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Friday, Feb 13

NO SCHOOL
Senior Menu: Calico casserole, fruit, whole wheat bread.
3rd Grade Boys Basketball, 3:30 p.m., Elementary Gym

Morning Prayer

Dear God,
thank you for
this new day
Give me the
strength to
face everything
with a grateful
heart and a
smile that stays,
even through
the storms.
Amen.



Saturday, Feb. 14

Pickleball, 9:30 a.m., elementary gym
SDHSAA Class B State Boys Wrestling Duals in Pierre
Basketball Double Header: Moberidge-Pollock at Groton Area (Gym: B7th-12, B8th-1, GC-2, Arena: BC-12, JVGBB-1, JVBBB-2, VGBB-3:15, VBBB-4:30)

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1440

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

DHS Funding Deadline

Congress faces a midnight deadline to keep the Department of Homeland Security funded, with lawmakers still at odds over immigration enforcement and agency reforms as of this writing.

Democrats are seeking tighter limits and oversight of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection, citing recent operations and fatal encounters in Minneapolis. They want stronger accountability measures and new constraints on certain enforcement tactics. Republicans say they are open to some changes but argue that many Democratic proposals would put agents at risk and that Democrats are exploiting the funding deadline to push broader immigration policy shifts. Most of the federal government is funded through September, but DHS has been operating under a short-term patch that expires today. ICE would likely continue operations even during a DHS shutdown.

Separately, the Trump administration said it is ending its large-scale immigration enforcement surge in Minneapolis, returning to a smaller presence in the area.

'Endangerment' Ruling Repealed

The Environmental Protection Agency repealed its 2009 finding yesterday that greenhouse gases threaten human life and well-being. The so-called "endangerment" finding formed the basis for the agency's case to regulate emissions from vehicles, the oil and gas industry, and power plants.

In 2007, the Supreme Court ruled greenhouse gases are air pollutants and called on the EPA to determine whether they pose a public health threat. In response, the EPA found carbon dioxide, methane, and four other greenhouse gases met the criteria to be considered dangerous to humans under the 1970 Clean Air Act.

In yesterday's decision, the Trump administration claimed the Clean Air Act only covers pollution directly causing harm to humans and only where damage is near the site of pollution. Democratic governors said they would challenge the repeal, setting up legal battles expected to reach the Supreme Court.

North Korea's Next Leader

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, 42, plans to designate his teenage daughter as his successor, South Korea's spy agency told lawmakers yesterday.

Kim's daughter, believed to be named Kim Ju Ae and about 13 years old, made her public debut at a missile test in November 2022. Speculation about her political future mounted after she joined her parents on a New Year's Day visit to a site with the bodies of her late grandfather and great-grandfather—North Korea's first and second leaders. South Korea previously said it was unlikely Kim Ju Ae would succeed her father, given North Korea's patriarchal society. She reportedly has an older brother and a younger sibling whose gender is unknown.

Kim is expected to outline policy goals at a party conference this month—the first since 2021. North Korea's economy reportedly grew 3.7% in 2024—its fastest pace in eight years—driven largely by expanded trade with China and arms exports to Russia.

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Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Ukrainian skeleton athlete Vladyslav Heraskevych is barred from Olympic race after defying International Olympic Committee by wearing a helmet honoring athletes and coaches killed since Russia invaded Ukraine four years ago.

US men's hockey beats Latvia 5-1 in preliminary Olympic game; rival Canada beats Czechia 5-0.

US snowboarder Chloe Kim falls short of third straight gold in Olympic women's halfpipe, wins silver.

GoFundMe for family of "Dawson's Creek" star James Van Der Beek surpasses \$1.3M within 24 hours of his death from colorectal cancer; treatment costs reportedly left his wife and six children in significant financial strain.

Science & Technology

NASA and SpaceX eye launch of two American astronauts, one French astronaut, and one Russian cosmonaut to International Space Station today.

Researchers uncover immune response behind rare blood-clotting side effect of some adenovirus-based COVID-19 vaccines, paving way for future vaccines that avoid the reaction.

Elephant whiskers have unusual material properties that enable them to feel objects and recognize where contact is made, compensating for their thick skin and poor eyesight; discovery could inform robot-assisted sensor technologies.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -1.6%, Dow -1.3%, Nasdaq -2.0%); tech stocks sink over AI disruption concerns.

Cisco shares close down 12%, the largest drop in four years, as rising memory costs put pressure on margins.

US existing home sales fell 8.4% month over month in January, the biggest monthly decline since February 2022; median home price of \$396,800 is up 0.9% from a year ago.

Anthropic closes \$30B funding round, valuing the maker of the Claude AI system at \$380B.

Politics & World Affairs

US antitrust chief Gail Slater leaves Justice Department post; Slater had been reviewing Netflix-Warner Bros. merger, among others.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa says he will deploy army to combat gang violence and illegal mining.

Switzerland will vote in June on referendum to cap the country's population, currently 9.1 million people, at 10 million.

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.

Meade County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash
Where: 12930 Highway 34, Sturgis, SD
When: 8:40 p.m., Sunday, February 8, 2026

Vehicle 1: 2003 Chevrolet Silverado
Driver 1: 15-year-old male from Sturgis, SD, no injuries
Seat belt Used: Yes
Charges pending: Yes
Passenger 1a: 15-year-old male from Sturgis, SD, minor injuries
Seat belt Used: Yes
Passenger 1b: 14-year-old male from Sturgis, SD, minor injuries
Seat belt Used: No
Passenger 1c: 15-year-old male from Spearfish, SD, fatal injuries
Seat belt Used: No
Passenger 1d: 14-year-old male, minor injuries
Seat belt Used: No
Passenger 1e: 14-year-old male, minor injuries
Seat belt Used: No

Meade County, S.D.- Four teenagers were injured, one fatally, in a single vehicle crash Sunday evening in Sturgis, SD.

The names of the persons involved have not been released.

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2003 Chevrolet Silverado was traveling on a gravel road on the Sturgis High School grounds. While attempting a left turn into a gravel lot, the driver lost control, slid, then rolled.

The driver and one passenger in the cab were wearing seat belts. The driver was not injured, and the passenger had minor injuries. Four teenagers riding in the pickup bed were ejected. Three had minor injuries. A fourth was taken to Monument Health in Sturgis and later airlifted to a Rapid City hospital, where he died from injuries sustained in the crash.

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

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



Is a former South Dakotan leading Nancy Guthrie investigation?

Yes.

A Madison High School graduate and former Sioux Falls attorney is leading the investigation into the disappearance of Nancy Guthrie.

Heith Janke started his second stint with the FBI in 2020. He is currently serving as the FBI special agent in charge of Guthrie's disappearance from her Arizona home.

Janke worked as an attorney at the Boyce Law Firm in Sioux Falls from 2002-04. He joined the FBI as a special agent from 2004-2017 and left to become the West Fargo, North Dakota, police chief.

Janke graduated from Madison High in 1994 and was a two-time champion in cross country and a five-time champion in track and field (3,200 and 1,600 meter runs).

The FBI is offering a \$50,000 award for information that leads to the whereabouts of Guthrie, who has been missing since Feb. 1. She is the mother of NBC "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

Walk-ins Welcome!

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! 😊





What can \$20 get you?

for **SENIOR CITIZENS**

GDI Living Fitness *Open 24/7*

or anyone using physical therapy

15 N Main • Ste. 101

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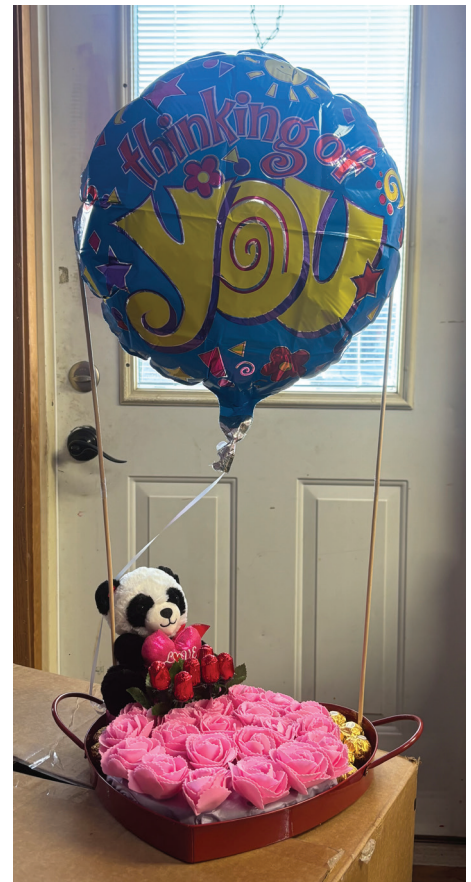
**Hersheys cake with strawberry drops and mini Hersheys on top
\$40.00**



**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**



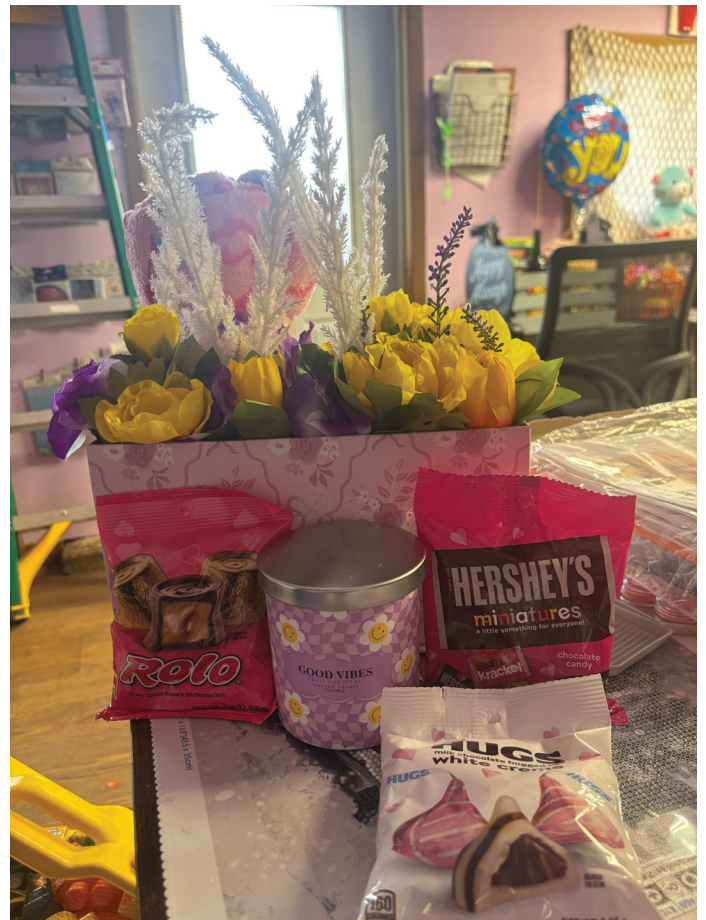
**Thinking of you balloon with bear, red chocolate roses with pink roses and Ferrero Rocher chocolate candy
\$25.00**

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Tonka truck basket \$50.00



Just because or thinking of you Basket \$40.00

Students intern in various occupations

by Dorene Nelson

Groton Area High School offers a variety of business classes. One of these classes, School Internships, offers seniors the opportunity to work in various local businesses of their choice. The purpose of this internship is to teach students responsibility by working for someone other than their family. It helps them learn how to work with the public and with customers who might not be all that agreeable at times. Internships could also help students decide on a part-time job while they are in college or maybe even to help them choose a future occupation.

Brittany Hubbart, a science and Career and Technical Education teacher, organized this experience for the students enrolled in her School Internship class. All students must be at their chosen place of work during the last period of the school day. The student interns must contact the place they would like to work and have their own personal transportation.

The following list contains the students who are currently doing their internship this school year.

Charlie Frost, who worked for Crawford Trucking, enjoyed learning various skills from the trucking company but disliked all of the cleaning that had to be done.

Emma Davies decided to work for Karma Salon since this is the area she's planning to go into after she graduates from Lake Area. She loves this job but finds doing hair extensions to be very challenging.

Natalia Warrington served her internship in the Groton School system while working with various school counselors. She plans to major in counseling in college after graduating from Groton.

Jarrett Erdmann interned at Lee Park Golf in Aberdeen. He likes to golf and enjoyed working for Lee Park where he had been able to test out the various golf clubs that Lee Park has. Doing inventory was probably the hardest part of this job.

Dreston Dennert did his internship at Gilchrist Farms, a business that was quite familiar to him. He enjoys working outside and doing various jobs that need to be handled on a farm.

Ben Hoeft enjoyed working on Strom Farms. He particularly enjoyed learning how to run and service various pieces of equipment. The hardest part was keeping the surroundings clean and sweeping the floor a lot!

Karsten Flihs worked for Groton Ag Partners, since he plans to farm after he completes his studies at Lake Area Ag Business and Finance. Paying close attention to detail was the most difficult part of this business.

Karter Moody chose to intern with Agtegra. He considered working here to be both stressful and fun. In addition to being an agronomist, he would like to get an aviation degree to do aerial spraying. The hardest part of being successful in this area is staying within a budget but still getting the maximum yield.

Nathan Unzen decided to work at S&S Lumber, an enjoyable job that isn't too difficult to learn. Working outside when it is really hot or cold is probably the most challenging part of this job. He was always busy and particularly liked stocking shelves or driving delivery trucks.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota House backs E-Verify use by all employers to check citizenship, immigration status

BY: JOHN HULT

The South Dakota House of Representatives voted 49-13 on Thursday to require the use of E-Verify by employers in the state to check employees' eligibility to work in the United States.

E-Verify is a free federal government website that compares records from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Social Security Administration to the information on an employee's I-9, which is an employment verification document that must be filed by employers for all new employees, including U.S. citizens.

If there's a discrepancy between I-9 information and records uncovered through an E-Verify check, employers are notified and employees have a chance to correct the discrepancy.

The federal government and its contractors are required to use E-Verify. If House Bill 1209 becomes law, South Dakota would be the 10th state to mandate E-Verify use by all employers. The bill now heads to a state Senate committee.

The bill, from Rep. Josephine Garcia, R-Watertown, would also empower South Dakota's attorney general to investigate employers and fine them up to \$2,000 for each time they fail to use the system.

"This is a common sense measure to protect American workers," Garcia said.

Some lawmakers bemoaned the administrative hassle for employers who'd be forced to file I-9 forms and use E-Verify, and others thought there ought to be exceptions.

Rep. John Shubeck, R-Beresford, said he wants to offer an amendment to state senators to exempt employers from using E-Verify on teenagers.

"I do think we need those carveouts for that, because I often hire high school kids, and I don't want to verify my own children," said Shubeck.

Rep. Eric Emery, D-Rosebud, said he's used E-Verify, but is concerned about errors in situations when the system has old data.

"It is a very quick system when it works, but it does have a lot of flaws," Emery said.

Canton Republican Rep. Karla Lems said E-Verify would offer some peace of mind to people who worry that large employers hire people who are not legally allowed to work in the country.

"It will just give someone relief to some of us that question some of those industries and who they're employing," Lems said.

Some opponents, however, suggested that a mandate to use E-Verify would serve more as a symbolic gesture on immigration than an impactful policy change.

"To think that we're going to solve immigration problems with this bill, I see as very optimistic," said Rep. Mike Stevens, R-Yankton.

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.

Mining explosives would be more tightly regulated by bill headed to state House

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR

Responding to concerns from residents near a controversial mine on the edge of the Black Hills, a committee of South Dakota lawmakers advanced legislation Thursday at the Capitol in Pierre that would subject mining explosives to tighter regulation.

Residents near Piedmont are concerned about blasting at a planned 300-acre limestone quarry. The mine plans to begin operations in August.

The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee approved a bill from Rep. Terri Jorgensen, R-Piedmont, who said dozens of residents have raised concerns about property values, noise, dust, ground-water and the cumulative effect of repeated blasting.

The bill would shift any mining that uses explosives to South Dakota's more stringent mining-permit process, rather than the simpler annual mining license system used for the extraction of materials such as sand, gravel, construction rock, and limestone. It would phase existing explosive-use operators onto those permits over five years. The bill would also require operators to report explosives use 90 days in advance.

Opponents, including the South Dakota Mineral Industries Association, Associated General Contractors of South Dakota, and the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, said the bill creates unnecessary regulation and imposes a statewide mandate to address a local issue.

They said blasting is already regulated at the federal level and that counties with zoning authority can address setbacks, noise and other concerns locally. State officials said the state does not directly regulate blasting under its mine permits and warned the bill would require additional staff and hearings without providing funding.

Supporters said 22 South Dakota counties — including Meade County, which includes Piedmont — lack comprehensive zoning, and that federal regulations prioritize worker safety over community impacts beyond the mine fence line.

Rep. Kady Wittman, D-Sioux Falls, said she planned to oppose this year's legislative effort. But then she learned the bill "doesn't ban blasting. It doesn't shut down aggregate production. It just says that when explosives are used, which we know increases impact and risk, the operation should have to meet more comprehensive permitting standards."

"If there are implementation concerns or transition questions, I think those can be addressed," she said.

Wittman made those comments as fellow lawmakers considered a motion to defeat the bill. She resisted that motion, arguing a rejection of the bill "stops this conversation completely, and I'm tired of hearing this come every single year, and us not doing anything about mining operations in the state."

Some in the crowd clapped and cheered in response to those comments, causing the committee chair to pound his gavel and call for order in the room. Many who were in attendance live near Piedmont, where the controversial quarry plan includes blasting.

Minutes later, the committee deadlocked 5-5 on a motion to defeat the bill, then voted 7-3 to advance the measure.

Wittman later told South Dakota Searchlight that her comments were about various mining issues: "whether bonding is sufficient, whether acreage thresholds are appropriate, and whether taxpayers are protected from long-term liability."

Other Piedmont-inspired bill fails

Separately, the Senate Commerce and Energy Committee also took up a bill Thursday that was motivated by the controversial Piedmont mine.

The bill, from Piedmont Republican Sen. John Carley, would require mining companies to send a notice to nearby neighbors, conservation districts, counties and cities at least two weeks prior to the commencement of mining activity for smaller operations, and 90 days in advance for operations at larger mines.

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Companies would also be required to post a notice of expected mining activity for those larger operations at least three times in the area's newspaper of record, the first of which would need to appear 180 days before mining begins.

Carley and some neighbors to the Piedmont mine testified in support, saying they had insufficient notice of the controversial mine. Mining company representatives, economic development lobbyists and the state Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources spoke against the bill, saying the notice requirements would be onerous and would unfairly burden all miners based on pushback against the Piedmont mine.

The bill was defeated 7-1.

Broader mining bill rejected

The House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee also rejected a bill 9-2 on Thursday that would tighten and restructure South Dakota's mining laws, revise permitting and operational requirements, and change fees.

Opponents, including mining officials, the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the state Chamber of Commerce, said the bill wrongly treats aggregate pits like large-scale mining, adds delays and costs, strains state staffing, and could repeal useful provisions.

Supporters, including bill sponsor Rep. Nicole Uhre-Balk, D-Rapid City, Dakota Rural Action, and the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance, said current laws allow mining with little notice and weak protections, and the bill would close gaps to protect water, sensitive sites and communities.

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.

Legislation passes state House that would require schools to show prenatal development videos

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

PIERRE — After a debate colored by views on abortion, the Republican-dominated state House of Representatives voted 52-10 to advance a bill requiring South Dakota public schools to teach students about prenatal human growth and development.

The bill's next stop is a state Senate committee.

If the legislation becomes law, schools would have to use resources recommended by the state Board of Education Standards for "age-appropriate and research-based instruction."

The bill requires that instruction to include a "high-definition ultrasound video" that shows the development of the brain, heart and other major organs during prenatal development, and another ultrasound video or computer-generated rendering or animation that "shows the progress of prenatal human development from fertilization through birth."

Videos must be at least three minutes long, and any teaching material or information used can't be produced or provided by an organization that promotes or performs abortions. Abortion is illegal in South Dakota, except to preserve the life of the mother.

Six states require prenatal development education, according to Live Action, an anti-abortion group that has advocated for a similar law using its "Baby Olivia" video. Critics of the video say it is misleading and contains medical inaccuracies.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Tony Kayser, R-Sioux Falls, texted a video to lawmakers that would fit the bill's requirements.

"I hope you had a chance to watch the video. It kind of hits around the miracle of life and how important

it is that we actually educate our youth on life," Kayser said.

Opponents raised concerns about the medical accuracy of materials and the standardization of materials across the state. Rep. Erin Healy, D-Sioux Falls, critiqued the video for measuring gestation from fertilization instead of the last menstrual period – an obstetrics standard.

"I am all about showing proper videos in schools with proper context," Healy said. "I'm worried that we're going to confuse students about medical texts and standard clinical language. It's really important that if we're going to teach this in classes, we're doing it correctly."

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.

State House rejects proposal requiring neighboring cities, counties to permit data centers

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

PIERRE — The state House of Representatives voted 41-21 on Thursday to reject a bill that would have required 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.

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 legislation's 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.

Republican Rep. David Kull lives in Brandon. He said the bill would take away local control from one entity, "forcing it on another – whether they want it or not."

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.

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.

Members of Congress again challenge Noem policy limiting visits to immigration facilities

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — Members of Congress on Thursday sought a ruling from a federal judge to block yet another Department of Homeland Security policy that required a notice for lawmakers to conduct oversight visits to immigration detention facilities.

The policy is the third from DHS Secretary Kristi Noem on the subject, and it is nearly identical to the previous two.

Noem's policies put in place a new requirement that members of Congress must give DHS seven days

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notice before conducting an oversight visit at a facility that holds immigrants, despite a 2019 appropriations law that allows for unannounced visits by lawmakers.

On Feb. 2, U.S. District Judge Jia Cobb blocked a seven-day notification policy ordered by Noem one day after the deadly shooting of Renee Good by a federal immigration officer in Minneapolis on Jan. 7.

On the same day as Cobb's ruling, Noem issued a nearly identical policy, after Democrats said they would refuse to approve new DHS funding unless changes in enforcement tactics were made following a second deadly shooting of Alex Pretti by two Customs and Border Protection officers.

With disagreement between both parties, and Thursday's failed vote to move forward on funding the Homeland Security bill for fiscal year 2026, the agency will be shut down beginning early Saturday.

However, even if DHS is shut down, Immigration and Customs Enforcement still has \$75 billion in funding due to the tax cuts and spending package signed into law last year.

Agency shutting down

Department of Justice attorneys on Thursday argued because DHS will be shut down, the appropriations law will expire by the end of the week and therefore the unannounced oversight provision for members of Congress will no longer be in effect.

An attorney for the members of Congress, Christine L. Coogle, rejected that argument and said just because the funds expire does not mean the law, which is a rider in the Homeland Security funding bill, does as well.

"The law itself does not expire," she said. "And so the oversight rider remains on the books."

Cobb said she would extend her temporary restraining order until March 2, or until she rules, whichever comes first.

Visits denied

Under a 2019 appropriations law, any member of Congress can carry out an unannounced visit to a federal facility that holds immigrants, referred to as Section 527. But in June, multiple Democrats were denied visits to ICE facilities, so they sued.

"What we're really seeking here is a return to the status quo," Coogle said in court Thursday.

In December, Cobb granted the request to stay Noem's policy, finding it violated the 2019 law.

But in the second policy Noem issued on Jan. 8, she argued because the ICE facilities are using funds through the Republican spending and tax cuts law, known as the "One, Big Beautiful Bill," and not the DHS appropriations bill, those facilities are therefore exempt from unannounced oversight visits by members of Congress.

Cobb earlier this month, rejected that argument from the Trump administration and temporarily blocked the policy for the plaintiffs in the case.

The House Democrats who sued include Joe Neguse of Colorado, Adriano Espaillat of New York, Kelly Morrison of Minnesota, Jamie Raskin of Maryland, Robert Garcia of California, J. Luis Correa of California, Jason Crow of Colorado, Veronica Escobar of Texas, Dan Goldman of New York, Jimmy Gomez of California, Raul Ruiz of California, Bennie Thompson of Mississippi and Norma Torres of California.

