end systems" after investigators spent days trying to find lost, corrupted or inaccessible images, Patel said.

"This will get the phone ringing for lots of potential leads," said former FBI agent Katherine Schweit. "Even when you have a person who appears to be completely covered, they're really not. You can see their girth, the shape of their face, potentially their eyes or mouth."

Tuesday afternoon, authorities were back near Guthrie's neighborhood, using vehicles to block her driveway. A few miles away, law enforcement was going door-to-door in the area where daughter Annie

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Guthrie lives, talking with neighbors as well as walking through a drainage area and examining the inside of a culvert with a flashlight.

Investigators have said for more than a week that they believe Nancy Guthrie was taken against her will. She was last seen at home Jan. 31 and reported missing the next day. DNA tests showed blood on her porch was hers, authorities said.

Authorities initially could not pull images from camera

Until now, authorities have released few details, leaving it unclear if ransom notes demanding money with deadlines already passed were authentic, and whether the Guthrie family has had any contact with whoever took Guthrie.

Savannah Guthrie posted the new surveillance images on social media Tuesday, saying the family believes their mother is still alive and offering phone numbers for the FBI and county sheriff. Within minutes, the post had thousands of comments.

Investigators had hoped cameras would turn up evidence right away about how Nancy Guthrie disappeared from her home in an secluded neighborhood.

But the doorbell camera was disconnected early on Feb. 1. While software recorded movement at the home minutes later, Guthrie did not have an active subscription, so Pima County Sheriff Chris Nanos had initially said none of the footage could be recovered. Officials continued working to get the footage.

Savannah Guthrie expressed desperation a day ago

Heartbreaking messages by Savannah Guthrie and her family shifted from hopeful to bleak as they made pleas for whoever took Nancy Guthrie. In a video just ahead of a purported ransom deadline Monday, Savannah Guthrie appeared alone and spoke directly to the public.

"We are at an hour of desperation," she said. "We need your help."

Much of the nation is closely following the case involving the longtime anchor of NBC's morning show.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said President Donald Trump watched the new surveillance footage and was in "pure disgust," encouraging anyone with information to call the FBI.

The FBI this week began posting digital billboards about the case in major cities from Texas to California.

Connor Hagan, a spokesperson for the FBI, said Monday that the agency was not aware of ongoing communication between Guthrie's family and any suspected kidnappers. Authorities also had not identified any suspects, he said.

Videos from Guthrie siblings appealed directly to whoever took their mom

Three days after the search began, Savannah Guthrie and her two siblings sent their first public appeal to whoever took their mother, saying, "We want to hear from you, and we are ready to listen."

In the recorded video, Guthrie said her family was aware of media reports about a ransom letter, but they first wanted proof their mother was alive.

"Please reach out to us," they said.

The next day, Savannah Guthrie's brother again made a plea, saying, "Whoever is out there holding our mother, we want to hear from you. We haven't heard anything directly."

Then over the past weekend, the family posted another video — one that was more cryptic and generated even more speculation about Nancy Guthrie's fate.

"We received your message, and we understand. We beg you now to return our mother to us so that we can celebrate with her," said Savannah Guthrie, flanked by her siblings. "This is the only way we will have peace. This is very valuable to us, and we will pay."

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By TY O'NEIL, JOHN SEEWER and HALLIE GOLDEN Associated Press

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As ICE expands, an AP review of crimes committed by agents shows how their powers can be abused

By RYAN J. FOLEY Associated Press

Investigators said one immigration enforcement official got away with physically assaulting his girlfriend for years. Another admitted he repeatedly sexually abused a woman in his custody. A third is charged with taking bribes to remove detention orders on people targeted for deportation.

At least two dozen U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement employees and contractors have been charged with crimes since 2020, and their documented wrongdoing includes patterns of physical and sexual abuse, corruption and other abuses of authority, a review by The Associated Press found.

While most of the cases happened before Congress voted last year to give ICE \$75 billion to hire more agents and detain more people, experts say these kinds of crimes could accelerate given the sheer volume of new employees and their empowerment to use aggressive tactics to arrest and deport people.

The Trump administration has emboldened agents by arguing they have "absolute immunity" for their actions on duty and by weakening oversight. One judge recently suggested that ICE was developing a troubling culture of lawlessness, while experts have questioned whether job applicants are getting enough vetting and training.

"Once a person is hired, brought on, goes through the training and they are not the right person, it is difficult to get rid of them and there will be a price to be paid later down the road by everyone," said Gil Kerlikowske, who served as commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection from 2014 to 2017.

Almost every law enforcement agency contends with bad employees and crimes related to domestic violence and substance abuse are long-standing problems in the field. But ICE's rapid growth and mission to deport millions are unprecedented, and the AP review found that the immense power that officers exercise over vulnerable populations can lead to abuses.

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Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin said that wrongdoing was not widespread in the agency, and that ICE "takes allegations of misconduct by its employees extremely seriously." She said that most new hires had already worked for other law enforcement agencies, and that their backgrounds were thoroughly vetted.

"America can be proud of the professionalism our officers bring to the job day-in and day-out," she said.

ICE misconduct could become a 'countrywide phenomenon'

ICE announced last month that it had more than doubled in size to 22,000 employees in less than one year.

Kerlikowske said ICE agents are particularly "vulnerable to unnecessary use of force issues," given that they often conduct enforcement operations in public while facing protests. With the number of ICE detainees nearly doubling since last year to 70,000, employees and contractors responsible for overseeing them are also facing challenging conditions that can provide more opportunities for misconduct.

The Border Patrol doubled in size to more than 20,000 agents from 2004 to 2011 — six years longer than ICE took. It was embarrassed by a wave of corruption, abuse and other misconduct by some of the new hires. Kerlikowske recalled cases of agents who accepted bribes to let cars carrying drugs enter the U.S. or who became involved in human trafficking.

He and others say ICE is poised to see similar problems that will likely be broader in scope, with less oversight and accountability.

"The corruption and the abuse and the misconduct was largely confined in the prior instance to along the border and interactions with immigrants and border state residents. With ICE, this is going to be a countrywide phenomenon as they pull in so many people who are attracted to this mission," said David Bier, director of immigration studies at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank.

Bier, who has helped publicize some of the recent arrests and other alleged misconduct by ICE agents, said he has been struck by the "remarkable array of different offenses and charges that we've seen."

AP's review examined public records involving cases of ICE employees and contractors who have been arrested since 2020, including at least 17 who have been convicted and six others who are awaiting trial. Nine have been charged in the last year, including an agent cited last month for assaulting a protester near Chicago while off-duty.

Some of the most serious crimes were committed by veteran ICE employees and supervisors rather than rookies.

While federal officials have justified ICE's aggression, the behavior of agents is drawing scrutiny from cellphone-wielding observers and prosecutors in Democratic-led jurisdictions. Local agencies are looking into last month's fatal shootings in Minneapolis of protesters Renee Good and Alex Pretti by federal agents, as well as the killing of Keith Porter by an off-duty ICE agent in Los Angeles on New Year's Eve.

Arrests have made local headlines

Around the country, the cases have attracted unwelcome headlines for ICE, which has spent millions of dollars publicizing the criminal rap sheets of those they arrest as the "worst of the worst."

Among them:

— The assistant ICE field office supervisor in Cincinnati, Samuel Saxon, a 20-year ICE veteran, has been jailed since his arrest in December on charges that he attempted to strangle his girlfriend.

Saxon had abused the woman for years, fracturing her hip and nose and causing internal bleeding, a judge found in a ruling ordering him detained pending trial. "The defendant is a volatile and violent individual," the judge wrote of Saxon, whose attorneys didn't return a message seeking comment. ICE said he is considered absent without leave.

— "I'm ICE, boys," an ICE employment eligibility auditor told police in Minnesota in November when he was arrested in a sting as he went to meet a person he thought was a 17-year-old prostitute. Alexander Back, 41, has pleaded not guilty to attempted enticement of a minor. ICE said Back is on administrative leave while the agency investigates.

—When officers in suburban Chicago found a man passed out in a crashed car in October, they were

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surprised to discover the driver was an ICE officer who had recently completed his shift at a detention center and had his government firearm in the vehicle. They arrested Guillermo Diaz-Torres for driving under the influence. He's pleaded not guilty and has been put on administrative duty pending an investigation.

___ After an ICE officer in Florida was stopped for driving drunk with his two children in the car in August, he tried to get out of charges by pointing to his law enforcement and military service. When that failed, he demanded to know whether one of the deputies arresting him was Haitian and threatened to check the man's immigration status, body camera video shows.

"I'll run him once I get out of here and if he's not legit, ooh, he's taking a ride back to Haiti," Scott Deiseroth warned during the arrest.

Deiseroth, who was sentenced to probation and community service, is on administrative leave pending the outcome of an internal investigation. "He did something stupid. He owned up to it," said his attorney, Michael Catalano. "He's very sorry about the whole thing."

Several cases involve force and abuse

The AP's review found a pattern of charges involving ICE employees and contractors who mistreated vulnerable people in their care.

A former top official at an ICE contract facility in Texas was sentenced to probation on Feb. 4 after acknowledging he grabbed a handcuffed detainee by the neck and slammed him into a wall last year. Prosecutors had downgraded the charge from a felony to a misdemeanor.

In December, an ICE contractor pleaded guilty to sexually abusing a detainee at a detention facility in Louisiana. Prosecutors said the man had sexual encounters with a Nicaraguan national over a five-month period in 2025 as he instructed other detainees to act as lookouts.

Outside Chicago, an off-duty ICE agent has been charged with misdemeanor battery for throwing to the ground a 68-year-old protester who was filming him at a gas station in December. McLaughlin has said the agent acted in self-defense.

Other charges cited corruption

Another pattern that emerged in AP's review involved ICE officials charged with abusing their power for financial gain.

An ICE deportation officer in Houston was indicted last summer on charges that he repeatedly accepted cash bribes from bail bondsmen in exchange for removing detainers ICE had placed on their clients targeting them for deportation.

ICE said the officer was "indefinitely suspended" in May 2024, before his arrest one year later. He has pleaded not guilty to seven counts of accepting bribes and was released from custody while awaiting trial.

Prosecutors say a former supervisor in ICE's New York City office provided confidential information about people's immigration statuses to acquaintances and made an arrest in exchange for gifts and other gain. He was arrested in November 2024, has pleaded not guilty and is awaiting trial.

Two Utah-based ICE investigators were sentenced to prison last year for a scheme in which they made hundreds of thousands of dollars stealing synthetic drugs known as "bath salts" from government custody and selling them through government informants.

ICE officials used badges to try to avoid consequences

The wrongdoing often included the use of ICE resources and credentials to try to avoid arrest or receive favorable treatment.

In 2022, ICE supervisor Koby Williams was arrested in a sting by police in Othello, Washington, while going to a hotel room to meet who he thought was a 13-year-old girl he'd arranged to pay for sex.

Williams had driven his government vehicle, which was filled with cash, alcohol, pills and Viagra, and was carrying his ICE badge and loaded government firearm. The 22-year ICE veteran offered a rationale that turned out to be a lie: that he was there to "rescue" the girl as part of a human trafficking investigation. Williams is serving prison time for what prosecutors called a "reprehensible" abuse of power.

"With a duty to protect and serve," they wrote, "defendant sought to exploit and victimize."

Netanyahu to urge expanded Iran talks during White House meeting as Trump says Tehran wants a deal

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and MELANIE LIDMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — With President Donald Trump saying he believes Iran wants to make a deal on its nuclear program, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to arrive at the White House on Wednesday with his own urgent message: Expand the talks further.

The visit from Netanyahu — their seventh meeting in Trump's second term — comes as both Tehran and Washington are projecting cautious optimism after holding indirect talks in Oman on Friday about how once again to approach negotiations over Iran's nuclear program.

"We'll see what happens. I think they want to make a deal," Trump said in an interview Tuesday with Fox Business Network's Larry Kudlow. "I think they'd be foolish if they didn't. We took out their nuclear power last time, and we'll have to see if we take out more this time."

He added, "It's got to be a good deal. No nuclear weapons, no missiles."

Netanyahu pushes for more in Iran talks

Netanyahu's office has said he wants those talks to include limits on Iran's ballistic missile program and support for militant groups like the Palestinian Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

"I will present to the president our outlook regarding the principles of these negotiations — the essential principles which, in my opinion, are important not only to Israel, but to everyone around the world who wants peace and security in the Middle East," Netanyahu said Tuesday before departing Israel.

It remains unclear how much influence Netanyahu will have over Trump's approach toward Iran. Trump initially threatened to take military action over Iran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests in January, then shifted to a pressure campaign in recent weeks to try to get Tehran to make a deal over its nuclear program.

Iran's is still reeling from the 12-day war with Israel this past June. The devastating series of airstrikes, including the U.S. bombing several Iranian nuclear sites, killed nearly 1,000 people in Iran and almost 40 in Israel.

Trump, at the time, said the U.S. action had "obliterated" Iran's nuclear capabilities, though the amount of damage remains unclear. Satellite photos of nuclear sites have recently captured activity, prompting concern Iran could be attempting to salvage or assess damage at the sites.

Israel has long called for Iran to cease all uranium enrichment, dial back its ballistic missile program and cut ties to militant groups across the region. Iran has always rejected those demands, saying it would only accept some limits on its nuclear program in return for sanctions relief.

"There's probably a degree of concern (for the Israelis) over the Iranians using any negotiation process to deflect some of the pressure," said Naysan Rafati, senior Iran analyst at the Washington-based International Crisis Group.

He added that Netanyahu will likely stress to Trump that there "shouldn't be an open-ended negotiation for the sake of negotiation, but to have the kind of parameters where the West should be willing to walk away from the table."

To that end, the U.S. has built up military forces in the region, sending an aircraft carrier, guided-missile destroyers, air defense assets and more to supplement its presence. Arab and Islamic countries, including Turkey and Qatar, have been urging both sides to show restraint, warning that any strike or retaliation could have destabilizing consequences for a region already strained by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

Gaza is likely to come up

That conflict is sure to come up on Wednesday as Trump plans to hold the first meeting next week of the Board of Peace, which was initially framed to oversee future steps of the U.S.-brokered Gaza ceasefire plan but has taken shape with Trump's ambitions of resolving other global crises.

