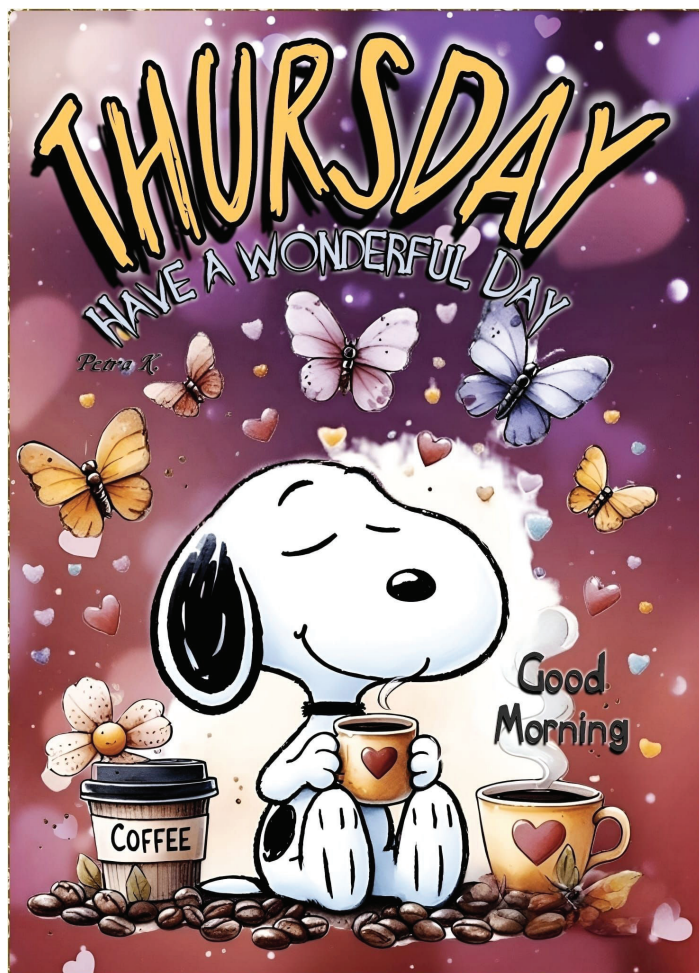


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Thursday, Feb. 12

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

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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.

El Paso Airspace Closure

Officials are offering conflicting explanations for an abrupt airspace closure around El Paso International Airport in Texas late Tuesday into Wednesday morning. The Trump administration cited a Mexican cartel drone incursion, while sources told major media outlets the ground stop was tied to US military tests of counter-drone technology.

The ground stop, initially announced as a 10-day shutdown for "special security reasons," halted or diverted all flights, including medical evacuations. Local officials in El Paso, a nearly 700,000-person city on Texas' US-Mexico border, received no advance notice, sparking confusion. The order called for the longest full grounding in the US since 9/11. The ground stop was lifted after the US military reportedly disabled the drones. As of this writing, officials have not disclosed how many drones were involved or how they were disabled.

Last year, a Homeland Security official told lawmakers cartels use drones almost daily to surveil the border and transport drugs, with over 1,200 pounds seized in the second half of 2024.

'Dawson's Creek' Star Dies

James Van Der Beek died yesterday at age 48 after a battle with colon cancer. The early aughts star was best known for his role as the titular character in the hit show "Dawson's Creek."

Born in 1977, Van Der Beek notched a series of stage and on-screen roles in his late teens, including appearances on Nickelodeon's "Clarissa Explains It All" and the CBS soap opera "As the World Turns." In 1998, he debuted as 15-year-old Dawson Leery in The WB teen drama "Dawson's Creek." The show—set in the fictional town of Capeside, Massachusetts—was an instant success. The first episode drew 6.8 million viewers, the highest ratings in the network's history. Van Der Beek regularly graced magazine covers and was often labeled a teen heartthrob.

He also appeared in films including "Varsity Blues" (1999) and "The Rules of Attraction" (2002). He was cast in Amazon Prime's "Legally Blonde" prequel, "Elle," slated to debut in July.

Smaller Proton Confirmed

A proton's radius measures 0.84 femtometers (trillionths of a millimeter; link free w/email), according to a study published yesterday in Nature. It is the most precise measurement of the subatomic particle to date.

For decades, a proton's radius was believed to measure 0.88 femtometers, with researchers relying on two methods to reach the figure. The first involves firing electrons at a hydrogen atom (containing a single proton), and the second involves measuring the radiation required to make an atom jump energy states. Over a decade ago, researchers applied these methods to muonic hydrogen, which, instead of an electron, has a particle roughly 200 times larger—allowing for more precise measurement and indicating a roughly 4% smaller proton size. Yesterday's study was 2.5 times more precise than previous measurements, and confirmed the smaller radius.

The study aligns with measurements predicted by the Standard Model theory of physics, which describes all known particles and forces in the universe except gravity.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

US snowboarder Chloe Kim vies for third gold in Olympic women's halfpipe final today at 1:30 pm ET, despite shoulder injury.

2028 Los Angeles Olympics committee backs chairman Casey Wasserman after Epstein files mention.

TikTok rolls out opt-in local feed that allows US users to see news and event recommendations based on their location; the feature was introduced to select European markets last year.

Super Bowl averages 124.9 million viewers, second-most watched behind 2025 game; Bad Bunny's half-time show is fourth-most watched with 128.2 million viewers.

Puppy Bowl draws 15.3 million viewers, best audience since 2018.

Science & Technology

Meta breaks ground on \$10B data center in Lebanon, Indiana, as part of AI build-out; tech giant pledges to invest over \$120M to improve local infrastructure.

New regenerative therapy helps repair lab-grown human spinal cord organoids with induced damage, bringing researchers closer to better treatments for spinal cord injuries.

Today's Caribbean coral reefs host food chains 60% to 70% shorter and fish 20% to 70% less diverse than their ancient predecessors, according to analysis of roughly 7,000-year-old reef fossils; declines appear linked to human activity.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close down (S&P 500 -0.0%, Dow -0.1%, Nasdaq -0.2%).

US employers added 130,000 jobs in January, more than the 55,000 to 70,000 jobs economists had forecast; unemployment rate fell to 4.3% from 4.4% in December.

Ray-Ban maker EssilorLuxottica reports it sold over 7 million Meta AI glasses last year, up from 2 million in 2023 and 2024 combined.

Billionaire Bill Ackman's hedge fund reveals it has invested roughly 10% of its capital—or about \$2B—in Meta.

Kraft Heinz pauses plan to split into two companies as new CEO says "challenges are fixable"; the food conglomerate had announced the breakup last fall.

Politics & World Affairs

Attorney General Pam Bondi testifies before Congress in four-and-a-half-hour confrontational hearing over the Justice Department's handling of Epstein files.

Bondi reportedly had file on Rep. Pramila Jayapal's (D, WA-7) search history during hearing.

Suspected shooter in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia, is identified as 18-year-old transgender student at the secondary school targeted; police have not publicly identified a motive as of this writing.

Pentagon is reportedly preparing a second aircraft carrier to deploy to the Middle East in two weeks as President Donald Trump negotiates terms of a potential nuclear deal with Iran.

Need a **Babysitter** or **House Cleaner?**

♥ **Babysitting Available!**

House Cleaning Offered!

Text Jeslyn Kosel at (605)-290-7821

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

The advertisement features a colorful illustration of a teddy bear, a baby bottle, and a stack of colorful blocks on the left, and a yellow bucket with cleaning supplies on the right. At the bottom, there is a red car driving on a road towards a yellow house with a red roof, set against a backdrop of green hills and a blue sky with clouds.

Gov. Rhoden Signs Bill to Reduce Property Taxes for Veterans Signs Eight other Bills

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Larry Rhoden signed [SB 12](#), a bill to provide for a refund of property taxes in previous years for qualifying veterans and surviving spouses.

He signed SB 12 at a private signing ceremony with the bill's prime sponsor, Senator Ernie Otten, and South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Jeremiah Schneider.

He also signed the following eight bills into law. You can click on the bill number for more information.

[SB 4](#) revises procedures for returning and withholding security deposits for residential premises;

[SB 8](#) permits a school district to administer epinephrine using a nasal spray;

[SB 9](#) revises provisions regarding notices to the one-call notification center;

[SB 22](#) clarifies when certification of values is transmitted to the county;

[SB 38](#) modifies the annual fee imposed on certain concentrated animal feeding operations;

[HB 1016](#) modifies provisions related to the controlled substances schedule and declares an emergency;

[HB 1054](#) repeals the creation and budgeting for the Digital Dakota Network; and

[HB 1055](#) updates the official code of laws.

Governor Rhoden has signed 22 bills into law and vetoed one this legislative session.

Gov. Rhoden Signs Bills to Promote the Great Outdoors

PIERRE, S.D. – Governor Larry Rhoden signed three bills that promote South Dakota's great outdoors. "South Dakota's outdoor beauty is part of what makes our state so great. I am committed to making sure our kids and grandkids can enjoy our great outdoors to the fullest for generations to come," said Governor Larry Rhoden. "By promoting fishing, strengthening preservation, and opening up space for new opportunities at our State Fair, we are protecting what makes South Dakota special."

The following two bills were signed at a signing ceremony with the prime sponsors; Game, Fish and Parks Secretary Kevin Robling; and other stakeholders:

[HB 1047](#) makes an appropriation for construction costs at the Blue Dog State Fish Hatchery, which produces a variety of fish species for stocking across our state; and

[HB 1052](#) transfers Hydro II to the Spearfish Canyon Foundation to strengthen preservation and public education.

Governor Rhoden also signed [HB 1021](#), which authorizes the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources to continue making improvements to the South Dakota State Fairgrounds by removing buildings that have outlived their useful life.

Heinrich named to UND 2025 President's Roll of Honor

GRAND FORKS, N.D. (February 11, 2026) – Nearly 1,300 University of North Dakota (UND) students have been recognized for outstanding academic achievement by being named to the 2025 fall semester President's Roll of Honor. To qualify for the UND President's Roll of Honor, a student must have an overall cumulative grade point average of 3.80 or higher. The student must also have earned a minimum of 30 semester hours and have completed a minimum of 12 hours at the close of the semester, eight of which must be for traditional letter grades. Groton's Claire Heinrich was named to the honor roll.

Legendary Sculptor Dale Claude Lamphere and Wife Jane Murphy Gift to SD Hall of Fame Copyright for Dignity of Earth & Sky



South Dakota — The South Dakota Hall of Fame announced today that it has received the copyright to the image of Dignity of Earth & Sky, the iconic sculpture created by Sculptor and 1987 South Dakota Hall of Fame Inductee Dale Lamphere, through a generous charitable gift from Lamphere and his wife, Jane Murphy.

The announcement was made during a media event and press conference held at the South Dakota Hall of Fame Visitor & Education Center in Chamberlain. The gift represents a significant contribution to the South Dakota Hall of Fame, allowing the organization to steward and protect the legacy of one of South Dakota's most recognizable works of art while supporting the Hall's mission.

Dignity of Earth & Sky has become a powerful symbol of South Dakota, recognized for its artistic significance and its connection to the state's history, culture, and people. Through this gift, the South Dakota Hall of Fame will oversee the use of the image in future reproductions and derivative works, ensuring the integrity of the sculpture is preserved for generations to come.

The legal transfer of ownership is defined as follows:

"Effective with the signatures of the Copyright Assignment being provided to the South Dakota Hall of Fame (SDHoF) by Sculptor and SDHoF Inductee Dale Lamphere and his wife, Jane Murphy, the SDHoF owns the copyright to the image of Dignity. Per the Agreement, select uses will continue to be permitted for Dale Lamphere, as well as the use by the State of South Dakota for the Dignity License Plates. Other proposed uses for the image of Dignity in derivative works should be directed to the SDHoF with the request and description of proposed use to info@sdhalloffame.org. A specific request form will be available soon on the SDHoF website. All proposed items must honor the intent and aesthetic of Dignity. The SD Hall of Fame will only approve items that respect the Indigenous women, culture, traditions, and community that Dignity is meant to honor. Items must be true to character, likeness, and the spirit of the work. No item shall diminish the image or reputation of Dignity."

Leadership of the South Dakota Hall of Fame expressed gratitude for the gift and its lasting impact, noting that this contribution strengthens the organization's ability to preserve, share, and honor South Dakota's stories of excellence.

More information about the South Dakota Hall of Fame and future updates regarding image use requests will be shared at www.sdhalloffame.org.

Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling League Week #12 Results

Team Standings: Cheetahs 15, Coyotes 12, Shihtzus 12, Foxes 8, Jackelopes 7, Chipmunks 6

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 186, Brad Larson 175, Charlie Dirks 174

Women's High Games: Suzie Easthouse 161, Dar Larson 154, Vicki Jorgensen 153

Men's High Series: John Sippel 483, Brad Waage 476, Brad Larson 470

Women's High Series: Sam Bahr 422, Vicki Jorgensen 417, Dar Larson 405

Week 12 Fun Game: Most Fills - Shihtzus with 68!

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CITIZENS**

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Fitness

or anyone using physical therapy

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**BEST
RATES
AROUND!**

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

Student: \$29.82 per month or \$255.60 per year
Single: \$35.15 per month or \$319.50 per year
2-Person: \$55.45 per month or \$575.10 per year
Family: \$67.10 per month or \$702.26 per year

MONTH-TO-MONTH

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



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

Same rates for several years!

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Tina's Baskets

605-397-7285



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



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



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



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

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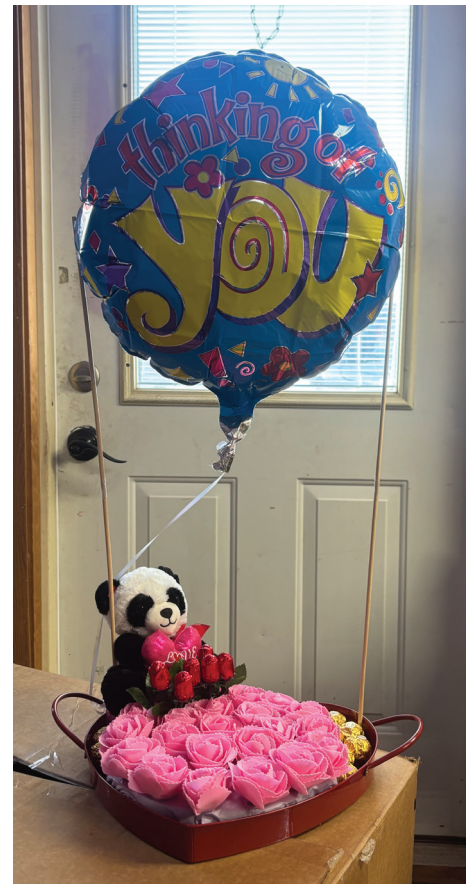
**Hersheys cake with strawberry drops and mini Hersheys on top
\$40.00**



**Laffy Taffy Octopus cake
\$ 15.00**



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



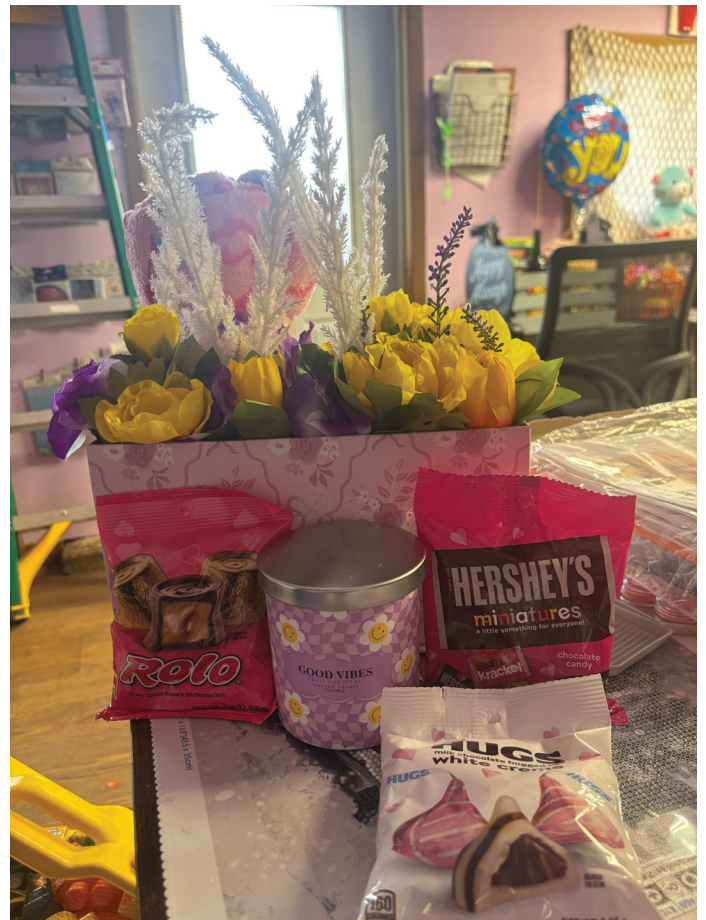
**Thinking of you balloon with bear, red chocolate roses with pink roses and Ferrero Rocher chocolate candy
\$25.00**

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Tonka truck basket \$50.00



Just because or thinking of you Basket \$40.00

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NEC Boys Basketball Standings

	(C)	(S)
Clark/Willow Lake	7-0	15-2
Groton Area	8-1	12-4
Hamlin	5-1	13-2
Britton-Hecla	5-3	11-6
Webster Area	6-3	9-7
Roncalli	4-5	5-9
Milbank	3-5	9-7
Sisseton	2-6	7-9
Deuel	1-4	5-10
Tiospa Zina	0-6	4-12
Redfield	0-7	2-13

NEC Girls Basketball Standings

	(C)	(S)
Clark/Willow Lake	7-0	14-2
Hamlin	6-0	14-1
Groton Area	6-2	13-5
Roncalli	6-2	12-4
Milbank	5-4	12-4
Webster	3-6	5-12
Sisseton	3-5	6-10
Deuel	2-3	4-11
Tiospa Zina	1-6	5-11
Redfield	1-6	4-12
Britton-Hecla	1-7	4-12

Girls Region 1A

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	PTS
1	Aberdeen Roncalli	12	4	.750	44.250
2	Groton Area	13	5	.722	43.778
3	Milbank	12	4	.750	43.267
4	Sisseton	6	10	.375	39.400
5	Webster Area	5	12	.294	38.529
6	Redfield	4	12	.250	37.625
7	Britton-Hecla	4	12	.250	37.133

Boys Region 1A

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	PTS
1	Groton Area	12	4	.750	44.250
2	Britton-Hecla	11	5	.688	41.312
3	Webster Area	9	7	.562	41.250
4	Sisseton	7	8	.467	40.533
5	Aberdeen Roncalli	5	8	.385	40.462
6	Milbank	8	7	.533	40.267
7	Redfield	2	13	.133	35.867

Boys State Standings

#	Name	W	L	PCT	PTS
1	West Central	17	0	1.000	47.000
2	Sioux Falls Christian	13	1	.929	46.214
3	Hamlin	13	2	.867	46.133
4	Clark/Willow Lake	15	2	.882	45.529
5	Groton Area	12	4	.750	43.875
6	Stanley County	14	2	.875	43.750
7	St. Thomas More	12	4	.750	43.688
8	Mahpiya Luta	14	3	.824	43.647
9	Vermillion	12	5	.706	43.588
10	Lennox	10	5	.667	43.533
11	Sioux Valley	12	5	.706	43.235
12	Pine Ridge	11	6	.647	43.118
13	Flandreau	11	6	.647	42.941
14	Cheyenne-Eagle Butte	11	3	.786	42.929
15	Winner	11	5	.688	42.812
16	Wagner	13	3	.812	42.500

Girls State Standings

#	Name	Season			Seed Pts
		W	L	PCT	PTS
1	Hamlin	14	1	.933	46.867
2	Mahpiya Luta	17	0	1.000	46.471
3	Sioux Valley	14	2	.875	45.438
4	Wagner	14	2	.875	45.250
5	Sioux Falls Christian	15	3	.833	45.167
6	Clark/Willow Lake	14	2	.875	45.062
7	Lennox	15	3	.833	44.833
8	West Central	13	4	.765	44.765
9	Rapid City Christian	15	3	.833	44.667
10	Aberdeen Roncalli	12	4	.750	44.438
11	Mobridge-Pollock	12	3	.800	44.400
12	Groton Area	13	5	.722	43.944
13	Lakota Tech	13	4	.765	43.529
14	St. Thomas More	13	4	.765	43.353
15	Milbank	12	4	.750	43.312
16	Miller	13	4	.765	43.176



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

State Senate advances measure asking voters to authorize mobile sports betting

Tax revenue would be captured to reduce property taxes

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

PIERRE — The South Dakota Senate voted 23-10 on Wednesday to approve a resolution that would ask voters to legalize mobile sports betting and capture tax revenue from it to reduce property taxes.

If the state House of Representatives also approves the resolution, it will go on the ballot Nov. 3.

More legislative news

See all of Searchlight's coverage of the 2026 legislative session.

Read the latest

Senate Joint Resolution 504, introduced by Sen. Casey Crabtree, R-Madison, would put 90% of tax revenue from mobile sports betting toward replacing property taxes. If voters approve the state constitutional amendment, the Legislature would set additional policies to put the program in place.

Voters amended the state constitution in 2020 to legalize sports betting only in Deadwood and tribal casinos in South Dakota. It is legal statewide in Wyoming and Iowa, among other states, and sports-betting smartphone apps and websites have proliferated nationwide.

Republican Sen. Steve Kolbeck lives in Brandon, a short distance from Iowa with the Grand Falls Casino just across the border. He told lawmakers that if voters do approve a constitutional amendment, it would bring economic benefits to South Dakota towns with bettors choosing to eat, watch games and stay in their own communities rather than driving across the border to Iowa or Wyoming to legally place sports bets.

Kolbeck added that he sees the constitutional amendment "as another Wayfair decision," referencing the U.S. Supreme Court decision involving South Dakota that allowed states to require out-of-state retailers to collect sales tax.

"This is us having revenue out there that we're not collecting, just like when Amazon was new, we had to go get that," Kolbeck said. "We had to adjust as a state. Now we have this situation that this body needs to react to and adjust to so that revenue can come back into our state coffers."

Opponents criticized the effort for attempting to fund property tax relief with a potentially addictive activity.

A supporter of the measure, Sen. Amber Hulse, R-Hot Springs, sees the constitutional amendment as a way to set up safety measures and guardrails, such as easier access to an addiction hotline and betting caps. Funding property tax relief through the new revenue source would be an added benefit, she said, though it "isn't going to probably do a lot."

Sen. Amber Hulse, R-Hot Springs, speaks on the Senate floor in Pierre on Feb. 11, 2026. (Photo by Makenzie Huber_South Dakota Searchlight).jpeg

Sen. Amber Hulse, R-Hot Springs, speaks on the Senate floor in Pierre on Feb. 11, 2026. (Photo by Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

"You can't legislate morality, but guess what? These people are already doing it," Hulse said, sharing that a family member of hers in South Dakota participates in mobile sports betting.

"They're already doing it on the black market. They're already potentially making bets that are hurting their families more," she added. "So why don't we put some guardrails on it and help protect some families so that there aren't as many harms being done by this, especially to our communities?"

The resolution does not need the governor's signature to appear on the ballot — it just needs majority

approval from both chambers.

South Dakota voters will consider at least four constitutional amendments in November, all of which were placed on the ballot by the Legislature last winter. Three other amendments have been approved for circulation, according to the South Dakota Secretary of State's Office, and could end up on the ballot if petitioners obtain enough signatures from registered voters.

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.

Lawmakers endorse adding school coaches as mandatory reporters of abuse and neglect, but not clergy

BY: SETH TUPPER AND JOHN HULT

Debates about which types of authority figures should be mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect ended in one proposal's failure and another's advancement Wednesday at the South Dakota Capitol in Pierre.

The state House of Representatives approved a bill that would add coaches of school activities to a list of mandatory reporters in state law that includes teachers, health care providers, child care workers and others. The bill's next stop is a state Senate committee.

The legislation's sponsor, Rep. Mary Fitzgerald, R-Saint Onge, was not fully happy despite the 66-0 vote in favor of the measure.

Her initial draft sought to add the term "coach" to the mandatory reporters list. A committee amendment narrowed the language to high school coaches. Fitzgerald unsuccessfully sought Wednesday to amend the bill back to her original language.

"I just cannot imagine why we would go out of our way to not protect kids," she said.

Other representatives said the word "coach" is too broad. An amendment moved Wednesday as a compromise by Rep. Drew Peterson, R-Salem, changed the language to "coach of a school activity."

Peterson said he wanted to broaden the bill beyond the language approved by the committee, but didn't want to put potential criminal liability on impromptu volunteers, citing the example of a parent who helps a little league team once for 20 minutes. He said such a person could have qualified as a "coach" under the original language and been prosecuted for failing to make a report.

Fitzgerald criticized the resistance to her language, saying "it's a sad day here in South Dakota."

Attempt to add clergy fails

Earlier Wednesday, the House Judiciary Committee voted 8-3 to defeat a bill that would have added clergy to the list of mandatory reporters.

House Bill 1216, from Sioux Falls Democratic Rep. Erin Healy, was modeled in part after a law in Washington state. The bill had the support of the Episcopal Diocese of South Dakota and the South Dakota Network Against Family Violence and Sexual Assault.