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

Trump administration completes rollback of Obama-era greenhouse gas regulations

BY: JACOB FISCHLER

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump and his top environmental policy officer finalized a move Thursday to undo an Environmental Protection Agency regulation that laid the foundation for federal rules governing emissions of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

At a White House event, Trump and EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin said they were officially rolling back the “endangerment finding” that labeled greenhouse gases a threat to public health and provided a framework for the EPA to regulate emissions.

The 2009 finding, established under President Barack Obama, called climate change a danger to human health and therefore gave the EPA power to regulate greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide from cars and trucks.

Such regulations created a challenge for automakers and other industries, which dragged down the entire economy, according to Trump, administration officials and allies in Congress.

Democrats and their allies in environmental and climate activism, though, consider the measure a crucial tool to address climate change and protect human health.

Undoing the finding will remove the economy-wide uncertainty, Trump argued.

“That is why, effective immediately, we are repealing the ridiculous endangerment finding and terminating all additional green emission standards imposed unnecessarily on vehicle models and engines between 2012 and 2027 and beyond,” he said Thursday.

Affordability argument

In its initial notice last year that it would repeal the endangerment finding, the EPA said it did not have the authority to regulate vehicle emissions.

With household costs, including transportation, expected to be a major theme in the fall’s midterm campaigns to determine control of Congress, members of both parties have framed it as an economic issue.

“This will be the largest deregulatory action in American history, and it will save the American people \$1.3 trillion in crushing regulations,” White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said at Tuesday’s press briefing.

Some Democrats and climate activists argue the rollback will hurt the country’s nascent renewable energy sector, driving up the cost of home heating, electricity and other common expenses.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, D-R.I., issued a lengthy joint statement slamming the announcement.

“The Trump EPA has fully abandoned its duty to protect the American people from greenhouse gas pollution and climate change. This shameful abdication — an economic, moral, and political failure — will harm Americans’ health, homes, and economic well-being. It ignores scientific fact and common-sense observations to serve big political donors,” the senators said.

“This sham decision initially relied on a now thoroughly disgraced and abandoned ‘report’ by known climate deniers. Zeldin stuck to this charade anyway, undaunted by half a century of actual evidence, showing the fix was in from the beginning,” they continued.

Money and fossil fuels

The move outraged Democrats and climate activists when Zeldin first proposed it last summer. Climate activists say undoing the finding undercuts the federal government’s ability to address an issue critical to the United States and the entire world.

In a Tuesday floor speech, Schumer blasted the rollback as a giveaway to fossil fuel companies, leaders of which contributed to Trump’s 2024 campaign.

“Remember: In the spring of 2024, Donald Trump invited top oil executives to Mar-a-Lago and told them, if you raise me a billion dollars to get me elected, I will cut regulations so you can make more money,”

Schumer said. "That devil's bargain is now coming true. I never thought it would be this way in America, in this bald disgusting way that so hurts people's health, but there it is."

Democratic attorneys general and environmental groups are likely to sue over the rollback.

At least one lawsuit, from the Environmental Defense Fund, was promised Thursday afternoon.

"EDF will challenge this decision in court, where evidence matters, and keep working with everyone who wants to build a better, safer and more prosperous future," Fred Krupp, EDF president, said in a statement Thursday.

Washington state Attorney General Nick Brown, a Democrat, said last year he would "consider all options if EPA continues down this cynical path."

Ashley Murray contributed to this report.

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

Department of Homeland Security shutdown nears, as US Senate remains stuck on funding

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY AND SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — The Department of Homeland Security is headed for a shutdown as lawmakers on Capitol Hill remained stuck Thursday over bans on face masks and other immigration tactics.

The department's funding expires Friday night.

A procedural vote to advance a funding bill failed in the Senate, 52-47, with Sen. John Fetterman, D-Pa., the only Democrat to join Republicans on the measure. Senate Majority Leader John Thune changed his vote in a maneuver to recommit the bill and bring it up again later. Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., did not vote.

The Senate then left for a scheduled recess over the Presidents Day holiday, and will not return for votes until Feb. 23.

Democrats have so far rebuffed counter proposals from the White House and a Republican offer to further extend temporary DHS funding while negotiations continue.

The vote came just hours after President Donald Trump's border czar Tom Homan announced immigration officers will retreat from Minneapolis, which has become ground zero for the administration's aggressive and deadly escalations that sparked mass protests and sinking approval numbers for the president.

Thune said the administration's exit from Minneapolis is "certainly a demonstration of good faith."

Demands for warrants and more

The fatal shootings in Minneapolis by federal agents of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, both U.S. citizens, has prompted Democrats to demand immigration officers obtain judicial warrants to forcibly enter homes, wear and actively use body cameras, remove face masks, wear identification and undergo additional training.

The department, which houses Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, is the remaining part of the government for which Congress has not passed full-year funding. In addition to ICE and Customs and Border Protection, the department also includes the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA, the Coast Guard and the Transportation Security Administration, otherwise known as TSA.

Short-term stopgap funds for the department expire Friday at midnight, though ICE will likely continue operations on an influx of cash earmarked for the agency in Republicans' massive tax and spending cuts law enacted in July.

TSA agents, Coast Guard personnel and other essential government workers will continue their duties without pay until lawmakers strike a deal. Others will be sent home, also without pay, though all will receive back pay once the shutdown ends.

Red lines

Thune said Democrats "don't seem to want to play ball" and consider his party's "reasonable efforts and requests."

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"There's some obviously red lines that Democrats have and that the White House has. I think Republicans, as I told you before, are very interested in making sure that law enforcement officials continue to be able to do their jobs in a way that is safe and that we aren't in any way enabling, you know, dangerous illegal aliens, or disallowing them being detained and deported from the country," the South Dakota Republican said following the failed vote.

Thune said the White House is "giving more and more ground on some of these key issues" but declined to provide further detail on the administration's proposal.

He added he did not plan to cancel the Senate's planned recess next week but has let members know they'll need to be available if a deal emerges.

"I'm encouraged to hear that they're actually going to put together another counterproposal. I think if people are operating in good faith and actually want a solution ... this can get done," he said.

Following the failed vote for full-year funding, Sen. Katie Britt, R-Ala., asked for unanimous consent to keep Homeland Security open with another stop-gap measure.

"Let's keep talking, let's keep working. Don't let anyone miss a paycheck," Britt, the chair of the Homeland Security appropriations subcommittee, said.

Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut, the top Democrat on the Homeland Security appropriations subcommittee, objected, saying the Democrats want "to rein in ICE's lawlessness."

Democrats want GOP to get 'serious'

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer doubled down on Democrats' demands following the failed procedural vote.

"This vote today asked a simple question: Will you rein in ICE's abuses, or will you vote to extend the chaos?" he said. "Republicans chose chaos and the Democrats, we refused — Republicans chose to put a bill on the floor that ignored the abuses, ignored the outrage, ignored what the American people want, overwhelmingly, and they failed to get the votes to avoid a shutdown at DHS."

The New York Democrat called on Republicans to get "serious" if they want to keep DHS funded.

"They need to sit down, they need to negotiate in good faith, produce legislation that actually reins in ICE and stops the violence," Schumer said.

Both sides have complained that the other did not work fast enough during the past two weeks to find a deal.

"I wish our Republican colleagues in the White House had shown more seriousness from the start, but Senate Democrats have been clear that we have all taken an oath, an oath to uphold the law of the country and this Department of Homeland Security, this ICE, is out of control. They are tear gassing our children's schools. They are killing American citizens. They are disappearing legal migrants," Murphy said.

Ahead of Thursday's vote, Murphy said Democrats would not fund the department until an agreement is reached with the White House to "reform abusive practices of ICE."

Murphy told reporters the White House is "obviously trying to get us to fund the department," pointing to the announcement of immigration officers soon leaving Minneapolis.

"If we fund ICE, because we believe that the drawdown is meaningful, they'll just pocket that money and show up in another city two weeks from now," he said. "We need statutory changes to stop them from the abuse, or they will be quiet for a couple of weeks and show up in Philadelphia on April 1."

Thune said "the ball is in Democrats' court," during remarks on the Senate floor Thursday morning.

"Are they going to shut down the Department of Homeland Security — which would be their second shutdown this fiscal year — or are they going to allow for the time to negotiate with the White House and get agreement on a final bill?" he said.

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

Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

US senators denounce immigration agents' use of force in deadly Minneapolis shootings

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — The top leaders of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee showed a play-by-play video leading up to the fatal shooting in Minneapolis of Alex Pretti by Customs and Border Protection officers, as they grilled the heads of two federal immigration agencies about the incident during an oversight hearing Thursday.

Chairman Rand Paul, Republican of Kentucky, said there needs to be accountability following the deaths of Pretti, an intensive care unit nurse and Renee Good, a mother of three and poet, in January at the hands of immigration agents.

"The thousands of people in the streets in Minneapolis and in Minnesota and the millions of viewers who witnessed the recent deaths, it's clearly evident that the public trust has been lost," Paul said. "To restore trust in (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and Border Patrol, they must admit their mistakes, be honest and forthright with their rules of engagement and pledge to reform."

Paul and Michigan Sen. Gary Peters, the top Democrat on the panel, questioned ICE acting Director Todd Lyons and CBP Commissioner Rodney Scott about immigration officers' use of force tactics and whether the agents followed de-escalation procedures.

"You have to look at what your rules are for drawing weapons, because it appears to me they're not using the same standards as the police," Paul said of immigration agents.

It was the second congressional oversight hearing for Scott and Lyons this week. Democrats and Republicans are at a stalemate over funding for the agency for fiscal year 2026, with Democrats demanding changes in immigration enforcement tactics after the deadly encounters in Minneapolis.

The shutdown will not stop President Donald Trump's mass deportation push, however. Even if an agreement to fund DHS is not reached by Friday and the agency is closed, ICE still has \$75 billion in funding from the tax and spending package from last year.

Minutes into Thursday's hearing, border czar Tom Homan announced that immigration enforcement operations would end in Minneapolis after two months.

Pretti pepper sprayed, held down

Paul and Peters showed the leaders of CBP and ICE a New York Times video analysis leading up to the shooting of Pretti, who was pepper sprayed and tackled to the ground by multiple immigration officers. He was held down and at least 10 shots can be heard on video.

Lyons and Scott declined to comment on the clips shown, saying there are multiple ongoing investigations. Scott said the FBI, CBP and ICE were conducting their own investigations.

Paul expressed his frustration with that answer and pointed to the lead-up to Pretti's encounters with federal officers. The video shows a woman yelling at a federal immigration officer. She is shoved to the ground and Pretti goes to help her up.

"No one in America believes shoving that woman's head, in the face, in the snow, was de-escalation," Paul said.

Paul asked if an appropriate response to someone yelling is to shove them to the ground.

Scott said it was not, but that he couldn't comment on the specific video.

Paul said that in the video it's clear that Pretti is using his hand to protect his face from pepper spray.

"He is retreating at every moment," Paul said. "He's trying to get away, and he's being sprayed in the face. I don't think that's de-escalatory. That's an escalatory thing."

Paul said an investigation needs to be done quickly.

Scott said there is body camera footage from the officers involved in Pretti's shooting that will be released to the public.

"I don't think this should take months and months and years and years," Paul said. "There needs to be a conclusion."

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Peters pointed to how immigration officers are seen beating Pretti with a pepper spray canister. He asked Scott if that was an appropriate response.

"What I'm seeing is a subject that's also not complying, he's not following any guidance. He's fighting back nonstop," Scott said, adding that he couldn't answer Peters' question because the investigation was ongoing.

Peters then questioned Scott and Lyons on why DHS Secretary Kristi Noem quickly labeled Good and Pretti as "domestic terrorists." He asked the men if they had given her any briefing or additional information for her to have drawn that conclusion.

Both said they had not.

Michigan Democratic Sen. Elissa Slotkin also told Lyons that she was concerned about statements made by Trump about sending immigration agents to polling locations ahead of the midterm elections.

"There's no reason for us to deploy to a polling facility," he said.

Minnesota withdrawal

Oklahoma Republican Sen. James Lankford informed the first panel, which brought Minnesota leaders to the nation's capital, of Homan's announcement that the surge would be ending in Minneapolis.

The first panel included GOP Rep. Tom Emmer of Minnesota; Minnesota House Republican Floor Leader Harry Niska; Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, a Democrat; and the commissioner of the Department of Corrections for the state of Minnesota, Paul Schnell.

Lankford said there needs to be better coordination between local and federal law enforcement, such as 287(g) agreements. In those partnerships, which are voluntary, local law enforcement will notify ICE if they arrest someone who is in the country unlawfully and hold that person until federal immigration officers can arrive.

"So the position that my office has taken is that, if you are a sheriff who wants to pursue 287(g), you must have the support of your county board," Ellison said, adding that seven counties have such agreements.

One Republican, Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin, blamed the deaths of Pretti and Good not on the immigration agents who killed them. He said they occurred because Ellison urged Minnesotans to exercise their First Amendment rights.

"Two people are dead because you encouraged them to put themselves into harm's way," Johnson said to Ellison. "And now you are exploiting those two martyrs. You ought to feel damn guilty about it."

In response, Ellison said, "It was a nice theatrical performance but it was all lies."

'Occupied by the federal government'

New Jersey Democratic Sen. Andy Kim noted that the number of ICE agents, about 3,000, initially sent to Minneapolis, significantly dwarfed the local police, which is roughly under 600. He asked Ellison how it felt in Minneapolis to have that many federal immigration agents in the city.

"It felt like we were being occupied by the federal government," Ellison said.

During the second panel, Kim asked Lyons if ICE is planning to conduct a similar operation in other cities.

Lyons said the agency would, and said he learned lessons from the deportation drive in Minneapolis.

"We look at lessons learned," Lyons said. "The problem, I believe, is the ... agitators and the coordination on the protest side. People can go out there and protest, but why are we going to encourage individuals to go out there and impede and put themselves in harm's way? I think that's the lesson learned from this."

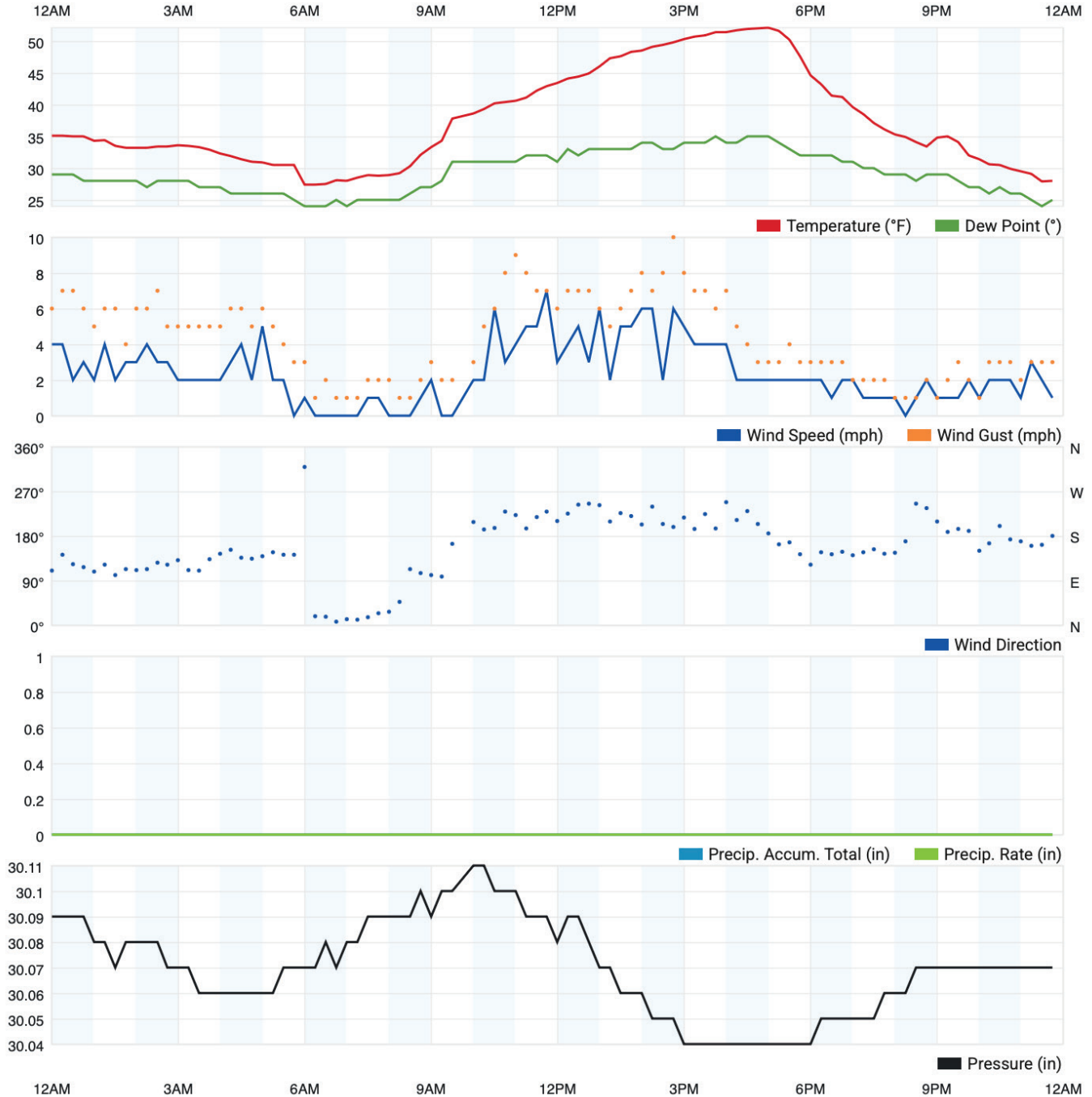
Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

February 12, 2026



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Today

Tonight

Saturday

Saturday Night

Sunday



High: 53 °F

Patchy Fog
then Sunny



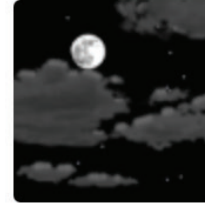
Low: 28 °F

Mostly Clear



High: 52 °F

Sunny



Low: 29 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 56 °F

Partly Sunny



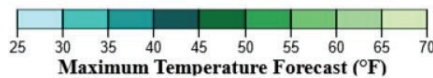
Above Normal Warmth Continues

February 13, 2026
3:14 AM CST

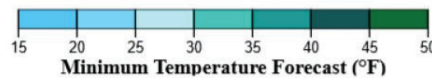
After Next Tuesday, Colder Temperatures Return To The Region

Maximum Temperature (°F) & Minimum Temperature (°F) Forecast

		2/13	2/14	2/15	2/16	2/17	2/18	2/19
		Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
Aberdeen	Max Temp	56	55	54	53	50	37	32
	Min Temp	24	28	29	31	37	25	20
Miller	Max Temp	61	57	60	57	55	43	37
	Min Temp	29	32	33	34	41	29	24
Mobridge	Max Temp	57	53	53	50	46	37	32
	Min Temp	24	29	29	29	34	27	21
Murdo	Max Temp	62	58	62	58	58	45	40
	Min Temp	28	30	30	32	39	30	24



		2/13	2/14	2/15	2/16	2/17	2/18	2/19
		Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
Ortonville	Max Temp	56	54	57	51	50	40	31
	Min Temp	26	29	29	33	35	28	22
Pierre	Max Temp	59	57	60	57	56	44	40
	Min Temp	26	28	29	31	39	30	23
Sisseton	Max Temp	54	52	55	50	47	37	29
	Min Temp	30	31	31	32	34	27	20
Watertown	Max Temp	54	52	55	52	50	41	30
	Min Temp	26	30	30	33	37	27	21



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Temperatures 20-30 degrees above normal will continue through Tuesday of next week. By Tuesday night, some rain and snow showers look to move in. Enjoy the unseasonable warm weather for the next few days! After Tuesday, temperatures begin to cool down to values closer to climatological normal for this time of year.

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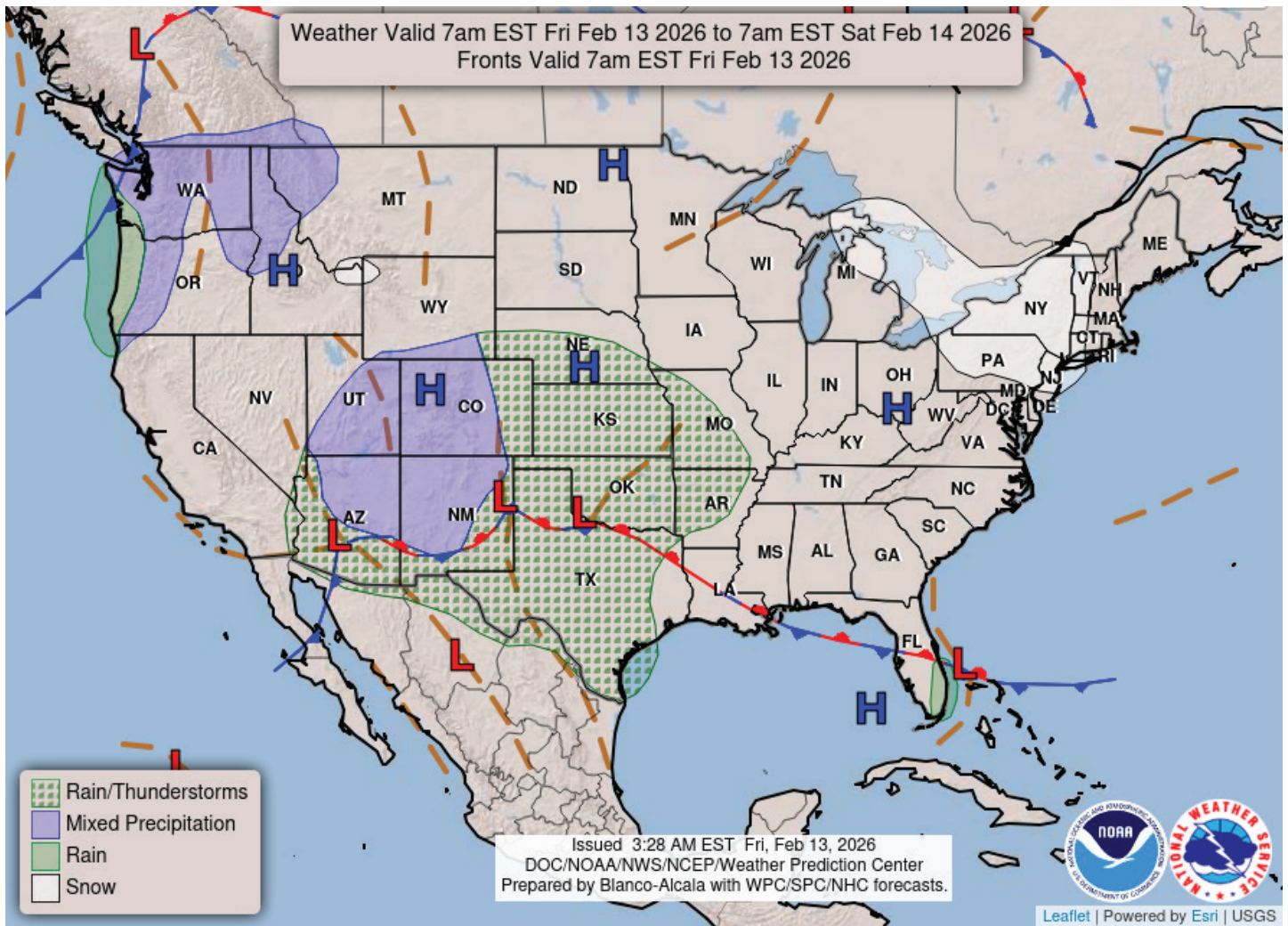
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 52 °F at 5:01 PM
Low Temp: 27 °F at 6:25 AM
Wind: 10 mph at 2:42 PM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 60 in 1901
Record Low: -34 in 1905
Average High: 28
Average Low: 5
Average Precip in Feb.: 0.26
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 0.81
Precip Year to Date: 0.00
Sunset Tonight: 5:56 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:35 am



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Today in Weather History

February 13, 1995: Snow fell over a broad strip from southwest to northeast South Dakota. The snow began as freezing rain in the northeast, and there were several vehicle accidents attributed to the icing. The most substantial snow was at Custer in the Black Hills, with 14 inches. A few six to eight inches amounts were reported over the southwest, central, and northeast South Dakota plains. In addition, strong winds caused some blowing and drifting snow in northeastern South Dakota.