On Iran, Trump said Friday that his special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner had "very good" talks on Iran and more were planned for this week. But the Republican president kept up the pressure, warning that if the country didn't make a deal over its nuclear program, "the consequences are very

steep.”

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi made similar comments, saying there will be consultations on “next steps” but cautioning that the level of mistrust between the two longtime adversaries remains a “serious challenge facing the negotiations.”

He also signaled that Iran would stick to its position that it must be able to enrich uranium — a major point of contention with Trump.

“The readouts from both President Trump and from the Iranians has been cautiously optimistic, not so much as there’s light at the end of the tunnel, but they may be able to build a tunnel,” Rafati said.

Netanyahu met with Witkoff and Kushner shortly after arriving in Washington on Tuesday evening and they gave him an update on the talks held with Iran in Oman, the prime minister’s office said. He was to meet with Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Wednesday morning, the State Department said.

Araghchi said in November that Iran was no longer enriching uranium due to the damage from last year’s war.

Before the June war, Iran had been enriching uranium up to 60% purity, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels. The U.N. nuclear watchdog — the International Atomic Energy Agency — had said Iran was the only country in the world to enrich to that level that wasn’t armed with the bomb.

Iran has been refusing requests by the IAEA to inspect the sites bombed in the June war. Even before that, Iran has restricted IAEA inspections since Trump’s decision in 2018 to unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Video in investigation into Nancy Guthrie’s abduction raises questions about surveillance technology

By SAFIYAH RIDDLE and MICHAEL LIEDTKE Associated Press

Tuesday’s release of video surveillance footage showing an armed, masked person at Nancy Guthrie’s doorstep on the night she was abducted has raised a host of questions about why it took so long to publicly release, how it was retrieved and what it means for privacy.

The process involved days of searching, the FBI said, after law enforcement initially believed the footage was lost because the camera was disconnected and Guthrie didn’t have a subscription to the camera company.

The surprising emergence of the video footage has resurrected questions about digital content’s long afterlife, as billions of people increasingly entwine their lives with mishmash of internet-connected devices, making it possible to retrieve snapshots from their past like old photos stored in an attic.

Unclear reasons for delay

In the days after her apparent abduction, Pima County Sheriff Chris Nanos initially said that a camera attached to Nancy Guthrie’s door was disconnected just before 2 a.m. on the night she disappeared. Minutes later, the camera’s software detected movement, but no footage was preserved, he said.

At the time, Nanos said that there was no video available in part because Guthrie didn’t have an active subscription to the company. But unexpectedly, FBI Director Kash Patel said on Tuesday that investigators kept working for days to pull the videos from “residual data located in backend systems.”

It was not immediately clear why it took so long to retrieve the video. The delay could, in part, be a law enforcement strategy, according to Joseph Giacalone, a retired New York police sergeant who managed hundreds of homicide and missing person cases.

Giacalone said the FBI likely tried to quietly identify the person on Guthrie’s porch before releasing the images.

“You’re trying to keep these things close to the vest. I think they worked this angle for a couple days,” Giacalone said.

Always recording

Local and federal law enforcement didn’t respond to questions clarifying what they meant by “discon-

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nected” or who was working on recovering the data.

The footage appears to have come from a Nest camera fastened on or near Guthrie’s door. Google, which has owned Nest since 2014, is among numerous companies that operates private surveillance cameras used in and around homes. Because common doorbell cameras aren’t equipped with the memory cards required for vast amounts of on-device storage, the video recorded on them is routinely transmitted to data centers scattered around the U.S. and other countries.

Google didn’t immediately respond to questions from The Associated Press about how the footage of the masked person was captured while the camera was apparently disconnected. They also didn’t clarify how the footage was extracted from “backend servers” even though law enforcement said Guthrie didn’t have a subscription.

However, Google’s privacy policy — a document that users often blindly agree to after purchasing a device — makes it clear that videos can be captured when a device is offline.

“That means you may not see a visual indicator when your camera is sending the video footage to our servers,” the policy states.

Data on the cloud doesn’t disappear

The policy also makes clear that footage can stay on cloud servers for varying amounts of time, but also gives users the right to view and delete video at their discretion.

Unless a Nest user subscribes to a service that allows for quick access to review footage recorded on a device, Google routinely purges the footage rather than retain it indefinitely, said Stacey Higginbotham, a policy fellow at Consumer Reports who specializes in cybersecurity issues.

But if law enforcement agencies such as the FBI reached out to Nest for the footage before it was overwritten, the video could still be retrieved and watched, Higginbotham said. “It’s basically like when you send an email to the trash. It’s still accessible,” depending on a provider’s retention policies.

Tensions with privacy concerns

There are ostensibly legal guardrails that are supposed to dictate how companies like Google access and share footage collected on cameras in and around people’s homes.

Under many user agreements, camera companies need a warrant or consent from the camera owner to share footage with law enforcement, according to Michelle Dahl, the executive director at the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project.

But there are plenty of legal loopholes that would allow a company like Google to share data directly with law enforcement without either of those things, Dahl said.

“Our hearts are on her family and what they are going through, and we are glad for any information that can lead to her being found,” she said. At the same time, Dahl added, “We should absolutely be alarmed over the privacy implications that are at stake with this video that was recovered by the Nest camera.”

Dahl said she doesn’t know about Nest cameras specifically. But she said that some user agreements specify that the data collected on cameras belong to the camera company, not the private camera owner. In those cases, a company like Google can share footage with law enforcement at its own discretion, without even notifying its users.

Dahl, who litigates about privacy and surveillance, said that practice is becoming more common, making it harder for consumers to balance the security a camera provides with constitutional protections against surveillance.

“I think the public has gotten too comfortable with surveillance cameras in not only public spaces, but also their private homes, without thinking about the consequences of where that data ends up,” Dahl said. “If a camera is absolutely necessary for your security, look into options where that data is not transmitted off to a cloud.”

Top Iran security official is in Oman, the site of talks with the US, likely over nuclear messages

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A top Iranian security official traveled on Tuesday to Oman, the Mideast sultanate now mediating talks between Tehran and Washington over the Islamic Republic's nuclear program aimed at halting a possible American strike.

The visit by Ali Larijani, a former Iranian parliament speaker who now serves as the secretary to the country's Supreme National Security Council, likely focused on what comes next after the initial round of indirect talks held last week in Muscat with the Americans.

Meanwhile, people chanted against Iran's theocratic government Tuesday night in the country's capital Tehran, just ahead of the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Larijani has meetings in Oman

Larijani's entourage shared photos of him meeting with Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi, the chief intermediary in the U.S.-Iran talks, with what appeared to be a letter sheathed in plastic and sitting alongside the Omani diplomat.

Iran has in the past communicated its positions in writing when dealing with the Americans — and famously, Japan's then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe tried to hand Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei a letter from U.S. President Donald Trump in 2019 that he refused to take.

Iranian media had said Larijani would deliver an important message. However, Iranian state television hours after that meeting described al-Busaidi as having "handed over a letter" to Larijani. It did not elaborate from where the letter came.

Al-Busaidi wrote on X that "we discussed recent developments, especially the Iran-U.S. talks."

"Regional peace and security is our priority, and we urge restraint and wise compromise," he wrote.

Larijani also met with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for nearly three hours, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. Neither Iran nor Oman offered any details on what had been discussed in Larijani's meetings.

Larijani also met an official from Yemen's Houthi rebels in Oman. The group is a member of Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance" that has attacked shipping in the Red Sea and engaged in hostilities against both Israel and the U.S. during the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Larijani was later to travel to Qatar, which hosts a major U.S. military installation that Iran attacked in June after the U.S. bombed Iranian nuclear sites during the 12-day Iran-Israel war.

Speaking to Oman TV, Larijani said that before the war negotiations with the U.S. "had seen gradual progress."

Larijani "affirmed Iran's readiness to engage in talks whenever they are realistic, noting that Iran's stance in the first round was positive," the TV report added. "He suggested the next phase could offer opportunities for strategic de-escalation or, at a minimum, a political repositioning, depending on the dialogue's outcomes."

Iran talks a global focus

Iran and the U.S. held new nuclear talks last week in Oman. Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, speaking Sunday 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 Trump. That war disrupted earlier rounds of nuclear talks between Washington and Tehran.

"The Muscat meeting, which was not a long one, it was a half-day meeting. For us it was a way to measure the seriousness of the other side, and to find out how we could continue the process. Therefore we mostly addressed the generalities," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei told journalists at a news conference Tuesday in Tehran.

"Our principles are clear. Our demand is to secure the interests of the Iranian nation based on international norms and the Non-Proliferation Treaty and peaceful use of nuclear energy," Baghaei said. "So as for the details, we should wait for the next steps and see how this diplomatic process will continue."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also arrived in Washington for talks with Trump. Iran is expected to be the major subject of discussion.

Larijani accused Israel of trying to play a "destructive role" in the talks.

"Americans must think wisely and not allow him, through posturing, to imply before his flight that 'I want to go and teach Americans the framework of the nuclear negotiations,'" Larijani said in a post on X.

Elsewhere, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee said there is "extraordinary alignment" between Washington and Israel over the talks with Tehran.

"Everyone would love to see something that would resolve without a war, but it'll be up to Iran," said Huckabee before he boarded a flight to Washington with Netanyahu.

The United States has 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. Already, U.S. forces shot down a drone they said got too close to the Lincoln and came to the aid of a U.S.-flagged ship that Iranian forces tried to stop in the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf.

The U.S. Transportation Department's Maritime Administration issued a new warning Monday to American vessels in the strait to "remain as far as possible from Iran's territorial sea without compromising navigational safety." The strait, through which a fifth of all oil traded passes, is in Iranian and Omani territorial waters. Those traveling into the Persian Gulf must pass through Iranian waters.

Anti-government chants from people's homes

Meanwhile, people in various neighborhoods of Iran's capital chanted "death to the dictator" from windows and rooftops on the eve of the anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, witnesses said, turning the annual celebration into a protest.

State television in recent days has routinely encouraged people to chant pro-government slogans accompanied by fireworks across the city, an annual ritual in the country. The government plans to hold rallies Wednesday to celebrate the anniversary.

The move came nearly one month after a bloody crackdown in Iran on anti-government protests that led to the deaths of thousands of people and tens of thousands more being detained.

FBI search of Georgia election offices relied on years-old claims of fraud, affidavit shows

By KATE BRUMBACK, ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The FBI relied on years-old claims about the 2020 presidential election, many of which had been thoroughly investigated and found to have no connection to widespread fraud, to obtain a search warrant for seizing ballots from election offices in Fulton County, Georgia, according to an affidavit unsealed Tuesday that shows the case began with a referral from an administration official who tried to help President Donald Trump overturn his election loss.

The affidavit provides the first public justification for an FBI search last month that targeted a county Trump and his allies have long seen as central to their false claim that the 2020 election was stolen. It cites claims that for years have been made by people who assert widespread fraud in the contest, even though audits, state officials, courts and Trump's own former attorney general have all rejected the idea of widespread problems that could have altered the outcome.

The investigation was initiated by a referral from Kurt Olsen, who advised Trump as his campaign and supporters lost dozens of lawsuits challenging the 2020 election and now serves as Trump's "director of election security and integrity" overseeing the attempt to investigate Trump's loss, according to the affidavit.

The search of the heavily Democratic county stirred immediate concerns among Democrats that Trump was marshaling the powers of the FBI and Justice Department to pursue retribution over his persistent claims of a stolen election and because of the unusual presence of Tulsi Gabbard, the country's director of national intelligence. The affidavit makes no mention of any evidence of foreign interference in the 2020 election even though the possibility of such meddling has been a longstanding conspiracy theory among

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Trump supporters who question the vote count.

Democrat Joe Biden won Georgia by about 11,800 votes in an election overseen by a Republican secretary of state and certified by a Republican governor.

Georgia officials fighting in court for the return of the ballots have decried the search, with Fulton County Chairman Robb Pitts on Tuesday calling the allegations "recycled rumors, lies, untruths and unproven conspiracy theories."

"These accusations have already been debunked, but here we go again on a merry-go-round," Pitts said. "Fulton County will fight. We'll fight this with every resource that's at our disposal and we will not stop fighting."

Uncertainty over whether any crime was committed

The affidavit says the FBI is examining possible "deficiencies or defects" in the Fulton County vote count, including its admission that it does not have scanned images of all the ballots counted during the original count or the recount. Fulton County has also confirmed that some ballots were scanned multiple times during the recount, the affidavit says.

"If these deficiencies were the result of intentional action, it would be a violation of federal law regardless of whether the failure to retain records or the deprivation of a fair tabulation of a vote was outcome determinative for any particular election or race," the document says.

The affidavit says seizure of the election records was necessary to determine whether any records "were destroyed and or the tabulation of votes included materially false votes." It cites potential violations of a law regarding the preservation and retention of election records, a misdemeanor. It also cites a law that makes it a crime to "knowingly and willfully" deprive residents of a "fair and impartially conducted election process," which is a felony.

But the document also expresses uncertainty about whether the potential defects constitute a crime, noting that elections in Fulton County have already been the subject of multiple reviews.

Previous investigations found disorganization, but no evidence of fraud

Investigations into complaints by the secretary of state's office, an independent monitor and a performance review by the state elections board, which came at the urging of the Republican-controlled legislature, reached similar conclusions.

After a particularly disastrous primary election in 2020, an independent monitor was hired to observe the general election that year as part of an agreement between the county and the State Election Board. He documented "sloppy processes" and "systemic disorganization" but found no evidence of illegality or fraud.

Republican state lawmakers in 2021 used a provision of a new law to initiate a performance review of the county's election practices. That review found that the county's elections had been characterized by "disorganization and a lack of a sense of urgency in resolving issues." But it also found the county had shown marked improvement.

According to the affidavit, the review board stated, "we do not see any evidence of fraud, intentional misconduct, or large systematic issues that would have affected the result of the November 2020 election."

Many of the 2020 election claims were thoroughly investigated

One of the central allegations is that someone inserted 17,852 "duplicate" ballot images into the Fulton County file. But the affidavit quotes one witness as noting that those potentially fake images were actually more pro-Trump than the confirmed Fulton County votes. This indicated to the witness, the affidavit states, "that the introduction of duplicate ballots was intended to make the recount numbers match more than to affect the outcome of the election."