Opponents came from the South Dakota Catholic Conference, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and religious liberty organizations.

The state of Washington agreed not to enforce a provision of its law that required reporting of abuse and neglect disclosed during Catholic confession as part of a settlement in a lawsuit brought against the state.

Catholic practice bars the disclosure of anything divulged in the confessional.

Michael Pauley of the South Dakota Catholic Conference said the bill would create "a legal obligation to report information in violation of church law."

Other church opponents said requiring faith leaders to make "subjective" calls on whether difficult life

circumstances or poverty amount to reportable abuse or neglect would interfere with the clergy-parishioner relationship, and run afoul of First Amendment protections for religious liberty.

Healy told the committee that disclosure during confession could be exempted, as it was in Washington. She said mandatory reporting is a backstop to ensure "bad actors" in the church who ignore abuse are held accountable.

"Complex" questions about the role of the clergy and their role in parishioners' lives, Healy said, "must always be weighed against our responsibility to protect children."

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

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

Federal judge declines to intervene in South Dakota attorney general's fight against abortion ads

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

A federal judge declined to intervene Wednesday against South Dakota Republican Attorney General Marty Jackley's attempt to shut down a national nonprofit's abortion-rights ad campaign.

Jackley asked a South Dakota state judge in December to stop advertisements by nonprofit Mayday Health. The advertisements on gas station pumps around the state ask "Pregnant? Don't want to be?" The ads also include a link to the group's website, which provides information about the availability of abortion pills.

Jackley said Mayday's advertisements mislead people to believe abortion is legal in South Dakota, which bans abortion except when the life of the mother is at risk.

Mayday Health filed a federal lawsuit in January to prevent Jackley from taking legal action against the campaign, on grounds that the ads are protected by the First Amendment right to free speech. The nonprofit educates people about the safety and effectiveness of abortion pills. After it began its ad campaign in early December, Jackley sent the group a cease-and-desist letter.

On Wednesday, a federal judge in New York declined to grant Mayday Health a preliminary injunction against Jackley's actions. The judge issued the ruling orally during a teleconference.

"I do believe that the law requires me to abstain from exercising federal jurisdiction in this case," said Judge Katherine Polk Failla. "I trust that the South Dakota court will get it right."

Meanwhile, Jackley's lawsuit continues in state court, where he's seeking an order to shut down Mayday's campaign. A hearing in the case is scheduled for Feb. 20 in Pierre.

The drugs mifepristone and misoprostol are commonly used in medication abortions. Jackley said Wednesday that state law makes it illegal to mail "drugs of this nature" into the state.

"The First Amendment is important," Jackley said at a press conference. "But it's an unprotected speech when you're being deceptive about it, when you're seeking an illegal activity."

Mayday Health did not immediately respond to a message Wednesday from South Dakota Searchlight.

South Dakota lawmakers adopted an abortion trigger ban in 2005 that took effect in 2022, after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned abortion rights previously guaranteed by the Roe v. Wade decision.

In 2023, medication abortions accounted for 63% of abortions in the country, according to data from the Guttmacher Institute. Mifepristone and misoprostol are listed on the World Health Organizations' list of essential medicines. In 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected an attempt by anti-abortion medical organizations to overturn the Food and Drug Administration's prescribing guidelines for mifepristone.

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

South Dakota's seniors need Medicare to address physician shortage

by Keith Hansen

As a reproductive endocrinologist in Sioux Falls, I've spent my career taking care of patients who trust me to always be there when they need help. I see the relief in their eyes when we catch something early. I've shared their concerns when a diagnosis comes back unclear. And I've felt their gratitude when we work together to manage a chronic condition.

I'm passionate about this work, but lately, it's become increasingly difficult for South Dakotans in rural areas to access care. The vast majority of our state suffers from a severe shortage of doctors — a problem worsened by unsustainably low payments from Medicare.

The Medicare Physician Fee Schedule (MPFS) — the complex system that the federal government uses to determine how physicians get paid for providing care to Medicare beneficiaries — isn't keeping up with the reality of running a practice in such a rural state. It neither keeps pace with the cost of providing care, nor does it account for rising inflation. And it's putting doctors in a tough spot.

Everything it takes to run a medical office has gotten more expensive. Staff deserve fair wages. Insurance goes up. Supplies cost more. Medicare payments haven't risen to match any of that.

And unlike hospitals or nursing facilities, physicians don't get automatic inflation updates. When adjusted for inflation, Medicare now pays doctors 33% less than it did in 2001. Most people assume that if you're treating Medicare patients, you're reimbursed for the cost of treating them. But for America's doctors, that hasn't been the case for a long time.

As costs rise across the board and reimbursement is slashed year after year, doctors are still expected to provide modern care. But no business could survive under conditions like that. We employ community members. We balance budgets. And we're fixtures of our communities.

Insufficient Medicare payments have forced too many physicians to make heartbreaking decisions. Some physicians have had to stop accepting new Medicare patients. In a state where 18% of our population receives Medicare benefits, this is making it harder for seniors to access medical care.

Meanwhile, some physicians have made the difficult choice to leave the practice of medicine. This is pushing South Dakota deeper into a physician shortage. No matter how you slice it, the impact of Medicare's inability to keep up with practice costs has an impact on patient care.

With fewer options in rural communities, patients lose access to doctors who know them by name and who they've trusted for years. Over half of South Dakota's counties have been designated health professional shortage areas. Failing to address the physician payment system will only further this worrying trend. This ultimately leaves seniors with a choice between driving farther for basic appointments or waiting weeks just to be seen. Practice closures can transform a rural community into a health care desert.

Next year's modest Medicare payment increase is welcome news. After five straight years of cuts, it's a relief to finally see a step in the right direction. But one small bump in payments doesn't fix years of chronic underpayments. It's a temporary patch when what we need is real reform.

For the good of South Dakotans and the physicians who dedicate their lives to treating them, Medicare needs a payment system that reflects the real cost of providing care. That means giving physicians the same kind of inflationary updates other providers already receive. It also means fixing outdated budget rules that create sudden, unpredictable cuts whenever a new service is added somewhere else in Medicare.

We can't keep holding up the system without a payment structure that supports the work we do. Next year's increase is a good start. Now Congress needs to finish the job and reform the Medicare Physician Fee Schedule for good so that patients across South Dakota and the United States can get the timely treatments they need right in their communities.

Dr. Keith Hansen is president of the South Dakota State Medical Association and a reproductive endocrinology and infertility specialist in Sioux Falls at Sanford Fertility & Reproductive Medicine Clinic. Originally from Wall, he received his medical training at Washington University in St. Louis. In 1998, he returned to South Dakota to

practice medicine and teach at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine. He is currently chair of the medical school's OB/GYN Department.

Legislative proposal would require data centers to get permits from neighboring cities and counties

Committee also advances bill that would mandate environmental impact statements for carbon pipelines

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — A legislative proposal related to a situation in the Sioux Falls area would require data centers in South Dakota to obtain an additional permit from a neighboring city or county, if the city or county line is within 1 mile of the facility.

The state House Commerce and Energy Committee approved the legislation 9-4 on Wednesday, sending it to the state House of Representatives.

Last month, Sioux Falls rezoned land for a proposed data center. Although the land is near Brandon, residents of Brandon had no official say in the matter. An effort to petition the rezoning to a public vote failed when petitioners failed to gather enough signatures.

"This is not an anti-data center bill," said the sponsor, Rep. John Sjaarda, R-Valley Springs. "It's a local control bill."

The legislation would require any "high energy use facility" using at least 20 megawatts of energy to apply for a conditional use permit from any city or county within 1 mile that has zoning ordinances. Large data centers often require more electricity than that to store data for artificial intelligence, cryptocurrency and other forms of technology.

Side effects of data centers, like noise from continuously running equipment, were some of the larger concerns of Brandon residents who supported the bill.

"These sounds and noises do not stop at a city limits sign," said resident Erin Taggart.

Rep. Kaley Nolz, R-Mitchell, was one of the committee members who voted for the bill.

"I think we need to be good neighbors," she said.

"You shouldn't be able to build it right across the road just because I don't live in that county."

The bill is one of many addressing data centers in the current legislative session, which lasts until mid-March. A bill that would have exempted data centers from sales taxes on their software and equipment purchases failed in a committee recently.

Further carbon pipeline regulations

Committee members also supported a bill Wednesday from Sioux Falls Republican Rep. John Hughes that would require companies proposing carbon dioxide pipelines to pay for and conduct an environmental impact study.

The proposal would allow companies to run those studies during the course of permit applications. Results of environmental impact studies would have to be accessible to the public.

The bill is one of many filed in recent years in response to a proposal from Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions to build a five-state pipeline through eastern South Dakota. The project would capture carbon dioxide from ethanol plants and sequester it underground in North Dakota, to capitalize on federal tax credits incentivizing the prevention of heat-trapping emissions into the atmosphere.

Last year, lawmakers and Gov. Larry Rhoden adopted a law banning carbon pipelines from using eminent domain, a legal process for obtaining land access when landowners are unwilling to grant it.

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.

US House approves bill mandating proof of citizenship for voting in federal elections

Rep. Dusty Johnson, R-South Dakota, votes in favor of legislation

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — The U.S. House passed legislation Wednesday that would require the public to produce a passport or birth certificate in most cases to register to vote, less than a year out from November midterm elections.

The 218-213 vote split mostly along party lines, with one Democrat, Rep. Henry Cuellar of Texas, breaking with his party to support the measure. One Republican, North Carolina's Greg Murphy, did not vote.

Republicans argued the bill, dubbed by House Republicans as the "Safeguard American Voter Eligibility Act," or the SAVE America Act, will prevent noncitizens from voting in federal elections, which is already illegal and rare.

The Senate is considering its own version of the bill.

The GOP's championing of the bill follows President Donald Trump's comments advocating to nationalize elections, a mid-decade campaign to redraw state congressional districts in Republicans' favor and more than two dozen Department of Justice lawsuits demanding Democratic-led states turn over unredacted voter rolls to the Department of Homeland Security.

The bill also includes a provision requiring each state to send an "official list of eligible voters for federal office" to Homeland Security to be run through the department's database to identify any noncitizens.

'Show your papers'

The legislation has attracted sharp criticism from Democrats and voting rights advocates as a "show your papers" law that will disenfranchise the roughly 146 million Americans who do not have a passport.

They say it would also affect those without ready access to a birth certificate and married women whose last names do not match the name appearing on birth records.

If passed by both chambers and signed into law by Trump, the measure would take effect immediately.

"Republicans know that they cannot win on the merits, so rather than change their policies, they're seeking to change the rules. John Lewis was not bludgeoned on a bridge in my hometown for the Republicans and Donald Trump to take these rules away from us," said Rep. Terri Sewell, D-Ala., invoking the late Democratic Rep. John Lewis, who was beaten in 1965 in Selma, Alabama, during a march for voting rights.

"This is a blatant power grab, as Democrats will not stand for it," Sewell, whose district includes Selma, said on the floor ahead of the vote.

Sean Morales-Doyle, director of voting rights and elections at the Brennan Center for Justice, said the timing of the measure, if enacted, would cause "maximum chaos."

"A change of this magnitude to our election system right before an election would be not only terrible in substance in that it would block Americans from voting, but would also be chaos-causing," Morales-Doyle said.

"It would change the rules that govern our elections and government registration right when that is happening at the highest rate. ... There's always a huge increase in registration in the run-up to an election."

'Daggum ID'

But Republicans argue the legislation provides "safeguards" to ensure only U.S. citizens vote, as Rep. Tim Burchett, R-Tenn., said on the floor ahead of the vote.

"House Republicans and President Trump want to protect the ballot box and ensure integrity in our elections across this great country," Burchett said.

"When you purchase a firearm, when you board a plane, when you open a bank account — if I put

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\$100 in the bank and right then ask for \$20 of it back, guess what: I gotta show a daggum ID," Burchett continued.

Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Wis., said Democrats' arguments against the bill amounted to "hyperbole."

"We should be checking and cleaning up the voter rolls and removing individuals who are not eligible to vote, because every citizen deserves the right to vote," he said.

Claims of noncitizen voting in federal elections represent "tiny fractions of voters," according to a July 2025 analysis from The Center for Election Innovation and Research. The report was updated this month.

Murkowski not on board

The Senate version, sponsored by Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, may face stronger headwinds.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, issued a statement on social media Tuesday saying she won't support the legislation.

"Not only does the U.S. Constitution clearly provide states the authority to regulate the 'times, places, and manner' of holding federal elections, but one-size-fits-all mandates from Washington, D.C., seldom work in places like Alaska," Murkowski wrote, adding that changing procedures so close to the midterms would "negatively impact election integrity."

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

US House in bipartisan vote defies Trump, agrees to end his tariffs on Canada

Several Republicans join Democrats to pass resolution, but not South Dakota's Rep. Dusty Johnson, who votes against it

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — In a notable break from President Donald Trump's signature trade policy, several House Republicans joined Democrats in passing a resolution to terminate the president's national emergency at the northern border that triggered tariffs on Canada just over one year ago.

The measure, passed 219-211, revokes Trump's Feb. 1, 2025, executive order imposing tariffs on Canada, which he triggered under an unprecedented use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA.

Whether he has the power to invoke tariffs under the 1970s law is under review at the U.S. Supreme Court, which heard arguments in November. An opinion, still not released, has been expected for months.

Reps. Don Bacon, R-Neb., Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., Jeff Hurd, R-Colo., Kevin Kiley, R-Calif., Thomas Massie, R-Ky., and Dan Newhouse, R-Wash., broke ranks with the GOP to join Democrats in rebuffing Trump's levies on Canadian goods.

Rep. Jared Golden, D-Maine, was the only Democrat to vote against the resolution.

Two Republicans, Greg Murphy of North Carolina and Riley Moore of West Virginia, did not vote.

The House vote occurred less than 24 hours after three House Republicans delivered a rebuketo Trump and joined Democrats in blocking House leadership's effort to extend a ban on bringing any resolutions to the floor that disapprove of the administration's tariffs.

Trump's centerpiece economic policy has drawn criticism over its on-again, off-again changes, causing uncertainty for business and costs passed along to consumers.

The vote also comes just days after Trump threatened to close a new bridge between Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit, Michigan, if Canada does not negotiate a new trade deal with the United States.

In a nearly 300-word post Monday on his platform Truth Social, Trump predicted that if Canada struck a deal with China, the eastern power would "terminate ALL ice Hockey being played in Canada, and permanently eliminate The Stanley Cup."

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'Canada is our friend'

Rep. Gregory Meeks, D-N.Y., the resolution's lead sponsor, criticized Trump's "manufactured emergency" regarding Canada.

"Canada isn't a threat. Canada is our friend. Canada is our ally. Canadians have fought alongside Americans, whether it was in World War II or the war in Afghanistan," Meeks said.

Meeks also said tariffs are costing his constituents up to \$1,700 per year.

"That's what this is about. It's about American people and making things affordable for them," Meeks said on the floor ahead of the vote.

Analyses from the Tax Foundation and Yale Budget Lab pin the average cost per household between roughly \$1,300 and \$1,750 from all current tariffs combined — not just import taxes on products purchased from Canada.

Fentanyl debate

Rep. Brian Mast, R-Fla., disagreed, arguing the cost amounted not to lost income but to drug overdose deaths attributed to illicit fentanyl.

"Who will pay the price? It's a very sad thing to have (been) asked by this colleague of mine ... because it's important to remember, what is this resolution? This resolution ends an emergency related to fentanyl," Mast said during pre-vote debate.

But U.S. Customs and Border Protection data from fiscal year 2023 to the present shows fentanyl seizures at the northern border dwarfed by the amount intercepted at the southwest border.

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency identifies China as the beginning of the illicit fentanyl supply chain that moves through clandestine labs in Mexico and then into the United States.

Trump's Feb. 1, 2025 executive order conceded that Border Patrol agents seized "much less fentanyl from Canada than from Mexico last year," but claimed the amount seized at the northern border in 2024 was still enough to kill 9.5 million people.

The synthetic opioid "is so potent that even a very small parcel of the drug can cause many deaths and destruction to America(n) families," according to the executive order.

Senate action so far

A handful of Republican senators have also rebuked at least one category of Trump's emergency tariffs. In late October, Sens. Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul of Kentucky, along with Alaska's Lisa Murkowski, Maine's Susan Collins and Thom Tillis of North Carolina, supported a joint resolution in a 52-48 vote to terminate Trump's 50% tariffs on Brazilian products, including coffee.

The president declared a national emergency and imposed the steep tariff on Brazilian goods on July 30 after accusing Brazil's government of "politically persecuting" its former far-right President Jair Bolsonaro for plotting a coup to remain in power in 2022.

The Senate vote marked a shift from two earlier efforts in April to stymie Trump's tariffs, including a measure to terminate the president's levies on Canadian imports.

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

Shutdown looms for FEMA, Coast Guard, TSA with stalemate over Homeland Security funds

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — Leaders from several agencies within the Department of Homeland Security testified before a U.S. House panel Wednesday about how a shutdown would affect the programs they oversee,

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though Democrats argued the hearing was a "show" that wasn't going to get lawmakers any closer to agreement on constraints to federal immigration enforcement.

Congress has until Friday at midnight to pass a stopgap spending bill or reach bipartisan agreement on the department's full-year funding bill, which was held up by Democrats after the killing of two U.S. citizens by immigration agents in Minneapolis. Otherwise, the department will begin a shutdown.

House Appropriations Committee ranking member Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., said it was unacceptable that neither Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem nor any leaders from Immigration and Customs Enforcement or Customs and Border Protection were at the hearing.

"Democrats requested that they be present. Why are they not here?" DeLauro said. "That should tell you everything you need to know about what this hearing is really all about. It is not to address the real concerns of millions of Americans over the unchecked brutality of officers within those agencies, brutality that has left two Americans dead and countless others seriously injured."

DeLauro countered that Republicans held the hearing to imply Democrats don't care about consistent funding for the many agencies within DHS, including the Coast Guard, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Secret Service and Transportation Security Administration.

"In fact, it is the Republican leadership that has chosen to hold your agencies hostage to avoid implementing reforms that they know are necessary to keep our community safe from Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Customs and Border Patrol," DeLauro said.

Nevada Republican Rep. Mark Amodei, chairman of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, said he opted not to invite Noem because he wanted to "talk to the operational people" and that he decided not to invite leaders of ICE and CBP since they testified in front of a separate House committee Tuesday.

Amodei said enacting a DHS funding bill before the Friday midnight deadline seemed "like a very tall order." "A shutdown has gone from a distinct possibility to a probability," Amodei said. "But not all components will equally share the pain during a Homeland shutdown."

Amodei said that ICE and CBP's "missions will be largely unaffected by a shutdown," in part, because Republicans provided the two agencies with more than \$150 billion in the party's "big, beautiful" law.

Most Homeland Security workers will stay on duty

A government shutdown this time around, unlike the one last year, would only affect the Department of Homeland Security, since Congress has approved the other 11 annual government funding bills.

The other agencies housed within DHS would sustain varying ramifications. In general, any employees who focus on national security issues or the protection of life and property would continue to work through a shutdown, while federal workers who don't are supposed to be furloughed.

Neither category of employees will receive their paychecks during the funding lapse, though federal law requires they receive back pay once Congress approves some sort of spending bill.

Texas Rep. Henry Cuellar, the top Democrat on the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee, said the "reality is that nearly 90% of the department will continue operating, even if Congress fails to complete its work by the end of the week."

Leaders urged to give up recess next week

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Tom Cole, R-Okla., urged GOP leaders to cancel the recess scheduled for next week, when many lawmakers plan to travel to Germany for the Munich Security Conference.

Cole argued that members should stay on Capitol Hill to negotiate an agreement on Homeland Security funding if a deal isn't reached before the deadline.

"I will tell you personally, I think it's unconscionable if Congress leaves and does not solve the problem," Cole said. "I'm sure Munich is a great place. I've been there many times. The beer is outstanding. But we don't need to go to a defense conference someplace in Europe when we're not taking care of the defense of the United States of America."

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Cole said he "would be embarrassed to walk past a TSA agent that wasn't getting paid so I could go someplace else. And that's my personal opinion.

"That's not necessarily the opinion of my leadership or anybody else, but we should stay here and get this resolved. We should make sure that men and women that we have already put in a terrible position once for 43 days don't have to go through it again."

Missing paychecks for the Coast Guard

Admiral Thomas Allan, vice commandant for the U.S. Coast Guard, told lawmakers "a funding lapse has severe and lasting challenges for our workforce, operational readiness and long-term capabilities."

"A lapse lasting more than a few days will halt pay for the Coast Guard's 56,000 active duty, reserve and civilian personnel," Allan said. "This is not a distant administrative issue. The uncertainty of missing paychecks negatively impacts readiness and creates a significant financial hardship for service members and their families."

Shutdowns, he said, "cripple morale and directly harm our ability to recruit and retain the talented Americans we need to meet growing demands."

Ha Nguyen McNeill, acting administrator at the Transportation Security Administration, said during the 43-day government shutdown that ended in November, she heard stories about "officers sleeping in their cars at airports to save money on gas, selling their blood and plasma and taking on second jobs to make ends meet."

"Many were subject to late fees from missed bill payments, eviction notices, loss of child care and more. All the while, expected to serve their country and perform at the highest level when in uniform," McNeill said. "Twelve weeks later, some are just recovering from the financial impact."

McNeill testified that "TSA's critical national security mission does not stop during a shutdown; around 95% or 61,000 of TSA's employees are deemed essential and continue to work to protect the traveling public during a shutdown, while not getting paid."

Matthew Quinn, deputy director at the United States Secret Service, said agents will continue to report to work though he emphasized a shutdown would still have consequences.

"To the casual observer, there will be no visible difference," Quinn said. "However, gaps in funding have a profound impact on our agency today and into the future."

Gregg Phillips, associate administrator in the Office of Response and Recovery at FEMA, said a shutdown "would severely disrupt FEMA's ability to reimburse states for disaster relief costs and to support our recovery from disasters."

Jennifer covers the nation's capital as a senior reporter for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include congressional policy, politics and legal challenges with a focus on health care, unemployment, housing and aid to families.

Transfer of Spearfish Canyon hydro plant and funding for fish hatchery earn governor's approval

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden signed bills Wednesday transferring an old hydroelectric plant in Spearfish Canyon to a nonprofit for potential conversion to an interpretive center, and appropriating millions for work at a fish hatchery in Waubay.

"South Dakota's outdoor beauty is part of what makes our state so great," Rhoden said in a statement. "I am committed to making sure our kids and grandkids can enjoy our great outdoors to the fullest for generations to come."

The Legislature approved both bills earlier this month.

More legislative news

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One would transfer ownership of the 1917 Homestake Mine Hydro Electric Plant No. 2 building from the state Department of Game, Fish and Parks to the Spearfish Canyon Foundation at no cost. The building is near the entrance to the popular Devil's Bathtub hiking trail. Supporters in the Legislature said the site could help visitors learn about the area's mining and hydropower history. The legislation will become law on July 1.

One would transfer ownership of the 1917 Homestake Mine Hydro Electric Plant No. 2 building from the state Department of Game, Fish, and Parks to the Spearfish Canyon Foundation at no cost. The building is near the entrance to the popular Devil's Bathtub hiking trail.

Supporters in the Legislature said the site will help visitors learn about the area's mining and hydropower history. The legislation will become law on July 1.

The other bill authorizes the department to spend \$8 million on construction and renovation work at the Blue Dog State Fish Hatchery. Federal funds from a tax on fishing gear and boat fuel will provide \$3.5 million, and \$4.5 million will come from a combination of state fishing license revenue and private donations.

The bill includes an emergency clause, meaning it takes effect immediately.

The hatchery project is the first affected by a law adopted last year requiring legislative approval for any Game, Fish and Parks projects exceeding \$2.5 million. The law came in response to former Gov. Kristi Noem's approval of a mix of state and donor funding to build a state-owned shooting range near Rapid City, after lawmakers rejected funding requests for the project.

The Blue Dog State Fish Hatchery is the state's top walleye producer, according to department spokesperson Nick Harrington. About 60 million fish raised at the hatchery are stocked in South Dakota lakes and other waterways each year.

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.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

We still need **14 MORE**
DONORS NEEDED

Friday, February 13

9:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Groton Community Center

Your donation can help save lives right here in our community.