1784 — Ice floes blocked the Mississippi River at New Orleans, then passed into the Gulf of Mexico. The only other time this occurred was during the "Great Arctic Outbreak" of 1899. (David Ludlum)

1885 — The "Friday the 13th" avalanche at Alva, UT, killed sixteen persons, and left thirteen others buried for twelve hours before being rescued. (David Ludlum)

1889 — It was the coldest morning of record along the Gulf Coast. The temperature dipped to 7 above zero at New Orleans LA and Pensacola FL, and plunged to -1 degree at Mobile AL. The mercury dipped to -2 degrees at Tallahassee, the coldest reading of record for the state of Florida. (David Ludlum)

1905: Freezing temperatures were recorded over the states of Oklahoma, Arkansas, Kansas, and Missouri. Morning lows of 29 degrees below zero at Gravette, Arkansas, 40 below at Lebanon, Kansas, and 40 below at Warsaw, Missouri, established all-time records for those three states.

The low temperature at Vinita, Oklahoma, plummeted to 27 degrees below zero. The temperature would be tied at Watts in January 1930 and Blackwell and Medford in February 2011. The negative 27-degree reading is cold enough to be the 2nd lowest temperature on record in Oklahoma. The coldest is currently 31 degrees below zero, recorded at Nowata on February 10, 2011.

1987 — A storm in the western U.S. produced heavy rain over central California. Chews Ridge reported nearly eleven inches of rain in 24 hours, and extensive flooding occurred in San Benito County. The Mount Rose ski resort in Nevada experienced a "white-out" with 60 mph winds and 36 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Strong winds in the wake of a storm in the northeastern U.S., gusting to 60 mph at Oswego NY, produced six foot snow drifts in northeastern Ohio. High winds in the mountains of Utah, gusting to 106 mph at the Snowbird ski resort, contributed to a forty car pile-up on Interstate 15, near the town of Bluffdale. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Showers and thunderstorms produced locally heavy rain and flash flooding from central Texas to western Pennsylvania. Up to ten inches of rain deluged western Kentucky in two days, with five day totals ranging up to 13.16 inches at Gilbertsville Dam KY. Flooding caused tens of millions of dollars damage, including 18 million dollars damage at Frankfort KY. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — A slow moving cold front brought heavy snow to Utah, Colorado and Wyoming. Big Horn WY reported 15 inches of snow, and up to 22 inches was reported in Utah. In Colorado, 8 to 12 inches of snow fell over the northwest suburbs of Denver, while 16 to 22 inches was reported in the high mountain elevations west of Fort Collins. Strong winds accompanied the heavy snow, and bitter cold weather followed in its wake. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1995: A National Weather Service Survey Team concluded a weak (F1) tornado occurred at the General Motors Desert Proving Grounds facility in Mesa, Arizona. Moderate damage was observed. A roof was damaged, and about 20 vehicles were destroyed and moved around. One car was lifted, moved several feet, and set down inside a roped-off area containing solar exposure equipment. The tornado traveled northeast and lasted about five minutes. The image below is from the February 1995 Storm Data.

2000: Late in the day and into the early morning hours of the 14th, severe thunderstorms spawned six tornadoes over southwestern Georgia that killed 19, injured 202, and caused \$35 million in damages. An F3 tornado hit southern Camilla, killing 11 people and wounding 175 others in the town.

The Power of Love

Because the Holy Spirit empowers us, we can respond to others calmly, patiently, and without complaint.

Luke 15:11-32: 11 And He said, "A man had two sons.

12 "The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them.

13 "And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.

14 "Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.

15 "So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 "And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.

17 "But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!

18 'I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.'"

20 "So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

21 "And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;

23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;

24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 "And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be.

27 "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.'

28 "But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him.

29 "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.'

31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.

32 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'"

There are four Greek words for love: eros (romantic love), philia (friendship love), storge (familial love), and agape (unconditional, selfless love). Our Father's care for us is agape—love so strong that He chose to bring us into a right relationship with Himself through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross (1 John 4:10).

The Parable of the Prodigal Son gives us a good example of this type of love. Agape is evident in our life when we ...

Respond reasonably to difficulty. The son prematurely asked for his share of the inheritance, revealing an attitude that must have pained his father. But the older man didn't allow hurt feelings to break the relationship or prevent a measured response.

Sacrifice without complaint. Though he knew his son was committed to a ruinous course, the father quietly fulfilled the request. In doing so, he chose the way of love, directing his efforts towards preserving their relationship.

Wait patiently. Out of deep affection, the father let his son leave. Yet he remained hopeful and waited for the young man to recognize that sin could never deliver what he desired.

As the Spirit's work empowers us to show sacrificial love, we become people characterized by calm and patience. Ask the Lord to help you love and care for others as He would.

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

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The Groton Independent

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.10.26

5 25 30 36 68 6

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$385,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 23 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 DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 38 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.12.26

10 12 24 32 35 12

TOP PRIZE:
\$7,000/week

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 53 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
02.11.26

3 6 8 17 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$274,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 53 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 DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 22 Mins 48 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 DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 22 Mins 48 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

Avon 62, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 46
Burke 62, Kimball-White Lake 46
Castlewood 58, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 27
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 92, Crazy Horse 37
Dupree 72, Faith 44
Elk Point-Jefferson 78, Lakota Tech 31
Elkton-Lake Benton 68, Estelline-Hendricks 57
Flandreau Indian 59, Gayville-Volin High School 55
Freeman 70, Corsica/Stickney 27
Gettysburg 65, Faulkton 54
Hamlin 74, Deuel 21
Hill City 61, Douglas 41
Huron 64, Aberdeen Central 40
Irene-Wakonda 58, Marty 45
James Valley Christian School 81, Arlington 42
Kadoka 59, Bison 29
Lyman 77, Philip 50
Mobridge-Pollock 71, Sully Buttes 63
New Underwood 86, Bennett County 67
Northwestern 59, Great Plains Lutheran 48
Oelrichs 60, Edgemont 50
Sioux Falls Christian 77, Western Christian, Iowa 62
Spearfish 58, Custer 38
St. Francis Indian 59, White River 54
Wessington Springs 60, Hitchcock-Tulare 46

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

GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL

Aberdeen Central 56, Huron 44
Arlington 54, James Valley Christian School 27
Avon 43, Tripp-Delmont-Armour 33
Bennett County 62, New Underwood 24
Bison 56, Hulett, Wyo. 30
Castlewood 60, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 28
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 75, Lower Brule 55
Gayville-Volin High School 88, Flandreau Indian 32
Hamlin 59, Deuel 25
Herreid-Selby 48, Leola-Frederick High School 36
Ipswich 49, Wilmot 29
Irene-Wakonda 55, Marty 13
Lyman 55, Philip 23
McIntosh High School 80, Takini 12
Milbank 53, Florence-Henry 31
Mobridge-Pollock 85, Sully Buttes 29

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Northwestern 40, Great Plains Lutheran 33
Oelrichs 67, Edgemont 57
Pine Ridge 81, Crow Creek Tribal School 54
Sisseton 75, Tiospa Zina 31
Spearfish 60, Custer 20
St. Francis Indian 74, Little Wound 43
Wessington Springs 48, Hitchcock-Tulare 41, OT
West Central 55, Elk Point-Jefferson 29
White River 79, Tiospaye Topa 12
Wolsey-Wessington 66, DeSmet 55

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

Johnson's 23 lead Denver past South Dakota State 79-61

By The Associated Press undefined

DENVER (AP) — Carson Johnson had 23 points in Denver's 79-61 win over South Dakota State on Thursday night.

Johnson also added five assists for the Pioneers (13-14, 6-6 Summit League). Jeremiah Burke had 18 points, five 3-pointers, and 12 rebounds. Zane Nelson shot 4 for 11 (1 for 4 from 3-point range) and 4 of 5 from the free-throw line to finish with 13 points.

Damon Wilkinson led the Jackrabbits (11-15, 4-7) in scoring, finishing with 18 points and six rebounds. Kalen Garry and Joe Sayler each had 15 points.

Iowa bus crash killed a 19-year-old college baseball player from South Dakota, officials say

TWIN LAKES, Iowa (AP) — Authorities on Thursday identified a 19-year-old from South Dakota as the sole fatality of a bus crash in rural Iowa that injured 32 other members of a community college's baseball team.

Carter Johnson was an outfielder from Rapid City in his first year at Iowa Lakes Community College, according to the team roster. Johnson died Wednesday after the bus overturned in a ditch alongside a highway near Twin Lakes, Iowa, about 85 miles (137 kilometers) northwest of Des Moines, authorities said Thursday.

The bus went off the road for "unknown reasons," said Iowa State Patrol Lt. Aaron Smidt, and the crash is under investigation.

"Carter was a great teammate, a friend and a valued member of our athletic community," said Troy Larson, the school's athletic director. "In his time here, he really impacted our campus, both within our halls, in the classrooms, as well as on the playing field."

Smidt said student-athletes in a vehicle trailing the bus were administering CPR to Johnson when first responders arrived. Johnson was pronounced dead at the scene.

All of the other occupants on the bus — 32 teammates — were injured in the crash but are stable and recovering, Smidt said. Three were airlifted for treatment in the Des Moines area.

The team had games scheduled Thursday and Friday at North Arkansas College in Harrison, Arkansas. Larson said the coaches and players will discuss in the weeks ahead how the team will move forward with their season.

"It's going to take some time for them to recover from some injuries," Smidt said, without providing details on the injuries or the conditions. "It was a pretty violent collision."

New astronauts launch to the International Space Station after medical evacuation

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A new crew rocketed toward the International Space Station on Friday to replace the astronauts who returned to Earth early in NASA's first medical evacuation.

SpaceX launched the replacements as soon as possible at NASA's request, sending the U.S., French and Russian astronauts on an expected eight- to nine-month mission stretching until fall. The four should arrive at the orbiting lab on Saturday, filling the vacancies left by their evacuated colleagues last month and bringing the space station back to full staff.

"It turns out Friday the 13th is a very lucky day," SpaceX Launch Control radioed once the astronauts reached orbit. "That was quite a ride," replied the crew's commander, Jessica Meir.

NASA had to put spacewalks on hold and deferred other duties while awaiting the arrival of Americans Meir and Jack Hathaway, France's Sophie Adenot and Russia's Andrei Fedyaev. They'll join three other astronauts — one American and two Russians — who kept the space station running the past month.

Satisfied with medical procedures already in place, NASA ordered no extra checkups for the crew ahead of liftoff and no new diagnostic equipment was packed. An ultrasound machine already up there for research went into overdrive on Jan. 7 when used on the ailing crew member. NASA has not revealed the ill astronaut's identity or health issue. All four returning astronauts went straight to the hospital after splashing down in the Pacific near San Diego.

It was the first time in 65 years of human spaceflight that NASA cut short a mission for medical reasons.

With missions becoming longer, NASA is constantly looking at upgrades to the space station's medical gear, said deputy program manager Dina Contella. "But there are a lot of things that are just not practical and so that's when you need to bring astronauts home from space," she said earlier this week.

In preparation for moon and Mars trips where health care will be even more challenging, the new arrivals will test a filter designed to turn drinking water into emergency IV fluid, try out an ultrasound system that relies on artificial intelligence and augmented reality instead of experts on the ground, and perform ultrasound scans on their jugular veins in a blood clot study.

They also will demonstrate their moon-landing skills in a simulated test.

Adenot is only the second French woman to launch to space. She was 14 when Claudie Haignere flew to Russia's space station Mir in 1996, inspiring her to become an astronaut. Haignere cheered her on from the Florida launch site, wishing her "Bon vol," French for "Have a good flight," and "Ad astra," Latin for "To the stars."

"I thought it would have been a quiet joy with pride for Sophie, but it was so hugely emotional to see her with a successful launch," Haignere said.

Hathaway, like Adenot, is new to space, while Meir and Fedyaev are making their second station trip. Just before liftoff, Fedyaev led the crew in a cry of "Poyekhali" — Russian for "Let's Go" — the word uttered at liftoff by the world's first person in space, the Soviet Union's Yuri Gagarin, in 1961.

On her first mission in 2019, Meir took part in the first all-female spacewalk. The other half of that spacewalk, Christina Koch, is among the four Artemis II astronauts waiting to fly around the moon as early as March. A ship-to-ship radio linkup is planned between the two crews.

Meir wasn't sure astronauts would return to the moon during her career. "Now we're right here on the precipice of the Artemis II mission," she said ahead of liftoff. "The fact that they will be in space at the same time as us ... it's so cool to be an astronaut now, it's so exciting."

SpaceX launched the latest crew from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station. Elon Musk's company is preparing its neighboring Kennedy Space Center launch pad for the super-sized Starships, which NASA needs to land astronauts on the moon.

Bangladesh Nationalist Party claims victory in country's first election since 2024 uprising

By SHEIKH SAALIQ and JULHAS ALAM Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — The Bangladesh Nationalist Party has claimed victory in the country's first election since the 2024 uprising, positioning itself to form the next government and potentially reshape Bangladesh's political landscape after years of intense rivalry and disputed polls.

The party's media unit said on X Friday that it had secured enough seats in Parliament to govern on its own, though rival group Jamaat-e-Islami raised concerns over delayed results.

The final tally has not yet been announced by the Election Commission, but several local media outlets reported the BNP crossing the 151-seat threshold needed for a majority in the 350-member Parliament.

The Election Commission said Friday the voter turnout in Thursday's election stood at 59.44%. More than 127 million voters were eligible.

Akhter Ahmed, a senior secretary of the Election Commission, said Friday that a majority of voters backed a proposal for constitutional reforms that was held alongside the election. The proposal included prime ministerial term limits and stronger checks on executive power.

He said they would publish official notifications, legitimizing the results, soon.

The BNP is headed by 60-year-old Tarique Rahman, its prime ministerial candidate who returned to Bangladesh in December after 17 years in self-exile in London. He is the son of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who died in December.

Saleh Shibly, press secretary to Rahman, said the BNP leader called on his supporters to hold special prayers alongside the weekly Friday service and not to hold any celebratory rallies or processions.

US, China, India and Pakistan congratulate the BNP's Rahman

The U.S. Embassy in Dhaka congratulated Rahman and his party on the win, calling it a "historic victory."

"The United States looks forward to working with you to achieve shared goals of prosperity and security for both our countries," U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh Brent T. Christensen wrote on X.

China congratulated the BNP for taking the lead in the election.

"We look forward to working together with the new government of Bangladesh and writing new chapters of China-Bangladesh relations," the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka said in a statement.

Leaders from India and Pakistan also lauded the BNP leader.

Historically, Bangladesh has enjoyed mixed relationships with the two regional powers.

India helped Bangladesh gain independence from its rival Pakistan through a bloody war in 1971. It had a warm relation with Bangladesh under previous Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was ousted following the 2024 protests and sent to exile in India.

Pakistan remained sidelined under Hasina, but that has been reversed under the interim administration led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus.

Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami party makes inroads

The contest was largely a two-way race between the BNP and an 11-party alliance led by the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami, a conservative religious party whose growing influence has fueled concern, particularly among women and minority communities.

Despite falling short of a majority, the alliance made a notable impact, securing at least 77 seats, according to local TV channels.

Shafiqur Rahman, who heads Jamaat-e-Islami, secured a seat in Dhaka and is poised to become the opposition leader in Parliament. But his party voiced objections to the handling of the election results.

The party's assistant secretary-general, Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, said the Election Commission had delayed announcing results in several constituencies, calling the holdups "unusual." In a statement on Facebook, the party also claimed that candidates from the alliance it heads were "narrowly and suspiciously losing" in multiple areas.

The National Citizen Party, established by student leaders of the uprising as a break from traditional politics but later aligning with the Jamaat-e-Islami-led coalition, also left its mark. Party chief Nahid Islam

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and at least three top leaders secured victories.

The vote was seen as test of Bangladesh's democracy

Thursday's vote took place amid tight security and concerns of democratic backsliding, rising political violence and the fraying of the rule of law.

The election was the first since a bloody student-led revolt in July 2024 led to Hasina's ouster. Many viewed it as a crucial test of Bangladesh's ability to restore trust in democracy and transform public protests into tangible political reform.

For much of the past 15 years, the BNP languished in opposition, boycotting several elections and accusing Hasina's government of systematic vote rigging and political repression. Tarique Rahman himself spent 17 years in self-imposed exile after Hasina's government pursued multiple corruption and other criminal cases against him. He has denied the charges, saying they were politically motivated.

Those cases were dropped after Hasina's government collapsed, paving the way for his return to Bangladesh. His campaign has cast him as a defender of democracy in a country whose politics have long been shaped by entrenched parties, military interventions, and allegations of electoral manipulation.

Tarique Rahman's BNP has for decades formed one half of the country's entrenched dynastic political system. His father, Ziaur Rahman, rose from the ranks of the army to become a dominant political figure, serving as the country's sixth president until his assassination in 1981. His mother Khaleda Zia, who first came to power in 1991, served two full five-year terms.

The party was the principal rival to Hasina's Awami League party, now banned, and their long-running feud came to define Bangladesh's political life.

Michael Kugelman, a senior fellow for South Asia at the Atlantic Council, said while the outcome appears as "a blow to the spirit of the 2024 revolution," as the BNP has long been associated with corruption and dynastic politics, it will still face significant pressure to act differently this time.

"The BNP will need to be on its toes," he said.

Trans-Atlantic tensions in focus as annual Munich security gathering opens

By EMMA BURROWS, MATTHEW LEE and GEIR MOULSON Associated Press

MUNICH (AP) — An annual gathering of top international security figures that last year set the tone for a growing rift between the United States and Europe opens Friday, bringing together many top European officials with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and others.

The Munich Security Conference opens with a speech by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, one of 15 heads of state or government from European Union countries expected to attend.

The many other expected guests at the conference that runs until Sunday include Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. In keeping with the conference's tradition, there will also be a large delegation of members of the U.S. Congress.

"Trans-Atlantic relations have been the backbone of this conference since it was founded in 1963 ... and trans-Atlantic relations are currently in a significant crisis of confidence and credibility," conference chairman Wolfgang Ischinger told reporters earlier this week. "So it is particularly welcome that the American side has such great interest in Munich."

At last year's conference, held a few weeks into U.S. President Donald Trump's second term, Vice President JD Vance stunned European leaders by lecturing them about the state of democracy on the continent.

A series of statements and moves from the Trump administration targeting allies followed in the months after that, including Trump's threat last month to impose new tariffs on several European countries in a bid to secure U.S. control of Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark. The president later dropped that threat.

With Rubio heading the U.S. delegation this year, European leaders can hope for a less contentious approach more focused on traditional global security concerns.

Rubio is expected to meet with Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and Greenlandic Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen on the sidelines of the conference, according to officials from both sides, one of many bilateral meetings going on in and around the hotel that hosts the event.

Before departing for Germany on Thursday, Rubio had some reassuring words as he described Europe as important for Americans.

"We're very tightly linked together with Europe," he told reporters. "Most people in this country can trace both, either their cultural or their personal heritage, back to Europe. So, we just have to talk about that."

But Rubio made clear it wouldn't be business as it used to be, saying: "We live in a new era in geopolitics, and it's going to require all of us to reexamine what that looks like."

Rubio arrived in Munich Friday and is due to address the conference on Saturday morning.

Since last year's Munich conference, NATO allies have agreed under pressure from Trump to a large increase in their defense spending target.

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte said there has been a "shift in mindset," with "Europe really stepping up, Europe taking more of a leadership role within NATO, Europe also taking more care of its own defense."

Indonesia readies up to 8,000 troops in first firm commitment to Gaza peacekeeping force

By DAVID RISING and NINIEK KARMINI Associated Press

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesia has begun training a contingent of up to 8,000 soldiers it plans to send as part of an international peacekeeping force to Gaza, the first firm commitment to a critical element of U.S. President Donald Trump's postwar reconstruction plan.

Indonesia has experience in peacekeeping operations as one of the top 10 contributors to United Nations missions, including in Lebanon, and has been deeply involved in providing humanitarian aid to Gaza, including funding a hospital.

But many Indonesians are skeptical of President Prabowo Subianto's plans to join Washington's proposed Board of Peace and participate in the International Security Force with only vague details so far on how they will operate, seeing it as simply kowtowing to Trump's agenda as the two countries negotiate a trade deal.

"We need to be careful to ensure that our military personnel are not supporting the Israeli military forces," said Muhammad Zulfikar Rakhmat, a Middle East expert with Jakarta's Center of Economic and Law Studies. "We need to be careful that our military forces are not fighting against wrong actors."

The ISF's mandate remains unclear

U.N. peacekeeping forces all have clear and strict mandates, but since the Board of Peace and ISF will operate outside the U.N., many wonder how the troops will be used, and who will pay for them. Last year's ceasefire agreement broadly says that the ISF will "provide support to vetted Palestinian police forces in Gaza" and will "work with Israel and Egypt to help secure border areas."

Indonesia currently is paid by the U.N. for the troops it sends to serve as peacekeepers, but people fear it will have to pick up the tab for the troops sent to Gaza, as well as a possible \$1 billion payment for a permanent place on the Board of Peace, as outlined in a draft charter.

Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim country and firmly supports a two-state solution in the Mideast, and officials have justified joining the Board of Peace by saying it was necessary to defend Palestinian interests from within, since Israel is included on the board but there is no Palestinian representation.

"Indonesia sees the importance of the involvement of the parties to the conflict as part of the process towards peace," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Yvonne Mewengkang said this week.

She said Indonesia would use its membership to "ensure that the entire process remains oriented towards the interests of Palestine and respects the basic rights of the Palestinian people, as well as encouraging the realization of a two-state solution."

The Jakarta Post slammed that kind of reasoning in an editorial, however, saying that an "independent Palestinian state, if it emerges at all, is likely decades away."

"Indonesia will end up paying \$1 billion long before any meaningful outcome is achieved," Abdul Khalik

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wrote. "And if Indonesia eventually withdraws in frustration, it will have already spent vast resources; financial, diplomatic and political, for nothing."

Trump seen as overstepping the UN

The Board of Peace was initially envisioned as a small group of world leaders overseeing Trump's plan for Gaza's future. But the U.S. president has since said he sees the board as a mediator of worldwide conflicts, sidestepping the mandate of the U.N.

Prabowo, a former army general who has been keen to raise Indonesia's profile on the world stage, quickly accepted Trump's offer for a place on the Board of Peace and made an initial pledge of 20,000 Indonesian troops as peacekeepers during his speech at the United Nations General Assembly.

An online petition started by a group of Muslim scholars and activists questions joining a body that ostensibly promotes peace, but whose proposed chairman for life will be Trump, citing his threats to take Greenland, the seizure of then-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, and the American veto of a U.N. Security Council resolution calling for a Gaza ceasefire last year.

"In our belief, peace will be difficult to achieve by a country or a leader of a country who repeatedly uses his veto power to prevent the occurrence of peace itself," reads the petition, which calls for Indonesia to withdraw from the Board of Peace and has gotten more than 9,000 signatures so far.

"The BoP faces serious legitimacy problems, both normatively, structurally and morally."

Indonesia's military readies troops despite lack of guidance

About 100 protesters against Indonesia's involvement gathered outside the U.S. Embassy in Jakarta on Friday, holding signs with slogans like "Bored of peace?" and "Free Gaza."

Earlier this week, Indonesian Army Chief of Staff Gen. Maruli Simanjuntak said that training had begun for the peacekeepers, even though Indonesia has yet to receive any guidance on what types of personnel were needed.