That was a similar conclusion as that of investigators with the Georgia Secretary of State's office, the affidavit adds, saying the Republican-run office found the error "not intentional misconduct."

Another allegation focuses on "pristine" absentee ballots that an unnamed poll manager said she saw when the ballots were counted by hand. She said the ballots were not folded as they would have been if they were put in an envelope, felt different from the other ballots and were all filled in the same, the affidavit says.

A former official with the secretary of state's office told the FBI that there would be unfolded absentee

ballots in every election because they would be generated by vote review panel members when they examined damaged ballots.

Investigators with the secretary of state's office looked into claims of pristine ballots in 2021, pulling boxes and batches identified by a woman who had worked as an auditor during the hand count, and found no evidence to support her claims.

County seeks return of seized equipment

Agents armed with a warrant spent hours on Jan. 28 at the county elections hub, just south of Atlanta, before driving off with trucks loaded with hundreds of cartons of election materials.

A week after the seizure, Fulton County officials filed a motion seeking the return of the materials that had been taken and the unsealing of the sworn statement presented to the judge who signed off on the search. The warrant sought the seizure of the following documents related to the 2020 election in the county: all ballots, tabulator tapes from the scanners that tally the votes, electronic ballot images created when the ballots were counted and then recounted, and all voter rolls.

"Claims that the 2020 election results were fraudulent or otherwise invalid have been exhaustively reviewed and, without exception, refuted," the county argued in a court filing.

U.S. citizens and legal residents sue over aggressive immigration raid at Idaho horse racing track

By REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho (AP) — Three Idaho families who are U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents are suing after they and hundreds of others were detained for hours during an aggressive immigration raid at a rural horse racing track last year.

The families say state and federal law enforcement agencies conspired to use unconstitutional tactics during the raid, including detaining people because they appeared to be Latino; keeping adults and some children in zip ties for hours without access to food, water or bathrooms; and searching individuals without reasonable suspicion of a crime.

Similar immigration dragnets marked by a heavy use of force have entangled U.S. citizens and legal residents in other states. An Alabama construction worker and U.S. citizen who says he was detained twice by immigration agents filed a federal lawsuit in his state last year demanding an end to Trump administration workplace raids targeting industries with large immigrant workforces.

Other lawsuits alleging racial profiling and unconstitutional detention have had mixed results in the courts. Last year, a federal judge in California issued a restraining order barring immigration agents from stopping people solely based on their race, language, job or location, but the Supreme Court lifted that order in September in a 6-3 ruling. Justice Brett Kavanaugh wrote in a concurrence that judicial second-guessing of how immigration officers carry out brief stops for questioning would chill lawful immigration enforcement efforts. But he also suggested stops by agents using force could still face legal challenges.

Idaho raid targeted an event popular among local Latino families

The Idaho families were among roughly 400 people detained at the privately owned race track known as La Catedral, about an hour's drive west of Boise. The October raid came amid an FBI-led investigation into allegations of illegal gambling, but only five people at the event were arrested in connection with the investigation. More than 100 others were arrested on suspicion of immigration violations.

The FBI had a criminal search warrant for the gambling investigation, but the operation was essentially a "fishing expedition for immigration violations," attorneys with the ACLU of Idaho wrote in the lawsuit.

The races are a popular family-friendly event for the local Latino community, with food vendors present and games for kids held, besides the equestrian events.

"Families with young children and elderly grandparents go for a nice outdoor activity, looking forward to the moments between races when kids are allowed to run down the track," the ACLU wrote. But on Oct. 19, a swarm of 200 law enforcement officers flooded the property.

"Wearing militarized gear and face coverings, they pointed guns and screamed orders at frightened

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families," the ACLU wrote.

Multiple agencies took part in the raid, including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the FBI, Idaho State Police, and local police and sheriff's deputies.

"We take this matter seriously and are committed to following the legal process with integrity and professionalism," said Nampa Mayor Rick Hogaboam. The city and the Nampa Police Chief are both named as defendants. The FBI and the Canyon County Sheriff's Office declined to comment. Other defendants did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Homeland Security Department spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin said afterward that "ICE dismantled an illegal horse-racing, animal fighting, and a gambling enterprise operation." However, court documents make no mention of animal fighting, and the track had a horse-racing license. McLaughlin later added that ICE did not restrain or arrest children.

ACLU says officers treated Latino detainees worse than white detainees

Some of the officers used racial epithets for Latinos, and used more force against people perceived to be Latino than they did against detainees who appeared to be white, said Jenn Rolnick Borchetta, an attorney with the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation, speaking at a news conference Tuesday. Some detainees were left in zip ties so tight their skin was cut or their hands went numb. Others were denied bathroom access, forcing them to urinate outside in view of others, according to the lawsuit.

"I have never seen so much direct evidence of racial targeting, and ethnic targeting, as I have in this case," Borchetta said.

Five families later told The Associated Press that kids as young as 11 were restrained, and children were separated from family members for hours. Juana Rodriguez, one of the lawsuit's lead plaintiffs in the lawsuit, said in October that her hands were zip-tied for almost four hours, leaving her unable to pick up and care for her 3-year-old son.

None of the families were questioned about gambling, and they were released after proving citizenship or lawful permanent residency. They want a federal judge to make the lawsuit a class action, and to declare that the law enforcement agencies violated federal law and the constitutional rights of detainees. They also want to be paid for damages in an amount to be proven at trial.

Families say law enforcement agencies conspired to violate civil rights

The lawsuit relies on the Fourth Amendment's protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, the 14th Amendment's promise of equal protection, and three post-Civil War federal laws created to combat a campaign of violence against the newly emancipated Black population.

Section 1983 gives individuals the right to sue state and local government employees for civil rights violations. Section 1985 makes it illegal for two or more people to conspire to interfere with someone's civil rights, and Section 1986 says individuals can be held liable for damages if they know about a conspiracy to violate civil rights and they neglect to try to stop the wrongful act, despite having the power to do so.

"I want to be clear about what this was: A coordinated government scheme to weaponize an arrest warrant as cover for racial profiling on a massive scale," said Paul Carlos Southwick, the ACLU of Idaho legal director. "The real objective was to deport hundreds of innocent people, no matter the human cost, while spreading terror throughout the Latine community."

Winter Olympics recap: Shiffrin out of the medals again, Klaebo wins another gold

By STEVE DOUGLAS AP Sports Writer

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy (AP) — Make that seven straight races without a medal for Mikaela Shiffrin at the Winter Olympics.

The American skiing standout was given the ideal platform to win the new team combined event after partner Breezy Johnson led the opening downhill leg on Tuesday.

Shiffrin was the last racer out in the slalom — the second leg of the event — and had the 15th-fastest

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time, dropping the U.S. to fourth place and extending her Olympic slump that stretches back to 2022 when she didn't win a medal in any of her six races at the Beijing Games.

Ariane Raedler and Katharina Huber of Austria won gold, while Paula Moltzan and Jacqueline Wiles took bronze ahead of their more high-profile U.S. teammates.

Olympic redemption will have to wait, then, for Shiffrin, who is the most successful World Cup racer of all time with a record 108 victories. She is set to compete in her core events of slalom and giant slalom later in the Milan Cortina Games as she looks to add to her two golds and a silver from her first two Olympics.

Johnson missed out on a second medal, having won the downhill on Sunday.

Klaebo nears gold medal record

Don't be surprised if Johannes Høsflot Klæbo soon holds the all-time record for gold medals at the Winter Games.

The Norwegian cross-country star powered to his second straight Olympic gold — and seventh of his career — by winning the men's sprint. He was a comfortable 0.8 seconds ahead of Ben Ogden of the United States.

Klæbo moved to one gold behind three compatriots: Marit Bjørgen, Bjørn Dæhlie and Ole Einar Bjørndalen, all of whom have retired with a record-tying eight. Bjørgen and Dæhlie also were cross-country skiers. Bjørndalen won his gold medals in biathlon, which combines cross-country skiing with shooting.

Klæbo can join them by winning the 10-kilometer freestyle on Friday. He already won the skiathlon on Sunday for his sixth gold.

In the women's final, King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden watched as the country swept the medals. Linn Svahn edged defending champion Jonna Sundling and Maja Dahlqvist was third.

Emotions run high for Norwegian medalists in biathlon

It was an emotional day for Norway's medal winners at the biathlon.

After winning the men's 20-kilometer individual race, Johan-Olav Botn paid tribute to a teammate who died in the lead-up to the Olympics.

Botn pointed to the sky as he crossed the line in honor of Sivert Guttorm Bakken, who was found dead in his hotel room in Lavaze, Italy, in December.

Sturla Holm Laegreid won the bronze medal and then gave quite the post-race interview, revealing — while fighting back tears — in a live broadcast that he had been unfaithful to his girlfriend.

The golds for Botn and Klæbo took Norway to six overall — three more than any other nation so far.

US routs Canada in women's hockey

The U.S.-Canada rivalry in women's hockey has turned extremely lopsided.

The Americans made it seven straight wins over their biggest rival by winning 5-0 in what many saw as a preview of the title match.

Hannah Bilka scored twice as the United States overwhelmed a Canadian team missing its captain, Marie-Philip Poulin, to clinch first place in Group A. The team swept all four of its preliminary-round games by a combined score of 20-1.

The reward for the U.S. in the quarterfinals? A match against host nation Italy.

Swedish siblings win curling's mixed doubles

Isabella and Rasmus Wranå, Sweden's first team of siblings at the Winter Olympics, won gold in mixed doubles curling by beating U.S. pair Cory Thiesse and Corey Dropkin.

A two-point play by Isabella off the final rock of a tight match sealed a 6-5 win for the Swedish duo, who used to be rival players and now are Olympic champions together.

The Americans won a first medal in Olympic mixed doubles, and Thiesse became the first American woman to capture a medal in curling.

Taubitz adds to German dominance in luge

Gold in women's singles luge went to Germany — again.

Julia Taubitz became the 13th winner from Germany in 17 editions, finishing nearly a full second ahead of Elina Bots of Latvia after four runs over two days. Ashley Farquharson took bronze, the third singles

medal ever for USA Luge at the Olympics and matching the best finish by an American women's slider. An Olympic gold completes Taubitz's resume. Now-retired German great Natalie Geisenberger won the last three gold medals.

Medal No. 12 for Fontana in short track speedskating

Twenty years later, Italian short track speedskater Arianna Fontana is still winning medals at the Winter Olympics.

The latest was a gold in the mixed team relay. That took her to three golds and 12 medals overall in an Olympic career that started in 2006 — when she was 15 — at the Winter Games in Turin.

Fontana was already the most decorated short track speedskater of all time and there's chances for more medals in the 500 and the 3,000 relay at the 2026 Olympics.

Moderna says FDA refuses its application for new mRNA flu vaccine

By LAURAN NEERGAARD and MATTHEW PERRONE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is refusing to consider Moderna's application for a new flu vaccine made with Nobel Prize-winning mRNA technology, the company announced Tuesday.

The news is the latest sign of the FDA's heightened scrutiny of vaccines under Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., particularly those using mRNA technology, which he has criticized before and after becoming the nation's top health official.

Moderna received what's called a "refusal-to-file" letter from the FDA that objected to how it conducted a 40,000-person clinical trial comparing its new vaccine to one of the standard flu shots used today. That trial concluded the new vaccine was somewhat more effective in adults 50 and older than that standard shot.

The letter from FDA vaccine director Dr. Vinay Prasad said the agency doesn't consider the application to contain an "adequate and well-controlled trial" because it didn't compare the new shot to "the best-available standard of care in the United States at the time of the study." Prasad's letter pointed to some advice FDA officials gave Moderna in 2024, under the Biden administration, which Moderna didn't follow.

According to Moderna, that feedback said it was acceptable to use the standard-dose flu shot the company had chosen — but that another brand specifically recommended for seniors would be preferred for anyone 65 and older in the study. Still, Moderna said, the FDA did agree to let the study proceed as originally planned.

The company said it also had shared with FDA additional data from a separate trial comparing the new vaccine against a licensed high-dose shot used for seniors.

The FDA "did not identify any safety or efficacy concerns with our product" and "does not further our shared goal of enhancing America's leadership in developing innovative medicines," Moderna CEO Stephane Bancel said in a statement.

It's rare that FDA refuses to file an application, particularly for a new vaccine, which requires companies and FDA staff to engage in months or years of discussions.

Moderna has requested an urgent meeting with FDA, and noted that it has applied for the vaccine's approval in Europe, Canada and Australia.

In the last year, FDA officials working under Kennedy have rolled back recommendations around COVID-19 shots, added extra warnings to the two leading COVID vaccines — which are made with mRNA technology — and removed critics of the administration's approach from an FDA advisory panel.

Kennedy announced last year that his department would cancel more than \$500 million in contracts and funding for the development of vaccines using mRNA.

FDA for decades has allowed vaccine makers to quickly update their annual flu shots to target the latest strains by showing that they trigger an immune response in patients. That's a far more efficient approach than running long-term studies tracking whether patients get the flu and how they fare. In an internal memo last year, Prasad wrote that the streamlined method would no longer be permitted — leading more than a dozen former FDA commissioners to pen an editorial condemning the statements.

How the head of ICE responded to questions in Congress over Trump's immigration policies

By REBECCA SANTANA, LISA MASCARO and MEG KINNARD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's top immigration officials appeared before Congress Tuesday for the first time since the shooting deaths of two American citizens in Minneapolis, seeking to defend their officers' actions as their agencies face intensifying scrutiny over nationwide immigration enforcement operations.

Todd Lyons, who is the acting head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, came in for some of the sharpest questioning during a more than 3-hour-long hearing in front of the House Homeland Security Committee. He appeared alongside Rodney Scott, who heads Customs and Border Protection, and Joseph Edlow, who leads U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Lawmakers asked them about issues that have dominated the public discourse since Trump launched his mass deportations agenda at the start of his second term. Here are some of their answers.

Defending officers after 2 Americans were killed in Minneapolis

Lyons and Scott faced scrutiny over the killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti but they repeatedly declined to answer questions, citing active investigations.