Make an appointment:

www.donors.vitalant.org

Search blood drive code: **groton**

Hope to see you there! 😊

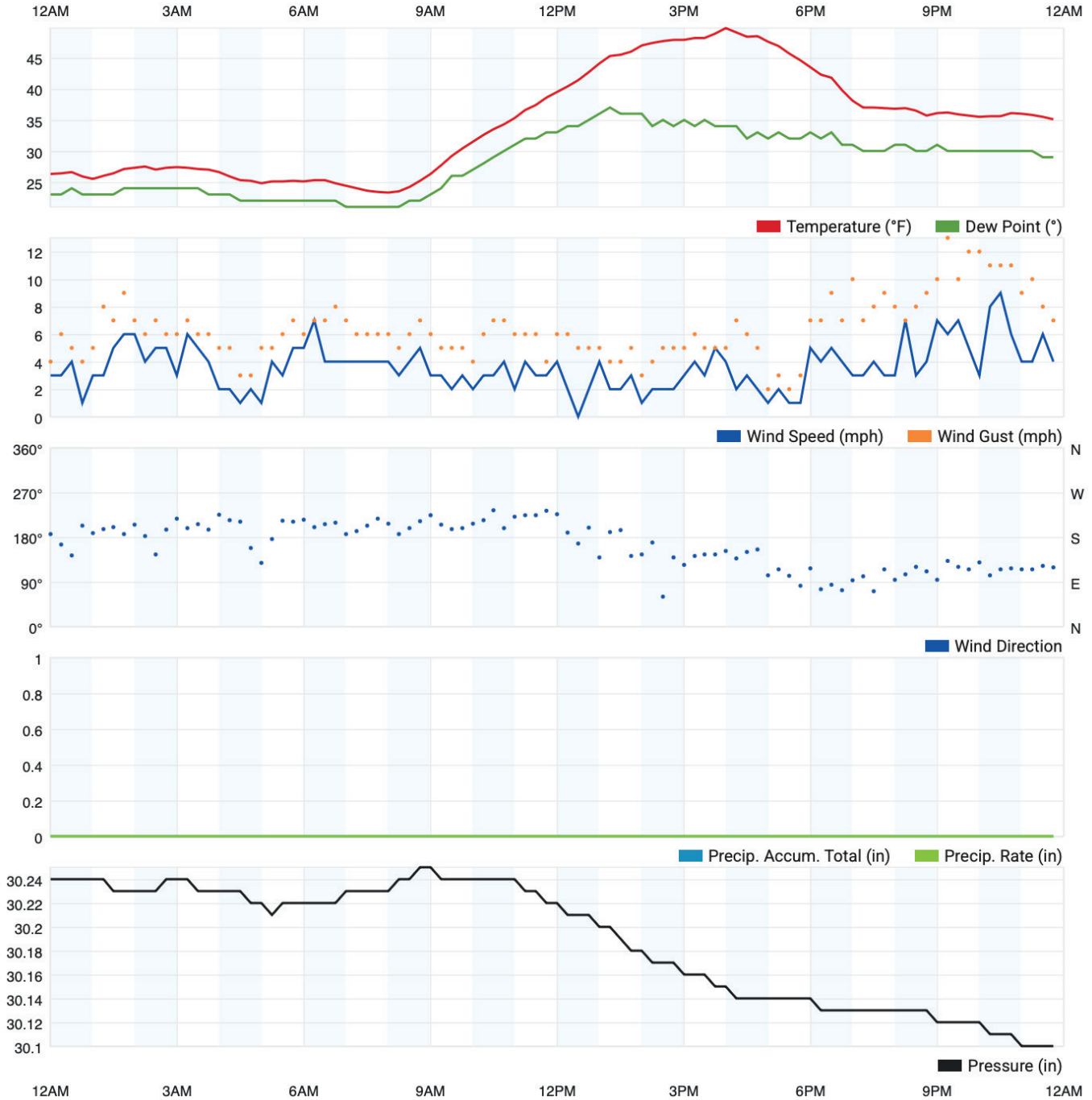


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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

February 11, 2026



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Today



High: 49 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 26 °F

Mostly Clear
then Patchy
Fog

Friday



High: 52 °F

Sunny

Friday Night



Low: 27 °F

Mostly Clear

Saturday



High: 52 °F

Mostly Sunny

Today



High Temperatures:
40s & 50s most areas

Outlook

Friday

Saturday



45-55°

45-55°

Wind: S-SW 5-15
mph

Wind: W-NW
10-15 mph

weather.gov/abr

February 12, 2026 4:14 AM

NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



Another day of 40s and 50s across the region as a mild air mass remains over the Northern Plains. Winds will remain rather light. Mild and much above normal temperatures will continue through the weekend as well!

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Valentine's Day Forecast

Climate Site	Forecast High Temperature (°F)	Normal High Temperature (°F)	Record High Temperature (°F)
<i>Aberdeen</i>	52	28	57 (1934)
<i>Pierre</i>	54	33	72 (1954)
<i>Mobridge</i>	52	31	66 (1954)
<i>Watertown</i>	52	25	58 (1999)
<i>Sisseton</i>	51	27	54 (1999)

Saturday is shaping up to be much above normal in regards to temperatures, with many areas rising into the 50s for highs. Aberdeen and Sisseton may come fairly close to record high temperatures!

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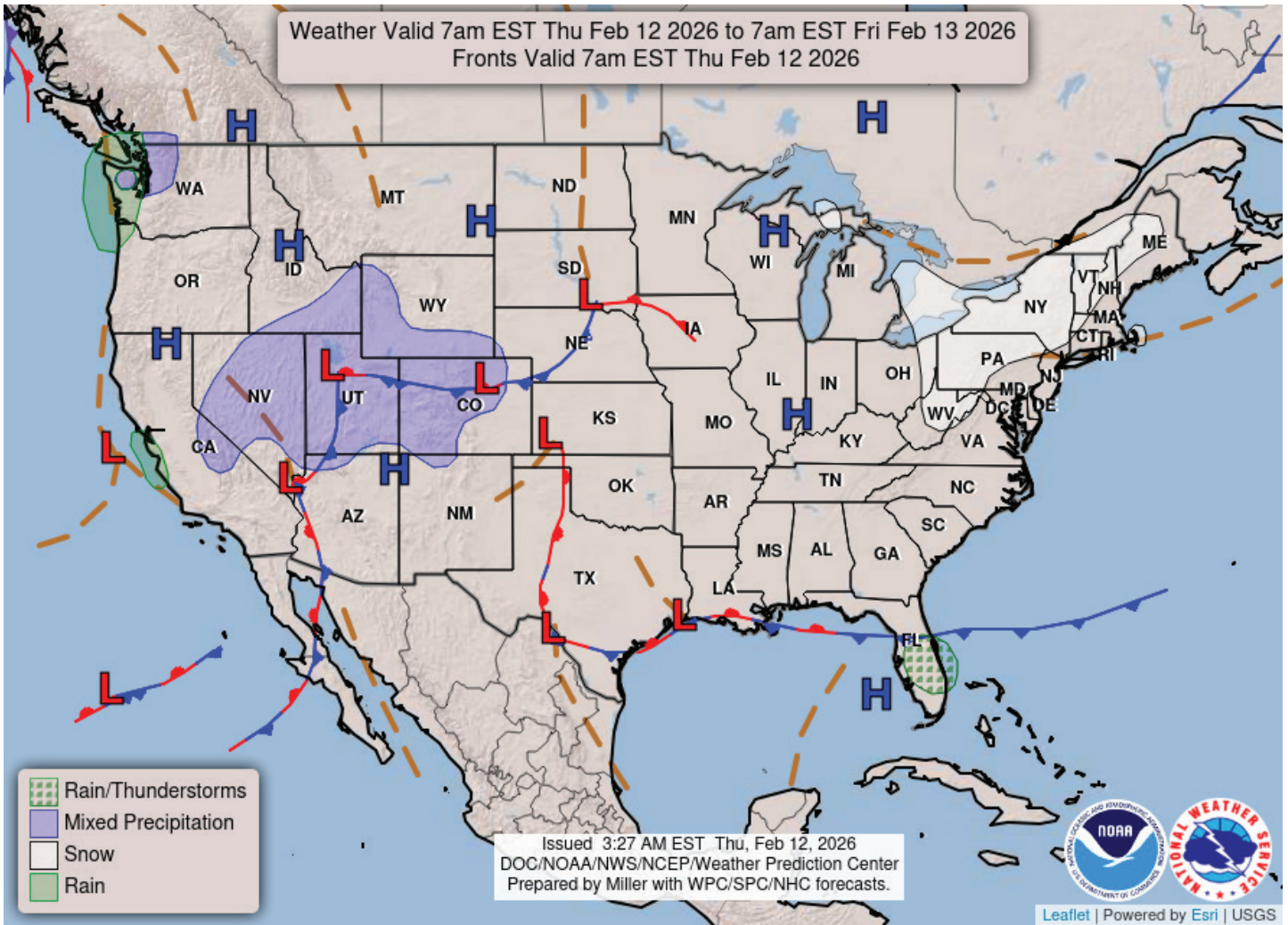
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 50 °F at 4:02 PM
Low Temp: 23 °F at 7:58 AM
Wind: 13 mph at 10:50 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 62 in 1921
Record Low: -36 in 1905
Average High: 28
Average Low: 5
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.24
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.79
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:54 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:37 am



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Today in Weather History

February 12, 1905: On this date in weather history, record low temperatures occurred across northeast South Dakota and west-central Minnesota, with lows in the 30s below zero. Sisseton, Aberdeen, and Watertown all had record lows. Sisseton fell to 31 degrees below zero, Watertown saw 35 degrees below zero, and Aberdeen dropped to 36 degrees below zero in 1905. In central South Dakota, Kennebec fell to 34 degrees below zero.

1784: Ice floes were spotted in the Gulf of America after passing out the Mississippi River in February 1784. Ice blocked the river in New Orleans, Louisiana. The ice in New Orleans is one of two times that this occurred during the Great Arctic Outbreak of 1899. The eruption of Laki in Iceland from June 8, 1783, through February 7, 1784, is the likely cause for the severe winter of 1783 - 1784.

1899: The bitter cold outbreak of February 1899 continued across the southern Plains, Texas, and the Deep South. The mercury dipped to 8 degrees below zero at Fort Worth, Texas, and 22 degrees below zero at Kansas City, Missouri. Nebraska's temperature at Camp Clarke plunged to 47 degrees below zero to establish a state record. The all-time record low for Oklahoma City was set when the temperature fell to a frigid 17 degrees below zero, breaking the previous record low of 12 below zero, set on the previous day. Washington D.C. hit 15 degrees below zero, while Charleston, SC, received a record four inches of snow. Snow was also reported in Fort Myers, Tampa, and Tallahassee in Florida.

1958: Snow blanketed northern Florida, with Tallahassee reporting a record 2.8 inches. A ship in the Gulf of America, 25 miles south of Fort Morgan, Alabama, reported zero visibility in heavy snow on the afternoon of the 12th.

1960 — A snowstorm in the Deep South produced more than a foot of snow in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. (David Ludlum)

1987 — A storm in the eastern U.S. produced high winds from North Carolina to Maine. A storm in the western U.S. produced up to thirty inches of snow in the Sierra Nevada Range of California. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — A classic "nor'easter" formed off the Carolina coast and intensified as it moved up the Atlantic coast bringing heavy snow to the northeastern U.S. Totals ranged up to 26 inches at Camden NY and Chester MA. Arctic cold gripped the north central U.S. Duluth MN was the cold spot in the nation with a low of 32 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Unseasonably mild weather prevailed across Alaska. Morning lows of 29 degrees at Anchorage and 31 degrees at Fairbanks were actually warmer than those in northern Florida. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 — Strong southerly winds ahead of an arctic cold front pushed temperatures into the 70s as far north as Iowa and Nebraska. Twenty-one cities in the central U.S., seven in Iowa, reported record high temperatures for the date. Lincoln NE reported a record high of 73 degrees, and the afternoon high of 59 degrees at Minneapolis MN smashed their previous record for the date by twelve degrees. Springfield IL reported a record forty-eight consecutive days with above normal temperatures. (The National Weather Summary)

2006 — An intense snow squall off of Lake Michigan cuts visibility to zero along a section of US 31. The resulting whiteout causes 96 cars to pile up. 25 were injured.

2017: There was an imminent failure of the auxiliary spillway on the Oroville Dam in California.

Doing God's Work God's Way

Every part of the believer's life should be characterized by steady reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah 4:1-7: 1 Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep.

2 He said to me, "What do you see?" And I said, "I see, and behold, a lampstand all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it;

3 also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side."

4 Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, "What are these, my lord?"

5 So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, "Do you not know what these are?" And I said, "No, my lord."

6 Then he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts.

7 'What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of 'Grace, grace to it!'"

It's easy to think that life should be divided into two separate parts: the secular, which seems separate from the Lord, and the spiritual. But we are God's children, so every aspect of life is to be an expression of that divine relationship.

Our culture wants us to believe that we can accomplish much without God. People will point out our human strengths, like education or skills and assure us that we have all that is necessary for success. The implication is that we don't need God. And Satan relies on this tactic because he always wants to turn us away from reliance upon the Lord.

The Bible tells us something different. To do God's work God's way means we must rely on His Spirit instead of depending on ourselves. When we're leaning on the Spirit's strength and wisdom, we will ...

Be fully persuaded we'll fail without God's active presence.

Seek to please God alone and not compromise.

Look expectantly for the Holy Spirit to work.

Spend more time thanking and praising Him.

Exhibit joy, a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

The lives of God's children are to be characterized by steady reliance upon the Holy Spirit, a bond that changes everything.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.10.26

5 25 30 36 68 6

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$385,000,000

NEXT 1 Days 17 Hrs 27

DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.11.26

2 14 28 41 51 2

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$15,450,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 42

DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.11.26

2 12 18 31 40 12

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 16 Hrs 57 Mins 48

DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.11.26

3 6 8 17 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$274,000

NEXT 2 Days 16 Hrs 57

DRAW: Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.11.26

5 6 19 27 57 23

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 26

DRAW: Mins 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

02.11.26

6 20 33 40 48 5

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$146,000,000

NEXT 2 Days 17 Hrs 26

DRAW: Mins 49 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Flandreau Indian 87, Santee, Neb. 33

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Santee, Neb. 72, Flandreau Indian 29

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

Uelmen scores 24, North Dakota takes down South Dakota 72-71

By The Associated Press undefined

VERMILLION, S.D. (AP) — Greyson Uelmen's 24 points helped North Dakota defeat South Dakota 72-71 on Wednesday.

Uelmen shot 9 of 18 from the field and went 5 of 6 from the line for the Fightin' Hawks (15-13, 9-3 Summit League). Reggie Thomas scored 10 points and added three steals.

Cameron Fens finished with 22 points, 12 rebounds and two blocks for the Coyotes (14-13, 6-6). South Dakota got 17 points and two blocks from Vince Buzelis. Jordan Crawford had 12 points and five assists.

EU leaders meet to counter pressure from Russia, China and Trump

By SAM McNEIL Associated Press

BILZEN-HOESELT, Belgium (AP) — Leaders from across the European Union are meeting Thursday in a Belgian castle as the 27-nation bloc faces antagonism from U.S. President Donald Trump, strong-arm economic tactics from China and hybrid threats from Russia — challenges that have prompted a rethink of Europe's approach to diplomacy and trade.

"We all know we must change course, and we all know the direction," Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever told a meeting of some European leaders on Wednesday. "Yet it sometimes feels like we're standing on the bridge of the ship staring at the horizon without being able to touch the helm."

There are competing visions of how the EU should navigate these troubled times. Thursday's meeting is to shape proposals for another summit in late March.

Before crossing a drawbridge to the 16th-century Alden Biesen castle, leaders told reporters they were focused on competitiveness and economic security.

"We need to continue our very proactive trade policy and protect our companies from unfair competition, from economic coercion," said European Council President António Costa just before the meeting started. He highlighted energy costs and cutting bureaucratic barriers to trade.

There are clear fault lines in the battle for Europe's future

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni lead a wing of the bloc calling for deregulation, rebooting Europe's relationship with Washington and forging trade deals like the recent one struck with the Mercosur nations of South America.

"We must deregulate every sector," Merz said Wednesday.

But they are at odds with France.

One key issue is how much of the EU's defense spending should be restricted to buying from EU arms companies. French President Emmanuel Macron argues that EU countries should buy exclusively from European producers, while Merz and Meloni say purchases should be from both foreign and European firms.

Macron has urged the EU to protect its industries overall via applying "European preference" in key sectors like cleantech, chemicals, steel, the car industry and defense.

"We need to protect our industry. The Chinese do it, the Americans do it too," Macron said in an interview with several newspapers including Le Monde and The Financial Times published Tuesday.

Without some European preference on strategic sectors, "Europeans will be swept aside. This is defensive, but it is essential, because we are facing unfair competitors who no longer respect the rules of the World Trade Organization," Macron said.

Facing the financial challenges of the US and China

EU leaders will also debate new financial instruments to protect the bloc in a global trading system rocked by Trump's blitzkrieg of tariffs and China's restricting of critical mineral exports.

Macron is renewing his call for the EU to be able to borrow money, which he described as "Eurobonds for the future" that would provide an opportunity "to challenge the hegemony of the dollar."

Merz and Meloni are following an economic stimulus strategy called for by Mario Draghi, former head of the European Central Bank. The plan includes cutting regulations, making infrastructure investments and establishing trade ties with more countries. Draghi will address leaders assembled in the castle.

"We have way too many barriers that prevent money and capital from moving from one country to another, way too many obstacles to simplification," said Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament. "No more words, but more action."

Germany and Italy are expected to call on leaders to act by cutting EU red tape, strengthening the single market and "ensuring an ambitious trade policy based on shared rules and a level playing field."

That echoes the economic security focus of European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who like Merz and Metsola is a leading figure in the European People's Party, which is the largest bloc in the European Parliament and claims 13 heads of EU states as members.

"Our power on the global stage depends greatly on our strength on the economic front," she said in a speech Wednesday.

Citizens across the bloc are hungry for a stronger EU and a more unified, stronger and ambitious leadership amid military threats, economic pressures and climate instability, according to an official EU poll, Eurobarometer.

"There has never been a better time for European leaders, national political leaders, to actually leverage on these European citizens' demand for greater European action," said Alberto Alemanno, a professor of EU law at the HEC Paris business school.

Russia fires another barrage at Ukrainian cities as next round of US-brokered talks is unclear

By SUSIE BLANN and ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russia launched a barrage of ballistic missiles and drones at Ukrainian cities in overnight attacks, officials reported on Thursday as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Moscow was "hesitating" about another round of U.S.-brokered talks on stopping the fighting.

Washington has proposed further negotiations next week between Russian and Ukrainian delegations in Miami or Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates, which was the location of the last meeting, Zelenskyy said late Wednesday.

Ukraine "immediately confirmed" it would attend, he said. "So far, as I understand it, Russia is hesitating," Zelenskyy told reporters in a messaging app interview late Wednesday.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Thursday that another round of talks was expected "soon" but gave no further details.

American officials made no comment on the possibility of further talks as part of a yearlong peace effort by the Trump administration. Zelenskyy said last week that the United States has given Ukraine and Russia a June deadline to reach a deal.

But with Russia's invasion of its neighbor marking its fourth anniversary later this month, disagreements between Moscow and Kyiv over key issues have held up a comprehensive settlement. The issues include who keeps the Ukrainian land that Russia's army has so far occupied, especially in the eastern Donbas industrial heartland, and Moscow's demands for Kyiv to surrender more territory.

Ukraine wants Western-backed security guarantees, including a date for joining the European Union,

and a postwar reconstruction package in place before it can contemplate signing a proposed 20-point settlement, Zelenskyy said.

Russia has meanwhile continued to pound Ukrainian civilian areas, including residential areas and the power grid, and Moscow has not responded to a U.S. proposal for an "energy ceasefire" that would also halt Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian oil facilities, Zelenskyy said.

Overnight from Wednesday to Thursday, Russia fired 219 long-range strike drones, 24 ballistic missiles and a guided aircraft missile at Ukraine, according to the Ukrainian air force.

The main targets were the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, the second-largest city of Kharkiv, Dnipro in central Ukraine, and the southern port city of Odesa, the air force said — all cities that have come under relentless bombardment.

In Dnipro, Russian strikes injured four people, including a 4-year-old girl and a newborn boy, regional head Oleksandr Hanzha wrote on Telegram.

In Kyiv, several residential buildings were damaged, and two people were injured, according to the city administration.

Temperatures have moved above freezing point in Kyiv, but it is still bitterly cold in the city. Mayor Vitalii Klitschko said that almost 2,600 residential buildings were left without heating as the attack damaged critical infrastructure.

In Odesa, one person was injured as a residential high-rise was partially destroyed and a market and a supermarket caught fire, regional head Oleksandr Hanzha wrote on Telegram.

Indian unions and farmers stage a nationwide strike over interim trade deal with US

By RAJESH ROY Associated Press

NEW DELHI (AP) — A coalition of major trade unions and farmers' groups in India mounted a nationwide strike Thursday to protest an interim trade deal with the United States, saying the agreement undermines the interests of farmers, small businesses and workers.

In Parliament, lawmakers from opposition political parties demanded that the government scrap the trade deal and criticized Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the slogan "Narendra Modi, surrender Modi."

The one-day strike partially disrupted public services and manufacturing activities, highlighting resistance to the reform agenda set by Modi, leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, and underscoring the political risks of pushing market-oriented policies ahead of key state elections later this year.

A union leader said the trade deal with Washington opens the Indian market to subsidized agricultural products, threatening the livelihoods of millions of small farmers.

"Cheap American farm produce will be dumped in India, making it difficult for our farmers and small businesses to compete," said Amarjeet Kaur, general secretary of All India Trade Union Congress, a prominent union that took part in the strike.

The government in New Delhi has defended the interim trade pact as a step toward expanding exports, attracting investments and strengthening strategic ties with the U.S. The interests of farmers in the agriculture and dairy sectors were protected, Indian Trade Minister Piyush Goyal said recently.

India and the U.S. this month announced they were moving closer to a formal trade pact, releasing an interim framework that would lower tariffs and deepen economic ties.

A fact sheet issued by the White House shows reciprocal tariff on Indian goods decreasing from 25% to 18%, while an additional 25% penalty tariff for India's purchase of Russian oil will be dropped.

In return, India will stop buying Russian oil and purchase \$500 billion worth of U.S. goods, including energy, while cutting taxes and non-tariff barriers.

The protesters in India also opposed Modi's efforts to privatize state-run companies and implement new labor codes, calling the sweeping changes "deceptive fraud" against workers.

Indian officials have argued that labor reforms were needed to boost efficiency and create jobs in the long run.

Spy agency says Kim Jong Un's daughter is close to being designated North Korea's future leader

By KIM TONG-HYUNG Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers on Thursday that it believes the teenage daughter of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is close to being designated as the country's future leader as he moves to extend the family dynasty to a fourth generation.

The assessment by the National Intelligence Service comes as North Korea is preparing to hold its biggest political conference later this month, where Kim is expected to outline his major policy goals for the next five years and take steps to tighten his authoritarian grip.

In a closed-door briefing, NIS officials said they are closely monitoring whether Kim's daughter — believed to be named Kim Ju Ae and around 13 years old — appears with him before thousands of delegates at the upcoming Workers' Party Congress, said lawmaker Lee Seong Kweun, who attended the meeting.

First appearing in public at a long-range missile test in November 2022, Kim Ju Ae has since accompanied her father to an increasing number of events, including weapons tests, military parades and factory openings. She traveled with him to Beijing last September for Kim's first summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in six years on the sidelines of a World War II event.

Speculation about her political future intensified last month when she joined her parents on a New Year's Day visit to Pyongyang's Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, a sacred family mausoleum displaying the embalmed bodies of her late grandfather and great-grandfather, the country's first- and second-generation leaders. Some experts saw the visit as the clearest sign yet that she's positioned to be the heir to her 42-year-old father.

South Korean officials initially expressed doubt that she could be chosen as a North Korean leader, citing the country's deeply conservative culture and tradition of male-dominated leadership. But her increasingly prominent appearances in state media have prompted a reassessment.

In its previous assessment of Kim Ju Ae's status in September, the NIS told lawmakers that Kim Jong Un's decision to bring her along on his trip to China was likely part of an effort to build a "narrative" possibly paving the way for her succession.

"In the past, (NIS) described Kim Ju Ae as being in the midst of 'successor training.' What was notable today is that they used the term 'successor-designate stage,' a shift that's quite significant," Lee said.

According to Lee, the agency cited her growing presence at high-profile military events, her inclusion in the family visit to Kumsusan, and signs that Kim Jong Un was beginning to seek her input on certain policy matters.

Not much is known about Kim's daughter

Despite her increased visibility in propaganda, North Korean state media have never published the name of Kim Jong Un's daughter, only referring to her as his "respected" or "most beloved" child.

The belief that she is named Kim Ju Ae is based on an account by former NBA star Dennis Rodman, in which he recalled holding Kim Jong Un's baby daughter during a trip to Pyongyang in 2013. South Korean intelligence officials believe she was born sometime that year.

In 2023, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers that Kim Jong Un and his wife also likely have an older son and a younger third child whose gender is unknown.

Since its foundation in 1948, North Korea has been ruled by male members of the Kim family, beginning with the country's founder Kim Il Sung and followed by his son, Kim Jong Il.

Kim Jong Un was just 26 when he was officially named heir during a 2010 party conference, two years after Kim Jong Il suffered a debilitating stroke. Following his father's death in December 2011, he was abruptly thrust into the throne with relatively little preparation.

Some analysts suggest that Kim Jong Un's decision to debut his daughter early possibly reflects his own experience of being rushed into power.

Party congress may offer hints toward succession plans

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Kim Ju Ae's first known visit to Kumsusan last month was also her father's first visit to the site in three years. Given the palace's status as a key symbol of the Kim family rule, the trip should be seen as a symbolic gesture by Kim Jong Un to present his daughter as his heir before his grandfather and father as he prepares for the major ruling party congress, said Cheong Seong-Chang, a senior analyst at South Korea's Sejong Institute.