He said Indonesia now envisions sending between 5,000 to 8,000 troops.

"We have started training personnel who might later serve as peacekeepers," he said. "So that means engineering, medical units - the types often deployed."

Despite the skepticism at home, the idea of Indonesians serving as peacekeepers in Gaza is seen in the region as a good one, said Hassan Jouni, a Qatar-based analyst who was formerly a Lebanese army general. Indonesia, he said, is viewed as an "honest and acceptable broker" by both sides in the conflicts in Lebanon and Gaza.

"Indonesia is a Muslim country... and its religious identity gives it a large distinction in its security participation as part of the peacekeeping forces in the Arab region," he said. "At the same time, it does not pose a strategic threat to Israel."

While Indonesia and Israel do not have formal diplomatic ties and Indonesia has been supportive of the rights of the Palestinians, it has not taken a directly confrontational stance toward Israel similar to some other Muslim-majority powers such as Turkey and Iran.

"From this point of view, the participation of Indonesian forces in southern Lebanon comes in a balanced and effective manner," he said, and it may be expected to do the same in Gaza.

Many are looking for clarity toward the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace next week in Washington, where other countries are expected to announce troop commitments of their own.

Prabowo plans to attend in person and is expected to also sign the new trade deal while there, and the Center of Economic and Law Studies' Rakhmat said he didn't think he would be swayed by public sentiment.

"I don't think the domestic opposition would significantly change the decision of Indonesia in joining the BoP," he said.

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

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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 — 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

The head of the economic crime unit of Norwegian police said Thursday that former Prime Minister Thorbjørn Jagland has been charged with "aggravated corruption" in connection with an investigation linked to the release of the Epstein files.

Økokrim, as the police unit is known, said last week it would investigate whether gifts, travel and loans were received in connection with Jagland's position.

On Thursday, unit chief Pål K. Lønseth also said its teams conducted a search of Jagland's residence in Oslo on Thursday, along with searches at two other properties in Risør, a coastal town to the south of the capital, and in Rauland to the west.

The searches were carried out after the Council of Europe, a human rights body that Jagland once led,

said it was honoring a request from Norwegian authorities to waive the immunity from legal processes that he had enjoyed.

The council lifted the immunity, saying it was intended to protect activities linked to official duties, not "personal benefit." Jagland is also a former head of the Norwegian Nobel Committee.

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."

Second US aircraft carrier is being sent to the Middle East, AP source says, as Iran tensions high

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States will send the world's largest aircraft carrier to the Middle East to back up another already there, a person familiar with the plans said Friday, putting more American firepower behind President Donald Trump's efforts to coerce Iran into a deal over its nuclear program.

The USS Gerald R. Ford's planned deployment to the Mideast comes after Trump only days earlier suggested another round of talks with the Iranians was at hand. Those negotiations didn't materialize as one of Tehran's top security officials visited Oman and Qatar this week and exchanged messages with the U.S. intermediaries.

Already, Gulf Arab nations have warned any attack could spiral into another regional conflict in a Mideast still reeling from the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, Iranians are beginning to hold 40-day mourning ceremonies for the thousands killed in Tehran's bloody crackdown on nationwide protests last month, adding to the internal pressure faced by the sanctions-battered Islamic Republic.

The Ford's deployment, first reported by The New York Times, will put two carriers and their accompanying warships in the region. Already, the USS Abraham Lincoln and its accompanying guided-missile destroyers are in the Arabian Sea.

The person who spoke to The Associated Press on the deployment did so on condition of anonymity to discuss military movements.

Ford had been part of Venezuela strike force

It marks a quick turnaround for the Ford, which Trump sent from the Mediterranean Sea to the Carib-

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bean last October as the administration build up a huge military presence in the lead-up to the surprise raid last month that captured then-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

It also appears to be at odds with Trump's national security strategy, which put an emphasis on the Western Hemisphere over other parts of the world.

Trump on Thursday warned Iran that failure to reach a deal with his administration would be "very traumatic." Iran and the United States held indirect talks in Oman last week.

"I guess over the next month, something like that," Trump said in response to a question about his timeline for striking a deal with Iran on its nuclear program. "It should happen quickly. They should agree very quickly."

Trump told Axios earlier this week that he was considering sending a second carrier strike group to the Middle East.

Trump held lengthy talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday and said he insisted to Israel's leader that negotiations with Iran needed to continue. Netanyahu is urging the administration to press Tehran to scale back its ballistic missile program and end its support for militant groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah as part of any deal.

The USS Ford set out on deployment in late June 2025, which means the crew will have been deployed for eight months in two weeks time. While it is unclear how long the ship will remain in the Middle East, the move sets the crew up for an usually long deployment.

The White House didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ford's deployment comes as Iran mourns

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. Already, online videos have shown mourners gathering in different parts of the country, holding portraits of their dead.

One video purported to show mourners at a graveyard in Iran's Razavi Khorasan province, home to Mashhad, on Thursday. There, with a large portable speaker, people sang the patriotic song "Ey Iran," which dates to 1940s Iran under the rule of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. While initially banned after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's theocratic government has played it to drum up support.

"Oh Iran, a land of full of jewels, your soil is full of art," they sang. "May evil wishes be far from you. May you live eternal. Oh enemy, if you are a piece of granite, I am iron."

Prosecutors move to dismiss charges against men accused of hitting ICE officer with broom and shovel

By MICHAEL BIESECKER and JACK BROOK Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Federal prosecutors in Minneapolis have moved to drop felony assault charges against two Venezuelan men, including one shot in the leg by a immigration officer, after new evidence emerged undercutting the government's version of events.

In a filing Thursday, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Minnesota said "newly discovered evidence" in the criminal case against Alfredo Alejandro Aljorna and Julio Cesar Sosa-Celis "is materially inconsistent with the allegations against them" made in a criminal complaint and a court hearing last month.

The government's motion asked the judge for "dismissal with prejudice," meaning the charges against the two men cannot be resubmitted.

The pending dismissal comes after a string of high-profile shootings involving federal immigration agents where eyewitness statements and video evidence called into question claims made to justify using deadly force. Dozens of felony cases against protestors accused of assaulting or impeding federal officers have also crumbled.

The case at issue in Thursday's filing stemmed from a Jan. 14 incident during which an FBI investigator said in an affidavit that U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement officers attempted to conduct a traffic stop on a vehicle driven by Aljorna, who crashed and fled on foot toward an apartment complex. As an im-

migration officer chased and tried to arrest him, the government claimed Aljorna began to violently resist. As the officer and Aljorna struggled on the ground, Sosa-Celis and another man came out of a nearby apartment and attacked the officer with a snow shovel and a broom handle, according to the complaint. The officer, who was not named in court filings, then fired his handgun, striking Sosa-Celis in the upper right thigh. The men then fled into a nearby apartment, where they were later arrested.

The day after the shooting, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem used the incident to attack Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, accusing the Democrats of "encouraging impeding and assault against our law enforcement which is a federal crime, a felony."

"What we saw last night in Minneapolis was an attempted murder of federal law enforcement," Noem said in a Jan. 15 statement. "Our officer was ambushed and attacked by three individuals who beat him with snow shovels and the handles of brooms. Fearing for his life, the officer fired a defensive shot."

Thursday's one-page motion seeking to dismiss the charges did not detail what new evidence had emerged, but cracks began to appear in the government's case during a Jan. 21 court hearing to determine whether the accused men could be released pending trial.

In court, the ICE officer's account of the moments before the shooting differed significantly from testimony from the two defendants and three other eyewitnesses. The ICE officer's account of being assaulted with a broom and snow shovel was also not corroborated by the available video evidence.

Aljorna and Sosa-Celis denied assaulting the agent with a broom or snow shovel. Neither video evidence nor testimony from a neighbor and the two men's romantic partners supported the agent's account that he had been attacked with a broom or shovel or that there had been a third person involved.

Aljorna's attorney Frederick Goetz said Aljorna had a broomstick in his hand and had thrown it at the agent as he ran towards the house. Sosa-Celis' attorney Robin Wolpert said he had been holding a shovel but was retreating into the home when the officer fired, wounding him. The men's attorneys said that the entirety of the prosecution's case relied on testimony from the agent who fired the gun.

Neither Aljorna and Sosa-Celis had violent criminal records. Both had been working as DoorDash delivery drivers at night in an attempt to avoid encounters with federal agents, their attorneys said.

After Aljorna and Sosa-Celis retreated into a nearby home, they and their families barricaded the upstairs door to prevent federal agents from entering, according to the FBI agent. Federal officers then used tear gas to try to force the family out of their home, he added. Out of concern for the safety of two children inside the home — both under the age of 2 — Aljorna and Sosa-Celis then turned themselves over to authorities.

Trump heads to Fort Bragg to cheer special forces members who ousted Venezuela's Maduro

By WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is heading to North Carolina on Friday to celebrate members of the special forces who stormed into Venezuela on the third day of the New Year and whisked away that country's leader, Nicolás Maduro, to face U.S. smuggling charges.

First lady Melania Trump will also be making the trip to Fort Bragg, one of the largest military bases in the world by population, to spend time with military families.

Trump has been hitting the road more frequently to states that could play key roles in November's midterm congressional elections, including a stop before Christmas in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. The White House has been trying to promote Trump's economic policies, including attempts to bring down the cost of living at a time when many Americans are becoming increasingly frustrated with Trump's efforts to improve affordability.

The president spoke at Fort Bragg in June at an event meant to recognize the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Army. But that celebration was overshadowed by his partisan remarks describing protesters in Los Angeles as "animals" and his defense of deploying the military there.

Trump has since deployed the National Guard to places like Washington and Memphis, Tennessee, as well as other federal law enforcement officials involved in his crackdown on immigration. Trump's border czar, Tom Homan, announced Thursday that the administration is ending the operations in Minnesota that led to the fatal shootings of two U.S. citizens.

This time, Trump's visit is meant to toast service members involved in his administration's dramatic ouster of Maduro, an operation he has described as requiring bravery and advanced weapons.

His administration has since pushed for broad oversight of the South American country's oil industry. Next month, he plans to convene a gathering of leaders from a number of Latin American countries in Florida, as the administration spotlights what it sees as concerning Chinese influence in the region.

The March 7 gathering can give Trump a chance to further press a new and aggressive foreign policy which the president has proudly dubbed the "Donroe Doctrine," a reference to 19th-century President James Monroe's belief that the U.S. should dominate its sphere of influence.

Goldman Sachs' top lawyer Kathy Ruemmler to resign after emails show close ties to Jeffrey Epstein

By KEN SWEET AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Kathy Ruemmler, the top lawyer at storied investment bank Goldman Sachs and former White House counsel to President Barack Obama, announced her resignation Thursday, after emails between her and Jeffrey Epstein showed a close relationship where she described him as an "older brother" and downplayed his sex crimes.

Ruemmler said in a statement that she would "step down as Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel of Goldman Sachs as of June 30, 2026."

Up until her resignation, Ruemmler repeatedly tried to distance herself from the emails and other correspondence and had been defiant that she would not resign from Goldman's top legal post, which she had held since 2020.

While Ruemmler has called Epstein a "monster" in recent statements, she had a much different relationship with Epstein before he was arrested a second time for sex crimes in 2019 and later killed himself in a Manhattan jail. Ruemmler called Epstein "Uncle Jeffrey" in emails and said she adored him.

In a statement before her resignation, a Goldman Sachs spokesperson said Ruemmler "regrets ever knowing him."

In her statement Thursday, Ruemmler said: "Since I joined Goldman Sachs six years ago, it has been my privilege to help oversee the firm's legal, reputational, and regulatory matters; to enhance our strong risk management processes; and to ensure that we live by our core value of integrity in everything we do. My responsibility is to put Goldman Sachs' interests first."

Goldman CEO David Solomonsaid in a separate statement: "As one of the most accomplished professionals in her field, Kathy has also been a mentor and friend to many of our people, and she will be missed. I accepted her resignation, and I respect her decision."

During her time in private practice after she left the White House in 2014, Ruemmler received several expensive gifts from Epstein, including luxury handbags and a fur coat. The gifts were given after Epstein had already been convicted of sex crimes in 2008 and was registered as a sex offender.

"So lovely and thoughtful! Thank you to Uncle Jeffrey!!!" Ruemmler wrote to Epstein in 2018.

Historically, Wall Street frowns on gift-giving between clients and bankers or Wall Street lawyers, particularly high-end gifts that could pose a conflict of interest. Goldman Sachs requires its employees to get preapproval before receiving or giving gifts from clients, according to the company's code of conduct, partly in order to not run afoul of anti-bribery laws.

As late as December, Goldman CEO David Solomon described Ruemmler as an "excellent lawyer" and said she had his full faith and backing.

Trump boasts of over \$1.5B in political funds. How he chooses to spend it could rock the midterms

By WILL WEISSERT and BRIAN SLODYSKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has bragged about building a political war chest exceeding \$1.5 billion — a staggering sum that he can wield at his whim to shape November’s midterms and the 2028 race to succeed him.

Trump’s stockpile — which dwarfs any amounts raised by his predecessors in their second terms — is not easy to precisely calculate given that much of it is being collected by groups that aren’t required to file regular financial disclosures.

Current and former staffers, as well as others in Trump’s orbit, wouldn’t say exactly where his political bank account stands six months after the president announced on social media that he’d raised, just since Election Day 2024, “in various forms and political entities, in excess of 1.5 Billion Dollars.”

But what is not in question is that it represents a mountain of cash that could reshape Republican politics for years to come — if he chooses. He’s been reluctant to spend money on other people’s races in the past, and he’s even found ways to funnel some cash to his own businesses.

The \$1.5 billion Trump claimed is roughly equal to what he and outside groups spent on his successful 2024 reelection bid, according to OpenSecrets, a nonpartisan group that tracks political spending.

By comparison, Democratic President Joe Biden’s various super PACs, political groups and nonprofits, as well as the Democratic National Committee, raised roughly \$97 million during his first year in office, according to public disclosures. That’s only about 7% of Trump’s total, and Biden was gearing up for a reelection run Trump isn’t allowed to make.

“I think a lot of people are asking, ‘What is it all for?’” said Saurav Ghosh, federal campaign finance reform director at the Washington nonprofit Campaign Legal Center.

It’s enough to shape the midterms and beyond

People close to Trump say the main benefit of all that cash is unmatched influence heading into November. They insist Trump is eager to help Republicans so his political agenda isn’t stymied, like when Democratic victories derailed his first-term agenda after 2018’s midterms. His stockpile has helped the GOP build a sizable cash advantage over Democrats ahead of November, at least so far.

“One of the main reasons a lame-duck president might want to amass this much money is to maintain political relevance,” said Daniel Weiner, a former Federal Election Commission attorney and current director of the Brennan Center’s Elections and Government Program. “Certainly he’s been far more aggressive about this than any of his predecessors.”

Trump on Wednesday vowed political consequences for Republicans opposing his tariff policies, and could spend big to hurt them in GOP primaries. Chief among his targets is Kentucky Rep. Thomas Massie, who opposed Trump’s tax and spend package and defied the White House in helping force the release of federal files on Jeffrey Epstein.

Trump has also endorsed a primary opponent of Sen. Bill Cassidy, R-La., after he voted to convict Trump during his 2021 impeachment trial over the mob attack on the U.S. Capitol. Still, the extent to which Trump will open his pocketbook in congressional races remains to be seen.

“What I’m a little surprised about is that Trump has not leveraged — at least overtly — the money he controls going into that election on his congressional agenda,” said Jason Roe, a Republican strategist in Michigan.

Indeed, Trump has a history of not spending big on races where he isn’t running. In 2018, Trump’s America First Action super PAC spent less than \$30 million — a pittance given that super PACs spent about \$820 million that cycle, according to OpenSecrets.

He doesn’t always follow through on his threats, either. Despite pledging to travel to Alaska to help defeat Republican Alaska Sen. Lisa Murkowski in 2022, a Trump-affiliated PAC instead gave \$1.5 million to a group opposing her. Murkowski was reelected anyway.

The president also has made no major moves so far to oppose state lawmakers in Indiana who refused

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to back new congressional maps championed by the White House.

Trump's campaign bank account also would let him play a decisive role in the next presidential race. Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio are the early favorites, with Trump suggesting pairing them on a GOP ticket he says would be formidable.

'A slush fund'

Much of Trump's political cash comes from the MAGA Inc. super PAC, which raised \$100-plus million in the last six months of 2025 and entered this year with more than \$300 million. The Republican National Committee reported raising \$172 million last year.

There's also a constellation of pro-Trump nonprofits, including Securing American Greatness, which are only required to release limited information about their finances. Donations to one Trump entity can be moved through the various nonprofits and super PACs, making it difficult to track what's spent where.

"Because there are virtually no restrictions on what super PAC money can be used for, it essentially can be operated as a slush fund at the disposal of whoever controls it," Weiner said.

There are many ways Trump has used political funds to enrich his businesses in the past, including billing his campaign for the use of his own airplane. He could also stage political events at his properties in Florida or New Jersey, or his golf club outside Washington.

At least \$26 million has been spent by conservative groups and Republican committees at Trump properties since 2015 — and the actual figure is likely higher since some groups don't have to offer detailed spending figures.

Though federal rules govern the ways political donations can be spent, they can also be skirted. In 2020, Trump's campaign paid tens of millions of dollars to limited liability companies controlled by aides, a move that satisfied federal disclosure rules, but masked the ultimate recipient of the money. In 2024, his political operation clawed back millions of dollars in donations it made to a super PAC supporting Trump's run and used the money to instead pay legal bills that mounted after his indictments in four federal criminal cases while also facing civil trials.

"As with so many things Donald Trump, he is sometimes pushing the envelope on what's permitted, sometimes blowing right through what are pretty clear legal limits," said Ghosh, of the Campaign Legal Center.

Who's helping Trump's campaign bank account grow?

Trump's fundraising efforts are tireless. The day after his 2024 election win, he ordered staff to begin fundraising anew, and he's since attended frequent fundraisers. His allies send out emails seeking donations constantly, often multiple times daily.

"I'm sitting here. Alone. In the war room. Fighting for you," Trump wrote in one such message last month. In another, a Trump-affiliated group tried to spur on donors to give by asking, "Does ICE need to come and track you down?"

During his first presidential run, Trump relied heavily on small donations. But much of his operation now relies on large checks from uber-wealthy donors and well-connected businesses.

Greg Brockman, co-founder of OpenAI, and his wife, Anna, donated \$25 million to MAGA Inc. last year, as Trump talked constantly about helping ensure U.S. companies dominate the artificial intelligence field globally.

Other big donations came from crypto interests that have had federal investigations dropped and big tobacco companies hoping to ease regulations.

The parents of Howard Brodie, Trump's ambassador to Finland, donated \$500,000 to MAGA Inc., while Isabela Herrera gave \$3.5 million before her father, Venezuelan banker Julio Herrera Velutini, was pardoned by Trump on bribery charges.

"Each of these wealthy individuals, corporations, they are ponying up for a purpose," Ghosh said. "What we're seeing with Trump's administration is just an unprecedented level of pay-to-play."

Experts say screening tips in Nancy Guthrie's disappearance is 'tremendous' and critical work

By ED WHITE Associated Press

An Arizona sheriff's department got more than 4,000 calls within 24 hours after the release of videos of a masked person on Nancy Guthrie's porch. Many tips will be worthless. Others could have merit. Experts say one thing's certain: They can't be ignored.

Tips can solve crimes — big or small — and eerie images of a mysterious male covered head to toe have been the most significant clues shared with the public during Guthrie's nearly two-week-old disappearance in the Tucson area.

"It's a tremendous amount of work," said Roberto Villaseñor, a former Tucson police chief.

"In a situation like this, you really cannot do what's been done without tips and public input," he said. "They have processed the scene. But once that's done and exhausted, it's hard to move forward without additional information coming in."

Tens of thousands of tips

The Pima County sheriff and the FBI announced phone numbers and a website to offer tips about the apparent kidnapping of Guthrie, the 84-year-old mother of NBC "Today" co-anchor Savannah Guthrie. Several hundred detectives and agents have been assigned to the case, the sheriff's department said.

The FBI said it has collected more than 13,000 tips since Feb. 1, the day when Guthrie was reported missing. The sheriff's department, meanwhile, said it has taken at least 18,000 calls.

"Every tip is reviewed for credibility, relevance, and information that can be acted upon by law enforcement," the FBI said Thursday on X, adding that the effort is a 24-hour operation. It said it won't comment on the tips received.

Tips have blown open investigations many times

Major U.S. crimes for years have been cracked with a tip. In 1995, the brother and sister-in-law of Ted Kaczynski recognized certain tones in an anonymous, widely published anti-technology manifesto. Known by the FBI as the "Unabomber," Kaczynski was found living in a shack in Montana and subsequently admitted to committing 16 bombings over 17 years, killing three people.

The 1989 murders of an Ohio woman and two teen daughters in Florida were solved three years later when St. Petersburg police asked the public if they recognized handwriting found in the victims' car. A former neighbor led investigators to Oba Chandler.

Retired Detroit homicide investigator Ira Todd recalled how images from a gas station camera solved the disappearance and death of a 3-month-old baby — and stopped authorities from pursuing the wrong person in 2001. "A niece of this guy saw it on TV and says, 'That's my uncle,'" he said.

The murders of four University of Idaho students in 2022 generated nearly 40,000 tips to state and federal authorities. None had a direct role in the capture of Bryan Kohberger, but the public's involvement nonetheless was "absolutely" important, said Lt. Darren Gilbertson of the Idaho State Police.

"That's one of the things that kept us going for weeks," he said, while authorities awaited DNA and other evidence.

Sorting the helpful from the conspiracy

Gilbertson said much of the early vetting was done by the FBI. He said agents and analysts who were screening tips had a good grasp of what information could be spiked and what should be handed up to key investigators. Some tips arrived by regular mail.

"Aliens to bears to crazy conspiratorial ideas — don't even pass that along," Gilbertson said.

Nancy Guthrie was last seen Jan. 31 and was reported missing the following day. Hours before her family knew she was gone, a porch camera recorded video of a person with a backpack who was wearing a ski mask, long pants, jacket and gloves — images that were released by the FBI along with a public plea for help. The FBI on Thursday said the person, who they now consider a suspect, is a male, about 5-foot, 9-inches tall with a medium build. The agency also named the brand and model of the backpack.

The sheriff's department has not said whether any tips tied to the videos have advanced the investigation.

"I'm hopeful," said Villaseñor, the former Tucson chief. "I have seen cases where simpler and less detailed information has helped bring somebody about. Maybe someone recognizes clothing, maybe the bag. You never know what someone will key on."

As electricity costs rise, everyone wants data centers to pick up their tab. But how?

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — As outrage spreads over energy-hungry data centers, politicians from President Donald Trump to local lawmakers have found rare bipartisan agreement over insisting that tech companies — and not regular people — must foot the bill for the exorbitant amount of electricity required for artificial intelligence.

But that might be where the agreement ends.

The price of powering data centers has become deeply intertwined with concerns over the cost of living, a dominant issue in the upcoming midterm elections that will determine control of Congress and governors' offices.

Some efforts to address the challenge may be coming too late, with energy costs on the rise. And even though tech giants are pledging to pay their "fair share," there's little consensus on what that means.

"Fair share" is a pretty squishy term, and so it's something that the industry likes to say because 'fair' can mean different things to different people," said Ari Peskoe, who directs the Electricity Law Initiative at Harvard University.

It's a shift from last year, when states worked to woo massive data center projects and Trump directed his administration to do everything it could to get them electricity. Now there's a backlash as towns fight data center projects and some utilities' electricity bills have risen quickly.

Anger over the issue has already had electoral consequences, with Democrats ousting two Republicans from Georgia's utility regulatory commission in November.

"Voters are already connecting the experience of these facilities with their electricity costs and they're going to increasingly want to know how government is going to navigate that," said Christopher Borick, a pollster and director of the Muhlenberg College Institute of Public Opinion.