Lyons was asked if he would apologize for the way some Trump administration officials characterized Good as an agitator, which he declined to do.

"I welcome the opportunity to speak to the family in private. But I'm not going to comment on any active investigation," Lyons said.

Lyons said he had seen the video that captured Pretti's shooting but said he could not comment because of the ongoing investigation.

Masks worn by immigration officers

Democrats painted masked officers as lawless and unaccountable. Republicans said masks are needed to protect officers from doxing.

Asked if he would commit to making his officers take off their masks and requiring them to wear "standard uniforms with identifiable badges," Lyons answered with one word: "No."

Lyons has said repeatedly that he supports officers who feel that they need to wear masks to protect their identities and their families.

Body cameras being deployed to officers

Lyons and Scott said thousands of federal immigration officers are already outfitted with body cameras, with more to come.

Lyons said the body camera footage caught in Minneapolis would be released to the public.

"That's one thing that I'm committed to is full transparency. And I fully welcome body cameras all across the spectrum in all of our law enforcement activities," Lyons said.

Lyons denies 5-year-old boy was used as bait

The case of Liam Conejo Ramos, who was wearing a bunny hat and Spider-Man backpack while he was surrounded by immigration officers, has sparked controversy over the administration's crackdown in Minnesota.

The boy and his father, Adrian Conejo Arias, who originally is from Ecuador, were detained in a Minneapolis suburb on Jan. 20.

Asked about the case, Lyons denied that the boy was used as bait to get one of the parents out of the house, as neighbors and school officials have alleged.

"He was obviously upset. We comforted him. The officers actually placed him in one of our vehicles, played his favorite song, favorite music. Then they took him to McDonald's," Lyons said.

A DHS funding lapse will threaten the country's security, officials said

The congressional hearing took place in the shadow of a looming government shutdown that would only affect the Department of Homeland Security.

Democrats are threatening to block funding for the department when it expires unless there are more

restraints for ICE and other law enforcement agencies carrying out Trump's federal immigration agenda.

Republican Rep. Michael Guest of Mississippi blamed Democrats for a possible shutdown and asked the agency heads whether such a shutdown would make the country less safe. They all answered that it would.

"It will have a great impact," said Lyons. He said a shutdown would particularly harm the department's task forces on transnational crimes and terrorism.

ICE at the World Cup

Lyons was asked if he would agree to pausing ICE operations during this year's FIFA World Cup.

A Democratic lawmaker said visitors were concerned by ICE's tactics. But Lyons declined to commit to a pause.

"ICE is dedicated to ensuring that everyone that visits the facilities will have a safe and secure event," Lyons said.

Questions over guarding voting precincts

With Trump's call for the federal government to "take over" elections, the ranking member of the committee, Democrat Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, asked the officials to answer if they are involved in any efforts to guard voting precincts, with the midterms set for later this year.

"You've not been asked to start deploying people for areas anywhere?" Thompson asked.

Lyon and Scott each replied, "No, sir."

Trump EPA set to repeal scientific finding that serves as basis for US climate change policy

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration on Thursday will revoke a scientific finding that long has been the central basis for U.S. action to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change, the White House announced.

The Environmental Protection Agency will issue a final rule rescinding a 2009 government declaration known as the endangerment finding. That Obama-era policy determined that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare.

President Donald Trump and EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin will "formalize the rescission of the 2009 Obama-era endangerment finding" at a White House ceremony, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Tuesday.

The action "will be the largest deregulatory action in American history, and it will save the American people \$1.3 trillion in crushing regulations," she said. The bulk of the savings will stem from reduced costs for new vehicles, with the EPA projecting average per vehicle savings of more than \$2,400 for popular light-duty cars, SUVs and trucks, Leavitt said.

The endangerment finding is the legal underpinning of nearly all climate regulations under the Clean Air Act for motor vehicles, power plants and other pollution sources that are heating the planet. It is used to justify regulations, such as auto emissions standards, intended to protect against threats made increasingly severe by climate change — deadly floods, extreme heat waves, catastrophic wildfires and other natural disasters in the United States and around the world.

Legal challenges certain to come

Legal challenges are certain for any action that effectively would repeal those regulations, with environmental groups describing the shift as the single biggest attack in U.S. history on federal efforts to address climate change.

"The Trump administration is abandoning its core responsibility to keep us safe from extreme weather and accelerating climate change," said Abigail Dillen, president of the nonprofit law firm Earthjustice. "There is no way to reconcile EPA's decision with the law, the science and the reality of disasters that are hitting us harder every year. Earthjustice and our partners will see the Trump administration in court."

EPA press secretary Brigit Hirsch said the Obama-era rule was "one of the most damaging decisions in modern history" and said EPA "is actively working to deliver a historic action for the American people."

Trump, who has called climate change a “hoax,” previously issued an executive order that directed EPA to submit a report on “the legality and continuing applicability” of the endangerment finding. Conservatives and some congressional Republicans have long sought to undo what they consider overly restrictive and economically damaging rules to limit greenhouse gases that cause global warming.

Zeldin, a former Republican congressman who was tapped by Trump to lead EPA last year, has criticized his predecessors in Democratic administrations, saying they were “willing to bankrupt the country” in an effort to combat climate change.

Democrats “created this endangerment finding and then they are able to put all these regulations on vehicles, on airplanes, on stationary sources, to basically regulate out of existence ... segments of our economy,” Zeldin said in announcing the proposed rule last July. “And it cost Americans a lot of money.”

Peter Zalzal, a lawyer and associate vice president of the Environmental Defense Fund, countered that the EPA will be encouraging more climate pollution, higher health insurance and fuel costs and thousands of avoidable premature deaths. The EPA is focusing solely on industry costs while ignoring the rule’s climate and health benefits, he and other advocates said.

Zeldin’s push “is cynical and deeply damaging, given the mountain of scientific evidence supporting the finding, the devastating climate harms Americans are experiencing right now and EPA’s clear obligation to protect Americans’ health and welfare,” Zalzal said.

Supreme Court has upheld endangerment finding

The Supreme Court ruled in a 2007 case that planet-warming greenhouse gases, caused by burning of oil and other fossil fuels, are air pollutants under the Clean Air Act.

Since the high court’s decision, in a case known as Massachusetts v. EPA, courts have uniformly rejected legal challenges to the endangerment finding, including a 2023 decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

Following Zeldin’s proposal to repeal the rule, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine reassessed the science underpinning the 2009 finding and concluded it was “accurate, has stood the test of time, and is now reinforced by even stronger evidence.”

Much of the understanding of climate change that was uncertain or tentative in 2009 is now resolved, the NAS panel of scientists said in a September report. “The evidence for current and future harm to human health and welfare created by human-caused greenhouse gases is beyond scientific dispute,” the panel said.

Google, Meta, push back on addiction claims in landmark social media trial

By KAITLYN HUAMANI and BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writers

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jurors in a landmark social media case that seeks to hold tech companies responsible for harms to children got their first glimpse into what will be a lengthy trial characterized by dueling narratives from the plaintiffs and the two remaining defendants, Meta and YouTube.

At the core of the Los Angeles case is a 20-year-old identified only by the initials “KGM,” whose case could determine how thousands of similar lawsuits will play out. KGM and the cases of two other plaintiffs have been selected to be bellwether trials — essentially test cases for both sides to see how their arguments play out before a jury.

Comparing social media platforms to casinos and addictive drugs, lawyer Mark Lanier delivered opening statements Monday in the Los Angeles Superior Court trial that seeks to hold Instagram owner Meta and Google’s YouTube responsible for addictive features and harms to children who use their products. Two other defendants, TikTok and Snap, have settled the case.

Meta lawyer Paul Schmidt spoke of the disagreement within the scientific community over social media addiction, with some researchers believing it doesn’t exist, or that addiction is not the most appropriate way to describe heavy social media use.

Luis Li, the attorney representing YouTube and Google, delivered an opening statement on Tuesday fo-

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cused on KGM's user data, saying the five-year average of her watch time is 29 minutes per day. He said KGM's average daily time spent on YouTube Shorts, watching vertical short form videos with the "infinite scroll" feature Lanier called into question Monday, was just 1 minute and 14 seconds.

He also told jurors that all of the YouTube features Lanier challenged in his opening statement could be disabled and modified to match users' preferences.

"When you strip away all of the rhetoric ... what you are left with is a simple truth. Infinite scroll is not infinite," Li said. "In some cases, in this case, before this court, before you, the jury, it's as little as a minute and 14 seconds. It's not social media addiction when it's not social media and it's not an addiction."

'Addicting the brains of children'

Lanier, the plaintiff's lawyer, delivered lively first remarks Monday, where he said the case will be as "easy as ABC" — which stands for "addicting the brains of children." He said Meta and Google, "two of the richest corporations in history," have "engineered addiction in children's brains."

He presented jurors with a slew of internal emails, documents and studies conducted by Meta and YouTube, as well as YouTube's parent company, Google. He emphasized the findings of a study Meta conducted called "Project Myst," in which they surveyed 1,000 teens and their parents about their social media use. The two major findings, Lanier said, were that Meta knew children who experienced "adverse events" like trauma and stress were particularly vulnerable for addiction; and that parental supervision and controls made little impact.

He also highlighted internal Google documents that likened some company products to a casino, and internal communication between Meta employees in which one person said Instagram is "like a drug" and they are "basically pushers."

Li was insistent that KGM is not addicted to YouTube, pointing to sworn testimony where she directly said she wasn't addicted to it. He also displayed three large boxes containing about 10,000 pages of medical records, saying that within all of those records, jurors would not see a "single example" of KGM being addicted to YouTube.

The sole reference to YouTube within those records is an instance where her provider noted KGM was using a YouTube video to assist with sleep at night when feeling anxious, he said.

Plaintiff grew up using YouTube, Instagram

KGM made a brief appearance on Monday during Lanier's statement and she will return to testify later in the trial. Lanier spent time describing KGM's childhood, focusing particularly on what her personality was like before she began using social media. She started using YouTube at age 6 and Instagram at age 9, Lanier said. Before she graduated from elementary school, she had posted 284 videos on YouTube.

The outcome of the trial could have profound effects on the companies' businesses and how they will handle children using their platforms.

Lanier said the companies' lawyers will "try to blame the little girl and her parents for the trap they built," referencing the plaintiff. She was a minor when she said she became addicted to social media, which she claims had a detrimental impact on her mental health.

The attorney also drew comparisons between the social media companies and tobacco firms, citing internal communication between Meta employees who were concerned about the company's lack of proactive action about the potential harm their platforms can have on children and teens.

Meta pushes back

In his opening statement representing Meta, Schmidt said the core question in the case is whether the platforms were a substantial factor in KGM's mental health struggles. He spent much of his time going through the plaintiff's health records, emphasizing that she had experienced many difficult circumstances in her childhood, including emotional abuse, body image issues and bullying.

Schmidt presented a clip from a video deposition from one of KGM's mental health providers, Dr. Thomas Suberman, who said social media was "not the through-line of what I recall being her main issues," adding that her struggles seemed to largely stem from interpersonal conflicts and relationships. He painted a picture — with KGM's own text messages and testimony pointing to a volatile home life — of a particularly troubled relationship with her mother.

Schmidt acknowledged that many mental health professionals do believe social media addiction can exist, but said three of KGM's providers — all of whom believe in the form of addiction — have never diagnosed her with it, or treated her for it.

A reckoning for social media and youth harms

A slew of trials beginning this year seek to hold social media companies responsible for harming children's mental well-being. Executives, including Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, are expected to testify at the Los Angeles trial, which will last six to eight weeks.

A separate trial in New Mexico, meanwhile, also kicked off with opening statements on Monday. In that trial, Meta is accused of failing to protect young users from sexual exploitation, following an undercover online investigation.

A federal bellwether trial beginning in June in Oakland, California, will be the first to represent school districts that have sued social media platforms over harms to children.

In addition, more than 40 state attorneys general have filed lawsuits against Meta, claiming it is harming young people and contributing to the youth mental health crisis by deliberately designing features on Instagram and Facebook that addict children to its platforms. The majority of cases filed their lawsuits in federal court, but some sued in their respective states.

TikTok also faces similar lawsuits in more than a dozen states.

Gov. Tim Walz says federal immigration crackdown in Minnesota could end within days

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Gov. Tim Walz said Tuesday that he expects the federal immigration crackdown in Minnesota will end in "days, not weeks and months," based on his recent conversations with top Trump administration officials.

The Democratic governor said at a news conference that he spoke Monday with border czar Tom Homan and with White House chief of staff Susie Wiles on Tuesday morning. Homan took over the Minnesota operation in late January after the second fatal shooting by federal officers and amid growing political backlash and questions about how the operation was being run.

"We're very much in a trust but verify mode," Walz said. He added that he expected to hear more from the administration "in the next day or so" about the future of what he said has been an "occupation" and a "retribution campaign" against the state.

While Walz said he's hopeful at the moment because "every indication I have is that this thing is winding up," he added that things could change.

"It would be my hope that Mr. Homan goes out before Friday and announces that this thing is done, and they're bringing her down and they're bringing her down in days," Walz said. "That would be my expectation."

Officials with the Department of Homeland Security did not immediately reply to a request for comment on the governor's remarks.

Walz said he has no reason not to believe Homan's statement last week that 700 federal officers would leave Minnesota immediately, but the governor added that still left 2,300 on Minnesota's streets. Homan at the time cited an "increase in unprecedented collaboration" resulting in the need for fewer federal officers in Minnesota, including help from jails that hold inmates who could be deported.

The governor also indicated that he expects the state will get "cooperation on joint investigations" into the shooting deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti by federal officers, but gave no details. That's been a point of friction between federal authorities and state investigators, who complain that they have been frozen out of those cases so far with no access to evidence.

Walz called the news conference primarily to denounce the economic impact of the enforcement surge. He spoke at The Market at Malcolm Yards, a food hall where owner Patty Wall said the entire restaurant sector of the local economy has become "collateral damage" from the surge.

Matt Varilek, the governor's employment and economic development commissioner, said Malcolm Yards

would normally be bustling, but is now struggling because employees and customers are afraid to come due to the crackdown.

"So it is great news, of course, that the posture seems to have changed at the federal level toward their activities here in Minnesota," Varilek said. "But, as the governor said, it's a trust-but-verify situation. And frankly, the fear that has been sown, I haven't really noticed any reduction in that."