The Workers' Party congress in late February, last held in 2016 and 2021, could provide a stage for Kim Jong Un to formalize his succession plans, possibly by giving his daughter the party's first secretary post, its No. 2 job, although such a decision might not be immediately disclosed to the outside world, Cheong said.

Other analysts question whether she would receive such a high-profile post or any formal party role, given that party rules require members to be at least 18.

If Kim Jong Un does use the party congress to cement his daughter as successor, the signs would be more subtle, said Koh Yu-hwan, former president of South Korea's Institute of National Unification.

For example, the party may issue self-praise about how North Korea has survived longer than most other Communist states and credit that to how the country established a "successful inheritance of the revolution," he said.

"If you see comments like that, it would be reasonable to think that Ju Ae has been cemented," as heir, Koh said.

World shares mostly gain after Wall Street wobbled over strong jobs report

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — World shares were mostly higher Thursday and benchmarks in Japan and South Korea reached new records after Wall Street wobbled following a better-than-expected U.S. job report.

U.S. futures edged higher. The future for the S&P 500 rose 0.3%, while that for the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 0.4%.

In Europe, Britain's FTSE gained 0.3% to 10,502.20 in early trading. Germany's DAX was up 1.3% to 25,169.49, while the CAC 40 in Paris gained 1% to 8,398.82.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 surpassed the 58,000 mark early in the session as trading resumed after a holiday. However, it gave up those gains, edging just 10 points lower to 57,639.84.

Japanese shares have rallied following Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's landslide victory in a parliamentary election on Sunday, as investors expect more policies to help spur economic growth.

South Korea's Kospi breached the 5,500 mark for the first time, driven by gains for technology-related stocks. It was up 3.1% at 5,522.27.

Samsung Electronics, South Korea's biggest listed company, rose 6.4%. Chipmaker SK Hynix added 3.3%.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.9% to 27,032.54. The Shanghai Composite index edged less than 0.1% higher to 4,134.02.

In Australia, the S&P/ASX 200 picked up 0.3% to 9,043.50.

On Wednesday, the S&P 500 was flat after initially moving toward an all-time high, closing 0.34 points lower, at 6,941.47. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.1% to 50,121.40. The Nasdaq composite dropped 0.2% to 23,066.47.

A U.S. Labor Department report said U.S. employers added 130,000 jobs to their payrolls in January, way more than economists had forecast.

The blockbuster U.S. non-farm payrolls report "strengthens the case for higher U.S. Treasury yields and a rebound in the dollar over the coming months," Jonas Goltermann, deputy chief markets economist at Capital Economics wrote in a note.

The latest job report reflects that the U.S. labor market is stabilizing, he said, so the chance of another Fed rate cut over the next few months is "quite low."

In the U.S. stock market, Robinhood Markets, the trading and investment app, lost 8.8% as investors

focused on a slowdown in crypto trading that has weighed on the company. Bitcoin's price in recent days has fallen to roughly half of its record high set in October.

Moderna fell 3.5%, after the U.S. Food and Drug Administration refused to review its application for a new flu vaccine. Kraft Heinz was up 0.4%, as the company said it was pausing plans to split into two businesses.

Shares of companies in the raw-material and energy sectors saw some of the bigger gains. Exxon Mobil rose 2.6%, while Smurfit Westrock surged 9.9%.

In other dealings Thursday, U.S. benchmark crude oil lost 15 cents to \$64.48 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, fell 16 cents to \$69.24 per barrel.

Gold and silver prices fell on Thursday. The price of gold was down 0.1% to \$5,093.60 per ounce, and the price of silver fell 0.5% to about \$83.50 an ounce.

The U.S. dollar fell to 152.84 Japanese yen from 153.27 yen. The euro rose to \$1.1888 from \$1.1873.

China issues new rules to curb auto price war after January passenger car sales drop 20%

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — China moved Thursday to curb a fierce price war among automakers that has caused massive losses for the industry, after passenger car sales dropped nearly 20% in January from the year before, the fastest pace in almost two years.

The State Administration for Market Regulation released guidelines for manufacturers, dealers and parts suppliers aimed at preventing a race-to-the-bottom price war.

They forbid automakers from setting prices below the cost of production to "squeeze out competitors or monopolize the market." Violators may face "significant legal risks," the regulator warned.

The rules also target deceptive pricing strategies and price fixing between parts suppliers and auto manufacturers.

Passenger car sales in China fell 19.5% in January from a year earlier, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers. That was the biggest percentage drop since February 2024.

The 1.4 million passenger cars sold in January compared with 2.2 million units sold in December, CAAM said.

Weakening demand reflects a reluctance of cash-strapped buyers to splash out on big purchases. Sales also have suffered from a cut in tax exemptions for EV purchases, coupled with uncertainties over whether trade-in subsidies for EV purchases will continue after some regions phased them out, auto analysts said.

The aggressive price war in China's auto sector has caused an estimated loss of 471 billion yuan (\$68 billion) in output value across the whole industry in the past three years, Li Yanwei, a member of the China Automobile Dealers Association, wrote recently.

Analysts expect domestic demand to dip this year. S&P has forecast sales of light vehicles, including passenger cars, in China will fall up to 3% in 2026.

However, Chinese automakers are gaining ground in global markets. China's exports of passenger cars jumped 49% year-on-year to 589,000 in January.

"We don't foresee a loss in momentum for the Chinese auto industry this year," said Claire Yuan, director of corporate ratings for China autos at S&P Global Ratings.

Chinese automakers like BYD — which overtook Tesla as the world's top electric vehicle maker — are targeting markets in Europe and Latin America as they confront intense competition in both prices and lineups at home due to oversupply.

Analysts at Citi expect China's car exports could jump 19% this year driven by exports of electric vehicles and plug-in hybrids.

Last month, Canada agreed to cut its hefty 100% tariff on China-made EV imports in a move welcomed by Chinese carmakers. China also recently reached a deal with the European Union that could allow more of its EVs to enter the European market.

BYD, China's largest carmaker, targets around 1.3 million of overseas car sales in 2026, up from the 1.05 million last year. Other major Chinese automakers have also set ambitious sales targets with a focus on exports.

Japan's technology investor SoftBank Group sees profitability return on AI boom

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese technology and telecoms giant SoftBank Group Corp. swung back into profitability in the last quarter of 2025 as its investments in OpenAI and other ventures paid off, the company said Thursday.

SoftBank Group reported a 248.6 billion yen (\$1.62 billion) profit for the October-December period, a reversal from 369 billion yen in losses racked up in the same quarter a year earlier.

Quarterly sales rose 8% to 1.98 trillion yen (\$12.9 billion).

Tokyo-based SoftBank Group sold its stake in Nvidia for \$5.8 billion in October, in line with its focus on artificial intelligence.

It has invested nearly \$35 billion in OpenAI, the developer of the artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT, for an ownership interest of about 11%, which has brought investments gains, the company said.

Among other investments, last year SoftBank Group acquired Ampere, a U.S.-based semiconductor design company, for \$6.5 billion, after which it became a wholly owned U.S. subsidiary.

Another interest is robotics. SoftBank Group reached an agreement with ABB last year to acquire its robotics business for \$5.375 billion. The deal still needs regulatory approval, including in Europe, China and the U.S.

For the nine months through December, SoftBank Group posted a 3.17 trillion yen (\$20.7 billion) profit, about five times what it recorded in the previous year. Nine-month sales edged up nearly 8% to 5.7 trillion yen (\$37 billion).

SoftBank generally does not release annual profit forecasts.

"Our investments are beginning to pay off," SoftBank Group's chief financial officer, Yoshimitsu Goto, told reporters.

He stressed the gains were coming not just from OpenAI but from a variety of investments, including in Arm, an AI semiconductor company.

SoftBank's financial performance tends to be erratic because it is an aggressive investor in innovative, often fledgling, technology.

Although its banking on OpenAI appears to have paid off so far, some analysts caution that counting too much on OpenAI could be risky.

SoftBank Group shares rose 2.4% on Thursday.

Bangladesh votes in its first election since the 2024 Gen Z uprising that ousted Hasina

By JULHAS ALAM, SHEIKH SAALIQ and SHONAL GANGULY Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — Voters cast ballots across Bangladesh on Thursday in a parliamentary election seen as a critical test of the country's democracy after years of political turmoil.

After a slow start, crowds came to polling stations in the capital, Dhaka, and elsewhere by midmorning. Balloting will continue through Thursday with results expected Friday.

More than 127 million people are eligible to vote in Bangladesh's first election since former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government collapsed in 2024 after weeks of mass protests, dubbed by many as a Gen Z uprising. Hasina fled the country and her party is banned from the polls. She is living in exile in India.

Tarique Rahman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party is a leading contender to form the next government. He is the son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and returned to Bangladesh in December after

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17 years in self-exile in London. Rahman has pledged to rebuild democratic institutions, restore the rule of law and revive the struggling economy.

Challenging the BNP is an 11-party alliance led by the Jamaat-e-Islami, the country's largest Islamist party, which was banned under Hasina but has gained prominence since her removal. The conservative religious group's growing influence has fueled concern, particularly among women and minority communities, that social freedoms could come under pressure if they come to power. Bangladesh is more than 90% Muslim, while around 8% are Hindu.

Shafiqur Rahman, chief of Jamaat-e-Islami, expressed optimism after casting his vote in a polling station. "It (the election) is a turning point," he told The Associated Press. "People demand change. They desire change. We also desire the change."

Voters are choosing new lawmakers

The vote is taking place under an interim government headed by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, which has said it is committed to delivering a credible and transparent election. As part of that effort, around 500 international observers and foreign journalists will be present, including delegations from the European Union and the Commonwealth, to which Bangladesh belongs.

Bangladesh's Parliament has 350 seats, including 300 elected directly from single-member constituencies and 50 reserved for women. Lawmakers are chosen by plurality and the parliament serves a five-year term. The Election Commission recently postponed voting in one constituency after a candidate died.

The election follows a turbulent period marked by mob violence, attacks on Hindu minorities and the press, the growing influence of Islamists and weakening of the rule of law.

It could reshape the domestic stability of Bangladesh, a country whose post-1971 history since gaining independence from Pakistan has been marked by entrenched political parties, military coups and allegations of vote rigging. Young voters, many of whom played a central role in the 2024 uprising, are expected to be influential. Some 5 million first-time voters are eligible.

"I think it is a very crucial election because this is the first time we can show our opinion with freedom," said 28-year-old voter Ikram ul Haque, adding that past elections were far from fair.

"We are celebrating the election. It is like a festival here," he said. "I hope Bangladesh will have exponential change."

A referendum would set up significant future changes

Thursday's election is a critical test not just of leadership but of trust in Bangladesh's democratic future. Voters can say "Yes" to endorse major reform proposals that stemmed from a national charter signed by major political parties last year.

If a majority of voters favor the referendum, the newly elected Parliament could form a constitutional reform council to make the changes with 180 working days from its first session. The proposals include the creation of new constitutional bodies and changing Parliament from a single body to a bicameral legislature with an upper house empowered to amend the constitution by majority vote.

The BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami both signed the document with some changes after initially expressing some dissent. Hasina's Awami League party, which is a major party, and some of its former allies were excluded from the discussion. The referendum has still been criticized for limiting the options put before voters.

Instagram chief says he does not believe people can get clinically addicted to social media

By KAITLYN HUAMANI and BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writers

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Adam Mosseri, the head of Meta's Instagram, testified Wednesday during a landmark social media trial in Los Angeles that he disagrees with the idea that people can be clinically addicted to social media platforms.

The question of addiction is a key pillar of the case, where plaintiffs seek to hold social media companies responsible for harms to children who use their platforms. Meta Platforms and Google's YouTube are the

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two remaining defendants in the case, which TikTok and Snap have settled.

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

Mosseri, who's headed Instagram since 2018 said it's important to differentiate between clinical addiction and what he called problematic use. The plaintiff's lawyer, however, presented quotes directly from Mosseri in a podcast interview a few years ago where he used the term addiction in relation to social media use, but he clarified that he was probably using the term "too casually," as people tend to do.

Mosseri said he was not claiming to be a medical expert when questioned about his qualifications to comment on the legitimacy of social media addiction, but said someone "very close" to him has experienced serious clinical addiction, which is why he said he was "being careful with my words."

He said he and his colleagues use the term "problematic use" to refer to "someone spending more time on Instagram than they feel good about, and that definitely happens."

It's "not good for the company, over the long run, to make decisions that profit for us but are poor for people's well-being," Mosseri said.

Mosseri and the plaintiff's lawyer, Mark Lanier, engaged in a lengthy back-and-forth about cosmetic filters on Instagram that changed people's appearance in a way that seemed to promote plastic surgery.

"We are trying to be as safe as possible but also censor as little as possible," Mosseri said.

In the courtroom, bereaved parents of children who have had social media struggles seemed visibly upset during a discussion around body dysmorphia and cosmetic filters. Meta shut down all third-party augmented reality filters in January 2025. The judge made an announcement to members of the public on Wednesday after the displays of emotion, reminding them not to make any indication of agreement or disagreement with testimony, saying that it would be "improper to indicate some position."

During cross examination, Mosseri and Meta lawyer Phyllis Jones tried to reframe the idea that Lanier was suggesting in his questioning that the company is looking to profit off of teens specifically.

Mosseri said Instagram makes "less money from teens than from any other demographic on the app," noting that teens don't tend to click on ads and many don't have disposable income that they spend on products from ads they receive. During his opportunity to question Mosseri for a second time, Lanier was quick to point to research that shows people who join social media platforms at a young age are more likely to stay on the platforms longer, which he said makes teen users prime for meaningful long-term profit.

"Often people try to frame things as you either prioritize safety or you prioritize revenue," Mosseri said. "It's really hard to imagine any instance where prioritizing safety isn't good for revenue."

Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg is expected to take the stand next week.

In recent years, Instagram has added a slew of features and tools it says have made the platform safer for young people. But this does not always work. A report last year, for instance, found that teen accounts researchers created were recommended age-inappropriate sexual content, including "graphic sexual descriptions, the use of cartoons to describe demeaning sexual acts, and brief displays of nudity."

In addition, Instagram also recommended a "range of self-harm, self-injury, and body image content" on teen accounts that the report says "would be reasonably likely to result in adverse impacts for young people, including teenagers experiencing poor mental health, or self-harm and suicidal ideation and behaviors." Meta called the report "misleading, dangerously speculative" and said it misrepresents its efforts on teen safety.

Meta is also facing a separate trial in New Mexico that began this week.

Israeli president ends a fraught Australia visit to comfort Jews as Gaza war protests follow

By ROD McGUIRK Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Israeli President Isaac Herzog was due to end a contentious four-day visit to Australia on Thursday that brought comfort to Sydney's Jewish community traumatized by a recent antisemitic mass shooting, but also attracted large-scale demonstrations protesting the civilian toll of the Gaza war.

Herzog has been dogged by protesters who label him a war criminal as he visited Sydney, the national capital Canberra and Melbourne in the first Australian visit by an Israeli head of state in six years.

"We came here to be with you, to look you in the eye, to embrace, to remember and weep together and we wept," Herzog told a Jewish community gathering in Melbourne on Thursday under tight police security hours before he was due to depart Australia.

"Indeed, we wept a great deal this week and still I must tell you that we return to Israel feeling empowered because we have seen firsthand the beauty and resilience of this community and its significance in the eyes of all Australians of goodwill," he added.

Herzog and the Australian government agree he was invited to support a community reeling from a Dec. 14 attack, allegedly inspired by the Islamic State group, on a Jewish festival at Bondi Beach that left 15 people dead.

Zionist Federation of Australia President Jeremy Leibler, who accompanied Herzog during his Australian travels, appealed to protesters to consider the grieving Jewish community.

"The community in Sydney is feeling extremely uplifted and seen following his visits," Leibler told Australian Broadcasting Corp.

"They (protesters) are entitled to their objection. I guess what I would ask is ... for the broader community to perhaps consider exercising just a little bit of regard as to the trauma that the Jewish community is experiencing following the attack on Bondi," Leibler said.

Herzog's critics take issue with another stated purpose of his visit. Herzog told The Associated Press in a statement last week his visit would "reinvigorate" bilateral relations and "dispel many of the lies and misinformation spread about Israel over the last two years."

"Now that means his visit is not a visit to mourn, but it's a visit that is political, that is in fact propaganda," Australian human rights lawyer Chris Sidoti told Seven Network television. "So his view seems to be different from the Australian government's view as to the purposes of his visit."

Sidoti was one of three experts appointed by the U.N.'s Human Rights Council to an inquiry that reported in September last year that Herzog, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant had incited the commission of genocide in Gaza.

Bilateral relations have been strained over the plight of Palestinian civilians since the Israel-Hamas war began in 2023, particularly since Australia decided to recognize a Palestinian state six months ago.

Herzog said on Thursday his discussions with Australian political leaders and "opinion shapers" this week had been "conducted with candor, open-mindedness and a great deal of mutual respect."

"I found serious partners who are willing to hold serious conversations and address the vile rhetoric, the misinformation, the shameful antisemitism head on," Herzog said.

Police said a planned visit on Thursday to the ruins of Melbourne's Adass Israel Synagogue, which was torched in late 2024, had been cancelled due to security concerns. Australia accused Iran of directing that arson attack and expelled Iranian Ambassador Ahmad Sadeghi in August.

Anti-Herzog graffiti left overnight at a Melbourne University campus was removed early Thursday.

"The university stands firmly against antisemitism. Racism, hatred and violence have no place in our society or our nation. We became aware of the offensive graffiti on the edge of our Parkville (suburban) campus this morning and immediately sent cleaners who swiftly removed it," a university statement said.

On his first day in Australia on Monday, Herzog laid a wreath at Bondi Beach. He also met survivors and bereaved families.

He addressed the media at the Australian Parliament House in Canberra on Wednesday, describing his visit as an opportunity to reset bilateral relations on a "new beginning and a better future."

Europe warily awaits Rubio at Munich Security Conference as Trump roils transatlantic ties

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Marco Rubio is leading a large U.S. delegation this week to the Munich Security Conference where increasingly nervous European leaders are hoping for at least a brief reprieve from President Donald Trump's often inconsistent policies and threats that have roiled transatlantic relations and the post-World War II international order.

A year after Vice President JD Vance stunned assembled dignitaries at the same venue with a verbal assault on many of America's closest allies in Europe, accusing them of imperiling Western civilization with left-leaning domestic programs and not taking responsibility for their own defense, Rubio plans to take a less contentious but philosophically similar approach when he addresses the annual gathering of world leaders and national security officials Saturday, U.S. officials say.

The State Department's formal announcement of Rubio's trip offered no details about his two-day stop in Munich, after which he will visit Slovakia and Hungary. But the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to preview the trip, said America's top diplomat intends to focus on areas of cooperation on shared global and regional concerns, including in the Middle East and Ukraine as well as China, an economic powerhouse seeking to take advantage of the uncertainty in U.S.-European ties.

Should that be the case, many in the audience may be relieved after being buffeted first by Vance's blunt rebukes last year and then a series of Trump statements and moves in the months since that have targeted virtually every country in Europe, Canada and long-standing allies in the Indo-Pacific.

Rubio has work to do to ease European concerns

Trump's recent comments about taking control of Greenland from NATO member Denmark and insults hurled at various leaders were particularly unnerving, leading many in Europe to question the value of the U.S. as an ally and partner.

That leaves Rubio with a heavy lift if he wants to calm the waters.

Vance's speech last year was "really a shock moment," said Claudia Major, a senior vice president at the German Marshall Fund in Berlin. "It was perceived as the first very clear statement of what the new Trump administration was about," namely that "Europeans are not partners any longer."

"There is a big doubt whether the basis (of trust) is still there and whether we still share the same vision for the trans-Atlantic relationship," she said. "The longer this kind of estrangement goes, the more difficult it will be to re-find a solid relationship."

Munich Security Conference chairman Wolfgang Ischinger offered a similar view.

"Transatlantic relations are currently in a significant crisis of confidence and credibility," he said this week. But he also expressed hope that Rubio and the dozens of U.S. lawmakers expected to attend the meeting will offer a less dire and dour prognosis for the future.

Some leaders take a middle line on Trump and some see a break

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, whom Rubio will meet Friday, has tried to adopt a middle line to deal with Trump's unpredictability and insistence on transactional relations.

He said Europe also needs to "learn the language of power politics" to assert itself, for example, by taking greater responsibility for its security, striving for greater "technological independence" and boosting its economic growth. But he stressed that "as democracies, we are partners and allies and not subordinates" of the U.S.

Some, like French President Emmanuel Macron and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, appear to have all but given up on Trump and the United States. Both Canada and France opened consulates in the Greenlandic capital, Nuuk, last week in a show of support for both Greenland and Denmark.

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Macron warned this week that tensions between Europe and the U.S. could intensify after the recent "Greenland moment." He described the Trump administration as "openly anti-European" and seeking the European Union's "dismemberment."

"When there's a clear act of aggression, I think what we should do isn't bow down or try to reach a settlement," he said in an interview with several European newspapers. "I think we've tried that strategy for months. It's not working."

Macron noted a "double crisis: We have the Chinese tsunami on the trade front, and we have minute-by-minute instability on the American side."

Carney — who drew applause from many for pushing back against Trump in a speech last month at the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland — has made no secret of his frustration and impatience with the Republican president.

Carney has emerged as a leader of a movement for countries to find ways to link up and counter the U.S. He vowed to pursue trade deals with countries other than the U.S., including China, to serve as anchors of commercial stability. The China deal drew new threats from Trump.

Greenland and Ukraine fears

For many in Europe, Trump's intentions regarding Greenland exacerbate their fears over Russia's war with Ukraine and serve as a reminder of centuries of power politics in which diplomacy was subordinate to the use of military force.

"Greenland is to Trump as, essentially, Ukraine is to (Russian President Vladimir) Putin, although obviously without the devastating war at this stage," said Fiona Hill, a Russia expert who served on the White House National Security Council during Trump's first term in office.

In the meantime, as Trump tries to mediate an end to the Russia-Ukraine war and seek a nuclear deal with Iran, Europeans are increasingly uneasy about Trump's "Board of Peace," a 27-member group of world leaders tasked first with handling the Gaza peace agreement but eventually envisaged as a vehicle for resolving other major conflicts.

Germany, France, Britain, Italy, Norway and Sweden, among others, have either declined to accept or have not yet signed on to the board, which will hold its first meeting to raise money for Gaza in Washington on Feb. 19.

Taiwan's AI-powered economy soars in the shadow of bubble fears and China threats

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — In Taipei, real estate agent Jason Sung is betting that home prices around a high-tech industrial park in the northern part of Taiwan's capital will soon take flight — because of computer chip maker Nvidia.

The area is where Nvidia plans to build its new Taiwan headquarters as it rapidly expands on the island, set to surpass Apple to become the biggest customer of Taiwan semiconductor maker TSMC, the biggest contract manufacturer of the advanced chips needed for artificial intelligence.

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang describes Taiwan as the "center of the world's computer ecosystem." It's riding high on the global AI frenzy. Its economy grew at an 8.6% annual pace last year, and it's hoping to maintain that momentum after it recently sealed a trade deal with U.S. President Donald Trump that cut U.S. tariffs on Taiwan to 15% from 20%.

"We have been lucky," said Wu Tsong-min, an emeritus economics professor at National Taiwan University and a former board member of Taiwan's central bank.

But Taiwan's heavy reliance on computer chip makers and other technology companies carries the growing risk of the AI craze turning out to be a bubble.

"What if the AI bubble is real, and what if its rapid growth pace slows, what's next for Taiwan? That's the question many have been asking," Wu said.

Escalating tensions with Beijing, which claims independently governed Taiwan as mainland China's terri-

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tory, are another abiding threat, despite the island's vital role in global chip and AI supply chains.

Taiwan's leads in chipmaking

An island of about 23 million people, Taiwan depends heavily on exports. They jumped nearly 35% year-on-year in 2025, as shipments to the U.S. surged 78% due to ballooning AI demand.

That's thanks largely to TSMC, or Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp., and electronics giant Foxconn, which makes AI servers for Nvidia and is a major supplier to Apple.

Taiwan has undergone massive economic changes while shifting from mainly labor-intensive industries such as plastics and textiles to advanced manufacturing like semiconductor fabrication.

The AI frenzy has made TSMC one of the world's top 10 most valuable companies. Its profit jumped 46% last year to \$1.7 trillion Taiwan dollars (\$54 billion).

The chipmaker is investing heavily both in Taiwan and in new factories in Arizona in the U.S. It produces more than 90% of the world's most advanced chips.

Foxconn, formally known as Hon Hai Precision Industry Co., has doubled its value since 2023. The maker of Apple's iPhone and iPads now produces AI servers and racks and has a partnership with OpenAI to supply AI data center equipment.

Taiwan's heavy reliance on its technology industry means its biggest risk is that growth will be "very highly contingent on the AI boom and tech race continuing," said Lynn Song, chief economist for Greater China at ING Bank.

Risks persist of an AI bubble?

Worries that the AI craze may prove to be a bubble prone to a bust similar to the dot.com crash in 2000 that swept through markets, alarming many in Taiwan.

"I'm also very nervous about it," C.C. Wei, TSMC's chairman said when asked about a potential AI bubble during an earnings call in January. "Because we have to invest about \$52-\$56 billion (this year)."