Energy race stokes concerns

Data centers are sprouting across the U.S., as tech giants scramble to meet worldwide demand for chatbots and other generative AI products that require large amounts of computing power to train and operate.

The buildings look like giant warehouses, some dwarfing the footprints of factories and stadiums. Some need more power than a small city, more than any utility has ever supplied to a single user, setting off a race to build more power plants.

The demand for electricity can have a ripple effect that raises prices for everyone else. For example, if utilities build more power plants or transmission lines to serve them, the cost can be spread across all ratepayers.

Concerns have dovetailed with broader questions about the cost of living, as well as fears about the powerful influence of tech companies and the impact of artificial intelligence.

Trump continues to embrace artificial intelligence as a top economic and national security priority, although he seemed to acknowledge the backlash last month by posting on social media that data centers "must 'pay their own way.'"

At other times, he has brushed concerns aside, declaring that tech giants are building their own power plants, and Energy Secretary Chris Wright contends that data centers don't inflate electricity bills — disputing what consumer advocates and independent analysts say.

States moving to regulate

Some states and utilities have started to identify ways to get data centers to pay for their costs.

They've required tech companies to buy electricity in long-term contracts, pay for the power plants and transmission upgrades they need and make big down payments in case they go belly-up or decide later

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they don't need as much electricity.

But it might be more complicated than that. Those rules can't fix the short-term problem of ravenous demand for electricity that is outpacing the speed of power plant construction, analysts say.

"What do you do when Big Tech, because of the very profitable nature of these data centers, can simply outbid grandma for power in the short run?" Abe Silverman, a former utility regulatory lawyer and an energy researcher at Johns Hopkins University. "That is, I think, going to be the real challenge."

Some consumer advocates say tech companies' fair share should also include the rising cost of electricity, grid equipment or natural gas that's driven by their demand.

In Oregon, which passed a law to protect smaller ratepayers from data centers' power costs, a consumer advocacy group is jousting with the state's largest utility, Portland General Electric, over its plan on how to do that.

Meanwhile, consumer advocates in various states — including Indiana, Georgia and Missouri — are warning that utilities could foist the cost of data center-driven buildouts onto regular ratepayers there.

Pushback from lawmakers, governors

Utilities have pledged to ensure electric rates are fair. But in some places it may be too late.

For instance, in the mid-Atlantic grid territory from New Jersey to Illinois, consumer advocates and analysts have pegged billions of dollars in rate increases hitting the bills of regular Americans on data center demand.

Legislation, meanwhile, is flooding into Congress and statehouses to regulate data centers.

Democrats' bills in Congress await Republican cosponsors, while lawmakers in a number of states are floating moratoriums on new data centers, drafting rules for regulators to shield regular ratepayers and targeting data center tax breaks and utility profits.

Governors — including some who worked to recruit data centers to their states — are increasingly talking tough.

Arizona Gov. Katie Hobbs, a Democrat running for reelection this year, wants to impose a penny-a-gallon water fee on data centers and get rid of the sales tax exemption there that most states offer data centers. She called it a \$38 million "corporate handout."

"It's time we make the booming data center industry work for the people of our state, rather than the other way around," she said in her state-of-the-state address.

Blame for rising energy costs

Energy costs are projected to keep rising in 2026.

Republicans in Washington are pointing the finger at liberal state energy policies that favor renewable energy, suggesting they have driven up transmission costs and frayed supply by blocking fossil fuels.

"Americans are not paying higher prices because of data centers. There's a perception there, and I get the perception, but it's not actually true," said Wright, Trump's energy secretary, at a news conference earlier this month.

The struggle to assign blame was on display last week at a four-hour U.S. House subcommittee hearing with members of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Republicans encouraged FERC members to speed up natural gas pipeline construction while Democrats defended renewable energy and urged FERC to limit utility profits and protect residential ratepayers from data center costs.

FERC's chair, Laura Swett, told Rep. Greg Landsman, D-Ohio, that she believes data center operators are willing to cover their costs and understand that it's important to have community support.

"That's not been our experience," Landsman responded, saying projects in his district are getting tax breaks, sidestepping community opposition and costing people money. "Ultimately, I think we have to get to a place where they pay everything."

Palestinians look to salvage Gaza's history from the ruins of Israel's military offensive

By MARIAM FAM and WAFAA SHURAFU Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — Muneer Elbaz remembers the joy of visiting the Great Omari Mosque in Gaza with his family, praying at a site where people have worshipped over centuries as empires came and went.

"These were the best days," Elbaz said, as he recalled promenading through the lively markets around the mosque before the Israel-Hamas war. "This place transports us from one era to another."

Today, much of the mosque stands in ruins — like most of Gaza — after being hit by Israeli strikes in the two-year war muffled by an uncertain ceasefire. The sight of the rubble brings to mind "a tree that had been uprooted from the land," said Elbaz, a Palestinian heritage consultant involved with recovery work at the site.

Israel's military offensive killed over 72,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and erased entire extended families.

Gone too is some of the heritage of a land with a rich history going back to ancient times. The mosque was built on a site where a Byzantine church had stood, and changed hands and even religions as one invader followed another.

With major military operations halted, Palestinians are gaining a clearer picture of the destruction. Some organizations are trying to save what they can at historical sites, even as full-scale restoration — and the broader reconstruction of the territory — face major obstacles.

Dozens of sites were damaged

Israel launched its offensive after Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took another 251 hostage in the Oct. 7, 2023, attack. The military accuses Hamas of concealing military assets beneath or near heritage sites, as well as other civilian structures.

The U.N. cultural agency, in an ongoing assessment based on satellite images, says it has verified damage to at least 150 sites since the start of the war. They include 14 religious sites, 115 buildings of historical or artistic interest, nine monuments and eight archaeological sites.

They are fragments of Gaza's soul, connecting Palestinians to a place and a history that many fear is at risk of being erased.

"These sites were an important element that solidifies the presence of the Palestinian people on this land and that represents the continuity of their cultural identity," said Issam Juha, co-director of the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation, based in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

"They want to erase the Palestinian identity and Palestinian heritage and ... to remove any connection that keeps the Palestinian society clinging to this land," he said.

The center is doing urgent rescue work at the badly damaged Pasha Palace, which housed centuries-old artifacts, many of which appear to have been looted, Juha said. Among the missing items are an Ottoman-era Quranic manuscript, jewelry from the medieval Mamluk era and a Roman-era sarcophagus from which only some fragments have been recovered, according to Hamouda al-Dohdar, an expert working at the site.

The Israeli military said it struck "a Hamas military compound and an anti-tank missile array" at the site. It said its forces struck a "terror tunnel" at the Omari mosque. It did not provide evidence in either case.

Amir Abu al-Omrain, an official with Gaza's endowments ministry, part of the Hamas-run government, denied the allegation about the mosque.

UNESCO does not have a mandate to assign responsibility for the damage it assesses.

An independent commission established by the U.N.'s Human Rights Council said it was not aware of any evidence of a tunnel shaft in the mosque. Noting the Israeli allegations about the mosque, it said that even the presence of a "legitimate military objective ... would not have justified the resulting damage." Israel has previously accused the commission of bias.

The centuries-old Saint Porphyrius Orthodox church complex, which had been sheltering displaced Palestinians, was also hit in an Israeli attack early in the war, causing deaths and injuries. The military said it had

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targeted a nearby Hamas command center. UNESCO said the church complex was moderately damaged.

Some of Gaza's heritage sites appear to have been spared. UNESCO said it has found no evidence of damage at the Saint Hilarion Monastery, dating to the 4th century.

Under international law, cultural property should not be targeted or used for military purposes.

The Israeli military says it takes the sensitivity of cultural and religious sites into account, aims to minimize damage to civilian infrastructure and adheres to international law.

A rich history

Artifacts and accounts stretching back thousands of years testify to Gaza's long history of commerce and conflict. Egypt's pharaohs sent chariots through the low-lying coastal strip in their wars with the Hittites in modern-day Turkey. Traders in Gaza did brisk business with the ancient Greeks.

The Omari mosque, named for Islam's second caliph, was initially built in the seventh century. Centuries later, the Crusaders converted it into a cathedral, and it went back to being a mosque after they were expelled, said Stephennie Mulder, associate professor of Islamic art at the University of Texas at Austin.

The mosque was damaged during World War I, when the British shelled Gaza in their campaign against the Ottoman Turks, and was later rebuilt.

"The building itself told the story of Gaza's past as a crossroads of trade, armies, empires, and religious traditions," said Mulder. "For many Gazans, the Omari mosque stood as a beloved symbol of multiplicity, resilience and persistence."

More than stones

Mohammad Shareef, 62, remembers attending prayers at the mosque with his father when he was a child, and studying for exams in its quiet confines. Years later, he would bring his own children there. He wept when it was hit.

"We were raised in it and around it, and there's no stone here that we haven't stepped on," he said. "For the people of Gaza, this is their history."

The loss will feel particularly acute during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which begins later this month. Before the war, thousands converged on the mosque for Ramadan prayers amid a festive atmosphere. This year, a large tented structure has been erected.

In recent days, workers have been filling wheelbarrows in the shadow of a damaged minaret.

Hosni Almazloum, an engineer working at the site, said the mosque's prayer hall ceiling had collapsed and columns had crumbled. He said it could be rebuilt, if construction supplies are allowed in. For now, teams have been focused on recovery and preventing further damage, sifting through and storing stones.

The U.S.-brokered ceasefire agreement, which halted most of the fighting in October, gives no timeline for Gaza's reconstruction, which may prove impossible if Israel maintains the blockade it imposed on the territory when Hamas seized power in 2007, after the militant group won Palestinian elections in 2006.

Many historic sites suffered from neglect before the war. The blockade and previous Israel-Hamas wars, along with a lack of resources and urban sprawl, posed challenges. Hamas-run authorities have leveled parts of what archaeologists believe was a Bronze Age settlement to make way for construction projects.

Elbaz says that before the ceasefire, grief was a luxury he couldn't afford — his family was just trying to survive.

"What would you begin to cry over?" he asked. "The historic mosques or your home or your history or your children's schools or the streets?"

Now, as he processes the war's toll, he sometimes weeps, away from the eyes of his children.

"Gaza is our mother," he said. "We have memories everywhere — in this tree, this flower, this garden and this mosque. Yes, we cry over every part of Gaza."

Judge says US must help bring back some of the Venezuelans deported to notorious prison

By SUDHIN THANAWALA Associated Press

A federal judge on Thursday ordered the Trump administration to make arrangements to allow some of the Venezuelan migrants deported to a notorious prison in El Salvador to return to the U.S. at the government's expense.

The case has been a legal flashpoint in the administration's sweeping immigration crackdown. It started in March after President Donald Trump invoked the 18th century Alien Enemies Act to send Venezuelan migrants accused of being gang members to a mega-prison known as the Terrorism Confinement Center, or CECOT.

In Thursday's ruling, U.S. District Judge James Boasberg in Washington criticized the White House's response to his earlier order that it come up with a plan to give the men a chance to challenge their removals.

"Apparently not interested in participating in this process, the Government's responses essentially told the Court to pound sand," Boasberg wrote. Nominated to the federal bench by President Barack Obama, the judge has repeatedly clashed with the administration over the deportations.

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson blasted Boasberg's ruling, saying in a statement it was "an absurd, unlawful ruling from a far-left judicial activist trying to undermine the President's lawful authority to carry about deportations."

"Americans elected President Trump based on his promise to deport criminal illegal aliens and Make America Safe Again," she said. "Boasberg has no right to stop the will of the American people, and this will not be the final say on the matter."

The 137 men were later returned to Venezuela in a prisoner exchange brokered by the United States.

Lee Gelernt, their attorney in the U.S., said at a court hearing on Monday that plaintiffs' attorneys are in touch with a handful of them who have since managed to leave Venezuela and are now in a third country. These men are interested in clearing their names, he said.

Boasberg's order says U.S. officials must provide the men in third countries who wish to fly back to U.S. with a boarding letter. The government must also cover their airfare. He noted the men would be detained upon their return.

Those men and the migrants who remain in Venezuela can also file new legal documents arguing the presidential proclamation under which they were deported illegally invoked the 18th century wartime law, the judge ruled. The legal filings can also challenge their designation as members of the Tren de Aragua gang.

Boasberg said he could decide later whether to require hearings and how to conduct them, but it was up to the government to "remedy the wrong that it perpetrated here and to provide a means for doing so."

"Were it otherwise, the Government could simply remove people from the United States without providing any process and then, once they were in a foreign country, deny them any right to return for a hearing or opportunity to present their case from abroad," he wrote.

In March, Trump officials flew the Venezuelan men to the prison, despite a verbal order from Boasberg for the aircraft to turn around. Boasberg subsequently started a contempt investigation, though the dramatic battle between the judicial and executive branches has been paused by an appeals court.

The administration has denied violating his order.

Gelernt said in a statement on Thursday Boasberg had "begun the process of giving these men their right to challenge their removal."

"Remarkably, although the government does not dispute the men were denied due process, it still was not willing to do what was right without a court order," he said.

Judge temporarily blocks Trump officials from rescinding health grants to some Democratic-led states

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

President Donald Trump's administration cannot rescind \$600 million in public health grants allocated to four Democratic-led states, for now, a federal judge in Illinois ruled Thursday.

California, Colorado, Illinois and Minnesota sued Wednesday to try to block the planned funding cuts to programs that track disease outbreaks and study health outcomes of LGBTQ+ people and communities of color in major cities.

U.S. District Judge Manish Shah stopped the cuts from taking effect for 14 days, saying in his order that the states "have shown that they would suffer irreparable harm from the agency action." That will keep grant money flowing from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to state and city health departments and their partner organizations while the challenge proceeds.

The first batch of grants could have been pulled Thursday if the judge had not intervened, Colorado Attorney General Phil Weiser said.

The Department of Health and Human Services said the grants are being terminated because they do not reflect CDC priorities, which were revised last year to align with the administration's shift away from health equity, the idea that certain populations may need additional support to eliminate health disparities.

Much of the money helped cities fight the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, especially among gay and bisexual men, adolescents and ethnic minorities.

Federal health officials did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the judge's order.

Officials in the four states are among Trump's strongest political foes and view the cuts as retaliation for opposing his immigration enforcement crackdown. All have been targets of other federal cuts, including for food assistance programs, child care subsidies and electric vehicle infrastructure.

Their lawsuit, led by Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, argues that the health care cuts violate the Constitution by imposing retroactive conditions on funding that Congress already awarded.

"Targeting four Democrat-run states that are standing up to his completely unrelated immigration policies is a transparent attempt to bully us into compliance," Raoul said. "The president may be playing politics with critical public health funding, including more than \$100 million to Illinois, but our residents are the ones who pay the price."

The attorneys general say the loss of funding would force them to lay off hundreds of public health workers.

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison said they will seek to extend the judge's pause for the duration of the lawsuit.

Courts have temporarily blocked similar efforts by the Trump administration, including a plan to cut off billions for child care subsidies and other programs for low-income families in the four states, plus New York.

Search for Nancy Guthrie now seeks nearby security videos from the month before she vanished

By TY ONEIL Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Investigators in Arizona want residents near Nancy Guthrie's home to share surveillance camera footage of suspicious cars or people they may have noticed in the month before she disappeared.

The alert went across a 2-mile (3.2-kilometer) radius in neighborhoods close to where the mother of "Today" show host Savannah Guthrie went missing 12 days ago, the Pima County Sheriff's Department said Thursday.

It asked for video of "anything neighbors deem out of the ordinary or important to our investigation" since the beginning of January.

Federal and local officers have been going door-to-door in Tucson neighborhoods around 84-year-old

Nancy Guthrie's house while also looking for clues around her other daughter's nearby home, which she had visited just hours before disappearing.

Investigators have recovered and are analyzing several pieces of evidence, including a pair of gloves, the sheriff's department said.

Authorities on Thursday briefly put up a tent in front of Nancy Guthrie's entryway where her blood was discovered in the early days of the investigation, and where a doorbell camera captured images of a masked person the night she went missing. The FBI released descriptors of that person Thursday, whom it now calls a suspect, in a post on X.

The post describes the suspect as a 5-foot-9-inch or 5-foot-10-inch male with an average build, and included photos from multiple angles of a black, 25-liter "Ozark Trail Hiker Pack" backpack, which the agency said is the brand and model the suspect was wearing.

"We hope this updated description will help concentrate the public tips we are receiving," the FBI said, noting the thousands of tips it has gotten since Nancy Guthrie's disappearance.

FBI Phoenix also announced it has hiked its reward to \$100,000 for information on Guthrie's disappearance.

Authorities have said Guthrie was taken against her will. She's been missing since Feb. 1, and authorities say she takes several medications and there's concern she could die without them.

While much of the nation remains engrossed by the mysterious disappearance, Savannah Guthrie on Thursday shared on Instagram a vintage home video of her mom with two children sharing pink flowers, writing "we will never give up on her. thank you for your prayers and hope."

On Wednesday, FBI agents carrying water bottles to beat the desert heat walked among rocks and vegetation at Nancy Guthrie's home. They also fanned out across a nearby neighborhood, knocking on doors and searching through cactuses, brush and boulders.

"They were just asking some general questions wondering if there was anything, any information we could shed on the Nancy Guthrie issue. Wanted to look around the property and after that, cameras and such," Ann Adams, a neighbor of Nancy Guthrie's oldest daughter, Annie Guthrie, told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

"They did ask specifically for the 31st of January and the morning of the first of February and then they wanted to know if we saw anything suspicious on cameras since then," Adams said.

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

Two investigators emerged from daughter Annie Guthrie's home Wednesday with a paper grocery sack and a white trash bag. One, still wearing blue protective gloves, also took a stack of mail from the road-side mailbox.

Adams, the neighbor, said she was out walking her dog earlier this week when, "it started to get really busy and then I heard about them searching, looked down the street, I saw them slowly moving this way."

Savannah Guthrie and her two siblings have indicated a willingness to pay a ransom. But it's not known whether ransom notes demanding money with deadlines that have already passed were authentic.

Remote community grieves the 8 killed in Canada's deadliest attack in years

By JIM MORRIS and ROB GILLIES Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) — The families of victims of a shooting in a remote Canadian Rockies town grappled with unrelenting grief Thursday as details emerged about those killed in the country's deadliest mass shooting in years.

Authorities said the 18-year-old alleged shooter, identified as Jesse Van Rootselaar, killed her 39-year-old mother, Jennifer Jacobs, and 11-year-old stepbrother, Emmett Jacobs, in their northern British Columbia home on Tuesday before heading to the nearby Tumbler Ridge Secondary School and opening fire, killing five children and an educator before killing herself.

Twenty-five people were also injured in the attack. The motive remains unclear.

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Among the dead was 12-year-old Kylie Smith, whose family remembered her as "the light in our family." "She loved her family, friends, and going to school," Kylie's family said in a statement. "She was a talented artist and had dreams of going to art school in the big city of Toronto. Rest in paradise, sweet girl, our family will never be the same without you."

Kylie's father tearfully recounted the desperate hours spent trying to learn what happened to his daughter, only to find out from an older girl, not the authorities.

Lance Younge told CTV News that his son, Ethan, texted "I love you" shortly after 3 p.m. Tuesday and then called a short time later to say he was hiding in a utility room at his school in the small mountain community of Tumbler Ridge, but that he didn't know where his sister Kylie was.

The family would find out hours later that Kylie was among the dead.

While looking for Kylie, Younge said he walked around the local recreation center where students were reuniting with their families for about six hours, but that police wouldn't tell him anything.

"I went home not knowing where my daughter was until a high school kid ... came here and told us her story about trying to save my daughter's life," he said. "The police didn't tell us anything. We had to find out through the community and through kids and rumors."

Authorities on Thursday identified the other victims as Abel Mwansa, Zoey Benoit and Ticaria Lampert, all age 12, as well as 13-year-old Ezekiel Schofield and assistant teacher Shannda Aviugana-Durand, 39.

In a statement, Zoey's family described her as "resilient, vibrant, smart, caring and the strongest little girl you could meet."

Peter Schofield, whose grandson, Ezekiel, was killed, shared his grief in a Facebook post, saying: "Everything feels so surreal. The tears just keep flowing."

A need for mental health services

Trent Ernst, publisher of Tumbler RidgeLines, the town's biweekly newspaper, said he has been "randomly breaking down and weeping at inopportune times, usually when talking to people about what is happening."

He said he knows Maya Gebala, 12, who was wounded in the head and neck, and Paige Hoekstra, 19, who also suffered bullet wounds. Both were hospitalized in Vancouver.

He said he spoke with Maya at a recent town winter carnival, describing her as "funky and vivacious" and "full of life."

Ernst said one of the biggest frustrations in the community is the lack of medical support and in particular mental health services. Rootselaar had a history of police visits to her home to check on her mental health, authorities said.

"The majority of people that I've talked to are sad more at the fact that Tumbler Ridge doesn't have the level of support for mental health and health services in general," he said.

"If this had happened three hours later, our clinic would have been closed and there would be no emergency room there," he said, adding that it would likely have reopened under such exceptional circumstances.

In particular, Ernst said there's a severe lack of mental health services in the Canadian Rockies town, which has roughly 2,700 residents and is more than 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) northeast of Vancouver, near the provincial border with Alberta.

"Right now, there are five mental health nurses in town. But this is the exception, and it's an exceptional situation. There are times where we'll go months, if not years, without having anybody in mental health services in town," he said.

Alleged shooter led a nomadic life

Rootselaar and her family led a "nomadic lifestyle" marked by multiple moves between at least three Canadian provinces, according to a 2015 British Columbia court ruling.

The court's decision in a dispute between the alleged shooter's parents described her mother, Jennifer Jacobs, moving with her children between Newfoundland, Grand Cache in Alberta and Powell River, British Columbia, in the previous five years.

Her mother, also known as Jennifer Strang, was found to have engaged in "reprehensible conduct" by failing to give her children's father enough notice that she was moving back to Newfoundland in August 2015.

Jacobs was ordered in the court ruling to return their children to British Columbia.

A community grieves

Mourners braved frigid cold Wednesday night to honor the victims, with Mayor Darryl Krakowka telling them, "It's OK to cry."

Krakowka described the town as "one big family," and encouraged people to reach out and support each other, especially the families of those who died in the attack. The community must support victims' families "forever," not only in the days and weeks to come, he said.

Police recovered a long gun and a modified handgun at the school that they said Rootselaar used in the attack.

Dwayne McDonald, deputy commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in British Columbia, said Wednesday there was no information that anyone at the school was targeted. He said officers arrived at the school two minutes after the initial call and that shots were fired in their direction when they showed up.

"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 Wednesday as he arrived in Parliament.

Carney, who said flags at government buildings will be flown at half-staff for seven days, planned to visit Tumbler Ridge on Friday.

Deadliest rampage since 2020

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

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.

Border czar says Minnesota immigration crackdown is over, after angry protests and 2 fatal shootings

By STEVE KARNOWSKI and TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — The Trump administration is ending a massive immigration crackdown that swept across the Minneapolis-St. Paul area and other Minnesota communities, border czar Tom Homan said Thursday, concluding an operation that led to thousands of arrests, angry mass protests and the fatal shootings of two U.S. citizens.

The crackdown, which the Department of Homeland Security called its "largest immigration enforcement operation ever," became the most prominent flashpoint in the debate over President Donald Trump's mass deportation efforts.

The surge of thousands of federal officers changed life across the Twin Cities. Convoys of unmarked SUVs became commonplace in some immigrant neighborhoods, where residents could stumble onto masked men in body armor making arrests and throngs of protesters who filled the air with taunts, insults and shrieking whistles.

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement operation, which flared up into street clashes after federal officers killed Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis, became a major political distraction for the Trump administration. The announcement of a drawdown marked a significant retreat as a new AP-NORC poll found that most U.S. adults say Trump's immigration policies have gone too far.

Operation Metro Surge, which started in December, resulted in more than 4,000 arrests, Homan told reporters Thursday morning, declaring it a success.

"The surge is leaving Minnesota safer," he said. "I'll say it again: It's less of a sanctuary state for criminals."