Even as Walz was expressing optimism that the crackdown would end soon, federal officers made a highly visible arrest inside the lobby of the main county building in downtown Minneapolis.

After a short foot chase, ICE officers grabbed a man who had arrived for a court appearance on charges of possessing over 50 pounds of methamphetamine.

The county's top prosecutor, Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty, protested that the arrest was "disruptive and disturbing to many" and left staffers in the building afraid to leave their offices for fear of being racially profiled.

The man could go unpunished on the state drug charges if he's deported first.

"Using local government courthouses for federal civil immigration enforcement interferes with the administration of justice, prevents witnesses from testifying and robs victims of their opportunity to seek justice," Moriarty said in a statement. She has also objected to earlier arrests by ICE officers of people making court appearances there.

Minneapolis man accused of cyberstalking, threatening ICE supporter amid crackdown in Minnesota

By STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A Minneapolis man was arrested Thursday after federal prosecutors said he made online threats against Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers and against a person who supported ICE during the federal crackdown in Minnesota.

Kyle Wagner, 37, is charged in a criminal complaint with violating cyberstalking and interstate communications laws for allegedly using his Instagram account to dox a "pro-ICE individual" by publishing a phone number, birth month and year, and suburban Detroit address. The complaint says Wagner later admitted that he doxed the victim's parents' house.

The complaint also details several online posts in which prosecutors say Wagner threatened immigration officers.

Court records in Detroit, Michigan, where the case was filed, did not list an attorney who could speak on Wagner's behalf. The complaint was filed on Feb. 3, and unsealed Thursday.

Attorney General Pamela Bondi alleged in a statement that Wagner doxed and threatened law enforcement officers, claimed an affiliation with antifa and "encouraged bloodshed in the streets."

And at the White House on Thursday, press secretary Karoline Leavitt held up Wagner's photo at the daily briefing and said such conduct by "left-wing agitators" won't go unpunished.

"And if people are illegally obstructing our federal law enforcement operations, if they are targeting, doxing, harassing and vilifying ICE agents, they are going to be held accountable like this individual here who, again, is a self-proclaimed member of antifa. He is a domestic terrorist, and he will be held accountable in the United States," Leavitt told reporters.

President Donald Trump announced in September that he would designate antifa a "major terrorist organization." Antifa, short for "anti-fascists," is an umbrella term for far-left-leaning militant groups and is not a singular entity. It consists of groups that resist fascists and neo-Nazis, especially at demonstrations.

When Trump administration border czar Tom Homan announced Wednesday that about 700 federal officers deployed to Minnesota would be withdrawn immediately, he said a larger pullout would occur only after there's more cooperation and protesters stop interfering with federal personnel.

According to prosecutors, Wagner repeatedly posted on Facebook and Instagram encouraging his followers to "forcibly confront, assault, impede, oppose, and resist federal officers" whom he referred to as the "gestapo" and "murderers."

The complaint alleges Wagner posted a video last month that directly threatened ICE officers with an obscenity-laden rant. "I've already bled for this city, I've already fought for this city, this is nothing new, we're ready this time," he said, concluding that he was "coming for" ICE.

The complaint further alleges that Wagner advocated for physical confrontation in another post, stating: "Anywhere we have an opportunity to get our hands on them, we need to put our hands on them."

Federal prosecutors didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on why the case was filed in Michigan instead of Minnesota. The alleged doxing was the only Michigan connection listed in the complaint.

The U.S. Attorney's office in Minnesota has been hit by the resignations of several prosecutors in recent weeks amid frustrations with the surge and its handling of the shooting deaths of two people by government officers. One lawyer, who told a judge that her job "sucks," was removed from her post.

Trump's chief federal prosecutor for Minnesota, Dan Rosen, told a federal appeals court in a recent filing that his office is facing a "flood of new litigation" and is struggling to keep up just with immigration cases, while his division that handles civil cases is down 50%.

Rosen wrote that his office has canceled other civil enforcement work "and is operating in a reactive mode." He also said his attorneys are "appearing daily for hearings on contempt motions. The Court is setting deadlines within hours, including weekends and holidays. Paralegals are continuously working overtime. Lawyers are continuously working overtime."

ICE chief defends his officers' actions before Congress after the deaths of 2 protesters

By REBECCA SANTANA and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Todd Lyons, the acting head of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, defended his agency's officers before Congress on Tuesday, standing behind their tactics and saying they would not be intimidated as they carry out the president's mass deportation plans.

Lyons was one of the three heads of agencies implementing President Donald Trump's immigration agenda to testify in a hearing called after the shooting deaths of two Americans at the hands of federal officers. They faced fierce questioning from Democrats, and support from most Republicans, over how they are prosecuting immigration enforcement inside American cities.

"Let me send a message to anyone who thinks they can intimidate us. You will fail," said Lyons, who blamed elected officials and protesters for escalating rhetoric that he said endangered his officers. Lyons, who at various points declined to comment directly on the killings of the two U.S. citizens, said his officers would not be deterred.

"We are only getting started," he said in opening remarks.

Trump's immigration campaign has been heavily scrutinized in recent weeks, especially after the shooting deaths in Minneapolis. The agencies have also faced criticism for a wave of policies that detractors say trample on the rights of both immigrants facing arrest and Americans protesting the enforcement actions. Tuesday's testimony is unlikely to quell simmering tensions over the centerpiece policy of Trump's second term.

Lyons, the acting ICE director, Rodney Scott, who heads U.S. Customs and Border Protection, and Joseph Edlow, who is the director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, spoke in front of the House Committee on Homeland Security in a hearing that lasted roughly three and a half hours.

Agency leaders testify as DHS faces a funding lapse

This is the first time all three have appeared in Congress since the department received a huge infusion of money from Congress last summer and since immigration enforcement operations intensified across the country.

Under Lyons' leadership, ICE has undergone a massive hiring boom and immigration officers have deployed in beefed-up enforcement operations designed to increase arrests and deportations.

The officials spoke at a time of falling public support for how their agencies are carrying out Trump's immigration vision. Their testimony comes as Democratic lawmakers in Congress are demanding restraints

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on immigration officers before agreeing to fund the Department of Homeland Security. The agency heads warned the country would be less safe if federal funds expire at the end of the week.

Tuesday's hearing was called after federal officers shot and killed Alex Pretti and Renee Good, which sparked outrage across the country and demands for accountability and reform. Lyons and Scott said standard operating procedures were being followed in investigations into the January shootings.

Tensions flared and the hearing sparked heated exchanges -- the Democrats comparing the enforcement operations to Nazi Germany and questioning how the administration officials will be judged -- the chairman at times gaveling the lawmakers back to order.

The ranking Democratic member of the committee, Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi, called the hearing the "start of a reckoning" and said Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem should be held accountable. Thompson said the department has blocked lawmakers from visiting detention facilities and needs to be more responsive to questions.

"Every American should be outraged," Thompson said.

Republicans shifted attention back to Biden-era policies, which allowed countless migrants to enter the country, and said the Trump administration has sealed the U.S.-Mexico border and is ending a "lawlessness" in the nation's immigration system.

Trading blame over the growing tensions

Opening the hearing, Rep. Andrew Garbarino, chairman of the committee, called the moment an "inflection point." The New York Republican said the deaths of the two U.S. citizens were "unacceptable and preventable."

The administration says that activists and protesters opposed to its operations are the ones ratcheting up attacks on their officers, not the other way around, and that their immigration enforcement operations are making the country safer by finding and removing people who've committed crimes or pose a threat to the country.

Scott lashed out at what he called an "unprecedented level of aggressive interference and intimidation" against federal officers in the course of doing their jobs, calling "attacks" on federal officers "coordinated and well funded."

Since Trump returned to the White House, Customs and Border Protection has taken on a significant role in arresting and removing illegal immigrants from inside the country. That increased activity has become a flashpoint for controversy and marks a break from the agency's traditional job of protecting borders and controlling who and what enters the country.

Rare pushback from Republican member

One Republican member of Congress suggested that it was Border Patrol commander Gregory Bovino who had contributed to the escalation in tensions over immigration enforcement, especially in Minneapolis.

"I would argue, in fairness, that he escalated the situation," Rep. Michael McCaul of Texas said.

Under Bovino, a group of Border Patrol agents hopscotched around the country to operations in Los Angeles, Chicago, Charlotte, North Carolina and New Orleans where they were often accused of indiscriminately questioning and arresting people they suspected were in the country illegally. Bovino says his targets are legitimate and identified through intelligence and says that if his officers use force to make an arrest, it's because it's warranted.

A Border Patrol agent and Customs and Border Protection officer both opened fire during Pretti's shooting death. Good was shot and killed by an ICE officer.

After the Pretti shooting, Bovino was reassigned and Trump sent border czar Tom Homan to Minneapolis to assume control, a move McCaul praised.

Lyons said that de-escalation was because protests had diminished, allowing ICE "to do their targeted, intelligence driven enforcement operation."

Lyons won't make officers take off masks

A key point of tension in Congressional debates over the president's immigration agenda has been whether officers should be allowed to wear masks while carrying out their jobs. Democrats are pushing to make officers take off the masks as part of budget negotiations.

Rep. Tim Kennedy, a Democrat from New York, asked Lyons if he would commit to making his officers take off their masks. Lyons answered, "No," which Kennedy called a "sad response."

Republican Rep. Ryan Mackenzie of Pennsylvania, asking Lyons about allegations that American citizens were being caught up in immigration enforcement operations, said greater transparency in DHS operations would be beneficial.

Lyons said he was committed to transparency, pointing to his support for officers to be outfitted with body cameras. He and Scott said thousands of officers deployed now wore them, with more to come.

Noem said last week that every DHS officer on the ground in Minneapolis would immediately be issued those cameras and that the program will be expanded nationwide as funding becomes available.

Malinowski concedes to Mejia in Democratic US House special primary in New Jersey

By MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — Former congressman Tom Malinowski conceded on Tuesday to Analilia Mejia, a longtime progressive activist and former political director for Sen. Bernie Sanders, in the crowded Democratic primary in New Jersey's U.S. House special election.

The race attracted national attention as Democrats sparred over the best way to win over voters in this year's midterm elections. Mejia showcased an aggressive progressive platform in a suburban district that normally favors more moderate candidates.

During a news conference Tuesday, Mejia credited her experience as an organizer as key to her success.

"In this moment, what we want are real representatives: real representatives who will listen to the people, who will ask questions about what is keeping you up at night, who will prioritize your interest over special interests," she said.

The special election is being held to fill the seat vacated when Mikie Sherrill stepped down to become governor. The Associated Press has not yet called Thursday's race.

There was friction over the role of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, whose affiliated super PAC tried to thwart Malinowski after he questioned unconditional aid to the Israeli government. However, their efforts appeared to backfire. Mejia, who said she agreed Israel committed genocide in Gaza, overtook Malinowski with a narrow lead on election night.

"The outcome of this race cannot be understood without taking into account the massive flood of dark money that AIPAC spent on dishonest ads during the last three weeks," Malinowski said in a statement.

He threw his support behind Mejia, who has been consolidating backing from her Democratic rivals. U.S. Sen. Andy Kim, who had backed Malinowski, also endorsed Mejia, as did Sherrill on Tuesday.

Matt Bennett, co-founder of the centrist Democratic organization Third Way, said AIPAC had made "a catastrophic error" and "there's a lot of anger about that."

He expressed concern that Mejia's victory would nudge the party too far to the left ahead of the midterms.

"This idea that there's a demand either among the Democratic electorate, primary or the general electorate for radical candidates, is baloney," he said. "It's just not true."

Mejia criticized AIPAC but said that wasn't the reason that she was coming out on top.

"What they didn't do was win this for us. How we won — it was people power," Mejia said.

The district covers parts of Essex, Morris and Passaic counties in northern New Jersey, including some of New York City's wealthier suburbs. All three counties in the district report some mail-in ballots yet to be processed. Additionally, mail-in ballots postmarked by Election Day can arrive as late as Wednesday and still be counted.

The race was so close that the Democratic National Committee prematurely congratulated Malinowski on election night. On Tuesday, it issued another statement backing Mejia, saying, "New Jersey deserves a fighter and not a spineless Trump lackey."

A former director of the Working Families Alliance in New Jersey, Mejia, 48, is a well-known figure in state politics, advocating for progressive causes. She was Sanders' political director during his 2020 presidential

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run and served as deputy director of the Labor Department's Women's Bureau under President Joe Biden. She was endorsed by noted progressives, including Sanders and U.S. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York, and she campaigned around the district by saying she was running against billionaires and their influence.

Mejia would face Republican Joe Hathaway, who was unopposed in his primary, in the special general election on April 16. The outcome will determine who serves the remainder of Sherrill's term until next January. There will also be a regular primary on June 2 and a general election on Nov 3.

Republicans are already taking aim at Mejia, saying she wants to "turn New Jersey into a socialist hellscape," according to National Republican Congressional Committee spokesperson Maureen O'Toole.

Malinowski's concession caps an effort to recapture a seat in Congress after he was defeated by a Republican in a different district in 2022.

Other leading Democrats who sought the nomination were Brendan Gill, an elected commissioner in Essex County, and Tahesha Way, who was lieutenant governor and secretary of state for two terms until last month.

Also on the ballot were John Bartlett, Zach Beecher, J-L Cauvin, Marc Chaaban, Cammie Croft, Dean Dafis, Jeff Grayzel, Justin Strickland and Anna Lee Williams.

Sherrill represented the district for four terms after her 2018 election. She won despite the region's historical loyalty to the Republican Party, a dynamic that began to shift during President Donald Trump's first term.

Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick acknowledges meetings with Epstein that contradict previous claims

By STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Under questioning from Democrats on Tuesday, Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick acknowledged that he had met with Jeffrey Epstein twice after the late financier's 2008 conviction for soliciting prostitution from a child, reversing Lutnick's previous claim that he had cut ties with him after 2005.

Lutnick again downplayed his relationship with the disgraced financier, who was once his neighbor in New York City, as he was questioned by Democrats during a subcommittee hearing of the Senate Appropriations Committee. He described their contact as a handful of emails and a pair of meetings that were years apart.