"If we did not do it carefully, that will be a big disaster to TSMC for sure," he said. "I want to make sure that my customers' demands are real."

In a recent report, analysts from Fitch Ratings argued that AI demand will remain strong at least in the near term. In the longer term, however, the risks "will depend on the evolution of AI, as well as trade and investment policies and the adaptability of Taiwanese firms," they wrote.

Taiwanese electronics company Asia Vital Components, a key supplier of liquid cooling systems for Nvidia, is investing heavily in research and development. Its chairman, Spencer Shen, said he saw no signs of a slowdown in AI-related demand so far. The company is already designing thermal solutions for 2028 AI servers, he said.

"We do not believe this is a bubble," Shen told The Associated Press in an interview. "AI is driven by companies with real products and massive cash flows, like Amazon, Microsoft, Google and Meta."

"In fact, AI infrastructure is still in short supply," Shen added. "I expect AI to trickle through to our everyday level and change the way that things will work fundamentally."

Taiwan has a 'silicon shield' against Beijing

Some in Taiwan believe that its pivotal role in the technology sector, especially as a maker of computer chips whose main material is silicon, helps to protect the island from attack by communist-ruled Beijing, whose leaders have vowed to reunite the island with the Chinese mainland, by force if necessary.

The two governments split in 1949 during a civil war. Beijing has been stepping up pressure, conducting military drills nearby. Exercises in late December included live rounds landing closer to the island than before, Taiwan officials said.

Such geopolitical factors cloud the economic outlook, though many in Taiwan including its former President Tsai Ing-wen believe its importance to global chipmaking would deter China from attacking.

The risk of an invasion is unclear. Both global tech companies and Chinese industries would suffer from massive disruptions of the chip supply chain, said Wu of National Taiwan University.

Still, some companies have been identifying contingency scenarios in recent years on how to respond in case of military action by China, said Chen Shin-hong, vice president of the semi-official Chung-Hua

Institution for Economic Research.

"We need to understand the potential risk, potential damages to Taiwan," said Chen.

While many of its core research and development activities are in Taiwan, TSMC already has plants in China, Japan and the U.S., and it's expanding its offshore production in the U.S., Germany and Japan.

Roughly 65% of Foxconn's manufacturing is in China, and the company has factories in other parts of the world such as India, Mexico and the U.S. AVC has been expanding its production capacity in Vietnam.

While some have called for Taiwan to diversify its economy away from technology to reduce risks, others argue that doubling down on its world-leading technology is the way forward. "It is our greatest strength," said Shen of AVC.

Some in Taiwan are being left behind

The AI boom has done wonders for Taiwan's stock exchange, where the benchmark Taiex has climbed nearly 250% over the past decade, making many investors rich. Economists have significantly upgraded forecasts for Taiwan's economic growth for 2026 based on its robust AI-related exports.

But as is true elsewhere, the wealth is not evenly spread. Many Taiwan residents feel they have been left behind.

Taiwan's wealth gap, according to official data, has roughly quadrupled over the past three decades.

The pay of tech workers already earning high wages, especially chip engineers and managers, has skyrocketed. For other traditional industries, such as plastics and machine toolmakers, growth has lagged.

Economists say that gap might widen as the AI frenzy continues.

"It can be tough to make a living," said Jean Lin, a 30-something manager of a takeaway outlet selling bento meals in a Taipei neighborhood where Foxconn's office is located.

"Many of the younger generation still can't afford to buy an apartment," Lin, who wishes to start her own business one day, added. "A lot of young people still feel they don't have much money."

Suspect in Canada shooting is identified as an 18-year-old with history of police visits to her home

By JIM MORRIS and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — The suspect in a school shooting in Canada was an 18-year-old who had a history of police visits to her home to check on her mental health, authorities said Wednesday, a day after the attack that killed eight people in a remote part of British Columbia.

Police said Jesse Van Rootselaar was found dead from an apparent self-inflicted wound following the assault on a school in the small mountain community of Tumbler Ridge.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Deputy Commissioner Dwayne McDonald said Van Rootselaar first killed her mother and stepbrother at the family home before attacking the nearby school. She had a history of mental health contacts with police, he said.

The motive was unclear.

Police initially said nine people were killed Tuesday, but McDonald clarified Wednesday that there were eight fatalities. McDonald said the discrepancy arose from a victim who was airlifted to a medical center. Authorities mistakenly thought that person had died.

More than 25 people were wounded.

The town is near the provincial border with Alberta

The town of 2,700 people in the Canadian Rockies is more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) northeast of Vancouver, near the provincial border with Alberta.

Police said the victims included a 39-year-old teacher and five students, ages 12 to 13.

The killings at the home occurred first, McDonald said. A young family member at the home went to a neighbor, who called police. The bodies of the suspect's mother, who was also 39, and her 11-year-old stepbrother were found at the home.

At the school, one victim was found in a stairwell and the rest were found in the library, McDonald be-

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lieved. The suspect was not related to any of the victims at the school, he said.

"There is no information at this point that anyone was specifically targeted," McDonald said.

Police recovered a long gun and a modified handgun. McDonald said officers arrived at the school two minutes after the initial call. When they arrived, shots were fired in their direction.

"Parents, grandparents, sisters, brothers in Tumbler Ridge will wake up without someone they love. The nation mourns with you, and Canada stands by you," an emotional Prime Minister Mark Carney said as he arrived in Parliament.

Deadliest rampage since 2020

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

Carney said flags at government buildings will be flown at half-staff for seven days and added: "We will get through this."

Shelley Quist said her neighbor across the street lost her 12-year-old. "We heard his mom. She was in the street crying. She wanted her son's body," Quist said.

Quist said her 17-year-old son, Darian, was on lockdown in the school for more than two hours. The provincial government website lists Tumbler Ridge Secondary School as having 175 students in grades 7 to 12.

"The grade sevens and eights, I think, were upstairs in the library, and that's where the shooter went," she said. Her son was in the library just 15 minutes prior to the attack.

Quist was working at the hospital down the street when the shooting started.

"I was about to go run down to the school, but my coworker held me back. And then I was able to get Darian on the phone to know he was OK," she said.

Darian Quist said he knew the attack was real when the principal came down the halls and ordered doors to be closed. He said fellow students texted him pictures of blood while he remained locked down in a classroom.

"We used the desk to block the doors," he said.

School shootings are rare in Canada, which has strict gun-control laws. The government has responded to previous mass shootings with gun-control measures, including a recently broadened ban on all guns it considers assault weapons.

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

A makeshift memorial of flowers and stuffed toys began to grow at the edge of the school grounds. Residents met nearby to comfort each other at the local community center.

Community is a 'big family'

Tumbler Ridge Mayor Darryl Krakowka said it was "devastating" to learn how many had died in the community, which he called a "big family."

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

The Rev. George Rowe of Tumbler Ridge Fellowship Baptist Church 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.

The school district said the high school and elementary school will be closed for the rest of the week.

Carney's office said he called off a planned trip to Europe for the Munich Security Conference.

British Columbia Premier David Eby said the full extent of what happened won't sink in for some time.

"I can tell you this is an incredibly strong community. Everybody is worried about somebody else," Eby said outside the townhall.

FBI combs desert terrain for clues in Nancy Guthrie's disappearance

By TY O'NEIL Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Fresh surveillance images from Nancy Guthrie's porch the night she went missing, coupled with intense police activity across Arizona and the detention of a man had raised hopes that authorities were nearing a major break.

But then the man was released after questioning, leaving it unclear Wednesday where the investigation stood into last week's disappearance of Guthrie, the 84-year-old mother of "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie.

FBI agents carrying water bottles to beat the 80-degree F (26.7-degree C) heat walked among rocks and desert vegetation at Guthrie's Tucson-area home. They also fanned out across a neighborhood about a mile (1.6 kilometers) away, knocking on doors and searching through cactuses, bushes and boulders.

Several hundred detectives and agents are now assigned to the investigation, which is expanding in the area, the Pima County Sheriff's Department said.

In a nearby neighborhood, two investigators emerged from daughter Annie Guthrie's home with a paper grocery sack and a white trash bag. One, still wearing blue protective gloves, also took a stack of mail from the roadside mailbox. They drove away without speaking to reporters.

Barb Dutrow, who was jogging through a neighborhood where teams were searching, said an FBI agent told her they were looking for anything that might have been tossed from a car. Dutrow, who was visiting from Louisiana for a convention, said she "can't imagine the feeling of the family of having their mother taken."

A day earlier, authorities said they had stopped a man near the U.S.-Mexico border, just hours after the FBI released videos of a person wearing a gun holster, ski mask and backpack and approaching Nancy Guthrie's home in Tucson. The man told media outlets early Wednesday that he was released after several hours and had nothing to do with Guthrie's disappearance last week.

Authorities have not said what led them to stop the man Tuesday but confirmed he was released. The sheriff's department said its deputies and FBI agents also searched a location in Rio Rico, a city south of Tucson where the man lives.

It was the latest twist in an investigation that has gripped the nation since Nancy Guthrie disappeared on Feb. 1. Until Tuesday, it seemed authorities were making little headway in determining what happened to her or finding who was responsible.

The black and white images released by the FBI showing a masked person trying to cover a doorbell camera on Guthrie's porch marked the first significant break in the case. But the images did not show what happened to her or help determine whether she is still alive.

FBI Director Kash Patel said investigators spent days trying to find lost, corrupted or inaccessible images.

Even though the images do not show the person's face, investigators are hopeful someone will know who was on the porch. More than 4,000 calls came into the Pima County sheriff's tip line within the past 24 hours, the department said Wednesday afternoon.

Authorities 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.

Savannah Guthrie posted the new surveillance images on social media and said the family believes their mother is still alive.

The longtime NBC host and her two siblings have indicated a willingness to pay a ransom.

It is not known whether ransom notes demanding money with deadlines that have already passed were authentic, and whether the family has had any contact with whoever took Guthrie.

TMZ reported it received a message Wednesday from someone claiming to know the kidnapper's identity and that they unsuccessfully tried to reach Savannah Guthrie's brother and sister. The person asked for bitcoin in exchange for the information, TMZ said. The FBI did not immediately respond to a message.

Authorities have said Nancy Guthrie takes several medications and there was concern from the start that she could die without them.

Deaths in Iran's crackdown on protests reach at least 7,000, activists say

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The death toll from a crackdown over Iran's nationwide protests last month has reached at least 7,002 people killed with many more still feared dead, activists said Thursday.

The slow rise in the number of dead from the demonstrations adds to the overall tensions facing Iran both inside the country and abroad as it tries to negotiate with the United States over its nuclear program. A second round of talks remains up in the air as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pressed his case directly with U.S. President Donald Trump to intensify his demands on Tehran in the negotiations.

"There was nothing definitive reached other than I insisted that negotiations with Iran continue to see whether or not a Deal can be consummated. If it can, I let the Prime Minister know that will be a preference," Trump wrote afterward on his TruthSocial website.

"Last time Iran decided that they were better off not making a Deal, and they were hit. ... That did not work well for them. Hopefully this time they will be more reasonable and responsible."

Meanwhile, Iran at home faces still-simmering anger over its wide-ranging suppression of all dissent in the Islamic Republic. That rage may intensify in the coming days as families of the dead begin marking the traditional 40-day mourning for the loved ones.

Activists' death toll slowly rises

The U.S.-based Human Rights Activists News Agency, which offered the latest figures, has been accurate in counting deaths during previous rounds of unrest in Iran and relies on a network of activists in Iran to verify deaths. The slow rise in the death toll has come as the agency slowly is able to crosscheck information as communication remains difficult with those inside of the Islamic Republic.

Iran's government offered its only death toll on Jan. 21, saying 3,117 people were killed. Iran's theocracy in the past has undercounted or not reported fatalities from past unrest.

The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the death toll, given authorities have disrupted internet access and international calls in Iran.

The rise in the death toll comes as Iran tries to negotiate with the United States over its nuclear program.

Diplomacy over Iran continues

Senior Iranian security official Ali Larijani met Wednesday in Qatar with Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. Qatar 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 in June. Larijani also met with officials of the Palestinian Hamas militant group, and in Oman with Tehran-backed Houthi rebels from Yemen on Tuesday.

Larijani told Qatar's Al Jazeera satellite news network that Iran did not receive any specific proposal from the U.S. in Oman, but acknowledged that there was an "exchange of messages."

Qatar has 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.

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. "We

have an armada that is heading there and another one might be going," he said.

Concern over Nobel Peace Prize laureate

Meanwhile, the Norwegian Nobel Committee said it was "deeply appalled by credible reports detailing the brutal arrest, physical abuse and ongoing life-threatening mistreatment" of 2023 Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi.

The committee that awards the prize said it had information Mohammadi had been beaten during her arrest in December and continued to be mistreated. It called for her immediate and unconditional release.

"She continues to be denied adequate, sustained medical follow-up while being subjected to heavy interrogation and intimidation," the committee said. "She has fainted several times, suffers from dangerously high blood pressure and has been prevented from accessing necessary follow-up for suspected breast tumors."

Iran just sentenced Mohammadi, 53, to over seven more years in prison. Supporters had warned for months before her arrest that she was at risk of being put back into prison after she received a furlough in December 2024 over medical concerns.

Pentagon let CBP use anti-drone laser before FAA closed El Paso airspace, AP sources say

By SEUNG MIN KIM, BEN FINLEY, MARY CLARE JALONICK, KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and MORGAN LEE
Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — The Pentagon allowed U.S. Customs and Border Protection to use an anti-drone laser earlier this week, leading the Federal Aviation Administration to suddenly close the airspace over El Paso, Texas, on Wednesday, according to two people familiar with the situation who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive details.

The confusing arc of events began as the FAA announced it was shutting down all flight traffic over the city on the U.S.-Mexico border for 10 days, stranding some travelers, but the closure ended up only lasting a few hours. The Trump administration said it stemmed from the FAA and Pentagon working to halt an incursion by Mexican cartel drones, which are not uncommon along the southern border.

One of the people said the laser was deployed near Fort Bliss without coordinating with the FAA, which decided then to close the airspace to ensure commercial air safety. Others familiar with the matter said the technology was used despite a meeting scheduled for later this month between the Pentagon and the FAA to discuss the issue.

While the restrictions were short-lived in the city of nearly 700,000 people, it is unusual for an entire airport to shut down even for a short time. Stranded travelers with luggage lined up at airline ticket counters and car rental desks before the order was lifted.

Normal flights resumed after seven arrivals and seven departures were canceled. Some medical evacuation flights also had to be rerouted.

Jorge Rueda, 20, and Yamilexi Meza, 21, of Las Cruces, New Mexico, had their morning flight to Portland, Oregon, canceled, so they were losing part of their Valentine's Day weekend trip.

Rueda said he was glad that "10 days turned into two hours." They were booked on an evening flight out of El Paso.

A troubling lack of coordination

The investigation into last year's midair collision near Washington, D.C., between an airliner and Army helicopter that killed 67 people highlighted how the FAA and Pentagon were not always working well together.

The National Transportation Safety Board said the FAA and the Army did not share safety data with each other about the alarming number of close calls around Reagan National Airport and failed to address the risks.

Democratic Sen. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois, a former Army helicopter pilot who serves on committees focused on aviation and the armed services, said the issue Wednesday was the latest example of "the lack of coordination that's endemic in this Trump administration."

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Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Cruz, R-Texas, said he would request a briefing from the FAA on the incident.

Rep. Veronica Escobar, a Democrat whose district includes El Paso, said neither her office nor local officials received any advance notice of the closure. After it was lifted, she said "the information coming from the federal government does not add up."

"I believe the FAA owes the community and the country an explanation as to why this happened so suddenly and abruptly and was lifted so suddenly and abruptly," Escobar said at a news conference.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said earlier that the airspace was closed as the Defense Department and the FAA halted an incursion by Mexican cartel drones and "the threat has been neutralized."

Officials at the Department of Homeland Security, FAA and Department of Transportation did not immediately respond to requests for comment. A Trump administration official insisted the agencies were in lockstep to protect national security and pointed to Duffy's statement. The Pentagon said it had nothing to add to its statement that largely mirrored Duffy's.

Cross-border drone activity is not new

Republican Rep. Tony Gonzales, whose congressional district covers an area that stretches about 800 miles (1,300 kilometers) along Texas' border with Mexico, said cartel drone sightings are common.

"For any of us who live and work along the border, daily drone incursions by criminal organizations is everyday life for us. It's a Wednesday for us," Gonzales said.

Steven Willoughby, deputy director of the counter-drone program at the Department of Homeland Security, told Congress in July that cartels are using drones nearly every day to transport drugs across the border and surveil Border Patrol agents. More than 27,000 drones were detected within 500 meters (1,600 feet) of the southern border in the last six months of 2024, he said, mostly at night.

What is "extremely rare" is the closure of an entire airport over a security issue, according to a former chief security officer at United Airlines.

Officials usually will try to take security measures to isolate the risk if a specific plane or airline is threatened rather than shut down the airport, said Rich Davis, now a senior security adviser at risk mitigation company International SOS.

Mexican officials question the explanation

Asked about the drone explanation provided by U.S. officials, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said she had "no information about the use of drones on the border." She noted that if U.S. authorities have more information, they should contact Mexico's government.

Mexican defense and navy secretaries planned to talk with officials from U.S. Northern Command in a meeting Wednesday in Washington attended by several other countries, Sheinbaum told reporters. Sheinbaum said the Mexican officials would "listen" in the meeting and her government would look into "the exact causes" of the closure.

El Paso is a hub of cross-border commerce alongside Ciudad Juárez. That Mexican city is home to about 1.5 million people, and some of its residents are accustomed to taking advantage of facilities, including airports, on the U.S. side of the border.

That easy access to the United States also has made Juarez, like other border cities, attractive to Mexico's drug cartels seeking to safeguard their smuggling routes for drugs and migrants headed north and cash and guns moving to the south.

'This was a major and unnecessary disruption'

El Paso Mayor Renard Johnson told reporters that he did not hear about the closure until after the alert was issued.

"Decisions made without notice and coordination puts lives at risk and creates unnecessary danger and confusion," Johnson said. "This was a major and unnecessary disruption, one that has not occurred since 9/11."

The airport describes itself as the gateway to west Texas, southern New Mexico and northern Mexico. Southwest, United, American and Delta are among the carriers that operate flights there.

A similar 10-day temporary flight restriction for special security reasons remained in place Wednesday

around Santa Teresa, New Mexico, which is about 15 miles (24 kilometers) northwest of the El Paso airport. FAA officials did not immediately explain why that restriction remained.

Sen. Ben Ray Lujan, a New Mexico Democrat, said in a statement that he was seeking answers from the FAA and the Trump administration "about why the airspace was closed in the first place without notifying appropriate officials, leaving travelers to deal with unnecessary chaos."

Confusion for travelers

Travel plans on both sides of the border were disrupted.

María Aracelia was pushing two roller suitcases across the pedestrian bridge from Ciudad Juarez to El Paso on Wednesday morning. She had a round-trip flight to Illinois scheduled for the afternoon.

After receiving a text at 4 a.m. telling her about the 10-day closure, she scrambled to try to find other options, even how to get to another airport. Then came a notification that the El Paso airport had reopened.

"This is stressful, and there isn't time to make so many changes, especially if you need to get back for work," Aracelia said.

Bondi clashes with Democrats as she struggles to turn the page on Epstein files furor

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER, ERIC TUCKER and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Attorney General Pam Bondi launched into a passionate defense of Donald Trump on Wednesday as she tried to turn the page from relentless criticism of the Justice Department's handling of the Jeffrey Epstein files, repeatedly shouting at Democrats during a combative hearing in which she postured herself as the Republican president's chief protector.

Besieged by questions over Epstein and accusations of a weaponized Justice Department, Bondi aggressively pivoted in an extraordinary speech in which she mocked her Democratic questioners, praised Trump over the performance of the stock market and openly aligned herself as in sync with a president whom she painted as a victim of past impeachments and investigations.

"You sit here and you attack the president and I'm not going to have it," Bondi told lawmakers on the House Judiciary Committee. "I am not going to put up with it."

With victims of Epstein seated behind her in the hearing room, Bondi forcefully defended the department's handling of the files related to the well-connected financier, an issue that has dogged her tenure. She accused Democrats of using the Epstein files to distract from Trump's successes, even though it was Republicans who initiated the furor over the records and Bondi herself fanned the flames by distributing binders to conservative influencers at the White House last year.

The hearing quickly devolved into a partisan brawl, with Bondi repeatedly lobbing insults at Democrats while insisting she was not "going to get in the gutter" with them. In one particularly fiery exchange, Rep. Jamie Raskin of Maryland accused Bondi of refusing to answer his questions, prompting the attorney general to call the top Democrat on the committee a "washed-up loser lawyer — not even a lawyer."

Aiming to help Bondi amid an onslaught of Democratic criticism, Republicans tried to keep the focus on bread-and-butter law enforcement issues like violent crime and illegal immigration. Bondi, for her part, repeatedly deflected questions from Democrats, responding instead with attacks seemingly gleaned from news headlines as she sought to cast them as disinterested in violence in their districts. Democrats grew exasperated as Bondi declined time and again to directly answer.

"This is pathetic. This is pathetic," said Rep. Becca Balint, a Vermont Democrat who tried to ask Bondi about different Trump administration officials revealed to have had ties to Epstein. "I am not asking trick questions here. The American people have a right to know the answers to this."

Bondi has struggled to move past the backlash over the Epstein files since she handed out the binders to a group of social media influencers in February 2025. The binders included no new revelations about Epstein, leading to even more calls from Trump's base for the files to be released.

In her opening remarks, Bondi told Epstein victims to come forward to law enforcement with any informa-

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tion about their abuse and said she was “deeply sorry” for what they had suffered. She told the survivors that “any accusation of criminal wrongdoing will be taken seriously and investigated.”

But she refused when pressed by Rep. Pramila Jayapal, D-Wash., to turn and face the Epstein victims in the audience and apologize for what Trump’s Justice Department has “put them through.” She accused the Democrat of “theatrics.”

Bondi’s appearance on Capitol Hill came a year into her tumultuous tenure, which has amplified concerns that the Justice Department is using its law enforcement powers to target political foes of the president. Just a day earlier, the department sought to secure charges against Democratic lawmakers who produced a video urging military service members not to follow “illegal orders.” But in an extraordinary rebuke of prosecutors, a grand jury in Washington refused to return an indictment.

Turning aside criticism that the Justice Department under her watch has become politicized, Bondi touted the department’s work to reduce violent crime and said she was determined to restore the department to its core missions after what she described as “years of bloated bureaucracy and political weaponization.”

GOP Rep. Jim Jordan praised Bondi for undoing actions under President Joe Biden’s Justice Department that Republicans say unfairly targeted conservatives — including Trump, who was charged in two federal criminal cases that were abandoned after his 2024 election victory.

“What a difference a year makes,” Jordan said. “Under Attorney General Bondi, the DOJ has returned to its core missions — upholding the rule of law, going after the bad guys and keeping Americans safe.”

Democrats, meanwhile, excoriated Bondi over haphazard redactions in the Epstein files that exposed intimate details about victims and included nude photographs. A review by The Associated Press and other news organizations has found countless examples of sloppy, inconsistent or nonexistent redactions that have revealed sensitive private information.

“You’re siding with the perpetrators and you’re ignoring the victims,” Raskin told Bondi in his opening statement. “That will be your legacy unless you act quickly to change the course. You’re running a massive Epstein cover-up right out of the Department of Justice.”

Rep. Thomas Massie, a Kentucky Republican who broke with his party to advance the legislation that forced the release of the Epstein files, also took Bondi to task for the release of victims’ personal information, telling her, “Literally the worst thing you could do to survivors, you did.”

Bondi told Massie that he was only focused on the files because Trump is mentioned in them, calling him a “hypocrite” with “Trump derangement syndrome.”

Department officials have said they took pains to protect survivors, but errors were inevitable given the volume of the materials and the speed at which the department had to release them. Bondi told lawmakers that the Justice Department had taken down files when it was made aware that they included victims’ information and said staff had tried to do their “very best in the time frame allotted by the legislation” mandating the release of the files.

After raising the expectations of conservatives with promises of transparency last year, the Justice Department said in July that it had concluded a review and determined that no Epstein “client list” existed and there was no reason to make additional files public. That set off a furor that prompted Congress to pass legislation demanding that the Justice Department release the files.

The acknowledgment that the well-connected Epstein did not have a list of clients to whom underage girls were trafficked represented a public walk-back of a theory that the Trump administration had helped promote when Bondi suggested in a Fox News interview last year that it was sitting on her desk for review. Bondi later said she was referring to the Epstein files in total, not a specific client list.

James Van Der Beek, the ‘Dawson’s Creek’ star who later mocked his own hunky persona, has died at 48

By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — James Van Der Beek, a heartthrob who starred in coming-of-age dramas at the dawn of the new millennium, shooting to fame playing the titular character in “Dawson’s Creek” and in later

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years mocking his own hunky persona, has died. He was 48.

"Our beloved James David Van Der Beek passed peacefully this morning. He met his final days with courage, faith and grace. There is much to share regarding his wishes, love for humanity and the sacredness of time. Those days will come," said a statement from the actor's family posted on Instagram. "For now we ask for peaceful privacy as we grieve our loving husband, father, son, brother and friend."