But while the administration portrayed its Minnesota targets as dangerous criminals, many had no criminal records and they included working families, children like 5-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos and U.S. citizens.

Relief and skepticism follow announcement

In a city with a long history of progressive politics, there was skepticism, along with relief, at Homan's

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announcement.

"We will believe it when we see it — and any ICE presence is a threat to everyone's safety," Minneapolis City Council Member Aurin Chowdhury said in a statement. "We will be left in the aftermath of destruction, and we will have to pick up the pieces of our communities."

The surge sent waves of fear through immigrant communities, with children staying home from school or learning remotely, immigrant businesses temporarily shutting down and church pews left empty. Residents delivered thousands of meals to families too afraid to leave home.

A sprawling activist network pushed back against the surge, with thousands of volunteers tracking the convoys of heavily armed federal agents. Clashes were commonplace for a time, with protesters throwing snowballs and spraying graffiti and officers sometimes using tear gas and pepper spray.

Trump initially said the surge was an effort to root out fraud in publicly funded programs, which he blamed on the state's large Somali community, most of whom are U.S. citizens. But it soon shifted gears toward other ethnic groups, such as Latinos and West Africans.

State and local officials, who frequently clashed with federal authorities, say the swarm of immigration officials has inflicted long-term damage on Minnesota's economy and immigrant community.

Russ Adams of the Lake Street Council, a nonprofit serving the largely immigrant neighborhood of the same name, estimated that businesses there lost tens of millions of dollars in December and January.

"We're not going to recover in March, even if 2,000 ICE agents leave tomorrow," he said last week. "You don't come back from that."

Governor urges continued vigilance

Democratic Gov. Tim Walz urged residents to remain vigilant in the coming days as immigration officers prepare to leave and said he will not express gratitude for the Trump administration officials who caused "this unnecessary, unwarranted and in many cases unconstitutional assault on our state."

"It's going to be a long road," Walz said at a news conference. "Minnesotans are decent, caring, loving neighbors and they're also some of the toughest people you'll find. And we're in this as long as it takes."

The governor proposed a \$10 million aid package for businesses that have suffered, and he called on Washington to help fund the recovery.

"You don't get to break things and then just leave without doing something about it," he said.

Homan was vague about a timeline for the drawdown, but Walz said Homan assured him that officers would start leaving immediately.

"We will help you get to the airport," the governor said. "We will clear the road to get to the airport. I will pack your damn bags if that's what it takes."

Homeland Security funding dispute continues

Homan's announcement came as Democratic lawmakers are demanding restraints on immigration officers before agreeing to fund DHS. The Trump administration is trying to secure votes in Congress to prevent federal funding from expiring at the end of the week.

Walz, a former congressman, said the announcement does not make him any readier to support restoring DHS funding. He added that he has been in contact with Democratic leaders in both houses of Congress and urged them to "hold the line until you get the at least minimum reforms necessary in this rogue agency."

In Washington, Republican Sen. Rand Paul said the shootings in Minneapolis changed how some Americans saw the immigration crackdown.

"It's clearly evident that the public trust has been lost," the Kentucky senator said at a Thursday hearing. "To restore trust in ICE and Border Patrol, they must admit their mistakes, be honest and forthright with their rules of engagement and pledge to reform."

Homan says the surge will end but not enforcement

"President Trump made a promise of mass deportation, and that's what this country is going to get," Homan said.

Todd Lyons, the acting director of ICE, said during the hearing that the agency is still looking for about 16,840 people in Minnesota with final orders of removal.

Homan took over the operation in late January after the second fatal shooting, of Pretti, and amid growing political backlash about how the operation was being run by Gregory Bovino, a proudly norm-breaking senior Border Patrol official who became the public face of the crackdown.

'Don't believe what they say'

Later Thursday, Sheila Rzepecki was among people visiting a makeshift memorial for Renee Good, an array of candles, posters, flowers and cards left at the scene of her shooting.

Her son is disabled, she said, and his health aide, who is from Colombia, has been too scared to leave her home even though she is in the U.S. legally.

"This is the fear they put into such wonderful people in our community," Rzepecki said.

She dismissed the claim that the surge left the region safer, saying: "The people they are rounding up are the people that are so important to our community. Don't believe what they say."

Many activists said the fight is not over. Lisa Erbes, a leader of the protest group Indivisible Twin Cities, said officials must be held accountable.

"People have died. Families have been torn apart," Erbes said. "We can't just say this is over and forget the pain and suffering that has been put on the people of Minnesota."

In New York, Mayor Zohran Mamdani met in the afternoon with Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey to discuss ways to protect immigrants.

"They thought they could break us, but a love for our neighbors and a resolve to endure can outlast an occupation," Frey said on social media. "These patriots of Minneapolis are showing that it's not just about resistance — standing with our neighbors is deeply American."

Trump's EPA revokes scientific finding that underpinned US fight against climate change

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Trump administration on Thursday revoked a scientific finding that long has been the central basis for U.S. action to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change, the most aggressive move by the Republican president to roll back climate regulations.

The rule finalized by the Environmental Protection Agency rescinds a 2009 government declaration known as the endangerment finding that determined that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases threaten public health and welfare. The Obama-era finding is the legal underpinning of nearly all climate regulations under the Clean Air Act for motor vehicles, power plants and other pollution sources that are heating the planet.

The repeal eliminates all greenhouse gas emissions standards for cars and trucks and could unleash a broader undoing of climate regulations on stationary sources such as power plants and oil and gas facilities, experts say. Legal challenges are near certain.

President Donald Trump called the move "the single largest deregulatory action in American history, by far," while EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin called the endangerment finding "the Holy Grail of federal regulatory overreach."

Trump called the endangerment finding "one of the greatest scams in history," claiming falsely that it "had no basis in fact" or law. "On the contrary, over the generations, fossil fuels have saved millions of lives and lifted billions of people out of poverty all over the world," Trump said at a White House ceremony, although scientists across the globe agree that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are driving catastrophic heat waves and storms, droughts and sea level rise.

Environmental groups described the move as the single biggest attack in U.S. history against federal authority to address climate change. Evidence backing up the endangerment finding has only grown stronger in the 17 years since it was approved, they said.

"This action will only lead to more climate pollution, and that will lead to higher costs and real harms for American families," said Fred Krupp, president of Environmental Defense Fund, adding that the consequences would be felt on Americans' health, property values, water supply and more.

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The EPA also said it will propose a two-year delay to a Biden-era rule restricting greenhouse gas emissions by cars and light trucks. And the agency will end incentives for automakers who install automatic start-stop ignition systems in their vehicles. The device is intended to reduce emissions, but Zeldin said "everyone hates" it.

Zeldin, a former Republican congressman who was tapped by Trump to lead EPA last year, has criticized his predecessors in Democratic administrations, saying that in the name of tackling climate change, they were "willing to bankrupt the country."

The endangerment finding "led to trillions of dollars in regulations that strangled entire sectors of the United States economy, including the American auto industry," Zeldin said. "The Obama and Biden administrations used it to steamroll into existence a left-wing wish list of costly climate policies, electric vehicle mandates and other requirements that assaulted consumer choice and affordability."

The endangerment finding and the regulations based on it "didn't just regulate emissions, it regulated and targeted the American dream. And now the endangerment finding is hereby eliminated," Zeldin said.

Supreme Court has upheld the endangerment finding

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

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

The endangerment finding is widely considered the legal foundation that underpins a series of regulations intended to protect against threats made increasingly severe by climate change. That includes deadly floods, extreme heat waves, catastrophic wildfires and other natural disasters in the United States and around the world.

Gina McCarthy, a former EPA administrator who served as White House climate adviser in the Biden administration, called the Trump administration's actions reckless. "This EPA would rather spend its time in court working for the fossil fuel industry than protecting us from pollution and the escalating impacts of climate change," she said.

Former President Barack Obama said on X that repeal of the endangerment finding will make Americans "less safe, less healthy and less able to fight climate change — all so the fossil fuel industry can make even more money."

Dr. Lisa Patel, a pediatrician and executive director of the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health, said Trump's action "prioritizes the profits of big oil and gas companies and polluters over clean air and water" and children's health.

"As a result of this repeal, I'm going to see more sick kids come into the Emergency Department having asthma attacks and more babies born prematurely," she said in a statement. "My colleagues will see more heart attacks and cancer in their patients."

David Doniger, a climate expert at the Natural Resources Defense Council, said Trump and Zeldin are trying to use repeal of the finding as a "kill shot" that would allow the administration to make nearly all climate regulations invalid. The repeal could erase current limits on greenhouse gas pollution from cars, factories, power plants and other sources and could hinder future administrations from imposing rules to address global warming.

The EPA action follows an executive order from Trump that directed the agency to submit a report on "the legality and continuing applicability" of the endangerment finding. Conservatives and some congressional Republicans have long sought to undo what they consider overly restrictive and economically damaging rules to limit greenhouse gases that cause global warming.

Withdrawing the endangerment finding "is the most important step taken by the Trump administration so far to return to energy and economic sanity," said Myron Ebell, a conservative activist who has questioned the science behind climate change.

Tailpipe emission limits targeted

Zeldin and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy have moved to drastically scale back limits on tailpipe emissions from cars and trucks. Rules imposed under Democratic President Joe Biden were intended to encourage U.S. automakers to build and sell more electric vehicles. The transportation sector is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S.

The Trump administration announced a proposal in December to weaken vehicle mileage rules for the auto industry, loosening regulatory pressure on automakers to control pollution from gasoline-powered cars and trucks. The EPA said its two-year delay to a Biden-era rule on greenhouse gas emissions by cars and light trucks will give the agency time to develop a plan that better reflects the reality of slower EV sales, while promoting consumer choice and lowering prices.

Environmental groups said the plan would keep polluting, gas-burning cars and trucks on U.S. roads for years to come, threatening the health of millions of Americans, particularly children and the elderly.

Scientific studies calculate climate change as health danger, while Trump calls it a 'scam'

By SETH BORENSTEIN AP Science Writer

The Trump administration on Thursday revoked a scientific finding that climate change is a danger to public health, an idea that President Donald Trump called "a scam." But repeated scientific studies say it's a documented and quantifiable harm.

Again and again, research has found increasing disease and deaths — thousands every year — in a warming world.

The Environmental Protection Agency finding in 2009, under the Obama administration, has been the legal underpinning of nearly all regulations fighting global warming.

"It boggles the mind that the administration is rescinding the endangerment finding; it's akin to insisting that the world is flat or denying that gravity is a thing," said Dr. Howard Frumkin, a physician and professor emeritus of public health at the University of Washington.

Thousands of scientific studies have looked at climate change and its effects on human health in the past five years and they predominantly show climate change is increasingly dangerous to people.

Many conclude that in the United States, thousands of people have died and even more were sickened because of climate change in the past few decades.

For example, a study on "Trends in heat-related deaths in the U.S., 1999-2023" in the prestigious JAMA journal shows the yearly heat-related death count and rate have more than doubled in the past quarter century from 1,069 in 1999 to a record high 2,325 in 2023.

A 2021 study in Nature Climate Change looked at 732 locations in 43 countries — including 210 in the United States — and determined that more than a third of heat deaths are due to human-caused climate change. That means more than 9,700 global deaths a year attributed to warming from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas.

A new study published this week found that 2.2% of summer deaths in Texas from 2010 to 2023 were heat related "as climate change brings more frequent and intense heat to Texas."

Research is booming on the topic

In the more than 15 years, since the government first determined climate change to be a public health danger, there have been more than 29,000 peer-reviewed studies that looked at the intersection of climate and health, with more than 5,000 looking specifically at the United States, according to the National Library of Medicine's PubMed research database.

More than 60% of those studies have been published in the past five years.

"Study after study documents that climate change endangers health, for one simple reason: It's true," said Frumkin, a former director of the National Center for Environmental Health appointed by President George W. Bush.

In a Thursday event at the White House, Trump disagreed, saying: "It has nothing to do with public health. This is all a scam, a giant scam."

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Experts strongly disagree.

"Health risks are increasing because human-cause climate change is already upon us. Take the 2021 heat dome for example, that killed (more than) 600 people in the Northwest," said Dr. Jonathan Patz, a physician who directs the Center for Health, Energy and Environmental Research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. "The new climate attribution studies show that event was made 150-fold more likely due to climate change."

Patz and Frumkin both said the "vast majority" of peer-reviewed studies show health harms from climate change. Peer-reviewed studies are considered the gold standard of science because other experts pore over the data, evidence and methods, requiring changes, questioning techniques and conclusions.

More than just heat and deaths

The various studies look at different parts of health. Some looked at deaths that wouldn't have happened without climate change. Others looked at illnesses and injuries that didn't kill people. Because researchers used different time periods, calculation methods and specific aspects of health, the final numbers of their conclusions don't completely match.

Studies also examined disparities among different peoples and locations. A growing field in the research are attribution studies that calculate what proportion of deaths or illness can be blamed on human-caused climate change by comparing real-world mortality and illness to what computer simulations show would happen in a world without a spike in greenhouse gases.

Last year an international team of researchers looked at past studies to try to come up with a yearly health cost of climate change.

While many studies just look at heat deaths, this team tried to bring in a variety of types of climate change deaths — heat waves, extreme weather disasters such as 2017's Hurricane Harvey, wildfires, air pollution, diseases spread by mosquitos such as malaria — and found hundreds of thousands of climate change deaths globally.

They then used the EPA's own statistic that puts a dollar value on human life — \$11.5 million in 2014 dollars — and calculated a global annual cost "on the order of at least \$10 billion."

Studies also connect climate change to waterborne infections that cause diarrhea, mental health issues and even nutrition problems, Frumkin said.

"Public health is not only about prevention of diseases, death and disability but also well-being. We are increasingly seeing people displaced by rising seas, intensifying storms and fires," said Dr. Lynn Goldman, a physician and dean emeritus at the George Washington University School of Public Health.

"We have only begun to understand the full consequences of a changing climate in terms of health."

Cold also kills and that's decreasing

The issue gets complicated when cold-related deaths are factored in. Those deaths are decreasing, yet in the United States there are still 13 times more deaths from cold exposure than heat exposure, studies show.

Another study concludes that until the world warms another 2.7 degrees (1.5 degrees Celsius) from now, the number of temperature-related deaths won't change much "due to offsetting decreases in cold-related mortality and increases in heat-related deaths."

But that study said that after temperatures rise beyond that threshold, and if society doesn't adapt to the increased heat, "total mortality rises rapidly."

Winter Olympics recap: Ukrainian athlete excluded, Kim falls short and Brignone completes comeback

By JAMES ELLINGWORTH AP Sports Writer

MILAN (AP) — An all-time great comeback and a controversial exclusion were the dominant stories at the Milan Cortina Olympics on Day 6.

And then there's Chloe Kim, the American snowboarder who fell just short in her bid to become the first to win three consecutive Olympic gold medals in her sport.

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NHL players on the U.S. and Canada teams also joined the action in their opening men's hockey games.
Brignone back in style

For much of last year, it wasn't clear if Federica Brignone of Italy could compete at her home Olympics at all, let alone contend for a medal.

She came away with gold in the women's super-G on Thursday, following a year spent largely in rehab after breaking multiple bones in her leg. She only returned to racing last month.

Brignone shrugged off difficult, foggy conditions to win her fourth career Olympic medal and become, at 35, the oldest female gold medalist in women's Alpine skiing. Romane Miradoli of France took silver and Cornelia Huetter of Austria got bronze.

Brignone's gold was one of four medals Thursday for Italy as the host nation pulled away in the medal count with 17. Norway and the U.S. have 14 apiece, and Norway leads the way in gold medals with seven.

Silver, not gold, for Chloe Kim

For Chloe Kim, it was a third medal but not a three-peat. The American snowboarding star won the halfpipe in 2018 and 2022, but 17-year-old Gaon Choi ended her reign.

Kim was in first ahead of the last run but Choi snatched the lead with a score of 90.25. Kim fell on her final attempt to beat it.

Choi, a South Korean who was mentored by Kim, recovered after taking a hard fall on her first run. She is the first non-American to win the gold medal on the women's side of snowboarding's premier event since Torah Bright of Australia at the 2010 Vancouver Games.

Ukrainian slider excluded

As the men's skeleton competition got underway, all the attention was on a Ukrainian athlete who wasn't on the track.

Vladyslav Heraskevych was barred from racing after refusing to give up his plan to race in a helmet commemorating athletes who have been killed since Russia invaded his country. The International Olympic Committee said the helmet broke rules against making statements on the field of play.

IOC President Kirsty Coventry turned up at the sliding track in a last-minute bid to change Heraskevych's mind ahead of the opening run of the competition Thursday morning.

Heraskevych, who had been a contender for the medals, refused and was excluded from the Olympics.

Heraskevych said it "looks like discrimination" to bar him from competing. Coventry, who said she'd hoped to find a compromise, was tearful on what she called an "emotional morning."

U.S. beats Latvia in its men's hockey opener

Two goals from Brock Nelson put the U.S. on course for a 5-1 win over Latvia in the men's hockey tournament, which is packed with NHL stars for the first time in over a decade.

Connor McDavid had three assists and Jordan Binnington made 26 saves to help Canada beat Czechia 5-0 in the opening game of its Olympic campaign.

The Canadian women responded after their worst-ever Olympic loss by beating Finland 5-0 to end the preliminary round. That sets up a quarterfinal meeting with Germany on Saturday.

13 medals but no three-peat

The most decorated short-track speedskating Olympian in history has yet another medal.

Arianna Fontana of Italy earned her 13th career medal from six Olympics with silver in the women's 500 meters but missed out on a three-peat in the event she won in 2018 and 2022. Xandra Velzeboer of the Netherlands won and also broke her own world record in the semifinals. There was another Dutch gold minutes later for Jens van 't Wout in the men's 1,000.

In a major upset, Cooper Woods of Australia won freestyle gold in men's moguls by edging Canadian great Mikael Kingsbury — the sport's most decorated skier — in a tiebreaker.

American Jessie Diggins overcame bruised ribs to take bronze in women's 10-kilometer cross-country skiing. Frida Karlsson won her second gold medal of these Games, leading a 1-2 finish for Sweden.

Italian speedskater Francesca Lollobrigida, whose great aunt was movie star Gina Lollobrigida, won her second gold of the Olympics by a tenth of a second in the women's 5,000.

Alessandro Haemmerle of Austria and Eliot Grondin of Canada repeated as gold and silver medalists,

respectively, in men's snowboardcross.

Germany won the team luge, as it has done at every Olympics since the event was added in 2014.

A look at false claims made by the Trump administration as it revokes a key scientific finding

BY MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

President Donald Trump on Thursday revoked the 2009 endangerment finding, which has long been the central basis for U.S. action to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and fight climate change.

But in making the announcement, Trump and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lee Zeldin made false claims regarding the government declaration, climate change, and energy.

Here's a closer look at the facts.

TRUMP: "Known as the endangerment finding, this determination had no basis in fact, had none whatsoever, and it had no basis in law."

THE FACTS: This is false. The endangerment finding was adopted in 2009 by the EPA after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 2007 that greenhouse gases are air pollutants that can be regulated under the Clean Air Act.

"The idea that the endangerment finding has no basis in law is ludicrous," said Ann Carlson, a professor of environmental law at the University of California, Los Angeles. "The Supreme Court in *Massachusetts v. EPA* specifically directed the Environmental Protection Agency to determine whether greenhouse gases endanger public health and welfare. The endangerment finding is the result."

Scientific evidence to support the endangerment finding was provided by the EPA at the time of its inception and is still available on the agency's website today.

Multiple federal courts have upheld the endangerment finding since it was adopted 16 years ago.

TRUMP: "We've basically stopped all windmills in this country. It's the most expensive energy you can get."

THE FACTS: Onshore wind is one of the cheapest sources of electricity generation, with new wind farms expected to produce around \$30 per megawatt hour, according to July estimates from the Energy Information Administration.

This compares to a new natural gas plant, around \$65 per megawatt hour, or a new advanced nuclear reactor, which runs over \$80. Offshore wind is among the sources of new power generation that will cost the most to build and operate, at \$88 per megawatt hour, the EIA said in July.

TRUMP, asked about the cost to health and the environment: "It has nothing to do with public health. This is all a scam, a giant scam. This was a rip off of the country by Obama and Biden, and let's say Obama started it and got it rolling and a terrible rip off."

THE FACTS: Thousands of peer-reviewed scientific studies connect health harms to climate change. They find increasing deaths from heat waves, extreme weather such as hurricanes and floods and air pollution from worsening wildfires. A 2021 study in *Nature Climate Change* calculated that globally about 9,700 people die a year from heat-related deaths attributable to human-caused climate change, based on data from 732 cities, including more than 200 in the United States.

A separate study last year listed dozens of climate change health harms and concluded, using the EPA's own calculation method, that the health costs are at least \$10 billion a year, probably much more.

The science of climate change dates back nearly 170 years to studies done by American Eunice Foote showing that carbon dioxide heated cylinders with thermometers inside more than ambient air. The first national climate assessment, done in 2000, before Obama and Biden, "concluded that climate variability and change are likely to increase morbidity and mortality risks."

ZELDIN: "The Obama and Biden administrations used the endangerment finding to steamroll into existence a left-wing wish, including electric vehicle mandates."

THE FACTS: Trump has made this claim before. There was no federal mandate to force the purchase

of EVs.

"If you looked at some of the tables that were in the Biden rules, you could see that there were a variety of different ways that companies could comply with the standards," said Carrie Jenks, the executive director of Harvard Law School's environmental and energy law program. "The endangerment finding nor the regulations mandated a shift from one type of vehicle to another."

Former President Joe Biden did set up a non-binding goal that EVs make up half of new cars sold by 2030. Trump issued an executive order on his first day in office revoking that goal.

Biden's policies tightened restrictions on pollution from gas-powered cars and trucks in an effort to encourage Americans to buy EVs and car companies to shift from gas-powered vehicles to electric cars.

US stocks drop sharply as investors hunt for losers that will be hurt by AI

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks fell sharply Thursday as the market punished companies seen as potential losers from artificial-intelligence technology.

The S&P 500 sank 1.6% for its second-worst day since Thanksgiving, though it's still near its all-time high set late last month. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 669 points, or 1.3%, and the Nasdaq composite fell 2%.

AppLovin lost nearly a fifth of its value and tumbled 19.7%, even though it reported a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Like other software companies, it's come under pressure from worries that AI may undercut its business while fundamentally changing how people use the internet.

AppLovin CEO Adam Foroughi pushed back on the concerns, saying in a conference call with analysts that indicators show his company is doing well. "There's a real disconnect between market sentiment and the reality of our business," he said.

Its stock nevertheless widened its loss for the young year so far, which came into the day at 32.2%.

Cisco Systems dropped 12.3% despite likewise topping analysts' expectations for profit and revenue last quarter. The tech giant indicated that it may make less profit off each \$1 of revenue during the current quarter than it did in the past quarter.

Analysts said that could be an indicator of higher prices for computer memory that everyone is having to pay amid the rush driven by AI.

More broadly, questions are rising about whether businesses that are spending heavily on AI will end up seeing high-enough profits and productivity to make the investments worth it.

The AI worries have hit software stocks particularly hard, but they're spreading to other industries and other markets. For bonds, for example, "AI disruption risk" looks set to knock down prices, even if the threat still looks hazy, according to strategists at UBS.

"The timing of AI disruption remains indeterminate, and the fog of uncertainty is unlikely to dissipate quickly," the strategists led by Matthew Mish wrote in a report.

They expect the AI risk to lead to an increase in defaults in the junk-bond and other low-rated markets. That could hurt even strong, financially stable companies by making it more expensive for them to borrow, including the Big Tech businesses that have been borrowing heavily to pay for their AI investments. That spending has been a major reason the AI frenzy has gotten as big as it has.

In a less likely but very damaging scenario, such knock-on effects "could be significant, potentially undercutting capital spending, investment plans, and ultimately the AI boom itself," according to the UBS strategists.