"I did not have any relationship with him. I barely had anything to do with him," Lutnick told lawmakers.

But Lutnick is facing growing scrutiny, including calls for his resignation, from lawmakers after the release of case files on Epstein contradicted Lutnick's claims on a podcast last year that he had decided to "never be in the room" with Epstein again after a 2005 tour of Epstein's home that disturbed Lutnick and his wife.

The commerce secretary told senators Tuesday that he and his family actually had lunch with Epstein on his private island in 2012 and he had another hour-long engagement at Epstein's home in 2011. Lutnick, a member of President Donald Trump's Cabinet, is the highest-profile U.S. official to face bipartisan calls for his resignation amid revelations of his ties to Epstein. His acknowledgement comes as lawmakers are grasping for what accountability looks like amid the revelations contained in what's known as the Epstein files.

In countries like the United Kingdom, the Epstein files have triggered resignations and the stripping of royal privileges, but so far, U.S. officials have not met the same level of retribution.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Tuesday that Lutnick "remains a very important member of President Trump's team, and the president fully supports the secretary."

Senators want to dig into Lutnick's ties to Epstein

Sen. Chris Van Hollen, the Democrat who questioned Lutnick, told him, "There's not an indication that you yourself engaged in any wrongdoing with Jeffrey Epstein. It's the fact that you believe that you misled the country and the Congress based on your earlier statements."

Van Hollen, D-Md., stopped short of calling for Lutnick's resignation on Monday, but requested docu-

mentation from Lutnick on any of his ties to Epstein.

"It's absolutely essential that he provide Congress with those documents, given the misrepresentations he's made, and then we'll go from there," he said.

Lutnick, during the Senate hearing, said he would give that request some thought, adding, "I have nothing to hide."

However, several Senate Republicans were also questioning Lutnick's relationship with Epstein. Sen. Roger Wicker, R-Miss., said the visit to Epstein's private island "would raise questions." And Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., told reporters, "It's something I'm concerned with."

Senate Majority Leader John Thune did not mention Lutnick by name, but told reporters Tuesday that those mentioned in the Epstein files are "going to have to answer questions around that."

"I think the American people are going to have to make judgments about whether or not they think those answers are sufficient," added Thune, a South Dakota Republican.

Tillis also stayed away from calling for Lutnick to leave his post, but added that "he would do himself a service by just laying out exactly what did and what did not happen over the course of what seems to be an interesting relationship that included business entanglements."

A pair of House members call for resignation

Meanwhile, House members who initiated the legislative effort to force the release of the files are calling for Lutnick to resign. Republican Rep. Thomas Massie of Kentucky called for that over the weekend after emails were released that alluded to the meetings between Lutnick and Epstein.

Rep. Ro Khanna, a California Democrat, joined Massie in pressuring Lutnick out of office on Monday.

"Based on the evidence, he should be out of the Cabinet," Khanna said.

He added, "It's not about any particular person. In this country, we have to make a decision. Are we going to allow the rich and powerful people who are friends and (had) no problem doing business and showing up with a pedophile who is raping underage girls, are we just going to allow them to skate?"

Annual governors' gathering with White House unraveling after Trump excludes Democrats

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI, STEVE PEOPLES and STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — An annual meeting of the nation's governors that has long served as a rare bipartisan gathering is unraveling after President Donald Trump excluded Democratic governors from White House events.

The National Governors Association said it will no longer hold a formal meeting with Trump when governors are scheduled to convene in Washington later this month, after the White House planned to invite only Republican governors. On Tuesday, 18 Democratic governors also announced they would boycott a traditional dinner at the White House.

"If the reports are true that not all governors are invited to these events, which have historically been productive and bipartisan opportunities for collaboration, we will not be attending the White House dinner this year," the Democrats wrote. "Democratic governors remain united and will never stop fighting to protect and make life better for people in our states."

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt, a Republican who chairs the NGA, told fellow governors in a letter on Monday that the White House intended to limit invitations to the association's annual business meeting, scheduled for Feb. 20, to Republican governors only.

"Because NGA's mission is to represent all 55 governors, the Association is no longer serving as the facilitator for that event, and it is no longer included in our official program," Stitt wrote in the letter, which was obtained by The Associated Press.

The governors' group, which is scheduled to meet from Feb. 19-21, is one of the few remaining venues where political leaders from both major parties gather to discuss the top issues facing their communities. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said on Tuesday that Trump has "discretion to invite anyone

he wants to the White House.”

“It’s the people’s house,” she said. “It’s also the president’s home, so he can invite whomever he wants to dinners and events here at the White House.”

Representatives for Sitt and the NGA didn’t comment on the letter. Brandon Tatum, the NGA’s CEO, said in a statement last week that the White House meeting is an “important tradition” and said the organization was “disappointed in the administration’s decision to make it a partisan occasion this year.”

In his letter to other governors, Stitt encouraged the group to unite around common goals.

“We cannot allow one divisive action to achieve its goal of dividing us,” he wrote. “The solution is not to respond in kind, but to rise above and to remain focused on our shared duty to the people we serve. America’s governors have always been models of pragmatic leadership, and that example is most important when Washington grows distracted by politics.”

Signs of partisan tensions emerged at the White House meeting last year, when Trump and Maine’s Gov. Janet Mills traded barbs.

Trump singled out the Democratic governor over his push to bar transgender athletes from competing in girls’ and women’s sports, threatening to withhold federal funding from the state if she did not comply. Mills responded, “We’ll see you in court.”

Trump then predicted that Mills’ political career would be over for opposing the order. She is now running for U.S. Senate.

The back-and-forth had a lasting impact on last year’s conference and some Democratic governors did not renew their dues last year to the bipartisan group.

Paramount sweetens offer for Warner Bros. shareholders in hostile takeover fight

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Paramount is again sweetening its hostile takeover bid for Warner Bros. Discovery, while again extending the deadline for its tender offer as it scrambles for more shareholder support.

On Tuesday, the Skydance-owned company said it would pay Warner shareholders an added “ticking fee” if its deal doesn’t go through by the end of the year — amounting to 25 cents per share, or a total of \$650 million, for every quarter after Dec. 31. Paramount also pledged to fund Warner’s proposed \$2.8 billion breakup payout to Netflix under its studio and streaming merger agreement.

The value of Paramount’s offer otherwise remains unchanged. The company is offering to pay \$30 per share in cash to Warner’s stakeholders, who now have until March 2 to tender their shares.

Paramount CEO David Ellison said that the “additional benefits” announced Tuesday “clearly underscore our strong and unwavering commitment to delivering the full value WBD shareholders deserve for their investment.”

Paramount wants to buy Warner’s entire company for \$77.9 billion, with a total enterprise value of \$108 billion including debt. Beyond studio and streaming operations, that includes Warner’s networks like CNN and Discovery.

But it has a long way to go in terms of getting shareholder support — which, according to recent company disclosures, has appeared to decline significantly over the last month. As of Monday, Paramount said that more than 42.3 million Warner shares had been “validly tendered and not withdrawn” from its bid, down from over 168.5 million Warner shares on Jan. 21.

Warner Bros. Discovery has about 2.48 billion shares outstanding in series A common stock today. Paramount would need more than 50% to effectively gain control.

The new March 2 deadline marks the third time Paramount has pushed back the expiration of its tender offer, which it may keep extending. Paramount has also begun soliciting proxies to challenge Warner’s agreement with Netflix.

Warner on Tuesday confirmed it received Paramount’s “amended, unsolicited tender offer” and said that its board would review it — but that company leadership wasn’t modifying its recommendation for the

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Netflix deal at this time. A Netflix spokesperson did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Warner's leadership has consistently backed the proposed merger with Netflix. In December, Netflix agreed to buy Warner's studio and streaming business for \$72 billion — now in an all-cash transaction that the companies have said will speed up the path to a shareholder vote by April. Including debt, the enterprise value of the deal is about \$83 billion, or \$27.75 per share.

Netflix and Warner have maintained that their agreement is better Paramount's bid. But Paramount argues that its offer is superior — and on Tuesday pointed to a "sliding scale" payout of the Netflix merger, which could range from \$21.23 to \$27.75 per share, depending on debt spanning from Warner's previously announced spinoff of its networks business.

Unlike Paramount, Netflix doesn't want Warner's networks. Under Netflix-Warner's agreement, "Discovery Global" would become its own separate public company before their merger is closed.

The prospect of a Warner sale to either company has raised tremendous antitrust concerns from lawmakers worldwide, who are calling on regulators to carefully scrutinize a merger of this size. The U.S. Department of Justice has already initiated reviews of both Warner's agreement with Netflix and Paramount's hostile bid. All three companies have disclosed that they've been in contact with the DOJ over requests for more information.

Other countries may also review the deal. And on Tuesday, Paramount said it "secured clearance" for its tender offer from authorities in Germany last month.

The companies have argued their proposed deals will be good news for consumers and the wider entertainment industry, claiming that merging will give streaming customers more content. But unions and other trade groups have warned that further consolidation in the industry could result in job losses and less diversity in content — with particularly negative consequences for filmmaking.

Israeli drone strike kills 2 cyclists in Gaza as death toll mounts despite ceasefire

By WAFAA SHURAFU and EDNA TARIGAN Associated Press

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip (AP) — An Israeli drone strike killed two Palestinians on bicycles Tuesday, hospital officials said, marking the latest deaths since an October ceasefire that hasn't halted deadly attacks in the Gaza Strip.

Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital said the two men were hit near the ceasefire line that divides Gaza, with one half under Israeli military control. They were hit in eastern Deir al-Balah, the hospital said, adding that it also received the body of a woman who was killed by Israeli gunfire in central Maghazi refugee camp.

Israel's military did not immediately respond to questions about either strike. It has previously said its forces respond to ceasefire violations or attacks on its soldiers.

Gaza's Health Ministry on Tuesday reported 586 Palestinians had been killed since the start of the ceasefire, bringing the cumulative toll to 72,037 killed since the start of Israel's offensive. The ministry, which is part of the Hamas-led government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts. But it does not give a breakdown of civilians and militants.

Deadly Israeli strikes have repeatedly disrupted the truce since it took effect on Oct. 10. The escalating Palestinian toll has prompted many in Gaza to say it feels like the war has continued unabated.

Yet parts of the agreement outlined in last year's ceasefire are moving forward. After a chaotic first week, officials say more Palestinians are entering and leaving Gaza for Egypt via the reopened Rafah crossing. Plans for an international peacekeeping force meant to provide security in Gaza are also beginning to take shape.

Indonesia — the world's most populous Muslim-majority country — said Tuesday that its military had begun training personnel to serve in Gaza, specifically for reconstruction and humanitarian response. Its army chief of staff said between 5,000 and 8,000 troops were preparing to deploy.

Vahd Nabyi Achmad Mulachela, a spokesperson for Indonesia's Foreign Affairs Ministry, said Indonesian

troops would not take part in disarmament — one of the most contentious and unresolved elements of the peace plan.

Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto told the U.N. General Assembly in October that his country planned to contribute troops, even as details about the force's role and mandate was unclear. The commitment came as Prabowo sought closer ties with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Israel and Hamas remain divided over the timeline and scope of Israel's withdrawal and the demilitarization of the enclave after nearly two decades of Hamas rule.

The temporary International Stabilization Force outlined last year in Trump's 20-point peace plan — among the key components of the demilitarization effort— is envisioned as a later phase of the plan.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel and killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, on Oct. 7, 2023. The 251 hostages taken in the attack were returned to Israel in various ceasefire agreements, with the remains of Israeli police officer Ran Gvili — the final body in Gaza — were found and returned in January, paving the way for the advance of the ceasefire agreement. The war has sparked worldwide protests and brought allegations of genocide that Israel denies.

UK leader Starmer averts a leadership challenge for now but remains damaged by Epstein fallout

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Keir Starmer fights another day.

After indirect fallout from the Jeffrey Epstein files sparked a dramatic day of crisis that threatened to topple him, the U.K. prime minister was saved by a pugnacious fightback and hesitation among his rivals inside the governing Labour Party about the consequences of a leadership coup.

Energy Secretary Ed Miliband said Tuesday that Labour lawmakers had "looked over the precipice ... and they didn't like what they saw."

"And they thought the right thing was to unite behind Keir," Miliband told the BBC.

He might have added: For now.

Mandelson blowback

Starmer's authority over his center-left party has been battered by aftershocks from the publication of files related to Epstein — a man he never met and whose sexual misconduct hasn't implicated him.

But it was Starmer's decision to appoint veteran Labour politician Peter Mandelson, a friend of Epstein, as U.K. ambassador to Washington in 2024 that has led many to question the leader's judgment and call for his resignation.

Starmer has apologized, saying Mandelson had lied about the extent of his ties to the convicted sex offender. And he vowed to fight for his job.

"I will never walk away from the mandate I was given to change this country," Starmer said Tuesday as he visited a community center in southern England. "I will never walk away from the people that I'm charged with fighting for and I will never walk away from the country that I love."

Starmer's risky decision to appoint Mandelson — who brought extensive contacts and trade expertise but a history of questionable ethical judgment — backfired when emails were published in September showing that Mandelson had maintained a friendship with Epstein after the financier's 2008 conviction for sex offenses involving a minor.

Starmer fired Mandelson, but a new trove of Epstein files released last month by the U.S. government contained more revelations. Mandelson is now facing a police investigation for potential misconduct in public office over documents suggesting that he passed sensitive government information to Epstein. He's not accused of any sexual offenses.

Simmering discontent

The Mandelson scandal may be the final straw that finishes Starmer's premiership. But it follows discontent that has built since he led Labour to a landslide election victory 19 months ago.

Some of Starmer's problems stem from a turbulent world and a gloomy economic backdrop. He has won

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praise for rallying international support for Ukraine and persuading U.S. President Donald Trump to sign a trade deal easing tariffs on U.K. goods. But at home, he has struggled to bring down inflation, boost economic growth and ease the cost of living.

Despite a huge parliamentary majority that should allow the government to implement its plans with ease, Starmer has been forced to make multiple U-turns on contentious policies including welfare cuts and mandatory digital ID cards.

Starmer has been through two chiefs of staff, four directors of communications and multiple lower-level staff changes in Downing Street. The prime minister's powerful chief of staff, Morgan McSweeney, resigned Sunday over the decision to appoint Mandelson. Communications director Tim Allan left the next day.