Van Der Beek revealed in 2024 that he was being treated for colorectal cancer.

Van Der Beek made a surprise video appearance in September at a "Dawson's Creek" reunion charity event in New York City after previously dropping out due to illness.

He appeared projected onstage at the Richard Rodgers Theatre during a live reading of the show's pilot episode to benefit F Cancer and Van Der Beek. Lin-Manuel Miranda subbed for him on stage.

"Thank you to every single person here," Van Der Beek said.

Forever tied to 'Dawson's Creek'

A one-time theater kid, Van Der Beek would star in the movie "Varsity Blues" and on TV in "CSI: Cyber" as FBI Special Agent Elijah Mundo, but was forever connected to "Dawson's Creek," which ran from 1998 to 2003 on The WB.

The series followed a group of high school friends as they learned about falling in love, creating real friendships and finding their footing in life. Van Der Beek, then 20, played 15-year-old Dawson Leery, who aspired to be a director of Steven Spielberg quality.

With Paula Cole's "I Don't Want To Wait," as its moody theme song, "Dawson's Creek" helped define The WB as a haven for teens and young adults who related to its hyper-articulate dialogue and frank talk about sexuality. And it made household names of Van Der Beek, Katie Holmes, Michelle Williams and Joshua Jackson.

"While James' legacy will always live on, this is a huge loss to not just your family but the world," Sarah Michelle Gellar wrote to his widow on Instagram. Katharine McPhee Foster added: "This is just beyond devastating news." Others posting messages of mourning were Jenna Dewan and Olivia Munn.

The show caused a stir when one of the teens embarked on a racy affair with a teacher 20 years his senior and when Holmes' character climbed through Dawson's bedroom window and they curled up together. Racier shows like "Euphoria" and "Sex Education" owe a debt to "Dawson's Creek."

Van Der Beek sometimes struggled to get out from under the shadow of the show but eventually leaned into lampooning himself, like on Funny Or Die videos and on Kesha's "Blow" music video, which included his laser gun battle with the pop star in a nightclub and dead unicorns.

"It's tough to compete with something that was the cultural phenomenon that 'Dawson's Creek' was," he told Vulture in 2013. "It ran for so long. That's a lot of hours playing one character in front of people. So it's natural that they associate you with that."

A popular GIF and 'Varsity Blues'

More than a decade after the show went off the air, a scene at the end of the show's third season became a GIF. Dawson was watching as his soul mate embarks on a love affair with his best friend and burst into tears.

"It wasn't scripted that I was supposed to cry; it was just one of those things where it's a magical moment and it just happens in the scene," Van Der Beek told Vanity Fair. He seemed exasperated when he told the Los Angeles Times: "All of a sudden, six years of work was boiled down to one seven-second clip on loop." (Van Der Beek himself recreated the GIF in 2011 for Funny or Die and gave it a second life.)

While still on "Dawson's Creek," Van Der Beek hosted "Saturday Night Live" — the musical guest was Everlast — and landed a plumb role in "Varsity Blues," playing a second-string high school quarterback who leaps into the breach when the star suffers an injury.

Van Der Beek's character, Mox, turns out to not be a football fanatic, preferring to read Kurt Vonnegut and yearning for the college education that will allow him to escape the jock mentality of his Texas town.

"I don't want your life," he screams at one point. Critic Roger Ebert called him "convincing and likable."

After 'Dawson's Creek'

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Some of his projects after "Dawson's Creek" included co-creating and playing Wesley "Diplo" Pentz, a dull but likable music producer in the mockumentary satire on Viceland, "What Would Diplo Do?" In 2019, he made it to the semifinals of ABC's "Dancing with the Stars" and played a balding, out-of-shape ex-boyfriend on "How I Met Your Mother."

"The more you make fun of yourself and don't try to go for any kind of respect, the more people seem to respect you," he told Vanity Fair in 2011. "I've always been a clown trapped in a leading man's body."

Between 2003 and 2013, he made appearances in shows like "Criminal Minds," "One Tree Hill," and "How I Met Your Mother." He played himself with a crackpot intensity in the Krysten Ritter-led ABC drama "Don't Trust the B— in Apartment 23," and the short-lived "CSI" spinoff "CSI: Cyber" and CBS' "Friends With Better Lives."

He's also appeared in movies such as Kevin Smith's 2001 comedy "Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back" and its 2019 sequel, "Jay and Silent Bob Reboot." He was in the Bret Easton Ellis adaptation of "The Rules of Attraction" in 2002 opposite Jessica Biel and Kate Bosworth.

In 2025, he was unmasked as Griffin on "The Masked Singer," after singing a cover of John Denver's "Take Me Home, Country Roads" and "I Had Some Help" by Post Malone and Morgan Wallen.

Early life as a theater kid

Van Der Beek, who was raised in Cheshire, Connecticut, started acting at 13 after suffering a concussion playing football that prevented him from playing for a year. He landed the role of Danny Zuko in his school production of "Grease."

He stuck with theater, landing at 16 in 1994 an off-Broadway role in "Finding the Sun" by Pulitzer Prize-winner Edward Albee and one of the sons in a revival of "Shenandoah" at the prestigious Goodspeed Opera House in his home state.

He earned a scholarship to New Jersey's Drew University but left school early when he was cast in "Dawson's Creek." In 2024, he returned to campus to accept an honorary degree for his "selfless service and exemplary commitment to the mission of Drew," the university said.

Drew University President Hilary Link welcomed Van Der Beek with a popular quote from his "Dawson's Creek" character: "Edge is fleeting," she said, "but heart lasts forever. So on this morning, we pay tribute to that heart."

He is survived by his wife, Kimberly, and six children, Olivia, Joshua, Annabel, Emilia, Gwendolyn and Jeremiah.

House votes to slap back Trump's tariffs on Canada in rare bipartisan rebuke

By LISA MASCARO and KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The House voted Wednesday to slap back President Donald Trump's tariffs on Canada, a rare if largely symbolic rebuke of the White House agenda as Republicans joined Democrats over the objections of GOP leadership.

The tally, 219-211, was among the first times the House, controlled by Republicans, has confronted the president over a signature policy, and drew instant recrimination from Trump himself. The resolution seeks to end the national emergency Trump declared to impose the tariffs, though actually undoing the policy would require support from the president, which is highly unlikely. It next goes to the Senate.

Trump believes in the power of tariffs to force U.S. trade partners to the negotiating table. But lawmakers are facing unrest back home from businesses caught in the trade wars and constituents navigating pocketbook issues and high prices.

"Today's vote is simple, very simple: Will you vote to lower the cost of living for the American family or will you keep prices high out of loyalty to one person -- Donald J. Trump?" said Rep. Gregory Meeks of New York, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, who authored the resolution.

Within minutes, as the gavel struck, Trump fired off a stern warning to those in the Republican Party who would dare to cross him.

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"Any Republican, in the House or the Senate, that votes against TARIFFS will seriously suffer the consequences come Election time, and that includes Primaries!" the president posted on social media.

The high-stakes moment provides a snapshot of the House's unease with the president's direction, especially ahead of the midterm elections as economic issues resonate among voters. The Senate has already voted to reject Trump's tariffs on Canada and other countries in a show of displeasure. But both chambers would have to approve the tariff rollbacks, and send the resolution to Trump for the president's signature — or veto.

Six House Republicans voted for the resolution, and one Democrat voted against it.

From Canada, Ontario, Premier Doug Ford on social media called the vote "an important victory with more work ahead." He thanked lawmakers from both parties "who stood up in support of free trade and economic growth between our two great countries. Let's end the tariffs and together build a more prosperous and secure future."

Trump recently threatened to impose a 100% tariff on goods imported from Canada over that country's proposed China trade deal, intensifying a feud with the longtime U.S. ally and Prime Minister Mark Carney.

GOP defections forced the vote

House Speaker Mike Johnson tried to prevent this showdown.

Johnson insisted lawmakers wait for a pending Supreme Court ruling in a lawsuit about the tariffs. He engineered a complicated rules change to prevent floor action. But Johnson's strategy collapsed late Tuesday, as Republicans peeled off during a procedural vote to ensure the Democratic measure was able to advance.

"The president's trade policies have been of great benefit," Johnson, R-La., had said. "And I think the sentiment is that we allow a little more runway for this to be worked out between the executive branch and the judicial branch."

Late Tuesday evening, Johnson could be seen speaking to holdout Republican lawmakers as the GOP leadership team struggled to shore up support during a lengthy procedural vote, but the numbers lined up against him.

"We're disappointed," Kevin Hassett, the director of the White House's National Economic Council, told reporters at the White House on Wednesday morning. "The president will make sure they don't repeal his tariffs."

Terminating Trump's emergency

The resolution put forward by Meeks would terminate the national emergency that Trump declared a year ago as one of his executive orders.

The administration claimed illicit drug flow from Canada constitutes an unusual and extraordinary threat that allows the president to slap tariffs on imported goods outside the terms of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada trade agreement.

The Republican chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Rep. Brian Mast of Florida, said the flow of fentanyl into the U.S. is a dire national emergency and the policy must be left in place.

"Let's be clear again about what this resolution is and what it's not. It's not a debate about tariffs. You can talk about those, but that's not really what it is," Mast said. "This is Democrats trying to ignore that there is a fentanyl crisis."

Experts say fentanyl produced by cartels in Mexico is largely smuggled into the U.S. from land crossings in California and Arizona. Fentanyl is also made in Canada and smuggled into the U.S., but to a much lesser extent.

Torn between Trump and tariffs

Ahead of voting, some rank-and-file Republican lawmakers expressed unease over the choices ahead as Democrats — and a few renegade Republicans — impressed on their colleagues the need to flex their power as the legislative branch rather than ceding so much power to the president to take authority over trade and tariff policy.

Rep. Don Bacon, R-Neb., said he was unpersuaded by Johnson's call to wait until the Supreme Court

makes its decision about the legality of Trump's tariffs. He voted for passage.

"Why doesn't the Congress stand on its own two feet and say that we're an independent branch?" Bacon said. "We should defend our authorities. I hope the Supreme Court does, but if we don't do it, shame on us."

Bacon, who is retiring rather than facing reelection, also argued that tariffs are bad economic policy.

Other Republicans had to swiftly make up their minds after Johnson's gambit — which would have paused the calendar days to prevent the measure from coming forward — was turned back.

"At the end of the day, we're going to have to support our president," said Rep. Keith Self, R-Texas.

Rep. Darrell Issa, R-Calif., said he doesn't want to tie the president's hands on trade and would support the tariffs on Canada "at this time."

House GOP pushes strict proof-of-citizenship requirement for voters ahead of midterm elections

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Republicans rushed to approve legislation on Wednesday that would impose strict new proof-of-citizenship requirements ahead of the midterm elections, a long shot Trump administration priority that faces sharp blowback in the Senate.

The bill, called the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility, or SAVE America Act, would require Americans to prove they are citizens when they register to vote, mostly through a valid U.S. passport or birth certificate. It would also require a valid photo identification before voters can cast ballots, which some states already demand. It was approved on a mostly party-line vote, 218-213.

Republicans said the legislation is needed to prevent voter fraud, but Democrats warn it will disenfranchise millions of Americans by making it harder to vote. Federal law already requires that voters in national elections be U.S. citizens, but there's no requirement to provide documentary proof. Experts said voter fraud is extremely rare, and very few noncitizens ever slip through the cracks. Fewer than one in 10 Americans don't have paperwork proving they are citizens.

"Some of my colleagues will call this voter suppression or Jim Crow 2.0," said Rep. Bryan Steil, R-Wis., presenting the package at a committee hearing.

But he said "those allegations are false," and he argued the bill is needed to enforce existing laws, particularly those that bar immigrants who are not citizens from voting. "The current law is not strong enough," he said.

Election turmoil shadows the vote

The GOP's sudden push to change voting rules at the start of the midterm election season is raising red flags, particularly because President Donald Trump has suggested he wants to nationalize U.S. elections, which, under the Constitution, are designed to be run by individual states.

The Trump administration recently seized ballots in Georgia from the 2020 election, which the president insists he won despite his defeat to Democrat Joe Biden. The Department of Justice is demanding voter rolls from states, including Michigan, where a federal judge this week dismissed the department's lawsuit seeking the voter files. Secretaries of state have raised concerns that voters' personal data may be shared with Homeland Security to verify citizenship and could result in people being unlawfully purged from the rolls.

"Let me be clear what this is about: It's about Republicans trying to rig the next election," said Rep. Jim McGovern of Massachusetts, the top Democrat on the Rules Committee, during a hearing ahead of the floor vote. "Republicans are pushing the Save America Act because they want fewer Americans to vote. It's that simple."

The legislation is actually a do-over of a similar bill the House approved last year, which also sought to clamp down on fraudulent voting, particularly among noncitizens. It won the support of four House Democrats, but stalled in the Republican-led Senate. Only one Democrat, Rep. Henry Cuellar of Texas, voted for the revised bill.

This version toughens some of the requirements further, while creating a process for those whose names

may have changed, particularly during marriage, to provide the paperwork necessary and further attest to their identity.

It also requires states to share their voter information with the Department of Homeland Security, as a way to verify the citizenship of the names on the voter rolls. That has drawn pushback from elections officials as potentially intrusive on people's privacy.

Warnings from state election officials

The new rules in the bill would take effect immediately, if the bill is passed by both chambers of Congress and signed into law.

But with primary elections getting underway next month, critics said the sudden shift would be difficult for state election officials to implement and potentially confuse voters.

Voting experts have warned that more than 20 million U.S. citizens of voting age do not have proof of their citizenship readily available. Almost half of Americans do not have a U.S. passport.

"Election Day is fast approaching," said Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska. "Imposing new federal requirements now, when states are deep into their preparations, would negatively impact election integrity by forcing election officials to scramble to adhere to new policies likely without the necessary resources."

The fight ahead in the Senate

In the Senate, where Republicans also have majority control, there does not appear to be enough support to push the bill past the chamber's filibuster rules, which largely require 60 votes to advance legislation.

That frustration has led some Republicans, led by Sen. Mike Lee of Utah, to push for a process that would skip the 60-vote threshold in this case, and allow the bill to be debated through a so-called standing filibuster — a process that would open the door to potentially endless debate.

Lee made the case to GOP senators at a closed-door lunch this week, and some said afterward they are mulling the concept.

"I think most people's minds are open," said Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., "My mind's certainly open."

But Murkowski of Alaska said she is flat out against the legislation.

"Not only does the U.S. Constitution clearly provide states the authority to regulate the 'times, places, and manner' of holding federal elections, but one-size-fits-all mandates from Washington, D.C., seldom work in places like Alaska," she said.

Karen Brinson Bell of Advance Elections, a nonpartisan consulting firm, said the bill adds numerous requirements for state and local election officials with no additional funding.

"Election officials have a simple request of Congress — that you help share their burdens not add to them," she said.

A privacy breach at the IRS: Taxpayer data wrongly shared with DHS, court filing says

By FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The IRS erroneously shared the taxpayer information of thousands of people with the Department of Homeland Security, as part of the agencies' controversial agreement to share information on immigrants for the purpose of identifying and deporting people illegally in the U.S, according to a new court filing.

The revelation stems from a data-sharing agreement signed last April by Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, which allows U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to submit names and addresses of immigrants inside the U.S. illegally to the IRS for cross-verification against tax records.

A declaration filed Wednesday by IRS Chief Risk and Control Officer Dottie Romo stated that the IRS was only able to verify roughly 47,000 of the 1.28 million names ICE requested.

For less than 5% of those individuals, the IRS gave ICE additional address information, potentially violating privacy rules created to protect taxpayer data.

Romo added that Treasury notified DHS in January of the error and requested DHS' assistance in "promptly

taking steps to remediate the matter consistent with federal law," which includes "appropriate disposal of any data provided to ICE by IRS based on incomplete or insufficient address information."

The IRS-DHS agreement set off litigation between advocacy groups and the federal government last year. Public Citizen filed a lawsuit against the Treasury secretary, the Homeland Security secretary and their respective agencies on behalf of several immigrant rights groups shortly after the agreement was signed.

Most recently, a Massachusetts federal court ordered the IRS to stop sharing residential addresses with ICE. And last November, a federal court blocked the IRS from sharing information with DHS, saying the IRS illegally disseminated the tax data of some migrants last summer.

The news of the erroneous disclosure was initially reported by The Washington Post. A spokesperson from the IRS did not respond to an Associated Press request for comment.

Advocates fear that the potential unlawful release of taxpayer records could be used to maliciously target Americans, violate their privacy and create other ramifications.

Lisa Gilbert, co-president of Public Citizen said that "this breach of confidential information was part of the reason we filed our lawsuit in the first place. Sharing this private taxpayer data creates chaos and, as we've seen this past year, if federal agents use this private information to track down individuals, it can endanger lives."

Tom Bowman, policy counsel for the Center for Democracy & Technology said that "the improper sharing of taxpayer data is unsafe, unlawful, and subject to serious criminal penalties."

"Once taxpayer data is opened to immigration enforcement, mistakes are inevitable and the consequences fall on innocent people," Bowman said. "The disclosure of thousands of confidential records unfortunately shows precisely why strict legal firewalls exist and have — until now — been treated as an important guardrail."

Few leads in Guthrie investigation after 11 days, yet cases often break unexpectedly

By JESSE BEDAYN Associated Press

Eleven days after the mother of "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie vanished from her home in the foothills outside Tucson, Arizona, investigators had yet to identify a suspect or even a person of interest Wednesday.

What seemed like a major break Tuesday — when authorities detained a person for questioning — fizzled when the man was released hours later. The detainment followed another potential break earlier in the day when investigators released video footage showing a masked and apparently armed man at Nancy Guthrie's doorstep the night of her disappearance.

The overall lack of progress has generated pressure and questions for local and federal investigators who haven't held a news conference in days. From the outside, it might seem like solving the case and finding the 84-year-old Guthrie is growing unlikely, but investigators may be further along than they let on.

It's not uncommon for cases to seem dead in the water at the outset and still eventually get solved, said Mary Ellen O'Toole, a former FBI profiler who worked on the yearslong search for the "Unabomber."

So how do investigators tackle cases like this?

The masked figure and the Unabomber

Surveillance footage released Tuesday showed a person on Guthrie's porch wearing a ski mask, backpack and what looked like a holstered handgun.

It offered the best opportunity yet for the public to help identify the suspect, said O'Toole, thinking back to the hunt for Ted Kaczynski, known as the "Unabomber," who was caught in 1996 after a yearslong search.

Kaczynski, who carried out a 17-year bombing campaign that killed three people and injured 23 others, wrote a manifesto that was published in The New York Times and The Washington Post before he was caught.

His brother recognized Kaczynski's tone in the screed, tipped off the FBI, and Kaczynski was arrested in a cabin outside Lincoln, Montana.

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Similarly, Luigi Mangione, who allegedly shot the CEO of UnitedHealthcare in New York, was arrested five days later when someone recognized him at a McDonald's and called in a tip.

In Guthrie's case, the release of the surveillance footage and Savannah Guthrie's plea for the public's help is the same strategy, O'Toole said.

Someone who knows the suspect may have noticed them acting unusual, such as not going to work, following the news closely or making offhand comments about the case.

If they recognize anything familiar about the masked person on camera, that could confirm their suspicions and lead them to tip off investigators, O'Toole said.

DNA and the University of Idaho murders

Investigators said DNA from blood on Guthrie's porch matched her, and O'Toole said investigators will still be casing the area for DNA from a possible suspect, including hair or fingerprints, which have helped solve other cases.

Bryan Kohberger, the criminology student who sneaked into a home and stabbed four University of Idaho students to death in 2022, was arrested after trace DNA was found on a knife sheath left on one of the victim's bed.

That DNA didn't yield any results from standard law enforcement databases, so investigators turned to publicly available genealogy services, searching for possible relatives.

After homing in on Kohberger by tracking his car using surveillance footage near the crime scene, investigators got a Q-tip from the trash outside his family's home and tested the DNA.

It matched the father of the person whose DNA was on the knife sheath.

Strange encounters and the Brown University shooting

In the days after a shooter killed two people at Brown University in 2025, investigators didn't appear any closer to identifying the suspect.

When police eventually shared images of a person of interest, a man started posting on Reddit that he recognized the person and that police should look into a gray Nissan.

The source, named only as "John" in a police affidavit, told investigators that he'd bumped into a man in the bathroom and thought his clothing was "inappropriate and inadequate for the weather." John saw him again outside acting nervous and jumpy near the Nissan.

John's tip about the car helped identify the shooter, Claudio Neves Valente, six days later, leading investigators to a storage unit where he was found dead from suicide.

It's unclear if John took the \$50,000 reward for information that was offered in the case. The FBI is offering the same amount for information in Guthrie's apparent abduction and hoping a tipster like John may come forward. The Pima County Sheriff's Department said Wednesday that they have received nearly 18,000 calls since the day Guthrie was reported missing.

Connor Hagan, a spokesperson for the FBI, said in a previous statement: "Someone has that one piece of information that can help us bring Nancy home."

US stocks wobble after feeling both the upside and downside of a strong jobs report

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks felt both the upside and downside Wednesday of a surprisingly strong report that said the nation's unemployment rate improved last month.

After initially rising toward an all-time high, the S&P 500 flipped between gains and losses before finishing with a minuscule dip of less than 0.1%. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 66 points, or 0.1%, and the Nasdaq composite fell 0.2%. Both also erased early gains.

Treasury yields, meanwhile, remained higher in the bond market after the Labor Department said U.S. employers added 130,000 jobs to their payrolls last month, more than economists expected. That helped calm worries from a day earlier, when a discouraging report suggested spending by U.S. households, the main engine of the economy, may be stalling.

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On one hand, the strong data on jobs raises hopes that the U.S. economy can remain solid and keep driving big profits for companies. Stocks in the energy and raw-material industries jumped to some of the bigger gains in the S&P 500, for example, and their profits tend to be closely tied to the health of the economy.

Exxon Mobil climbed 2.6%. Smurfit Westrock jumped 9.9% even though the packaging company reported a weaker profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. It gave financial targets for the next five years that some analysts found encouraging.

But on the other hand for the broad stock market, the stronger-than-expected jobs data could also keep the Federal Reserve on hold when it comes to cuts to interest rates. And higher rates can drag on prices for stocks and all kinds of other investments.

After Wednesday's report showed the tick down for the U.S. unemployment rate, traders pushed back their bets for when the Fed could begin cutting interest rates again, according to data from CME Group. The bets slid further into the summer, after a new Fed chair is set to take the helm.

If Wednesday's jobs report had shown a rise in the unemployment rate or other worsening for the job market, that could have pushed the Fed to resume its cuts more quickly.

Lower rates would give the economy and financial markets a boost, though at the cost of potentially worsening inflation. The next monthly update on inflation at the U.S. consumer level is arriving on Friday, and it will likely be another big influence on the Fed's plans.

After the jobs report, the yield on the 10-year Treasury edged up to 4.17% from 4.16% late Tuesday. The two-year Treasury yield, which moves more closely with expectations for Fed moves, climbed more. It rose to 3.51% from 3.45%.

To be sure, all is still not perfectly clear for the U.S. economy. Wednesday's report included major revisions, which said employers added just 181,000 jobs for all of last year. That's less than a third of the previously reported 584,000, and it's the weakest showing for a year since 2020, when COVID-19 shut down the economy.

The overall jobs report nevertheless looked to be an encouraging signal for the economy.

"We all knew there would be downward revisions, but these were better than expected," Brian Jacobsen, chief economic strategist at Annex Wealth Management, said of the markdowns for 2025.

On Wall Street, Robinhood Markets fell 8.8% even though the trading and investment app reported a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Its revenue fell short of forecasts, and analysts highlighted Robinhood's forecast for expenses in 2026, along with concerns about how long a slowdown in crypto trading will last.

Crypto prices have plunged recently, and bitcoin's price fell toward \$67,000 Wednesday. It's lost close to half its value since setting a record in October.

Moderna dropped 3.5% after saying the U.S. Food and Drug Administration is refusing to consider its application for a new flu vaccine made with Nobel Prize-winning mRNA technology. It's the latest sign of the FDA's heightened scrutiny of vaccines under Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Kraft Heinz recovered from an early loss and added 0.4% after CEO Steve Cahillane said he's pausing the company's planned split into two businesses as he tries to return it to profitable growth. He also announced a \$600 million investment across marketing, sales and research and development.

All told, the S&P 500 edged down by 0.34 to 6,941.47 points. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 66.74 to 50,121.40, and the Nasdaq composite fell 36.01 to 23,066.47.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed in Europe following a better showing in Asia.

The United Kingdom's FTSE 100 gained 1.1%, and South Korea's Kospi rose 1% for two of the bigger moves.

Winter Olympics recap: Franjo von Allmen wins his 3rd gold, Chloe Kim and NHL stars get rolling

By JAMES ELLINGWORTH AP Sports Writer

MILAN (AP) — Franjo von Allmen of Switzerland looks like a breakout star of the Milan Cortina Olympics after winning his third gold medal. Jordan Stolz has one gold and is targeting three more. And Chloe Kim and a bunch of NHL stars are just getting started.

Von Allmen won the super-G in Bormio on Wednesday to become the third man with three victories in Alpine skiing at one Winter Games. It hadn't been done since 1968.