In the meantime, some of the companies serving customers with huge AI budgets are benefiting.

Equinix, for example, jumped 10.4% even though the digital infrastructure company's results for the latest quarter fell short of analysts' expectations. It gave financial forecasts for 2026 that topped analysts' expectations, and CEO Adaire Fox-Martin said that "demand for our solutions has never been higher."

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The company's data centers are helping to power the world's move into AI.

Outside of tech, McDonald's rose 2.7% after reporting a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. The restaurant chain credited moves to improve its value and affordability, including cutting prices on some U.S. combo meals in September.

Walmart's rally of 3.8%, meanwhile, was the strongest single force pushing upward on the S&P 500. It erased losses from earlier in the week after a report said spending at U.S. retailers overall stalled in December.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 108.71 points to 6,832.76. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 669.42 to 49,451.98, and the Nasdaq composite sank 469.32 to 22,597.15.

In the bond market, Treasury yields fell as investors looked for safer places to park their cash. A report also said slightly more U.S. workers filed for unemployment benefits last week than economists expected.

Still, the number was lower than the prior week's, which is a signal that the pace of layoffs may be improving. It also followed a surprisingly strong report on the job market from Wednesday, which said the nation's unemployment rate improved last month.

A strengthening job market could push the Federal Reserve to hold interest rates steady and keep its cuts on pause, even if President Donald Trump keeps loudly and aggressively calling for lower rates. While lower rates can give the economy a boost, they can also worsen inflation.

It all raises the stakes for Friday's upcoming report on inflation at the U.S. consumer level. Economists expect it to show inflation slowed to 2.5% last month from 2.7% in December.

A separate report on Thursday said that sales of previously occupied homes slumped last month by more than economists expected, which also weighed on yields.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.10% from 4.18% late Wednesday.

In stock markets abroad, South Korea's Kospi rushed 3.1% higher thanks to gains for Samsung Electronics, SK Hynix and other tech stocks.

The moves were more modest in other Asian markets and in Europe. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.9%, and France's CAC 40 rose 0.3%.

Homeland Security shutdown seems certain as funding talks between White House and Democrats stall

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, KEVIN FREKING and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A shutdown for the Department of Homeland Security appeared certain Thursday as lawmakers in the House and Senate were set to leave Washington for a 10-day break and negotiations with the White House over Democrats' demands for new restrictions had stalled.

Democrats and the White House have traded offers in recent days as the Democrats have said they want curbs on President Donald Trump's broad campaign of immigration enforcement. They have demanded better identification for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and other federal law enforcement officers, a new code of conduct for those agencies and more use of judicial warrants, among other requests.

The White House sent its latest proposal late Wednesday, but Trump told reporters on Thursday that some of the Democratic demands would be "very, very hard to approve."

Democrats said the White House offer, which was not made public, did not include sufficient curbs on ICE after two protesters were fatally shot last month. The offer was "not serious," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York said Thursday, after the Senate rejected a bill to fund the department.

Americans want accountability and "an end to the chaos," Schumer said. "The White House and congressional Republicans must listen and deliver."

Lawmakers in both chambers were on notice to return to Washington if the two sides struck a deal to end the expected shutdown. Sen. Patty Murray, the top Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, told reporters that Democrats would send the White House a counterproposal over the weekend.

Impact of a shutdown

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Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., said after the vote that a shutdown appeared likely and “the people who are not going to be getting paychecks” will pay the price.

The impact of a DHS shutdown is likely to be minimal at first. It would not likely block any of the immigration enforcement operations, as Trump’s tax and spending cut bill passed last year gave ICE about \$75 billion to expand detention capacity and bolster enforcement operations.

But the other agencies in the department — including the Transportation Security Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Secret Service and the Coast Guard — could take a bigger hit over time.

Gregg Phillips, an associate administrator at FEMA, said at a hearing this week that its disaster relief fund has sufficient balances to continue emergency response activities during a shutdown, but would become seriously strained in the event of a catastrophic disaster.

Phillips said that while the agency continues to respond to threats like flooding and winter storms, long-term planning and coordination with state and local partners will be “irrevocably impacted.”

Trump defends officer masking

Trump, who has remained largely silent during the bipartisan talks, noted Thursday that a recent court ruling rejected a ban on masks for federal law enforcement officers.

“We have to protect our law enforcement,” Trump told reporters.

Democrats made the demands for new restrictions on ICE and other federal law enforcement after ICU nurse Alex Pretti was shot and killed by a U.S. Border Patrol officer in Minneapolis on Jan. 24. Renee Good was shot by ICE agents on Jan. 7.

Trump agreed to a Democratic request that the Homeland Security bill be separated from a larger spending measure that became law last week. That package extended Homeland Security funding at current levels only through Friday.

Schumer and House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York have said they want immigration officers to remove their masks, to show identification and to better coordinate with local authorities. They have also demanded a stricter use-of-force policy for the federal officers, legal safeguards at detention centers and a prohibition on tracking protesters with body-worn cameras.

Democrats also say Congress should end indiscriminate arrests and require that before a person can be detained, authorities have verified that the person is not a U.S. citizen.

Thune suggested there were potential areas of compromise, including on masks. There could be contingencies “that these folks aren’t being doxed,” Thune said. “I think they could find a landing place.”

But Republicans have been largely opposed to most of the items on the Democrats’ list, including a prohibition on masks.

Sen. Eric Schmitt, R-Mo., said Republicans who have pushed for stronger immigration enforcement would benefit politically from the Democratic demands.

“So if they want to have that debate, we’ll have that debate all they want,” said Schmitt.

Judicial warrants a sticking point

Thune, who has urged Democrats and the White House to work together, indicated that another sticking point is judicial warrants.

“The issue of warrants is going to be very hard for the White House or for Republicans,” Thune said of the White House’s most recent offer. “But I think there are a lot of other areas where there has been give, and progress.”

Schumer and Jeffries have said DHS officers should not be able to enter private property without a judicial warrant and that warrant procedures and standards should be improved. They have said they want an end to “roving patrols” of agents who are targeting people in the streets and in their homes.

Most immigration arrests are carried out under administrative warrants. Those are internal documents issued by immigration authorities that authorize the arrest of a specific person but do not permit officers to forcibly enter private homes or other nonpublic spaces without consent. Traditionally, only warrants signed by judges carry that authority.

But an internal ICE memo obtained by The Associated Press last month authorizes ICE officers to use

force to enter a residence based solely on a more narrow administrative warrant to arrest someone with a final order of removal, a move that advocates say collides with Fourth Amendment protections.

Far from agreement

Thune, R-S.D., said were "concessions" in the White House offer. He would not say what those concessions were, though, and he acknowledged the sides were "a long ways toward a solution."

Schumer said it was not enough that the administration had announced an end to the immigration crack-down in Minnesota that led to thousands of arrests and the fatal shootings of two protesters.

"We need legislation to rein in ICE and end the violence," Schumer said, or the actions of the administration "could be reversed tomorrow on a whim."

Simmering partisan tensions played out on the Senate floor immediately after the vote, as Alabama Sen. Katie Britt, the chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that oversees Homeland Security funding, tried to pass a two-week extension of Homeland Security funding and Democrats objected.

Britt said Democrats were "posturing" and that federal employees would suffer for it. "I'm over it!" she yelled.

Connecticut Sen. Chris Murphy, the top Democrat on the Homeland spending subcommittee, responded that Democrats "want to fund the Department of Homeland Security, but only a department that is obeying the law."

"This is an exceptional moment in this country's history," Murphy said.

Takeaways from AP and Public Source's report on pollution and safety issues at Pittsburgh coke plant

By JOSH KELETY Associated Press

On Aug. 11, 2025, an explosion at U.S. Steel's Clairton Coke Works outside Pittsburgh — a 392-acre river-side industrial facility and the largest of its kind in the Western Hemisphere — killed two U.S. Steel workers and injured 11 others, according to the Chemical Safety Board, a federal agency investigating the incident.

Six months later, workers remain rattled and community concerns about air pollution from the plant are heightened. The blast comes on top of a string of other accidents at the Clairton plant and a history of legal battles between U.S. Steel and Allegheny County regulators. Some current and former workers at Clairton Coke Works say poor management and underinvestment have exacerbated air pollution and undermined workplace safety at the plant. And the August blast came after Nippon Steel's \$15 billion acquisition of U.S. Steel in June 2025. Nippon Steel did not provide a response to written questions.

Pittsburgh's Public Source and The Associated Press interviewed current and former workers at Clairton Coke Works, experts, former and current government officials, reviewed court documents and analyzed federal data to produce this report.

Here are key takeaways from the report:

What we know about the explosion

Industrial ovens at Clairton Coke Works, which opened more than a century ago, heat coal at high temperatures for hours to make coke, a key component in steelmaking. The heat removes impurities, producing a flammable byproduct called coke oven gas.

According to the Chemical Safety Board, the August explosion happened while workers were closing and opening a gas isolation valve in a basement after pumping water into the valve. U.S. Steel's written procedure did not mention the use of water and a U.S. Steel supervisor directed workers to pump the water, the agency said. Kurt Barshick, U.S. Steel's vice president of the Mon Valley Works, said during an October presentation to residents that workers trapped "3,000 PSI water inside of a valve that's rated for 50 PSI." The valve cracked and gas filled the area, Barshick added.

Drew Sahli, the Chemical Safety Board's investigator in charge, said there was a "release of coke oven gas" and that the gas "contacted an ignition source" and exploded. The agency is still investigating how the gas was released, Sahli said.

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In a written statement, U.S. Steel stressed its commitment to safety and said that it has "strengthened several safety protocols" based on its own ongoing investigation, including prohibiting the use of high-pressure water for valve cleaning.

Before the August blast, the plant already had a history of accidents and explosions, including a 2009 blast that killed a maintenance worker and another explosion in 2010 that injured 14 employees and six contractors.

Workers question management

Some current and former workers at the Clairton plant fault U.S. Steel's management of the aging Clairton Coke Works, saying that it has caused a range of operational problems. For instance, they describe difficulties getting coke oven doors, which can leak emissions, replaced.

Current and former workers also point to a fire at the Clairton plant that occurred on Christmas Eve in 2018. It shut down pollution control equipment and led to repeated releases of air pollution, according to a lawsuit filed by environmental groups after the incident. An engineer hired by the plaintiffs wrote in a report filed in the case that he found "no indication" that U.S. Steel "has an effective, comprehensive maintenance program for the Clairton plant." Sahu also wrote that the 2018 accident "preventable by a robust inspection and preventive maintenance program and by better plant design."

In a 2024 consent decree settling the lawsuit, U.S. Steel agreed to measures including investing close to \$20 million in facility upgrades. As part of the consent decree, U.S. Steel admitted no liability.

In its statement, U.S. Steel said that the company's "overall transformation efforts have improved our company's performance, created a robust maintenance program, and improved employee safety over time."

Plant regularly under fire for pollution

The Clairton plant has been the largest local source of air pollution in recent years, according to the Allegheny County Health Department. County Health Department regulators routinely clash with U.S. Steel over alleged violations of the plant's operating permit, such as excessive emissions or failing to use pollution control equipment. In 2023, the Allegheny County Health Department fined U.S. Steel more than \$2 million for violations at Clairton Coke Works.

In response to questions from Public Source and AP, the Allegheny County Health Department that air monitoring stations near the Clairton plant "have measured a 15-25% reduction in annual average particle pollution concentrations compared to ten years ago."

Nationally, Clairton Coke Works' environmental compliance track record is an outlier, according to a Public Source and AP analysis of federal Clean Air Act data from about 14,000 facilities. The analysis found that Clairton Coke Works is classified by the EPA as a "high-priority violator" – only about 11% of major emitters fall into that category. It's even rarer for facilities to garner financial penalties on the magnitude that Clairton Coke Works has faced in the last five years, the analysis shows. Just 11 facilities, including Clairton Coke Works, have faced \$10 million in penalties or more in the last five years.

U.S. Steel said in its statement that the company spends "\$100 million annually on environmental compliance at Clairton alone and has consistently achieved an environmental compliance rate exceeding 99% for regulated activities per year at our Clairton Plant."

New ownership arrives

In the nearly \$15 billion deal to buy U.S. Steel, Nippon Steel pledged to invest \$14 billion in domestic steelmaking operations. Much of that money remains publicly uncommitted, and U.S. Steel has been firm that it wants to keep the Clairton plant operating.

"The Clairton Coke Plant is an important part of our North American Flat-Rolled integrated operations," the company said in November. The company added that a "steady coke supply remains critical" and that the "Clairton Coke Plant will be maintained for the next generation of steelmaking."

However, U.S. Steel has not publicly committed to spending money at the Clairton plant to expand production, extend its life, improve efficiency, upgrade safety or reduce its polluting air emissions. Of the \$14 billion, U.S. Steel has said \$2.4 billion will go toward its Pittsburgh-area plants. A portion of that money will be spent on building a new hot strip mill to replace the one at its Irvin plant, just down the Monongahela River from Clairton, that processes steel into massive sheet rolls.

Virginia Supreme Court rules US Marine's adoption of an Afghan war orphan will stand

By JULIET LINDERMAN and CLAIRE GALOFARO undefined

The Virginia Supreme Court ruled Thursday that a U.S. Marine and his wife will keep an Afghan orphan they brought home in defiance of a U.S. government decision to reunite her with her Afghan family. The decision likely ends a bitter, yearslong legal battle over the girl's fate.

In 2020, a judge in Fluvanna County, Virginia, granted Joshua and Stephanie Mast an adoption of the child, who was then 7,000 miles away in Afghanistan living with a family the Afghan government decided were her relatives.

Four justices on the Virginia Supreme Court on Thursday signed onto an opinion reversing two lower courts' rulings that found the adoption was so flawed it was void from the moment it was issued.

The justices wrote that a Virginia law that cements adoption orders after six months bars the child's Afghan relatives from challenging the court, no matter how flawed its orders and even if the adoption was obtained by fraud.

Three justices issued a scathing dissent, calling what happened in this court "wrong," "cancerous" and "like a house built on a rotten foundation."

An attorney for the Masts declined to comment, citing an order from the circuit court not to discuss the details of the case publicly. Lawyers representing the Afghan family said they were not yet prepared to comment.

The child was injured on the battlefield in Afghanistan in September 2019 when U.S. soldiers raided a rural compound. The child's parents and siblings were killed. Soldiers brought her to a hospital at an American military base.

The raid was targeting terrorists who had come into Afghanistan from a neighboring country; some believed she was not Afghan and tried to make a case for bringing her to the U.S. But the State Department, under President Donald Trump's first administration, insisted the U.S. was obligated under international law to work with the Afghan government and the International Committee of the Red Cross to unite the child with her closest surviving relatives.

The Afghan government determined she was Afghan and vetted a man who claimed to be her uncle. The U.S. government agreed and brought her to the family. The uncle chose to give her to his son and his new wife, who raised her for 18 months in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Mast and his wife convinced courts in rural Fluvanna County, Virginia, to grant them custody and then a series of adoption orders, continuing to claim she was the "stateless" daughter of foreign fighters.

Judge Richard Moore granted them a final adoption in December 2020. When the six-month statute of limitations ran out, the child was still in Afghanistan living with her relatives, who testified they had no idea a judge was giving the girl to another family. Mast contacted them through intermediaries and tried to get them to send the girl to the U.S. for medical treatment but they refused to let her go alone.

When the U.S. military withdrew from Afghanistan and the Taliban took over, the family agreed to leave and Mast worked his military contacts to get them on an evacuation flight. Mast then took the baby from them at a refugee resettlement center in Virginia, and they haven't seen her since.

The AP agreed not to name the Afghan couple because they fear their families in Afghanistan might face retaliation from the Taliban. The circuit court issued a protective order shielding their identities.

The Afghans challenged the adoption, claiming the court had no authority over a foreign child and the adoption orders were based on Mast repeatedly misleading the judge.

The Virginia Supreme Court on Thursday wrote that the law prohibiting challenges to an adoption after six months is designed to create permanency, so a child is not bounced from one home to another. The only way to undercut it is to argue that a parent's constitutional rights were violated.

The lower courts had found that the Afghan couple had a right to challenge the adoption because they were the girl's "de facto" parents when they came to the United States.

Four of the Supreme Court judges — D. Arthur Kelsey, Stephen R. McCullough, Teresa M. Chafin, Wesley G. Russell Jr. — disagreed.

“We find no legal merit” in the argument that “that they were ‘de facto’ parents of the child and that no American court could constitutionally sever that relationship,” they wrote. They pointed to Fluvanna County Circuit Court Judge Richard Moore’s findings that the Afghan couple “are not and never were parents” of the child, because they had no order from an Afghan court and had not proven any biological relationship to her.

The Afghans had refused DNA testing, saying it could not reliably prove a familial connection between opposite-gender half-cousins. They insisted that it didn’t matter, because Afghanistan claimed the girl as its citizen and got to determine her next-of-kin.

The Supreme Court leaned heavily on a 38-page document written by Judge Moore, who granted the adoption, then presided over a dozen hearings after the Afghans challenged it. He wrote that he trusted the Masts more than the Afghans, and believed that the Masts’ motivations were noble while the Afghans were misrepresenting their relationship to the child.

The Supreme Court also dismissed the federal government’s long insistence that Trump’s first administration had made a foreign policy decision to unite her with her Afghan relatives, and a court in Virginia has no authority to undo it. The government submitted filings in court predicting dire outcomes if the baby was allowed to remain with the Marine: it could be viewed as “endorsing an act of international child abduction,” threaten international security pacts and be used as propaganda by Islamic extremists — potentially endangering U.S. soldiers overseas.

But the Justice Department in Trump’s second administration abruptly changed course.

The Supreme Court noted in its opinion that the Justice Department had been granted permission to make arguments in the case, but withdrew its request to do so on the morning of oral arguments last year, saying it “has now had an opportunity to reevaluate its position in this case.”

The Supreme Court returned repeatedly to Moore’s finding that giving the girl to the family “was not a decision the United States initiated, but rather consented to or acquiesced in.”

The three judges who dissented were unsparing in their criticism of both the Masts and the circuit court that granted him the adoption.

“A dispassionate review of this case reveals a scenario suffused with arrogance and privilege. Worse, it appears to have worked,” begins the dissent, written by Justice Thomas P. Mann, and signed by Chief Justice Cleo E. Powell and LeRoy F. Millette, Jr.

A Virginia court never had the right to give the child to the Masts, the dissent said.

They castigated the Masts for “brazenly” misleading the courts during their quest to adopt the girl.

“We must recognize what an adoption really is: the severance and termination of the rights naturally flowing to an otherwise legitimate claimant to parental authority. Of course, the process must be impeccable. An evolved society could not sanction anything less than that. And here, it was less,” Mann wrote. “If this process was represented by a straight line, (the Masts) went above it, under it, around it, and then blasted right through it until there was no line at all — just fragments collapsing into a cavity.”

Colorectal cancer is rising in younger adults. Here’s who is most at risk and symptoms to watch for

By LAURAN NEERGAARD AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Colorectal cancer is a threat not just to older adults but increasingly to young men and women, too. It’s now the top cancer killer of Americans younger than 50.

The deaths of “Dawson’s Creek” actor James Van Der Beek at 48 this week, and a few years ago “Black Panther” star Chadwick Boseman at 43, highlight the risk for younger adults.

“We’re now starting to see more and more people in the 20-, 30- and 40-year-old range developing colon cancer. At the beginning of my career, nobody that age had colorectal cancer,” said Dr. John Marshall of Georgetown University’s Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center, who has been a cancer doctor for

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more than three decades.

That trend "is shaking us all, to be blunt," said Marshall, who is also medical consultant to the Colorectal Cancer Alliance.

Here's what to know about colorectal cancer — at any age — and how to protect yourself.

How common is colorectal cancer?

More than 158,000 cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed in the U.S. this year, according to the American Cancer Society. Among all ages, it's the nation's second leading cancer killer, behind lung cancer — expected to claim more than 55,000 lives this year.

For the population overall, cases and deaths have inched down in recent years. That's thanks in part to screening tests that can spot tumors early, when they're easier to treat — or even prevent them if precancerous growths are found and removed.

Who's most at risk?

The vast majority of colorectal cancer cases and deaths still are in people 50 and older. That older age group has seen the most progress, with deaths dropping by about 1.5% a year over the past decade, according to cancer society statistics.

But while it's still relatively rare in the under-50 crowd, their colorectal cancer diagnoses have been rising since the early 2000s.

And last month, cancer society researchers reported that colorectal cancer mortality in Americans under 50 had increased by 1.1% a year since 2005, becoming the deadliest cancer in that age group. This year, the society estimates 3,890 people under age 50 will die of it.

Risk factors at any age include obesity, lack of physical activity, a diet high in red or processed meat and low in fruits and vegetables, smoking, heavy alcohol use, having inflammatory bowel disease or a family history of colorectal cancer.

Marshall advises everyone to eat lots of fruits and vegetables and whole grains. "Meat's not evil" but eat less of it, he said.

And a recent study found that a three-year exercise program improved survival in colon cancer patients and reduced cancer recurrence.

What are the symptoms of colorectal cancer?

Symptoms include blood in stool or rectal bleeding; changes in bowel habits such as diarrhea, constipation or narrowing of stool that lasts more than a few days; unintended weight loss; and cramps or abdominal pain.

"Don't ignore symptoms. Get it checked," Marshall stressed. Survival is far more likely when colorectal cancer is diagnosed early, before it spreads.

When to get screened for colorectal cancer

Medical guidelines say the average person should start getting screened at age 45 — too late for some young adults.

People known to be at higher risk are supposed to talk with their doctors about whether to start screening even earlier.

How often people need to get checked depends on the type of screening they choose. There are a variety of options, including yearly stool-based tests or colonoscopies that may be done every 10 years as long as no problems were found. There's also a newer blood test for adults 45 or older.

What's causing the colorectal cancer rise in younger adults?

No one knows what's causing the rise in cases in younger adults. But Georgetown's Marshall said many young patients lack common risk factors. He wonders if changes in young people's gut bacteria — the microbiome — might play a role.

Also, where cancer occurs along the question mark-shaped colon — it starts on one side of the abdomen and swoops to the other before ending with the rectum — influences how aggressive it is and how it's treated. Marshall said there's a marked difference in where younger and older people's tumors tend to strike, another clue being explored.

Speaker Johnson says he disapproves of Justice Department logging lawmaker searches of Epstein files

By ERIC TUCKER and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson said Thursday that he did not think it was appropriate for the Justice Department to be tracking the search histories of lawmakers who are reviewing files from the Jeffrey Epstein investigation.

The rare rebuke to the Trump administration came as photographs emerged revealing an apparent index of records reviewed by a Democratic member of Congress who was among the lawmakers given an opportunity to read less-redacted versions of the Epstein files at a department annex and on department-owned computers.

Rep. Jamie Raskin, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, asked the Justice Department's inspector general to investigate what he characterized as "spying," and Johnson, a close ally of President Donald Trump, offered his own scolding when asked about the issue Thursday.

"I think members should obviously have the right to peruse those at their own speed and with their own discretion. I don't think it's appropriate for anybody to be tracking that," Johnson told reporters. "I will echo that to anybody involved with the DOJ — and I'm sure it was an oversight."

The Justice Department said in a statement that, as part of the process of permitting lawmakers to review the Epstein files, it "logs all searches made on its systems to protect against the release of victim information."

Photographs taken during Attorney General Pam Bondi's hearing before the House Judiciary Committee on Wednesday showed her with a printout that said "Jayapal Pramila Search History" and that listed a series of documents that were apparently reviewed. Pramila Jayapal, a Democratic congresswoman, was among the Judiciary Committee members who pressed Bondi during the hearing about the department's handling of the Epstein files.

Jayapal called it "totally unacceptable" and said lawmakers will be "demanding a full accounting" of how the department is using the search history.

"Bondi has enough time to spy on Members of Congress, but can't find it in herself to apologize to the survivors of Epstein's horrific abuse," Jayapal said in a post on X.