Allan's predecessor, Matthew Doyle, has since been appointed by Starmer to the House of Lords, but said Tuesday he would not be sitting as a Labour member over his association with Sean Morton, a former Labour councilor who was convicted in 2017 of possessing indecent images of children. Doyle condemned Morton's crimes and apologized for campaigning for him in an election before his conviction, saying that was "a clear error of judgment for which I apologize unreservedly." He said he had believed Morton's claim of innocence at the time.

Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar held a news conference on Monday and called for Starmer to resign. If other senior party figures had followed, the pressure would have been impossible for Starmer to resist.

But none did. Instead, Starmer's Cabinet and parliamentary colleagues posted apparently choreographed messages of support. They included former Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner and Health Secretary Wes Streeting, considered the two most likely challengers for the top job.

Then, came a highly charged meeting with Labour members of Parliament, where Starmer impressed many with his sense of resolve. Lawmakers in the room said that the mood, initially skeptical, became supportive.

"It was clear he was up for the fight," said Chris Curtis, one of more than 200 Labour lawmakers elected in the 2024 Starmer landslide.

Temporary reprieve

Starmer appears to have more political lives than Larry the cat, who has outlasted five prime ministers during 15 years as "chief mouser" in Downing Street.

But his respite is likely to be temporary. Many Labour lawmakers remain worried about their reelection chances if the party's dire opinion poll ratings don't improve.

Some female party members feel particularly disappointed by Mandelson's appointment. The Labour leader of Wales, First Minister Eluned Morgan, called revelations about Mandelson "deeply troubling, not least because, once again, the voices of women and girls were ignored.

"That failure must be acknowledged and confronted honestly," she said, while offering support for Starmer.

Labour faces potential electoral setbacks at a Feb. 26 special election in what was once a party stronghold in northwest England, and in May's elections for legislatures in Scotland and Wales and local councils in England.

And rivals are still plotting. The Guardian reported that an "Angela for leader" website backing Rayner briefly went live last month by accident. Streeting, whose genial relationship with Mandelson is now a weakness, released messages he'd exchanged with Mandelson before and after the ambassadorial appointment, seemingly in an attempt to show the men weren't close friends.

The exchanges include implicit criticism of Starmer, with Streeting writing that the government had "No growth strategy at all."

Tim Bale, professor of politics at Queen Mary University of London, said that Starmer had "bought himself some time" and challengers were "keeping their powder dry" for the moment.

"It's very difficult to imagine after the shellacking that the party will presumably face in May, him continuing to lead the party much beyond this summer," Bale said.

Though in British politics, nothing is impossible.

"There are problems with the other candidates," Bale said. "It's never an ideal situation for any party to be choosing a prime minister in midterm, and it may be that the Labour Party decides, better the devil

you know. I suspect that Keir Starmer will go, but who knows?"

Raedler and Huber of Austria win team combined at the Olympics, Mikaela Shiffrin is 4th

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer
CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy (AP) — Neither Ariane Raedler nor Katharina Huber have ever won a World Cup skiing race.

Yet now they are Olympic champions.

The Austrian duo won gold in the new team combined event at the Milan Cortina Games on Tuesday when Mikaela Shiffrin surprisingly crossed fourth after wasting a first-run lead by teammate Breezy Johnson.

Shiffrin, the most successful World Cup racer of all time with a record 108 victories — 71 of them in slalom, also a record — has now gone seven straight Olympic races without a medal.

After taking two golds and a silver from her first two Olympics, Shiffrin also didn't win a medal in any of her six races at the Beijing Games four years ago.

Kira Weidle-Winkelmann and Emma Aicher of Germany earned silver and Paula Moltzan and Jacqueline Wiles of the U.S. took bronze.

"No tricks here at all," Shiffrin was told over team radio before her run on a course set by an Austrian coach. "Actually, it's nothing to report. You got it."

But Shiffrin lost time to the leaders at every checkpoint and crossed 0.31 seconds behind — missing a medal by finishing 0.06 behind the other American team. In the finish area, Johnson — who was coming off a gold in the individual downhill — embraced Shiffrin, while the Austrians and other podium finishers began celebrating.

The team combined consists of one racer competing in a downhill run and another in a slalom run, with the times from the two added together to determine the results.

Shiffrin still has her individual events of giant slalom and slalom to come.

Raedler placed second in the downhill leg before Huber had the 10th-fastest slalom leg.

"For me, it was sure that Mikaela could do it," Huber said. "In the end, it was really a surprise gold medal for us."

Aicher, one of the few all-around skiers competing in every event, also took silver in the individual downhill.

"Usually, Mikaela is the best slalom skier, and we expected her to be super good in this slalom today, too," Weidle-Winkelmann said. "But this is also slalom. You never know."

Wiles, who was fourth in the downhill leg, and Moltzan, who had the fourth-fastest slalom leg, both earned their first Olympic medals.

Shiffrin was only 15th fastest in the slalom leg.

Susan Collins announces reelection bid in pivotal Maine Senate race

By PATRICK WHITTLE and KIMBERLEE KRUESI Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — Republican Sen. Susan Collins announced her reelection bid Tuesday, betting that she can hold onto her coveted Maine seat despite a renewed Democratic effort to oust her in a race that could determine control of the U.S. Senate.

The campaign will test Collins' political survival skills. The 73-year-old has won five terms by casting herself as a reflection of Maine's independent spirit, occasionally clashing with President Donald Trump while also largely supporting his agenda.

"I have always worked across the aisle to solve problems. Maine needs experienced, steady leadership that focuses on getting things done," Collins said in a Tuesday statement.

As she seeks a sixth term, Collins faces outrage over immigration enforcement tactics that could become a political liability for Republican candidates across the country. A recent operation in Maine led to hundreds

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of arrests but also criticism that people were being rounded up even if they didn't have criminal records. Collins has taken credit for stopping the surge of federal agents in Maine after she spoke directly with Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem.

However, Democrats accused Collins of not going far enough, pointing to her refusal to call for Noem's ouster and her vote in favor of a bipartisan Homeland Security funding bill. The party needs to net four seats to retake the Senate majority, and they are aiming to do that in Maine, North Carolina, Alaska and Ohio.

Gov. Janet Mills and oyster farmer Graham Platner are among Collins' top Democratic challengers. While many establishment Democrats and influential left-leaning groups have backed Mills, Platner has gained traction with his anti-establishment image and economic equality message. He's campaigned aggressively while facing revelations of problematic social media posts and having to cover up a tattoo resembling a Nazi symbol.

Mills has accused Collins of governing "without any courage" shortly after the Republican voted in favor of funding the DHS and several other agencies in January. She repeated that charge Tuesday.

"Seniority without a backbone is just tenure, and after decades in Washington, Senator Collins has failed to demonstrate the leadership required in this dangerous moment in history," she said in a statement.

Platner has demanded that Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which is part of DHS, be dismantled and said he did not believe Collins or the Trump administration's promise to leave Maine. He said Tuesday in a post on the social platform X that Collins should have kept her promise to serve just two Senate terms.

"That's just one of a hundred reasons she doesn't deserve a sixth term," he wrote.

Platner recently outraised both Mills and Collins, according to the latest federal filings. The first-time candidate collected nearly \$4.6 million, while Mills raised \$2.7 million. Collins, who had not yet officially launched her campaign during the filing period, had more than \$8 million in cash on hand at the end of 2025.

Collins, who has said she didn't vote for Trump in 2016, voted to convict the president after his 2021 impeachment over his role in the Jan. 6 Capitol riot. After Collins joined a handful of Republican colleagues in backing a failed effort to limit the president's ability to unilaterally use force in Venezuela, Trump said on social media that they "should never be elected to office again."

But Collins has also broadly backed Trump's agenda, including his tax and spending bill, and his nominees.

Notably, Collins voted to confirm Robert F. Kennedy Jr. as Trump's choice to be secretary of Health and Human Services. Kennedy has since espoused anti-vaccine policy and ousted public health officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

She has faced down tough challenges before. Democrat Sara Gideon raised \$69 million in 2020, outspending Collins in a bid to help take back the Senate during a presidential election year when the Democrats won the top of the ticket. Collins defeated Gideon by more than 8 points.

Collins has remained in office despite Maine becoming increasingly blue. The proportion of registered Democrats has increased since her last reelection campaign, when "unenrolled" independent voters outnumbered Democrats in 2019 but now trail them in 2026. Republicans have trailed both groups for years.

Retail sales unchanged in December from November, closing out year on a lackluster tone

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Shoppers unexpectedly paused their spending in December from November, closing out the holiday shopping season and the year on a lackluster tone.

The report, issued by the Commerce Department on Tuesday, surprised economists who were looking for growth despite mounting concerns about slowing job growth, uncertainty about President Donald Trump's tariffs and other economic headwinds. And it raised questions about shoppers' ability to spend after they have remained resilient for months despite souring consumer confidence, economists said.

Retail sales were flat in December from November, when business was up 0.6%, according to the Com-

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merce Department. Economists were expecting a 0.4% increase for December.

The report was delayed because of the 43-day government shutdown.

Sales in October fell 0.1%, rose 0.1% in September, but jumped 0.6% in July and August and 1% in June, according to the Commerce Department.

The retail sales figures, which are not adjusted for inflation, showed that many types of businesses posted declines including furniture and home furnishings stores and electronics and appliance retailers.

Among the few bright spots: building materials and garden stores, which posted a solid sales increase. Gas stations and food and beverage stores saw small sales gains.

The snapshot offers only a partial look at consumer spending and doesn't include many services, including travel and hotel lodges. But the lone services category – restaurants – registered a dip of 0.1%.

The data comes as U.S. consumer confidence has been souring for months. In fact, confidence declined sharply in January, hitting the lowest level since 2014 as Americans grow increasingly concerned about their financial prospects.

"Consumer spending has finally caught up with consumer sentiment, and not in a good way," Chris Zaccarelli, chief investment officer for Northlight Asset Management in Charlotte, North Carolina, wrote in a report published Tuesday.

He noted that consumer confidence numbers have been disappointing for months, and shoppers have been complaining about the cost of everything – and yet they kept spending.

But he added, "This month's data show that consumers are no longer relentlessly increasing their level of spending."

Thomas Ryan, North America economist at Capital Economics, also noted the report was worrisome, but given expected stimulus from the bigger tax refund checks, he thinks that consumption at the end of the first quarter of this year "may turn out to be a lot stronger than it currently looks at the start."

Economists will be closely monitoring a slew of economic reports on jobs and prices due out later this week.

But the economy is in a confusing place.

Growth is robust: Gross domestic product — the nation's output of goods and services — advanced from July through September at the fastest pace in two years. But the job market is lackluster: Employers have added just 28,000 jobs a month since December.

In the 2021-2023 hiring boom that followed COVID-19 lockdowns, by contrast, they were creating 400,000 jobs a month.

When the agency releases hiring and unemployment numbers for January on Wednesday, they are expected to show that businesses, government agencies and nonprofits added about 80,000 jobs last month — modest but up from 50,000 in December.

Analysts will also be studying consumer price report, to be released Friday. In December, consumer prices matched the 0.3% increase in November. If inflation cools in the coming months, it could increase the likelihood the Federal Reserve will reduce its key interest rate later this year, economists say.

Against this backdrop, some chains like Walmart, whose everyday low prices have pulled in shoppers from rivals, are thriving but others struggle.

A growing number of retailers are closing stores as companies reorganize under bankruptcy protection or pare down their operations to focus on profitable operations.

On Monday, the operator of roughly 180 Eddie Bauer stores across the U.S. and Canada filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, blaming declining sales and a litany of other industry headwinds.

Last month, the parent company of Saks Fifth Avenue said it was seeking bankruptcy protection, buffeted by rising competition and the massive debt it took on to buy its rival in the luxury sector, Neiman Marcus, just over a year ago. A few days later, the parent company said it was closing most of its Saks Off 5th stores.

Amazon said earlier this month that it was closing almost all of its Amazon Go and Amazon Fresh locations within days as it narrows its focus on food delivery and its grocery chain, Whole Foods Market.

US figure skater Amber Glenn resolves copyright issue with a Canadian music artist at the Olympics

By DAVE SKRETTA AP Sports Writer

MILAN (AP) — U.S. figure skater Amber Glenn has smoothed out copyright concerns with the artist behind one of the pieces of her free skate music, and the Olympic team gold medalist thinks she may have struck up a new friendship with him because of it.

Canadian artist Seb McKinnon, who produces music under the name CLANN, had taken to social media after Glenn performed her free skate to conclude the team event Sunday and expressed surprise that his song, "The Return," was used as part of the program.

"So just found out an Olympic figure skater used one of my songs without permission for their routine. It aired all over the world ... what? Is that usual practice for the Olympics?" McKinnon posted to X, before later congratulating Glenn on her medal.

Figure skaters are required to obtain copyright permission for the music they use. But the process is confusing and prone to mistakes, and several skaters at the Milan Cortina Games have had to change programs at the last minute because of it.

"The issue of music rights can be complex and confusing," Glenn said in a statement. "Seems like there was a hiccup in that whole process. I'm glad we cleared things up with Seb and I look forward to collaborating with him."

It was not clear where the hiccup occurred. Glenn has been performing to "The Return" for the past two years without any issues.

"It was a dream come true to perform at the Olympic Games and to have Seb acknowledge my performance and congratulate me afterward made the moment even more special," Glenn said. "It's my sincere hope that I was able to help create new fans of both figure skating and Seb. We will move forward and continue supporting both artists and the skating community."

McKinnon, whose debut feature film "The Stolen Child" will be released soon, confirmed Monday that the copyright issues had been resolved. McKinnon said he wasn't trying to cause a controversy but wanted to ensure the rights of artists were respected.

"I love it when music inspires people," he said. "We can all agree creators deserve clear consent, proper credit and fair compensation when their work is used. It doesn't matter if you're the most famous artist in the world or a complete unknown. It's for all."

The issue of copyright is a relatively new problem in figure skating, because for generations the only music that could be used was mostly part of the public domain. But when the International Skating Union relaxed its regulations in 2014 and athletes began using more modern music reflective of their own personality, some artists began to demand compensation for their work.