That's not a priority for von Allmen, though. He said he's just staying in the moment. As for history, "maybe in a few years it will be important for me," he added.

Von Allmen won the downhill on Saturday and paired with Tanguy Nef to win the team combined Monday. Skating and waiting for Stolz

Jordan Stolz won the first of what could be four gold medals at these Winter Olympics in men's 1,000-meter speedskating.

The 21-year-old from Wisconsin set an Olympic record with his time but had to wait longer than usual for his victory to be confirmed because another skater was given a do-over after being bumped during his race.

When Joep Wennermars of the Netherlands failed to beat Stolz, it was time for the American to take a delayed victory lap.

Ice dancing favorites beaten by French duo

American ice dancers Madison Chock and Evan Bates sought gold but ended up with silver as they were upset by France's Laurence Fournier Beaudry and Guillaume Cizeron.

Cizeron became the first skater to win back-to-back ice dance gold with different partners. The Canadian team of Piper Gilles and Paul Poirier took bronze ahead of Italian and British contenders.

NHL stars back on Olympic ice

The puck dropped on men's hockey on Wednesday, marking the return of NHL players to the Games for the first time since 2014.

It started with the Juraj Slafkovsky show, part two.

The Slovakian forward who lit up the 2022 Olympics as a 17-year-old tournament MVP returned as an NHL star with the Montreal Canadiens and picked up where he left off.

Slafkovsky finished with two goals, including the tournament opener, and one assist as Slovakia upset 2022 gold medalist Finland 4-1 in the first game of the preliminary round.

The one team without NHL players, host nation Italy, pushed Sweden hard in a 5-2 loss. It was a one-goal game with five minutes remaining.

The NHL opted not to participate in the Pyeongchang Olympics of 2018, and pandemic-related scheduling issues prompted the league to skip the Beijing Games in 2022.

Kim off to a flying start

The halfpipe three-peat attempt began promisingly for Chloe Kim on Wednesday as she finished first in qualifying while wearing a shoulder brace.

After a shoulder injury disrupted her buildup to the Games, Kim credited her muscle memory and a "very well-behaved" shoulder for getting her through to the 12-athlete final on Thursday.

Elsewhere in the mountains, Elizabeth Lemley and Jaelin Kauf won gold and silver for the United States in women's freestyle moguls skiing.

Host nation Italy's luge team won two gold medals in one evening, first in the new event of women's doubles, then an hour later in men's doubles. That put the Italian medal count for the Milan Cortina Games at 13, tied with Norway for the most. The U.S. has 12.

Jens Luraas Oftebro of Norway overtook rivals and plowed through deep, slushy snow for gold in the Nordic combined normal hill event. And in the women's 15-kilometer individual biathlon, Julia Simon became the first Frenchwoman to win gold and teammate Lou Jeanmonnot took silver.

Team Canada 'heartbroken' after shooting

The Canadian team at the Winter Olympics issued a statement saying it is "heartbroken" after waking to the news of a deadly school shooting in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia.

"Our thoughts are with the families who have lost loved ones, those who are injured, and the entire Tumbler Ridge community," the statement said.

A standoff between Ukrainian athlete Vladyslav Heraskevych and the International Olympic Committee rumbled on as he again trained in a helmet decorated with portraits of Ukrainians killed in Russian attacks, many of them athletes. The IOC says it won't allow the helmet in competition.

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 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."

Collins has also broadly backed Trump's agenda and his nominees, even though she voted against his 2025 tax and spending bill.

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.

Jordan Stolz opens his bid for 4 golds by winning the 1,000 meters in an Olympic-record time

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP National Writer

MILAN (AP) — Jordan Stolz pictured this moment most of his life, ever since he was 5 and learning to skate on a frozen pond in his Wisconsin backyard after falling in love with speedskating while watching the 2010 Winter Olympics on TV — and hoping to one day step atop the podium himself.

So what was the little hassle of a 10-plus-minute wait to make sure this first speedskating gold medal officially would be his Wednesday? Especially because, as Stolz would say later, "I didn't think anybody was going to beat that time."

Stolz needed to hold off on a celebratory lap with a U.S. flag until another competitor got the chance for a re-skate, then soon enough was able to smile while leaning forward to receive his gold for winning the men's 1,000 meters at the Milan Cortina Games in an Olympic-record time thanks to a blistering closing stretch.

"It was just a feeling like, 'You finally did it,'" said the 21-year-old Stolz, who was trailing silver medalist Jenning de Boo of the Netherlands with 400 meters to go. "It almost doesn't seem real, right?"

Stolz's father, Dirk, plowed away snow on their pond all those years ago so that little Jordan and his older sister, Hannah, could skate — over the objections of their mother, Jane. When they all gathered after Wednesday's race, Dirk said, "He showed me (the medal) and said, 'I finally got it!'"

Now Stolz will hope to keep going and add to his collection of trophies: He's entered in three more events in Milan.

"Well, it's hard to say, 'Oh, I could win four gold medals,' when you haven't won one yet. Now that I've won one, I kind of know what to expect and can kind of feel like how the crowd is, with the energy, and the ice," he said. "So it's going to be good."

Skating in the next-to-last pairing at Milano Speed Skating Stadium, a temporary facility constructed for these Olympics, Stolz finished in 1 minute, 6.28 seconds.

That didn't threaten his world record of 1:05.37 but did better the Olympic standard of 1:07.18 that stood since 2002. All four long track speedskating races in Milan have been won in the fastest times ever turned in at an Olympics.

De Boo ended up a half-second slower; no one else came within a full second of Stolz. Zhongyan Ning of China got the bronze.

"He's just a killer on the last lap," said Bob Corby, Stolz's coach.

Stolz's medal was his first at this level: As a 17-year-old at the 2022 Beijing Games, he was 14th in the 1,000 and 13th in the 500.

It also was the first medal of any sort in the men's 1,000 for the United States since the 2010 Vancouver Games. That's when Shani Davis — a mentor and, at one point, a coach to Stolz — won his second

consecutive gold in that event, and Chad Hedrick got the bronze. Dutch men had won the 1,000 at each of the past three Winter Games.

With Eric Heiden, the only speedskater to win five golds at one Olympics, sitting next to rapper Snoop Dogg in the stands, Stolz pulled ahead of de Boo by the time one full lap was done. Then de Boo moved in front and was still there at the 600-meter mark.

But Stolz zoomed ahead around the final corner and crossed the line first with his hands on his knees, then rose for an understated pump of his right hand.

"I had high hopes. But his last lap is just incredible," de Boo said. "I heard him coming at 800 meters, and then I just knew it was too late."

Stolz entered the day as a big favorite.

He holds the 1,000 world record and is a two-time world champion at the distance. Plus, he went 5-for-5 on the World Cup circuit this season in the event, confirming his status as the man to beat at the Olympics.

"Everything up until today was nothing. It was just: 'Eh, it's a regular meet.' We get ready. We get set. We rest. And we're skating good in practices," Corby said. "After he sat down after the race, he was kind of like, 'Wow. This is a pretty big deal.' I was like, 'Yeah, it is.'"

Up next: Stolz races the 500 on Saturday, the 1,500 on Feb. 19, and the mass start on Feb. 21.

Stolz's name is often mentioned alongside that of Heiden, the only speedskater to claim five long track gold medals at a single Winter Games. At the 1980 Lake Placid Olympics, Heiden won the 500, 1,000, 1,500, 5,000 and 10,000.

Stolz is flattered to hear such comparisons but also quick to note that what Heiden accomplished was remarkably different, covering five distances. Stolz might add the longer events to his repertoire down the road; for now, he is the best there is in the sprints.

"One gold medal is huge enough, right? It would be super nice to have two, three, right?" Stolz said. "But just having one means a lot."

Lindsey Vonn says she had a 'successful' 3rd surgery on broken leg following crash at the Olympics

By ANDREW DAMPF AP Sports Writer

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, Italy (AP) — Lindsey Vonn had a "successful" third surgery on her broken left leg following her downhill crash at the Olympics, the American skier said Wednesday

Vonn posted an update on Instagram that included photos of her giving a thumbs up sign in her hospital bed with a metal frame attached to her leg.

"I had my 3rd surgery today and it was successful. Success today has a completely different meaning than it did a few days ago," Vonn said. "I'm making progress and while it is slow, I know I'll be ok."

The 41-year-old Vonn crashed 13 seconds into her run during Sunday's race at the Milan Cortina Games and was airlifted off the course by helicopter. She said late Monday she had suffered a "complex tibia fracture that is currently stable but will require multiple surgeries to fix properly."

Nine days before Sunday's crash, Vonn ruptured the ACL in her left knee in another crash. Even before then, all eyes had been on her as the feel-good story heading into the Games for her comeback after nearly six years of retirement.

Andrea Panzeri, the chief physician for the Italian Winter Sports Federation, told The Associated Press that some fractures require what he called external fixation to keep the leg stable, often until a further surgery is performed.

Panzeri has operated on Sofia Goggia, Federica Brignone and other top skiers after serious injuries for years but he cautioned that he has not examined Vonn or seen her X-rays, so he does not have direct knowledge of her injuries. He said he is not surprised by what he saw in the picture she posted, though: "In our line of work nothing should surprise you, because every situation is different."

Vonn's father, Alan Kildow, told the AP on Monday that she is surrounded by family "at all times" at the

hospital in Treviso where she is being treated.

"Thankful for all of the incredible medical staff, friends, family, who have been by my side and the beautiful outpouring of love and support from people around the world," Vonn said in her latest post. "Also, huge congrats to my teammates and all of the Team USA athletes who are out there inspiring me and giving me something to cheer for."

Vonn, who holds the record of 12 World Cup victories in Cortina, returned to ski racing in December 2024, following surgery to insert a partial titanium replacement in her right knee in April of that year.

She was the top speed racer this season entering the Olympics, winning two downhills and finishing on the podium in seven of the eight World Cup races that she finished. She came fourth in the other one.

Vonn's post had thousands of comments just a few hours after it went up. Hall of Fame tennis star Billie Jean King wrote, "Forever the champion! Feel better soon." Seven-time Olympic track champion Allyson Felix added, "sending you lots of love."

Teammate Bella Wright, who lost control in the same spot of the downhill course during Tuesday's combined race, commented of Vonn, "the baddest there is."

Studies test whether gene-editing can fix high cholesterol. For now, take your medicine

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Scientists are testing an entirely new way to fight heart disease: a gene-editing treatment that might offer a one-time fix for high cholesterol.

It's very early stage research, tried in only a few dozen people so far. But gene-editing approaches being developed by two companies show hints that switching off certain genes could dramatically lower artery-clogging cholesterol, raising hopes of one day being able to prevent heart attacks without having to take pills.

"People want a fix, not a bandage," said Dr. Luke Laffin, a preventive cardiologist at the Cleveland Clinic. After co-authoring a promising study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, he said he was flooded with queries about how to participate in the next clinical trial.

Everyone needs a certain amount of cholesterol. But too much, especially a "bad" kind called LDL cholesterol, builds plaque in the artery walls and is a main driver of heart attacks and strokes. Cardiovascular disease is the nation's — and world's — leading killer.

Millions take cholesterol-lowering medicines such as statins, the cornerstone of treatment. But many still struggle to lower their cholesterol enough, and sticking with the drugs for life is difficult, with some quitting because of side effects.

Why genes matter for cholesterol

While your diet contributes, your liver produces the cholesterol your body needs, according to the American Heart Association, and genes play a role in how it's managed. Some people inherit genes that trigger very high cholesterol. Others have cholesterol that's naturally extremely low over their lifetime and seldom develop heart disease.

Years ago, Dr. Kiran Musunuru, a cardiologist now at the University of Pennsylvania, reported some of those lucky people harbor a mutation that turns off a gene named *ANGPTL3*, lowering their levels of both LDL cholesterol and another bad fat, triglycerides.

Separately, geneticists at UT Southwestern Medical Center found still other people's extremely low LDL was due to loss of function of another gene named *PCSK9*.

"It's a natural experiment in what would happen if we actually changed the gene," said the Cleveland Clinic's Dr. Steven Nissen, who with Laffin oversaw an *ANGPTL3* study funded by Swiss-based CRISPR Therapeutics.

What early gene-editing studies can and can't show

Today there are injected medicines that block proteins produced by the *PCSK9* and *ANGPTL3* genes in the liver, thus helping the body clear away cholesterol. The new research uses CRISPR, the Nobel Prize-

winning gene-editing tool, to try switching off one of those genes in people at high risk from uncontrolled cholesterol.

In one study, 15 adults received a single infusion of tiny particles that carried the CRISPR tool to the liver, switching off the ANGPTL3 gene inside that organ's cells. Within two weeks, those getting the highest dose saw their LDL and triglyceride levels both drop by half, Laffin and Nissen reported in November.

Boston's Verve Therapeutics, a subsidiary of pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly, earlier reported that its PCSK9-targeted editing infusion cut LDL cholesterol by a similar amount in a small study.

Both companies' initial studies were done in Australia, the U.K. and other countries. A Lilly spokesperson said U.S. study sites are opening. Nissen said a next-step study of CRISPR Therapeutics' approach should start later this year, with sites yet to be announced. Each company is pursuing several gene targets.

While people with naturally nonfunctioning ANGPTL3 or PCSK9 have no apparent bad consequences, longer studies of the gene-editing approach in far more people are needed, said Penn's Musunuru, who co-founded Verve. He said some participants in an earlier Verve study have been tracked for two years, their cholesterol still lowered.

Gene editing is considered permanent. If edited liver cells reproduce, their progeny contain the altered genes, and Musunuru said the edits have lasted a lifetime in mice.

There are major safety questions to be answered, cautioned Dr. Joseph Wu of Stanford University, who wasn't involved in either study. CRISPR-based therapies for any disease haven't been used enough to know long-term safety — and the particles carrying the gene-editing tool can irritate or inflame the liver, he said. Another unknown is whether gene-editing hits only the intended target.

That's why for now, studies largely target people at very high risk.

What to do now for better heart health

Whether gene editing eventually pans out, the American Heart Association lists eight key factors for better heart health that everyone should work on now.

Some involve lifestyle. Eat a heart-healthy diet with lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats like those found in nuts. Saturated fats can increase cholesterol while healthier diets can lower LDL levels and raise levels of HDL, the so-called good cholesterol.

Also, be physically active, as exercise can increase good HDL and help lower triglycerides.

Maintain a healthy weight. If you smoke, quit. And get enough sleep.

On the medical side, control your blood pressure — levels measuring less than 120 over 80 are optimal. Diabetes also harms the heart so control your blood sugar.

As for cholesterol, keeping levels of that "bad" LDL kind at 100 is considered fine for healthy people. But once people develop high cholesterol or heart disease, guidelines recommend lowering it to at least 70, even lower for those at very high risk.

When lifestyle changes aren't enough, statin pills like Lipitor, Crestor or their cheap generic equivalents block some of the liver's production of cholesterol and are highly effective at lowering LDL. There are a few other pill options for people who need additional help or can't take statins, as well as some injected medicines.

The Latest: Trump administration ties El Paso airspace closure to Mexican cartel drones

By The Associated Press undefined

The Federal Aviation Administration reopened the airspace around El Paso International Airport in Texas on Wednesday morning, just hours after it announced a 10-day closure that would have grounded all flights to and from the airport.

The FAA announced in a social media post that it has lifted the temporary closure of the airspace over El Paso, saying there was no threat to commercial aviation and all flights would resume.

The shutdown was expected to create significant disruptions given the duration and the size of the met-

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ropolitan area. El Paso, a border city with a population of nearly 700,000 and larger when the surrounding metro area is included, is a hub of cross-border commerce alongside the neighboring city of Ciudad Juárez in Mexico.

Here's the latest:

Ranking Democrat on Senate Armed Services criticizes 'conflicting accounts' for airport closure

The ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services committee is demanding answers for the El Paso airport's abrupt and temporary closure, while criticizing inconsistent statements from within the Trump administration on what went wrong.

"The conflicting accounts coming from different parts of the federal government only deepen public concern and raise serious questions about coordination and decision-making," said Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island.

Reed called on the Defense Department and Federal Aviation Administration to "immediately present the facts, reconcile these discrepancies, and assure the American people that airspace security decisions are being made responsibly, transparently, and with public safety as the highest priority."

Security adviser calls airspace closure 'extremely, extremely rare'

Rich Davis, a senior security adviser at risk mitigation company International SOS and former chief security officer at United Airlines, said a prolonged airspace closure is highly unusual.

"It's extremely, extremely rare for an airport to shut down for any length of time due to a security issue," he said. Davis added that the initial 10-day timeline was especially striking because even a closure lasting several days is uncommon.

Last year's midair collision in metro D.C. highlighted lack of coordination between FAA, Pentagon

The investigation into last year's midair collision between an airliner and an Army helicopter that killed 67 highlighted the lack of coordination between the FAA and Pentagon.

The National Transportation Safety Board said the FAA and the Army didn't share safety data about the alarming number of close calls around Reagan National Airport with each other and failed to address the risks.

El Paso airport calls itself 'gateway to West Texas, Southern New Mexico and Northern Mexico'

El Paso International Airport calls itself the "gateway to West Texas, Southern New Mexico and Northern Mexico."

Forty-three flights, totaling more than 5,900 seats, were scheduled to depart from the airport Wednesday, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium. Seven departing flights had been canceled as of midday Wednesday, per flight tracker FlightAware — as well as another 7 flights scheduled to arrive at the airport. About a dozen more were delayed.

The majority of domestic passengers traveling through El Paso International flying are with Southwest, which the airport said accounts for more than 53% of its market share in November, the latest month with data available. Other carriers operating out of the airport include American, United, Frontier and Delta.

Cirium found that a total of 325,000 passengers flew into and out of El Paso International in November. And at this time last year, the firm said there were 229,244 total departing and arriving passengers in February 2025.

Duckworth blames air space closure on 'lack of coordination' by Trump administration

U.S. Sen. Tammy Duckworth, who is a former Army helicopter pilot serving on committees focused on aviation and the Armed Services, said this is yet another example of "the lack of coordination that's endemic in this Trump administration."

Duckworth said she is "hearing now is that it was a CBP and DoD laser based counter drone test that was not coordinated prior to them conducting the test with the FAA. So I have all sorts of questions."

"They should have coordinated all of that before they endangered the flying public," said Duckworth, the Illinois Democrat.

Pentagon-FAA dispute over lasers to thwart cartel drones led to airspace closure, AP sources say

The sudden and surprising airspace closure over El Paso stemmed from the Pentagon's plans to test a laser for use in shooting down drones used by Mexican drug cartels, according to three people familiar

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with the situation who were granted anonymity to share sensitive details.

That caused friction with the FAA, which wanted to ensure commercial air safety and the two agencies sought to coordinate, according to two of the people.

Still, despite a meeting scheduled later this month to discuss the issue, the Pentagon wanted to go ahead and test it — prompting the FAA to shutter the airspace. It was not clear if the laser was ultimately deployed.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said earlier that a response to an incursion by Mexican cartel drones had prompted the airspace closure and that the threat had been neutralized. Drone incursions are not uncommon along the southern border.

— Seung Min Kim, Ben Finley, Mary Clare Jalonick

Airspace closure throws travel plans into chaos on both sides of border

María Aracelia was pushing two roller suitcases across the pedestrian bridge to El Paso Wednesday morning from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. She had a round-trip flight to Illinois scheduled for the afternoon.

"The (U.S.) government's closure is affecting a lot of people indirectly who have to leave for business or other reasons," she said.

She called the airline after receiving a text message saying there was something up with her flight around 4 a.m. local time. The airline told her the airspace would be closed for 10 days.

"So I had to look for alternatives for buses to go because I had to look (for flights) from another airport," she said. "This is stressful and there isn't time to make so many changes, especially if you need to get back for work."

She had just heard the restrictions were lifted, so was headed to the El Paso airport.

Rep. Gonzales says a similar shutdown happened last year

U.S. Rep. Tony Gonzales, a Republican whose district stretches along more than 800 miles (1,287 kilometers) of the Texas border, including parts of El Paso, said a similar shutdown happened in November in Hudspeth County, which is about 80 miles (129 kilometers) away.

He called drone activity by drug cartels a daily experience along the border.

"For any of us who show live and work along the border, daily drone incursions by criminal organizations is everyday life for us. It's a Wednesday for us," Gonzales said.

'Keeping our communities informed and safe is critical'

U.S. Sen. Ben Ray Lujan of New Mexico, a Democrat, said in a statement that he was demanding answers from the FAA and the Trump administration "about why the airspace was closed in the first place without notifying appropriate officials, leaving travelers to deal with unnecessary chaos."

He added that "keeping our communities informed and safe is critical."

Airspace closure redirected medical evacuations to New Mexico

"Medical evacuation flights were forced to divert to Las Cruces," El Paso Mayor Renard Johnson said at a Wednesday morning news conference. "All aviation operations were grounded, including emergency flights. This was a major and unnecessary disruption, one that has not occurred since 9/11."

Las Cruces is about 45 miles (72 kilometers) from El Paso.

Johnson added that a significant amount of necessary surgical equipment en route from Dallas and other parts of the country "did not show up here in El Paso."

Congresswoman says information from federal government 'does not add up'

U.S. Rep. Veronica Escobar, a Democrat whose district includes El Paso, had urged the FAA to lift the restrictions in a statement Wednesday morning, saying neither her office, the city of El Paso nor airport operations received advance notice.

"I believe the FAA owes the community and the country an explanation as to why this happened so suddenly and abruptly and was lifted so suddenly and abruptly," she said during a morning news conference, adding that there was "nothing extraordinary about any drone incursion into the U.S. that I'm aware of."

Later, she said, "The information coming from the federal government does not add up."

Sheinbaum reports 'no information' on drone use along the border today

Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum said in her morning press briefing that her government was going

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to look into "the exact causes of why they closed" the flights.

Asked about the explanation given by U.S. officials, she said, "There is no information about the use of drones on the border." She noted that if U.S. authorities have more information, they should contact Mexico's government.

"There's no need for speculation, we're going to have information, and as always, continue our permanent communication" with the U.S., she said.

Mexico and US security officials slated to meet in Washington

Mexican defense and navy secretaries will meet with Northern Command officials in Washington on Wednesday in a meeting attended by several other countries, according to Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum.

Sheinbaum said during her morning news conference that Mexican officials would "listen" in the meeting.

"They are not taking any position other than the one we already know, which is the defense of sovereignty," she said. "We will inform you in due course."

She noted that Mexican Security Secretary Omar García Harfuch, who has spearheaded her government's strategy to combat cartels, will also meet with American security officials tomorrow.

The meetings are part of ongoing security talks between the two governments.

DHS official testified before Congress last year about cartel usage of drones

Steven Willoughby, the deputy director of the counter-drone program at the Department of Homeland Security, told lawmakers in July that nearly every day cartels are using drones to try to bring drugs across the U.S.-Mexico border and surveil Border Patrol agents.

More than 27,000 drones were detected within 500 meters (1,640 feet) of the southern border in the last six months of 2024, he testified, most flying late at night.

Homeland Security has said agents have seized thousands of pounds of methamphetamine, fentanyl and other drugs that cartels have tried to bring across the border by drone over the past few years.

How Mexican cartels use drones

Mexican cartels have long used drones to traffic drugs, control migrant crossings along the border and wage war with rival cartels and authorities.

Mexico first issued an international alert about the use of remote-controlled aircraft in 2010, and the practice has only continued to expand. Often rigged commercial drones, the aircraft offer cartels an advantage to subtly carry out their illegal activities without risking their own necks like they would in the past.

Between 2012 and 2014, U.S. authorities detected 150 remote-controlled aircraft crossing the border with Mexico. A decade later, in 2022, U.S. Customs and Border Protection detected 10,000 drone incursions in the Rio Grande Valley area alone, according to a 2025 report.

This report also indicated that more recently, Mexican cartels seem to be inclined to smuggle fentanyl in drones, which can carry up to 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of cargo.

Southwest Airlines is resuming operations at El Paso International Airport

"Our travel advisory for customers remains active and we encourage customers to confirm their flight's status on Southwest.com or the Southwest app. Nothing is more important to Southwest than the safety of its customers and employees," the airline said in an updated statement.

'There is no danger to commercial travel in the region'

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said in a post on the social platform X that the FAA and Defense Department "acted swiftly to address a cartel drone incursion. The threat has been neutralized and there is no danger to commercial travel in the region."

He said normal flights are resuming.

Concern and calls for autonomy in neighboring Ciudad Juárez, Mexico

Thor Salayandia, head of Mexico's Border Business Association, explained that many Mexican maquilas — factories that produce goods for mostly U.S. consumers — said their businesses depend on the El Paso airport to ship their products.

Salayandia, the head of his family's auto-parts manufacturing business, added that Mexican authorities should consider bolstering their airport in Juárez so as not be as dependent on the whims of their north-

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ern neighbor, coming on top of calls for more economic autonomy in the wake of Trump's tariff threats. "Nothing like this has ever happened in the region," he said. "There's a lot of confusion."

An administration official says airspace closure was tied to cartel drones

A Trump administration official said the airspace over El Paso was closed after Mexican cartel drones breached the airspace, but said that the Defense Department took action to disable the drones.

Both the FAA and Defense Department have determined there is no threat to commercial travel, said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss a national security issue.