The ISU has been working to help skaters avoid copyright problems, but several still have popped up during the Winter Games.

Spanish skater Tomas-Llorenc Guarino Sabate had to work feverishly to obtain approval for the music to his short program, set to a medley from the animated film "Minions." Sabate had been performing the popular program all season, only to learn Universal Studios was poised to reject its use during the Winter Games. He got the final approval he needed last Friday.

Russian skater Petr Gumennik did have to change his short program two days before the start of competition Tuesday night because he did not have the proper permission for music from "Perfume: The Story of a Murderer," a psychological thriller. He pivoted to "Waltz 1805" by Edgar Hakobyan, for which Gumennik was able to get permission.

As for Glenn, the three-time U.S. champion has become an unintentional lightning rod during the Olympics.

An outspoken LGBTQ+ rights activist, Glenn said she has been receiving threats following a pre-Olympics press conference in which she said that the queer community is going through a "hard time" amid the political climate under President Donald Trump.

"I was disappointed because I've never had so many people wish me harm before, just for being me and speaking about being decent — human rights and decency," Glenn said Sunday night, wearing an

LGBTQ+ pin on her team jacket during the team medal ceremony.

"So that was really disappointing," Glenn added, "and I do think it kind of lowered that excitement for this."

Glenn spent most of Monday making the TV rounds with several of her teammates to celebrate their gold medals, the second straight for the Americans in the Olympic team event. Then she planned to head to a training camp outside of Milan to prepare for the women's individual competition, which begins with the short program on Feb. 17.

"For all of us first-time Olympians, you saw our nerves, and (it was good) just getting them out," Glenn said following the team event. "So I'm really grateful that I was able to have this opportunity ahead of the individual."

Russia can't attack NATO this year but plans to boost its own forces, an intelligence chief says

By EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Russia cannot launch an attack on NATO this year or next but is planning to increase its forces significantly along the alliance's eastern flank, depending on the outcome of the war in Ukraine, a senior European intelligence official said.

Speaking in an online briefing with journalists, Kaupo Rosin, the head of Estonia's foreign intelligence service, also told The Associated Press that Russian President Vladimir Putin currently has no desire to halt the nearly 4-year-old invasion of neighboring Ukraine and thinks he can "outsmart" the United States during talks on how to end the war.

Rosin said Russia's plan involves creating new military units and multiplying the prewar force along its border with NATO by two to three times. But that will be heavily influenced by the outcome of discussions involving Moscow, Washington and Kyiv regarding a cessation of hostilities in Ukraine, he said. That's because Russia will need to maintain a "significant portion" of its military inside occupied Ukraine and in Russia to prevent future Ukrainian action, he said.

Currently there are "not enough resources available" for Moscow to launch an attack on NATO, but the Kremlin is concerned about Europe rearming and being able to conduct military action against Russia in the next couple of years, the intelligence chief said.

Russian officials, meanwhile, are playing for time in the talks with Washington and "there is absolutely no discussion about how to really cooperate with the U.S. in a meaningful way," Rosin said.

Estonia's security assessment

Rosin spoke to reporters ahead of the publication of Estonia's annual security report Tuesday. He said the information on how the Kremlin views the talks with the U.S. is based on intelligence that NATO member Estonia gathered from "Russian internal discussions." He did not elaborate on how the information was obtained but said the discussions showed that Russian officials believe Washington remains Moscow's "main enemy."

Russian officials have insisted publicly they want a negotiated deal but have shown little willingness to compromise and remain adamant their demands must be met.

U.S.-brokered talks between envoys from Russia and Ukraine in recent weeks have been described by officials from both sides as constructive and positive, but there has been no sign of any progress on key issues in the discussions.

Putin, "in his head, still thinks that he can actually militarily win (in Ukraine) at some point," Rosin said.

A White House official responded to the Estonian intelligence chief's comments and said President Donald Trump's negotiators had made "tremendous progress" on the talks to end the war. Although prisoner exchanges have happened sporadically since May, they pointed in particular to a recent agreement in Abu Dhabi reached by the U.S., Ukraine and Russia to release more than 300 prisoners.

That agreement was evidence that efforts to end the war are advancing, said the official, who was granted anonymity because they did not have permission to speak publicly.

In an indication that Trump wants to accelerate the momentum of those efforts, Ukrainian President

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Volodymyr Zelenskyy said last week that Washington has given Kyiv and Moscow a June deadline to reach a settlement. Trump over the past year has set several deadlines that have come and gone without apparent consequences.

Fiona Hill, a Russia expert and adviser to Trump in his first term, said Trump and his officials are spinning a story that depicts the U.S. president as a peacemaker and, for that reason, they are not interested in changing their assessment that Putin wants to end the war.

She told AP that both leaders "need their version of events to play out" and are hanging onto their version of the truth — Putin as the victor in Ukraine and Trump as the dealmaker.

More deadly Russian bombardments

On Tuesday morning, Russian planes dropped seven powerful glide bombs on Sloviansk, in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, killing an 11-year-old girl and her mother, according to regional chief Vadym Filashkin. He said that 16 others, including a 7-year-old girl, were injured in the attack that damaged 14 apartment blocks.

During the night, Russian drone attacks elsewhere in Ukraine wounded at least five people, including a toddler and two other children, regional authorities said.

Although Trump has repeatedly suggested that Putin wants peace, he has sometimes appeared frustrated with the Russian leader's lukewarm approach to talks.

From an intelligence perspective, Rosin said he doesn't know why U.S. officials believe Putin wants to end the war.

Hill, who served as a national intelligence officer under previous U.S. administrations, said it's unclear what intelligence information Trump gets on Russia — or if he reads it.

He relies heavily on his lead negotiators, special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner, who Hill said may struggle to believe that the damage to the Russian economy from the war is a price Putin is willing to pay for Ukraine.

Referring to reports that Witkoff has attended meetings with Putin without a U.S. State Department translator, she questioned if Trump's envoys understood what was being said in meetings and suggested officials may be "selectively" looking for what they want to hear.

Optimistic reports filter up to Putin

Putin is fixated on controlling all of Ukraine and the idea "is so deep in his head" that it takes priority over anything else, including the economy, Rosin said, suggesting the conflict will continue in some form for several years.

He said Putin's position may change only if the situation in Russia, or on the front line, becomes "catastrophic," threatening his power. For now, the Kremlin leader still believes he can take Ukraine and "outsmart everybody," Rosin said.

One reason Putin thinks he can win militarily in Ukraine is because he is "definitely" getting some incorrect information from his officials, the Estonian intelligence chief said.

Not all Russian officials, however, believe they are winning the war in Ukraine, Rosin said.

"The lower you go in the food chain," the more people understand "how bad it is actually on the ground," he said, whereas higher-level officials are more optimistic because they are given more positive reports. Rosin cited examples of officials being told Russian forces had captured Ukrainian settlements when that was not true.

The reports that arrive at Putin's desk may be "much more optimistic" than the situation on the ground because Putin only wants to see success, Rosin said.

Hill said both Trump and Putin are probably being told what they want to hear by people who want to please them.

Misery deepens in the West Bank as Israel provides few Palestinian work permits

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

TULKAREM, West Bank (AP) — Hanadi Abu Zant hasn't been able to pay rent on her apartment in the occupied West Bank for nearly a year after losing her permit to work inside Israel. When her landlord calls the police on her, she hides in a mosque.

"My biggest fear is being kicked out of my home. Where will we sleep, on the street?" she said, wiping tears from her cheeks.

She is among some 100,000 Palestinians whose work permits were revoked after Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack ignited the war in the Gaza Strip. Confined to the occupied territory, where jobs are scarce and wages far lower, they face dwindling and dangerous options as the economic crisis deepens.

Some have sold their belongings or gone into debt as they try to pay for food, electricity and school expenses for their children. Others have paid steep fees for black-market permits or tried to sneak into Israel, risking arrest or worse if they are mistaken for militants.

Israel, which has controlled the West Bank for nearly six decades, says it is under no obligation to allow Palestinians to enter for work and makes such decisions based on security considerations. Thousands of Palestinians are still allowed to work in scores of Jewish settlements across the West Bank, built on land they want for a future state.

Risk of collapse

The World Bank has warned that the West Bank economy is at risk of collapse because of Israel's restrictions. By the end of last year, unemployment had surged to nearly 30% compared with around 12% before the war, according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

Before the war, tens of thousands of Palestinians worked inside Israel, mainly in construction and service jobs. Wages can be more than double those in the landlocked West Bank, where decades of Israeli checkpoints, land seizures and other restrictions have weighed heavily on the economy. Palestinians also blame the Palestinian Authority, which exercises limited self-rule in parts of the territory, for not doing enough to create jobs.

About 115,000 Palestinians had work permits that were revoked after the outbreak of the war. Israel initially reinstated around 8,000 according to a report last year from Gisha, an Israeli group advocating for Palestinian freedom of movement. An Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity in accordance with regulations, provided a similar figure for reinstated permits last month.

Wages earned in Israel injected some \$4 billion into the Palestinian economy in 2022, according to the Institute for National Security Studies, an Israeli think tank. That's equivalent to about two-thirds of the Palestinian Authority's budget that year.

An Israeli official said Palestinians do not have an inherent right to enter Israel, and that permits are subject to security considerations. The official spoke on condition of anonymity in line with regulations.

Israel seized the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war, territories the Palestinians want for a future state. Some 3 million Palestinians live in the West Bank, along with over 500,000 Israeli settlers who can come and go freely.

The war in Gaza has brought a spike in Palestinian attacks on Israelis as well as settler violence. Military operations that Israel says are aimed at dismantling militant groups have caused heavy damage in the West Bank and displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians.

'My refrigerator, it's empty'

After her husband left her five years ago, Abu Zant secured a job at a food-packing plant in Israel that paid around \$1,400 a month, enough to support her four children. When the war erupted, she thought the ban would only last a few months. She baked pastries for friends to scrape by.

Hasan Joma, who ran a business in Tulkarem before the war helping people find work in Israel, said Palestinian brokers are charging more than triple the price for a permit.

While there are no definite figures, tens of thousands of Palestinians are believed to be working illegally

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in Israel, according to Esteban Klor, professor of economics at Israel's Hebrew University and a senior researcher at the INSS. Some risk their lives trying to cross Israel's separation barrier, which consists of 9-meter high (30-foot) concrete walls, fences and closed military roads.

Shuhrat Barghouthi's husband has spent five months in prison for trying to climb the barrier to enter Israel for work, she said. Before the war, the couple worked in Israel earning a combined \$5,700 a month. Now they are both unemployed and around \$14,000 in debt.

"Come and see my refrigerator, it's empty, there's nothing to feed my children," she said. She can't afford to heat her apartment, where she hasn't paid rent in two years. She says her children are often sick and frequently go to bed hungry.

Sometimes she returns home to see her belongings strewn in the street by the landlord, who has been trying to evict them.

Forced to work in settlements

Of the roughly 48,000 Palestinians who worked in Israeli settlements before the war, more than 65% have kept their permits, according to Gisha. The Palestinians and most of the international community view the settlements, which have rapidly expanded in recent years, as illegal.

Israeli officials did not respond to questions about why more Palestinians are permitted to work in the settlements.

Palestinians employed in the settlements, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution, say their employers have beefed up security since the start of the war and are far more willing to fire anyone stepping out of line, knowing there are plenty more desperate for work.

Two Palestinians working in the Mishor Adumim settlement said security guards look through workers' phones and revoke their permits arbitrarily.

Israelis have turned to foreign workers to fill jobs held by Palestinians, but some say it's a poor substitute because they cost more and do not know the language. Palestinians speak Arabic, but those who work in Israel are often fluent in Hebrew.

Raphael Dadush, an Israeli developer, said the permit crackdown has resulted in costly delays.

Before the war, Palestinians made up more than half his workforce. He's tried to replace them with Chinese workers but says it's not exactly the same. He understands the government's decision, but says it's time to find a way for Palestinians to return that ensures Israel's security.

Assaf Adiv, the executive director of MAAN Workers Association, an Israeli group advocating for Palestinian labor rights, says there has to be some economic integration or there will be "chaos."

"The alternative to work in Israel is starvation and desperation," he said.

Today in History: February 11 Nelson Mandela released from prison

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, Feb. 11, the 42nd day of 2026. There are 323 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Feb. 11, 1990, South African anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela was freed after 27 years in prison. (Mandela would be elected president of South Africa four years later.)

Also on this date:

In 1847, American inventor Thomas Alva Edison was born in Milan, Ohio.

In 1937, a six-week-old sit-down strike against General Motors ended, with the company agreeing to recognize and negotiate with the United Auto Workers union.

In 1945, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Josef Stalin signed the Yalta Agreement, in which Stalin agreed to declare war against Imperial Japan following Nazi Germany's capitulation.

In 1975, Margaret Thatcher was elected leader of Britain's opposition Conservative Party, a prelude to

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her eventual rise to prime minister in 1979.

In 1990, in one of the biggest upsets in boxing history, underdog Buster Douglas knocked out the previously undefeated heavyweight champion Mike Tyson at Japan's Tokyo Dome.

In 2011, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak resigned after days of pro-democracy protests, ending three decades of authoritarian rule.

In 2012, on the eve of the Grammy Awards, superstar singer Whitney Houston was found dead after she drowned in a hotel room bathtub in Beverly Hills, California; she was 48. The official coroner's report listed heart disease and cocaine as contributing factors in her death.

In 2013, during a routine morning meeting of Vatican cardinals, Pope Benedict XVI announced he would resign as pope effective Feb. 28; it was the first papal resignation in nearly 600 years.

In 2020, the World Health Organization gave the official name of COVID-19 to the disease caused by the coronavirus that had emerged in China and was unleashing a worldwide pandemic.

Today's birthdays: Actor Tina Louise is 92. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush is 73. Democratic Sen. Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin is 64. Musician Sheryl Crow is 64. Former Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin is 62. Actor Jennifer Aniston is 57. Actor Damian Lewis is 55. Surfer Kelly Slater is 54. Singer-actor Brandy is 47. Singer Kelly Rowland is 45. Actor Natalie Dormer is 44. Actor Taylor Lautner is 34. Singer-songwriter Khalid is 28.