The official did not say how many drones were involved or what specifically was done to disable them.

Associated Press journalist Darlene Superville contributed to this report from Washington.

FAA lifts temporary closure of airspace over El Paso

The Federal Aviation Administration reopened the airspace around El Paso International Airport in Texas on Wednesday morning, just hours after it announced a 10-day closure that would have grounded all flights to and from the airport.

The FAA said in a social media post that it has lifted the temporary closure of the airspace over El Paso, saying there was no threat to commercial aviation and that all flights will resume.

The shutdown announced just hours earlier "for special security reasons" had been expected to create significant disruptions given the duration and the size of the metropolitan area.

Airport travelers have been left stranded

Local newscasts showed travelers with luggage lining up at airline ticket counters and car rental desks hours after flights were grounded in El Paso.

The closure has left stranded travelers with few nearby options. The closest major U.S. airport is in Albuquerque, New Mexico, more than 270 miles (434.5 kilometers) away.

El Paso borders Mexico's Ciudad Juárez

Ciudad Juárez is home to about 1.5 million people. Like many border-spanning communities, some residents are accustomed to using facilities like airports on both sides of the border, depending on where they are traveling.

The city exploded in size in recent decades as free trade agreements spurred a boom in assembly plants that offer less-expensive labor and the advantage of easy access to the U.S. market. Nearly 97% of the goods produced in Juárez's plants go to the United States, according to Mexico's Economic Ministry.

That easy access to the U.S. has also made Juárez, like other border cities, attractive to Mexico's drug cartels that seek control in order to safeguard their smuggling routes for drugs and migrants headed north and cash and guns coming south.

The Pentagon referred questions to the FAA

When asked if the ban was related to U.S. military operations, the Pentagon referred comment to the FAA in an email.

Southwest Airlines issues statement

Southwest Airlines said in the statement that it has paused all operations to and from El Paso at the direction of the FAA.

"We have notified affected customers and will share additional information as it becomes available," Southwest Airlines said. "Nothing is more important to Southwest than the safety of its customers and employees."

Democrat lawmaker says no warning was given for the restriction

Rep. Veronica Escobar, a Democrat whose district includes El Paso, urged the FAA to lift the restrictions in a statement Wednesday morning. There was no advance notice given to her office, the city of El Paso or airport operations, she said.

"The highly consequential decision by FAA to shut down the El Paso Airport for 10 days is unprecedented and has resulted in significant concern within the community," Escobar said. "From what my office and I have been able to gather overnight and early this morning there is no immediate threat to the community or surrounding areas."

Santa Teresa airspace also closed

A similar temporary flight restriction for special security reasons over the same time period was imposed around Santa Teresa, New Mexico, which is about 15 miles (24 kilometers) northwest of the El Paso airport.

FAA closes airspace around El Paso for 10 days, citing 'special security reasons'

The Federal Aviation Administration is closing the airspace around El Paso International Airport in Texas for 10 days, grounding all flights to and from the airport.

A notice posted on the FAA's website said the temporary flight restrictions were for "special security reasons," but did not provide additional details. The closure does not include Mexican airspace.

The airport said in an Instagram post that all flights to and from the airport would be grounded from late Tuesday through late on Feb. 20, including commercial, cargo and general aviation flights. It suggested travelers contact their airlines to get up-to-date flight information.

The shutdown is likely to create significant disruptions given the duration and the size of the metropolitan area. El Paso, a border city with a population of nearly 700,000 and larger when you include the surrounding metro area, is hub of cross-border commerce alongside neighboring Ciudad Juárez in Mexico.

The airport describes itself as the gateway to west Texas, southern New Mexico and northern Mexico. Southwest, United, American and Delta all operate flights there, among others.

Trump says he 'insisted' to Netanyahu that US talks with Iran continue as Israel wants them expanded

By FARNOUSH AMIRI, MELANIE LIDMAN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump met privately with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday and said he'd insisted that negotiations with Iran continue as the U.S. pushes for a nuclear deal with Tehran.

Netanyahu spent nearly three hours at the White House, but he entered and left out of the view of reporters and he and Trump didn't take questions. In a subsequent post on his social media site, however, the president called it "a very good meeting" and said "there was nothing definitive reached, other than I insisted that negotiations with Iran continue to see whether or not a Deal can be consummated."

"If it can, I let the Prime Minister know that will be a preference," Trump wrote. "If it cannot, we will just have to see what the outcome will be."

He added, "Last time Iran decided that they were better off not making a Deal" and were hit by U.S. airstrikes.

"Hopefully this time they will be more reasonable and responsible," Trump wrote.

In a statement, Netanyahu's office said the two leaders had discussed negotiations with Iran as well as developments in Gaza and around the region and they had "agreed to continue their close coordination and relationship."

Wednesday's meeting was their seventh during Trump's second term and took place as both the U.S. and Iran are projecting cautious optimism after holding indirect talks in Oman on Friday about how, once again, to approach negotiations over Iran's nuclear program.

Trump said on reaching an agreement with Iran in a Tuesday interview 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."

"It's got to be a good deal," he said then. "No nuclear weapons, no missiles."

Netanyahu pushes for more in Iran talks

Netanyahu's office said prior to the meeting that he wants the U.S.-Iran talks to include limits on Tehran's ballistic missile program and its support for militant groups such as Hamas and 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 leaving Israel.

But it remains unclear how much influence Netanyahu will have over Trump's approach toward Iran.

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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 is still reeling from the 12-day war with Israel in 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 has said repeatedly that U.S. strikes had "obliterated" Iran's nuclear capabilities, though the amount of damage remains unclear. Satellite photos of nuclear sites have recently captured activity, prompting concern that 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.

Washington 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 was also a topic

In his post, Trump said he and Netanyahu had "also discussed the tremendous progress being made in Gaza, and the Region in general."

Trump plans to hold the first meeting next week of his 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.

Earlier Wednesday, Netanyahu met with Secretary of State Marco Rubio at Blair House, across the street from the White House, and agreed to be part of the board.

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

Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, made similar comments, saying there will be consultations on "next steps." He also said the level of mistrust between the two longtime adversaries remains a "serious challenge facing the negotiations."

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

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.

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

Before the 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 was not 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.

Several ICE agents were arrested in recent months, showing risk of misconduct

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

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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.

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.

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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 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 detainees 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."

Surge of 130,000 US hires last month is a stark contrast to the weak hiring of 2025

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. employers added a surprisingly strong 130,000 jobs last month, but government revisions cut 2024-2025 U.S. payrolls by hundreds of thousands.

The unemployment rate fell to 4.3%, the Labor Department said Wednesday.

The report included major revisions that reduced the number of jobs created last year to just 181,000, a third the previously reported 584,000 and the weakest since the pandemic year of 2020.

The job market has been sluggish for months even though the economy is registering solid growth.

But the January numbers were much stronger than the 75,000 economists had expected. Healthcare accounted for nearly 82,000, or more than 60%, of last month's new jobs. Factories added 5,000, snapping a streak of 13 straight months of job losses. The federal government shed 34,000 jobs.

Average hourly wages rose a solid 0.4% from December to January.

The unemployment rate fell from 4.4% in December as the number of employed Americans rose and the number of unemployed fell.

"The surprisingly strong job gains in January were driven mainly by health care and social assistance," Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union, wrote in a commentary. "But it is enough to stabilize the job market and send the unemployment rate slightly lower. .. but it is stabilizing. That's an encouraging sign to start the year, especially after the hiring recession in 2025."

Weak hiring over the past year reflects the lingering impact of the high interest rates the Federal Reserve engineered in 2022 and 2023 to counter surging inflation, as well as Elon Musk's purge last year of the federal workforce. The chaos from President Donald Trump's erratic trade policies also made businesses less willing to hire.

Dreary numbers had been coming in ahead of Wednesday's report. Employers posted just 6.5 million job openings in December, fewest in more than five years.

Payroll processor ADP reported last week that private employers added an unexpectedly weak 22,000 jobs in January. And the outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas reported that companies slashed more than 108,000 jobs last month, the most since October and the worst January for job cuts since 2009.

Nicole Bachaud, a labor economist with ZipRecruiter, said new data Wednesday could signal "the start of a revival in the labor market."

Hiring is getting a boost, she noted, from three interest rate cuts by the Fed last year. Trump's tariffs are proving somewhat smaller and more predictable than they appeared last spring, giving employers more confidence to hire. Bachaud also noted that black unemployment, which she sees as a sign of where the overall job market might be headed, fell last month to 7.2%, lowest since July.

Samuel Tombs of Pantheon Macroeconomics remains skeptical, attributing January job gains partly to

unusually warm weather that boosted hiring. He noted that construction firms added a strong 33,000 jobs last month. "We think it is premature to conclude the labor market has decisively turned a corner," he wrote. Last year's sluggish job market didn't match the economy's performance.

From July to September, America's gross domestic product – its output of goods and services – galloped ahead at a 4.4% annual pace, the fastest in two years. Consumer spending was strong, and rising exports and tumbling imports boosted growth.

Economists are puzzling out whether job creation will eventually accelerate to catch up to strong growth, perhaps as President Donald Trump's tax cuts translate into big tax refunds that Americans start spending this year. But there are other possibilities. GDP growth could slow and fall into line with a weak labor market or advances in AI. Automation may mean that the economy grows without as many jobs.

At West Shore Home, a remodeling company in south central Pennsylvania with 3,000 employees, business is brisk. West Shore plans to hire about 200 workers in 2026, similar to last year.

Many homeowners can't afford to, or don't want to sell after locking in cheap mortgages years ago. Instead, they are improving the places they own.

As with many other businesses, artificial intelligence has arrived at West Shore Home. Jessica Bittinger, chief human resources officer, said the company is starting to use AI to simplify tasks such as scheduling projects. She doesn't expect the company to cut jobs because of AI, but she also believes she won't have to hire as many people in the future. "It's helping our employees work smarter, not harder," she said.

The jobs report Wednesday could lead the Fed to further delay more cuts to its key interest rate. Some Fed officials have specifically argued that last year's weak hiring is shows that borrowing costs are weighing on growth and discouraging companies from expanding. A pickup in hiring, if sustained, undercuts that view.

Fed officials signaled in December that they expect to reduce their key rate once more this year, while Wall Street investors expect two reductions, according to futures pricing.

Wednesday's report included the government's annual benchmark revisions, meant to take into account the more-accurate jobs numbers that employers report to state unemployment agencies. They cut 898,000 jobs from payrolls in the year ending March 2025.

The revisions, which can reflect more accurate information about businesses that opened or closed, trimmed the tally of jobs created from April through December last year to 120,000 (or 13,000 a month) from an originally reported 251,000 (or 28,000).

Despite recent high-profile layoffs, the unemployment rate has looked better than the hiring numbers.

That is partly because President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown has reduced the number of foreign-born people competing for work.

As a result, the number of new jobs that the economy needs to create to keep the unemployment rate from rising has tumbled. Researchers at the Brookings Institution believe it could now be as low as 20,000 and headed lower.

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 split-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 homes in the capital, Tehran, of "Death to the dictator!"

Meanwhile, President Masoud Pezeshkian got on stage at Azadi Square in Tehran and insisted that Iran

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is willing to negotiate over its nuclear program as fledgling talks with the U.S. 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 met Qatar's foreign minister in Doha 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 said Iran was "not seeking nuclear weapons" and is "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. "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

Iranian state TV 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.

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, which covers the Middle East.

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

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, 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 met in Qatar with Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani. Qatar 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. Larijani also met with officials of the Palestinian Hamas militant group, and in Oman with Tehran-backed Houthi rebels from Yemen.

Larijani told Qatar's Al Jazeera satellite news network that Iran did not receive any specific proposal from the U.S. in Oman, but acknowledged that there was an "exchange of messages."

Qatar has 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

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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 the 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. "We have an armada that is heading there and another one might be going," he said.

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.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance during a visit to Baku, Azerbaijan said the focus has been on reaching a deal through negotiations, but not ruling out other options if talks break down.

"He's going to have a lot of options, because we have the most powerful military in the world," he said.

What to know about the deadly shooting at a school in Canada

VANCOUVER, Canada (AP) — Ten people are dead after shootings at a school and home in remote northern British Columbia.

Canadian authorities say seven people died and more than 25 were wounded Tuesday in the shooting at Tumbler Ridge Secondary School. Two more people were found dead at a nearby home, and a woman believed by police to be the shooter also was found dead, apparently from a self-inflicted wound.

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

Here's what to know about the shooting:

What happened

Police reached the school within two minutes, British Columbia Premier David Eby told reporters. Royal Canadian Mounted Police said officers found six people dead and more than 25 wounded, including two in life-threatening condition.

A seventh person died while being transported to a hospital, and two more were found dead at a residence the authorities believe was connected to the attack. A suspect appeared to have died of a "self-inflicted injury."

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

Where it happened

Tumbler Ridge, population 2,700, is in the Canadian Rockies, more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) northeast of Vancouver and near the provincial border with Alberta. Tumbler Ridge Secondary School has 175 students from Grades 7 to 12, according to the provincial government website.

Mayor Darryl Krakowka called the community a "big family."

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

Who is responsible

Investigators have identified a female suspect but have not released her name. They said the motive remains unclear, and police are still investigating the connection between the shooter and the victims.

The prime minister's response

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Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney suspended a planned trip to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Munich, Germany.

He said in a social media post that he was devastated by the shooting.

"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.

Canada has strict gun laws

Canada's government has responded to previous mass shootings with gun control measures. It has banned more than 2,500 makes and models of assault-style firearms since May 2020, and a national freeze on the sale and purchase of handguns took effect in October 2022.

More than 12,000 assault-style weapons were collected and destroyed as part of a compensation program for businesses that ran between November 2024 and April 2025, according to government officials. A similar program for individuals opened last month to compensate gun owners who voluntarily turn in banned weapons by March 31.

Those who do not participate must dispose of or permanently deactivate their prohibited guns before an amnesty period ends Oct. 30.

New revelations from Epstein files take a toll across Europe

By The Associated Press undefined

GENEVA (AP) — The fallout from the Jeffrey Epstein saga is rippling through Europe.

Politicians, diplomats, officials and royals have seen reputations tarnished, investigations launched and jobs lost after a trove of more than 3 million pages of Epstein-related documents released by the U.S. Justice Department revealed their ties to the American financier and convicted sex offender who died behind bars in 2019.

Apart from the former Prince Andrew, none of them face claims of sexual wrongdoing. They have been toppled for maintaining friendly relationships with Epstein after he became a convicted sex offender.

Some experts note the reckoning in Europe's parliamentary democracies has been swifter and more severe — for now — than in the United States, where Epstein built his empire and hobnobbed with many American elites.

Here's a look at some of those in the Old World caught up in the new furor.

U.K. royal family

The former Prince Andrew, one of King Charles III's two brothers, is one of the most prominent names linked to the Epstein underworld involving the recruitment of underage girls for sex.

He has repeatedly denied any wrongdoing, but the scandalous headlines forced the king last year to strip Andrew of his royal titles, including that of prince. He is now known as Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor.

The recent document dump exposed the depth of ties between Mountbatten-Windsor and Epstein, revealing more unsavory details that have jolted the royal family, including an allegation that the former prince sent trade reports to Epstein in 2010.

Mountbatten-Windsor has been forced to move out of the royal estate that he occupied for more than two decades. Buckingham Palace says that the king is ready to support police in the event of an inquiry into whether Mountbatten-Windsor gave confidential information to Epstein.

British politics

The U.K. government has been shaken by new revelations about Peter Mandelson, a longtime Labour party stalwart who Prime Minister Keir Starmer brought out of the political wilderness as U.K. ambassador in Washington.

Mandelson was stripped of that plum post in September, after Epstein emails showed that they had had closer ties than the ambassador had initially acknowledged.

While Starmer himself isn't implicated in the files, his position has come under threat over appointing Mandelson. He has faced calls from his opponents and from within his own Labour party to resign —

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which he has so far refused.

Mandelson is now facing a criminal investigation, after the new files suggested that he may have shared market-sensitive information with Epstein a decade and a half ago.

Norway's crown princess

The new documents showed, among other things, that Norwegian Crown Princess Mette-Marit, the 52-year-old wife of Crown Prince Haakon, borrowed an Epstein-owned property in Palm Beach, Florida, for several days in 2013.

And in an email exchange between Epstein and Mette-Marit in 2012, he noted how he was in Paris "on my wife hunt," but "i prefer Scandinavians."

She replied that the French capital was "good for adultery," but "Scandis" were "better wife material."

Mette-Marit apologized this month for "the situation I have put the royal family in," and said: "Some of the content of the messages between Epstein and me does not represent the person I want to be."

Norway ex-prime minister

On Wednesday, the Council of Europe said that it was honoring a request from Norwegian authorities to waive the immunity from legal processes that its former secretary-general and ex-Prime Minister Thorbjørn Jagland, had enjoyed.

The council, a human rights body based in Strasbourg, France, said that such immunity aims "to safeguard the independent exercise of official functions," and wasn't intended for "personal benefit."

Based on revelations in the Epstein files, Norwegian authorities opened an investigation into "aggravated corruption" involving Jagland, who is also a former chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

Emails indicate that Jagland made plans to visit Epstein's island with his family in 2014.

Norwegian former ambassador

Mona Juul, Norway's ex-ambassador to Jordan, who was involved in Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts in the 1990s, resigned over the weekend, after reports said that Epstein left \$10 million to Juul's children in a will drawn up shortly before he died.

Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide said that a ministry investigation into her knowledge of and contact with Epstein will continue, and Juul will continue discussions with Norwegian officials to clarify the situation.

French ex-culture minister

Jack Lang, 86, stepped down as head of the Arab World Institute in Paris over alleged past financial links to Epstein that prompted a tax investigation.

Lang was summoned to appear Sunday at the French Foreign Ministry, which oversees the institute, but submitted his resignation.

The former culture minister under President Francois Mitterrand is the highest-profile figure in France impacted by the U.S. Justice Department's release of files on Jan. 30.

Slovakia ex-foreign minister

Prime Minister Robert Fico's national security adviser, Miroslav Lajčák, resigned over past communications with Epstein — including text messages in which they discussed "gorgeous" girls.

"When I'm reading the messages today, I feel like an idiot," Lajčák told Slovak public radio.

Lajčák, a former foreign minister and former president of the U.N. General Assembly, has denied any wrongdoing. He said that he considered Epstein a valuable contact who was accepted by the rich and powerful in the U.S.

"Those messages are nothing more than stupid male egos in action," Lajčák said. "Nothing more than words ever came of it."

Russia says it will stick to New START's nuclear arms limits as long as the US does

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — Moscow will observe the limits of the last nuclear arms pact with the United States that expired last week as long as it sees that Washington is doing the same, Russia's top diplomat said Wednesday.

The New START treaty expired Feb. 5, leaving no restrictions on the two largest atomic arsenals for the first time in more than a half-century and fueling fears of an unconstrained nuclear arms race.

Russian President Vladimir Putin last year declared his readiness to stick to the treaty's limits for another year if Washington followed suit, but U.S. President Donald Trump has argued that he wants China to be a part of a new pact — something Beijing has rejected.

Remarks to Russian lawmakers

Speaking Wednesday to the parliament's lower house, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that even though the U.S. hasn't responded to Putin's offer, Russia will respect New START's caps for as long as it sees that the U.S. observes them too.

"The moratorium declared by the president will remain as long as the U.S. doesn't exceed these limits," Lavrov told lawmakers. "We will act in a responsible and balanced way on the basis of analysis of the U.S. military policies."

He added that "we have reason to believe that the United States is in no hurry to abandon these limits and that they will be observed for the foreseeable future."

"We will closely monitor how things are actually unfolding," Lavrov said. "If our American colleagues' intention to maintain some kind of cooperation on this is confirmed, we will work actively on a new agreement and consider the issues that have remained outside strategic stability agreements."

US-Russia talks in Abu Dhabi

Lavrov's statement followed a report by Axios claiming Russian and U.S. negotiators discussed a possible informal deal to observe the pact's limits for at least six months during talks last week in Abu Dhabi. Asked to comment on the report, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday that any such extension could only be formal, adding that "it's hard to imagine any informal extension in this sphere."

At the same time, Peskov confirmed that Russian and U.S. negotiators discussed future nuclear arms control in Abu Dhabi where delegations from Moscow, Kyiv and Washington held two days of talks on a peace settlement in Ukraine.

"There is an understanding, and they talked about it in Abu Dhabi, that both parties will take responsible positions and both parties realize the need to start talks on the issue as soon as possible," Peskov said.

The limits of the New START treaty

New START, signed in 2010 by then-President Barack Obama and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, was the last of a long series of agreements between Moscow and Washington to limit their nuclear arsenals, starting with SALT I in 1972.

New START restricted each side to no more than 1,550 nuclear warheads on no more than 700 missiles and bombers deployed and ready for use. It was originally set to expire in 2021 but was extended for five years.

The pact envisioned sweeping on-site inspections to verify compliance, although they stopped in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and never resumed.

In February 2023, Putin suspended Moscow's participation, saying Russia couldn't allow U.S. inspections of its nuclear sites at a time when Washington and its NATO allies openly declared they wanted Moscow's defeat in Ukraine. But the Kremlin also emphasized it wasn't withdrawing from the pact altogether, pledging to respect its caps on nuclear weapons.

In September, Putin offered to keep the New START's limits for another year to buy time for both sides to negotiate a successor agreement.

Even as New START expired, the U.S. and Russia agreed on Feb. 5 to reestablish high-level, military-

to-military dialogue following a meeting between senior officials from both sides in Abu Dhabi, the U.S. military command in Europe said. The link was suspended in 2021 as relations grew increasingly strained before Russia sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

Lavrov cites 'excellent' Trump-Putin relationship

Lavrov described personal relations between Putin and Trump as "excellent," saying that their "mutual sympathy and respect helped create the atmosphere that allowed them to reach understanding" on specific issues during their August summit in Anchorage, Alaska, including Ukraine.

Asked by lawmakers about the U.S. bid to take control of Greenland, Lavrov said it doesn't concern Russia, but he noted that "in case of militarization of Greenland and the creation of military capabilities there aimed against Russia, we will take relevant countermeasures, including those of a military-technical character."

He described the U.S. ban for Russia, China and Iran to make any transactions with Venezuelan oil as "discriminatory," noting that Moscow expects Washington to develop relations on the basis of "mutual respect."

Lavrov emphasized that while the Kremlin hasn't yet launched a "strategic dialogue" with the Trump administration, "we are always open for such dialogue."

Shooter in Canada kills 9 people and injures 25 others at a school and home

By JIM MORRIS and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — A shooting at a school in remote northern British Columbia left seven people dead, while two more were found dead at a nearby home, Canadian authorities said Tuesday. A woman believed by police to be the shooter was also found dead, apparently from a self-inflicted wound.

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

Tumbler Ridge in the Canadian Rockies is more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) northeast of Vancouver, near the provincial 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, RCMP Superintendent Ken Floyd said. A seventh person died while being transported to a hospital, and two more were found dead at a residence the authorities believe was connected to the attack. A suspect appeared to have died of a "self-inflicted injury."

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 the connection between the shooter and the victims.

Tumbler Ridge Mayor Darryl Krakowka said it was "devastating" to learn how many had died in the community of 2,700, which he called a "big family."

"I broke down," Krakowka said. "I have lived here for 18 years. 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.

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The school district said the high school and Tumbler Ridge Elementary School will be closed for the rest of the week.

School shootings are rare in Canada, which has strict gun control laws.

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

"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 said he had spoken to Carney about 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.

Today in History: February 12 Clinton acquitted in impeachment trial

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Thursday, Feb. 12, the 43rd day of 2026. There are 322 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Feb. 12, 1999, the Senate voted to acquit President Bill Clinton in his impeachment trial on charges of perjury and obstruction of justice.

Also on this date:

In 1554, Lady Jane Grey, who had claimed the throne of England for nine days, and her husband, Guildford Dudley, were beheaded after being condemned for high treason.

In 1809, Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, was born in a log cabin at Sinking Spring Farm near Hodgenville, Kentucky.

In 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was founded in New York City.

In 1912, Pu Yi, the last emperor of China, abdicated, marking the end of the Qing Dynasty.

In 1914, groundbreaking took place for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

In 2002, former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milošević went on trial in The Hague, charged with genocide and war crimes. (Milošević died in 2006 before the trial could conclude.)

In 2016, Pope Francis embraced Patriarch Kirill in the first meeting between a pontiff and the head of the Russian Orthodox Church. The meeting in Havana was a landmark development in the 1,000-year schism that has divided Christianity.

In 2019, Mexico's most notorious drug lord, Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, was convicted in New York of running an industrial-scale drug smuggling operation, murder and money laundering. (Guzman is currently serving a life sentence at the federal supermax prison facility in Florence, Colorado.)

Today's birthdays: Film director Costa-Gavras is 93. Author Judy Blume is 88. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak is 84. Country singer Moe Bandy is 82. Musician Michael McDonald is 74. Actor-talk show host Arsenio Hall is 70. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh is 61. Actor Josh Brolin is 58. Filmmaker Darren Aronofsky is 57. Actor Christina Ricci is 46. Rapper Gucci Mane is 46. Actor Jennifer Stone is 33. Pro wrestler Jaida Parker is 27.