The Justice Department statement did not explain why Bondi came to the House hearing with information on lawmaker searches.

A bipartisan contingent of lawmakers has traveled in recent days to a Justice Department outpost to review less-redacted records from the files, but some who have seen the documents have complained that too much information about Epstein associates remains withheld from view. The Trump administration Justice Department said last month that it was releasing more than 3 million pages along with more than 2,000 videos and 180,000 images related to Epstein investigations.

In a statement, Raskin said that not only had the Justice Department withheld records from lawmakers "but now Bondi and her team are spying on members of Congress conducting oversight in yet another blatant attempt to intrude into Congress's oversight processes."

He added: "DOJ must immediately cease tracking any Members' searches, open up the Epstein review to senior congressional staff, and publicly release all files—with all the survivors' information, and only the survivors' information, properly redacted—as required by federal law."

Judge blocks Pentagon from punishing Sen. Mark Kelly for call to resist unlawful orders

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge agreed Thursday to block the Pentagon from punishing Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly, a former Navy pilot, for participating in a video that called on troops to resist unlawful orders.

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U.S. District Judge Richard Leon ruled that Pentagon officials not only violated Kelly's First Amendment free speech rights, but they also "threatened the constitutional liberties of millions of military retirees." The judge invoked an old-fashioned rebuke -- "Horsefeathers!" -- in response to the government's claim that Kelly is trying to exempt himself from the rules of military justice.

"To say the least, our retired veterans deserve more respect from their Government, and our Constitution demands they receive it!" wrote Leon, who was nominated to the bench by Republican President George W. Bush.

Kelly, who represents Arizona, sued in federal court to block his Jan. 5 censure from Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth. Leon's order prohibits the Pentagon from implementing or enforcing Kelly's punishment while his lawsuit is pending. The judge instructed the parties to provide him with an update in 30 days.

In November, Kelly and five other Democratic lawmakers appeared on a video in which they urged troops to uphold the Constitution and not to follow unlawful military directives from the Trump administration. Republican President Donald Trump accused the lawmakers of sedition "punishable by DEATH" in a social media post days later.

The court case is just one front in a broader dispute that has spiraled between the group of Democratic lawmakers and the Trump administration since they posted the video. Earlier this week, a Washington grand jury declined to indict the lawmakers over the video.

Michigan Sen. Elissa Slotkin has said she has been told the Justice Department could seek a new indictment as soon as Friday. Kelly and Slotkin said at a news conference Wednesday that they are keeping all legal options on the table regarding potentially suing the administration.

Hegseth said the government will appeal Leon's decision. "Sedition is sedition, 'Captain,'" he posted on his X account, referring to Kelly by his rank at retirement.

Leon said that Kelly "is likely to succeed on the merits" of his free speech claim. "He has also shown irreparable harm, and the balance of the equities fall decidedly in his favor."

Hegseth said Kelly's censure was "a necessary process step" to proceedings that could result in a demotion from the senator's retired rank of captain and subsequent reduction in retirement pay.

The judge concluded that Kelly's speech is entitled to full First Amendment protection.

"Rather than trying to shrink the First Amendment liberties of retired servicemembers, Secretary Hegseth and his fellow Defendants might reflect and be grateful for the wisdom and expertise that retired servicemembers have brought to public discussions and debate on military matters in our Nation over the past 250 years," Leon wrote.

"If so," he added, "they will more fully appreciate why the Founding Fathers made free speech the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights!"

Kelly said in a video statement posted after the ruling that the case was about more than just him and that the administration "was sending a message to millions of retired veterans that they too can be censored or demoted just for speaking out."

He added that the ruling was unlikely the end: "This might not be over yet, because this president and this administration do not know how to admit when they're wrong."

The 90-second video was first posted on a social media account belonging to Slotkin. Reps. Jason Crow of Colorado, Chris Deluzio of Pennsylvania, Maggie Goodlander of New Hampshire and Chrissy Houlahan of Pennsylvania also appeared in the video. All of the participants are veterans of the armed services or intelligence agencies.

The Pentagon began investigating Kelly in late November, citing a federal law that allows retired service members to be recalled to active duty on orders of the defense secretary for possible court-martial or other punishment. Hegseth has said Kelly was the only one of the six lawmakers to be investigated because he is the only one who formally retired from the military and still falls under the Pentagon's jurisdiction.

Kelly's lawyers said the Pentagon's censure of Kelly — and its efforts to reduce his retirement grade and pay — are an unprecedented attack on the rights of veterans to publicly debate national security issues.

"Defendants assert an absolute and unreviewable authority to impose military punishment on a retired veteran and sitting United States Senator for engaging in speech a civilian political appointee dislikes. That

position is as alarming as it is unprecedented," they wrote.

Government lawyers said the case "is not about legislative independence or freedom of speech in civilian society."

"Instead, this case involves a retired military officer who seeks to use his military status as a sword and his legislative position as a shield against the consequences of his actions in military personnel matters," they wrote.

Hegseth, the Defense Department, Navy Secretary John Phelan and the Navy are named as defendants in the lawsuit.

RFK Jr. promised to restore trust in US health agencies. A year later, it's eroding

By MIKE STOBBE and ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Since Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was sworn in to lead the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services one year ago, he has defended his upending of federal health policy by saying the changes will restore trust in America's public health agencies.

But as the longtime leader of the anti-vaccine movement scales back immunization guidance and dismisses scientists and advisers, he has clashed with top medical groups who say he is not following the science.

The confrontation is deepening confusion that surged during the COVID-19 pandemic. Surveys show trust in the agencies Kennedy leads is falling, not rising, as the country's health landscape undergoes dramatic change.

Kennedy says he aims to boost transparency to empower Americans to make their own health choices. Doctors counter that the false and unverified information he promotes is causing major, perhaps irreversible, damage — and that if enough people forgo vaccination, it will prompt a surge of illness and death.

People once trusted health agencies regardless of party, and the government reported "the best of what science knows at this point," said Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

"Now, you cannot confidently go to federal websites and know that," she said.

HHS spokesman Andrew Nixon said that trust had suffered during the Biden administration. "Kennedy's mandate is to restore transparency, scientific rigor, and accountability," he said.

Surveys show trust is declining

New findings from the health care research nonprofit KFF show that 47% of Americans trust the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention "a great deal" or "a fair amount" to provide reliable vaccine information, down about 10 percentage points since the beginning of Trump's second term.

Trust among Democrats dropped 9 percentage points since September, to 55%, the survey found. Trust among Republicans and independents hasn't changed since September, but it has declined somewhat among both groups since the beginning of Trump's term.

Even among supporters of Kennedy's Make America Healthy Again movement, fewer than half say they trust agencies like the CDC and Food and Drug Administration "a lot" or "some" to make recommendations about childhood vaccine schedules.

Gallup surveys also show a drop in Americans who believe the CDC is doing a "good job," from 40% in 2024 to 31% last year.

Those results came alongside a decline of trust across the government, not just agencies under Kennedy's oversight. Yet concerns about Kennedy's trustworthiness also have emerged, including through documents recently obtained by The Associated Press and The Guardian, which undermine his statements about his motive behind a 2019 trip to Samoa, prompting senators to accuse Kennedy of lying.

Trust slid during the COVID pandemic

Historically, federal scientific and public health agencies enjoyed strong ratings in opinion polls. The CDC for decades scored above many other government agencies in Gallup surveys asking whether they were doing a "good" or "excellent" job.

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Two decades ago, more than 60% of Americans gave the CDC high marks, according to Gallup. But that number plummeted at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, amid agency mistakes and guidance that some people didn't like.

In 2020, the percentage of Americans who believed the CDC was doing at least a "good" job fell to 40% and then leveled off for a few years.

Alix Ellis, a hairstylist and mom in Madison, Georgia, lost her confidence in the CDC and other health agencies during the pandemic. She said some guidance didn't make sense. At her salon, stylists could work directly on someone's hair, but others in the room had to be several feet away.

"I'm not saying that we were lied to, but that is when I was like, OK, 'Why are we doing this?'" the 35-year-old said.

Kennedy helped create the trust problem, doctor says

Part of Kennedy's pitch as health secretary has been restoring Americans' trust in public health.

"We're going to tell them what we know, we're going to tell them what we don't know, and we're going to tell them what we're researching and how we're doing it," Kennedy told senators about the CDC last September. "It's the only way to restore trust in the agency — by making it trustworthy."

Before entering politics, Kennedy was one of the loudest voices spreading false information about immunizations. Now, he is trying to fix a trust problem he helped create, said Dr. Rob Davidson, a Michigan emergency physician.

"You fed those people false information to create the distrust, and now you're sweeping into power and you're going to cure the distrust by promoting the same disinformation," said Davidson, who runs a doctor group called the Committee to Protect Health Care. "It's upside-down."

Kennedy has wielded the power of his office to take steps that diverge from medical consensus.

Last May, he announced COVID-19 vaccines were no longer recommended for healthy children and pregnant women, a move doctors called concerning and confusing.

In November, he directed the CDC to abandon its position that vaccines do not cause autism, without supplying new evidence. Earlier this year, the CDC reduced the number of vaccines recommended for every child, a decision medical groups said would undermine protections against a half-dozen diseases.

Kennedy also overhauled his department through canceled grants and mass layoffs. Last summer, Kennedy fired his CDC chief after less than a month over vaccine policy disagreements.

Confusion emerges as trust erodes

Some have applauded the moves. But surveys suggest many Americans do not.

"I have much less trust," said Mark Rasmussen, a 67-year-old retiree in Danbury, Connecticut.

Shocked by Kennedy's dismantling of public health norms, professional medical groups have urged Americans not to follow new vaccine recommendations they say were adopted without public input or compelling evidence.

More than 200 public health and advocacy groups urged Congress to investigate Kennedy's change to the vaccine schedule. The American Medical Association, working with the University of Minnesota's Vaccine Integrity Project, this week announced a new evidence-based process for reviewing the safety of respiratory virus vaccines — something they say is needed since the government stopped doing that kind of systematic review.

Many Democratic-led states have created their own alliances to counter Kennedy's vaccine guidance.

"We see burgeoning confusion about which sources to trust and about which sources are real. That makes decision-making on an individual level much harder," said Dr. Megan Ranney, dean of the Yale School of Public Health.

She said she worried the confusion was contributing to the rise in diseases like whooping cough and measles, once largely eliminated in the U.S.

Surveys indicate growing public wavering over support for the measles-mumps-rubella vaccine. An August 2025 Annenberg survey found that 82% would be "very" or "somewhat" likely to recommend that an eligible child in their household get MMR vaccine, compared with 90% in November 2024.

HHS officials say they are promoting independent decision-making by families while working to reduce

preventable diseases. They say reducing routine vaccine recommendations was meant to ensure parents vaccinate children against the riskiest diseases.

As Kennedy has pledged to restore trust, he has also urged people to come to their own conclusions. "This idea that you should trust the experts," Kennedy said recently on The Katie Miller Podcast, "a good mother doesn't do that."

2 Mexican Navy ships laden with humanitarian aid dock in Cuba as US blockade sparks energy crisis

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ and MILEXSY DURÁN Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Two Mexican Navy ships laden with humanitarian aid docked in Cuba on Thursday as a U.S. blockade deepens the island's energy crisis.

The ships arrived two weeks after U.S. President Donald Trump threatened tariffs on any country selling or providing oil to Cuba, prompting the island to ration energy in recent days.

The Mexican government said that one ship carried some 536 tons of food including milk, rice, beans, sardines, meat products, cookies, canned tuna, and vegetable oil, as well as personal hygiene items. The second ship carried just over 277 tons of powdered milk.

Yohandri Espinosa, a 34-year-old engineer, observed the ships arrive with his daughter and took pictures. "This is incredibly important aid for the Cuban people at this moment," he said. "We are living through difficult times of great need and uncertainty, and we don't know how long we will be like this."

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel has called Trump's threats an "energy blockade" and said it affects transportation, hospitals, schools, tourism and the production of food.

Cuban aviation officials warned airlines earlier this week that there isn't enough fuel for airplanes to refuel on the island. On Monday, Air Canada announced it was suspending flights to Cuba, while other airlines announced delays and layovers in the Dominican Republic before flights continued to Havana. The cuts in fuel are expected to be another blow to Cuba's once thriving tourism economy.

"Sometimes you think that things are going to improve, but it's not like that," said Javier González, a Cuban who sat on Havana's famed seawall watching the Mexican ships arrive. "We can't stay how we are because it's too hard. We'll have to wait and see."

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Thursday that as soon as the ships return, "we will send more support of different kinds." Her administration noted that it still plans to send 1,500 tons of beans and powdered milk.

Sheinbaum has previously said the humanitarian aid would be sent while diplomatic maneuvering to resume oil supplies is underway. She says Mexico has told the United States it seeks to promote peaceful dialogue and ensure Cuba "can receive oil and its derivatives for its daily operations."

Before Trump's announcement, the state-owned oil company Petróleos Mexicanos, Pemex, had already suspended crude oil shipments to Cuba in January, although it has not clarified the reasons behind that decision.

Meanwhile, speaking with journalists on Thursday, the Russian presidential spokesman declined to comment on whether Russia might send oil supplies to Cuba.

"It's impossible to discuss these issues publicly right now for obvious reasons," presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. He also stressed said that Moscow did not want an escalation with the United States over the situation: "Probably, we are still counting on constructive dialogue."

Cuba relied heavily on oil shipments from Venezuela that were halted when the U.S. attacked the South American country in early January and arrested its leader.

Cuba has also reduced bank hours and suspended cultural events, while fuel distribution companies have said that sales only will be made in dollars and limited to 20 liters (5.28 gallons) per user.

In addition to severe blackouts, Cuban officials say that U.S. sanctions, which increased under Trump's second term, cost the country more than \$7.5 billion between March 2024 and February 2025.

Scientists say genetic analysis could greatly speed restoration of iconic American chestnut

By MICHAEL PHILLIS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Billions of American chestnut trees once covered the eastern United States. They soared in height, producing so many nuts that sellers moved them by train car. Every Christmas, they're called to mind by the holiday lyric "chestnuts roasting on an open fire."

But by the 1950s, this venerable tree went functionally extinct, culled by a deadly airborne fungal blight and lethal root rot. A new study out Thursday in the journal *Science* provides hope for its revitalization, finding that the genetic testing of individual trees can reveal which are most likely to resist disease and grow tall, thus shortening how long it takes to plant the next, more robust, generation.

A smaller gap between generations means a faster path to lots of disease-resistant trees that will once again be able to compete for space in Eastern forests. The authors hope that can occur in the coming decades.

"What's new here is the engine that we're creating for restoration," said Jared Westbrook, lead author and director of science at The American Chestnut Foundation, which wants to return the tree to its native range that once stretched from Maine to Mississippi.

The American chestnut, sometimes called the "redwood of the East," can grow quickly and reach more than 100 feet (30 meters), produce prodigious amounts of nutritious chestnuts and supply lumber favored for its straight grain and durability.

But it had little defense against foreign-introduced blight and root rot. Another type of chestnut, however, had evolved alongside those diseases. The Chinese chestnut had been introduced for its valuable nuts and it could resist diseases. But it isn't as tall or competitive in U.S. forests, nor has it served the same critical role supporting other species.

So, the authors want a tree with the characteristics of the American chestnut and the disease resistance of the Chinese chestnut.

That goal is not new — scientists have been reaching for it for decades and made some progress.

But it has been difficult because the American chestnut's desirable traits are scattered across multiple spots along its genome, the DNA string that tells the tree how to develop and function.

"It's a very complex trait, and in that case, you can't just select on one thing because you'll select on linked things that are negative," said John Lovell, senior author and researcher at the HudsonAlpha Genome Sequencing Center.

Breed for disease resistance alone and the trees get shorter, less competitive.

To deal with this, the authors sequenced the genome of multiple types of chestnuts and found the many places that correlated with the desired traits. They can then use that information to breed trees that are more likely to have desirable traits while maintaining high amounts of American chestnut DNA — roughly 70% to 85%.

And genetic testing allows the process to move faster, revealing the best offspring years before their traits would be demonstrated by natural growth and encountering disease. The closer the gap between generations, the faster gains accumulate.

Steven Strauss, a professor of forest biotechnology at Oregon State University who wasn't involved in the study, said the paper identified some promising genes. He wants scientists to be able to edit the genes themselves, a possibly faster, more precise path to a better tree. In an accompanying commentary piece in *Science*, he says regulations can bog down these ideas for years.

"People just won't consider biotech because it is on the other side of this social, legal barrier" and that's shortsighted, he said.

For people who have closely studied the American chestnut, the work begs an almost existential question: How much can the American chestnut be changed and still be an American chestnut?

"The American chestnut has a unique evolutionary history, it has a specific place in the North American ecosystem," said Donald Edward Davis, author of *The American Chestnut: An Environmental History*. "Hav-

ing that tree and no other trees would be sort of the gold standard.”

He said the tree was a keystone species, useful to humans and vital to bigger populations of squirrels, chipmunks and black bears — hybrids might not be as majestic or effective. He was pleased that the authors included some surviving American chestnuts in their proposal, but favored an approach that relied on them more heavily.

“Not that the hybrid approach is itself bad, it is just that why not try to get the wild American trees back in the forest, back in the ecosystem, and exhaust all possibilities from doing that before we move on to some of these other methods?” he said.

Lovells said resurrecting the species requires introducing genetic diversity from outside the traditional pool of American chestnut trees. The study authors’ goal is tall, resilient trees and they are optimistic.

“I think if we only select American chestnut (tree genes), period, there’s going to be too small of a pool and we’re going to end up with a genetic bottleneck that will lead to extinction in the future,” said Lovell.

Ukraine’s Vladyslav Heraskevych out of Winter Olympics because of banned helmet honoring war dead

By TIM REYNOLDS AP Sports Writer

CORTINA D’AMPEZZO, Italy (AP) — Ukrainian skeleton athlete Vladyslav Heraskevych, a likely medal contender at the Milan Cortina Games, was barred from racing Thursday after refusing a last-minute plea from the International Olympic Committee to not use a helmet that honors more than 20 athletes and coaches killed since Russia invaded his country four years ago.

The decision came roughly 45 minutes before the start of the competition and ended a three-day saga where Heraskevych knew he was risking being pulled from the Games by wearing the helmet, one that the IOC says breaks rules against making statements on the field of play.

The International Bobsled and Skeleton Federation said his decision to wear the helmet was “inconsistent with the Olympic Charter and Guidelines on Athlete Expression.” He wore the helmet in training, but the IOC asked him to wear a different helmet in races. It offered concessions, such as wearing a black armband or letting him display the helmet once he was off the ice.

“I believe, deeply, the IBSF and IOC understand that I’m not violating any rules,” Heraskevych said. “Also, I would say (it’s) painful that it really looks like discrimination because many athletes already were expressing themselves. ... They didn’t face the same things. So, suddenly, just the Ukrainian athlete in this Olympic Games will be disqualified for the helmet.”

IOC President Kirsty Coventry, who was slated to be in Cortina d’Ampezzo to see Alpine skiing, went to the sliding center instead. She was waiting at the top of the track when Heraskevych arrived and they met privately. After about 10 minutes, Coventry was unable to change Heraskevych’s mind.

“We didn’t find common ground in this regard,” Heraskevych said.

Tears rolled down Coventry’s face after the meeting. The Olympic champion swimmer said she wanted a different outcome, and the IOC said its decision was made with regret.

“As you’ve all seen over the last few days, we’ve allowed for Vladyslav to use his helmet in training,” Coventry said. “No one, no one — especially me — is disagreeing with the messaging. The messaging is a powerful message. It’s a message of remembrance. It’s a message of memory and no one is disagreeing with that. The challenge that we are facing is that we wanted to ask or come up with a solution for just the field of play.”

Coventry and Heraskevych agreed that the helmet images aren’t clearly seen during races, since sliders zip down the icy chute at around 120 kph (75 mph). That, the IOC hoped, was the window to a compromise. Heraskevych would not budge.

“Sadly, we’ve not been able to come to that solution,” Coventry said. “I really wanted to see him race today. It’s been an emotional morning.”

Heraskevych filed an appeal with the Court of Arbitration for Sport, but the race went on without him.

The first two runs were Thursday; the last two are Friday. Heraskevych and his attorneys asked CAS for a response by Friday, though it's not clear how his situation could be remedied at this point.

Regardless of what CAS says, if anything, his chance to race in these Games is gone. The IOC let him keep his credential, meaning he can remain at the Olympics as an athlete — just not a competing one.

About a dozen Russian athletes are being allowed to compete at the Olympics as neutral individuals along with seven Belarusians; they are not allowed to compete under their national flag or anthem. Heraskevych has spoken out about why he believes they shouldn't be at the Olympics and said the IOC's decision "plays along with Russian propaganda."

The decision drew immediate condemnation from officials in Ukraine and some athletes.

"Sport shouldn't mean amnesia, and the Olympic movement should help stop wars, not play into the hands of aggressors," Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on social media. "Unfortunately, the decision of the International Olympic Committee to disqualify Ukrainian skeleton racer Vladyslav Heraskevych says otherwise."

In the luge team relay Thursday night, Ukraine's six sliders all took a knee after the team crossed the finish line and hoisted their helmets — plain white ones, no designs to be found — skyward in a show of support for Heraskevych.

"Disqualified. I think that's enough to understand what the modern IOC really is and how it disgraces the idea of the Olympic movement," Ukrainian skier Kateryna Kotsar posted on Instagram. "Vladyslav Heraskevych, for us and for the whole world, you're a champion. Even without starting."

The IOC had sided with Ukraine's top slider before. When he displayed a "No war in Ukraine" sign after his fourth and final run at the 2022 Beijing Olympics, the IOC said he was simply calling for peace and did not find him in violation of the Olympic charter.

This time, Heraskevych said he believes there are inconsistencies in how the IOC decides what statements are allowed. Among those he cited: U.S. figure skater Maxim Naumov bringing a photo of his late parents — former pairs world champions Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov, who were among the 67 people killed in a plane crash on Jan. 29, 2025 — to the kiss-and-cry area after his skate in Milan this week, and Israeli skeleton athlete Jared Firestone's decision to appear at the opening ceremony wearing a kippah that bore the names of 11 Israeli athletes and coaches killed in the 1972 attack during the Munich Games.

"A competitor literally placed the memory of the dead on his head to honor them," Heraskevych wrote on Instagram. "I frankly do not understand how these two cases are fundamentally different."

Firestone said simply that he admired Heraskevych. "I think he's a man with strong values," he said.

In Milan, IOC spokesman Mark Adams said if athletes were allowed to display messaging without restrictions on the field of play, "that would lead to a chaotic situation."

"Sport without rules cannot function. ... If we have no rules, we have no sport," Adams said.

Heraskevych was fourth at the world championships last year and was among the fastest in training leading into the Olympic races. A medal was possible, but to Heraskevych, the helmet mattered more.

"The International Olympic Committee destroyed our dreams," said Mykhailo Heraskevych, the slider's coach and father. "It's not fair."

Ukrainian athlete tests the Olympic rules on free speech — and gets disqualified

By GRAHAM DUNBAR AP Sports Writer

MILAN (AP) — Ukrainian skeleton racer Vladyslav Heraskevych pushed at the limits of the International Olympic Committee's rules on freedom of expression, and the global sports body pushed back. That created an emotional and historic moment of Winter Games lore.

Heraskevych insisted on wearing a helmet in competition with the images of Ukrainian athletes and coaches killed during Russia's nearly 4-year-old full-scale invasion of their country. By refusing to back down, he was disqualified from his Olympic event Thursday.

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He defied a last-minute plea by IOC President Kirsty Coventry, who was in tears after their early morning meeting at the sliding center in Cortina d'Ampezzo. Although disqualified from the competition, Heraskevych was not expelled from the Olympics, unlike previous athletes who staged prominent protests.

A look at the Olympic rules and previous protests:

Heraskevych and the Olympic rules

Heraskevych had freely worn his preferred helmet on training runs, and the IOC told him he could bring it to media areas on race days.

For the actual race, however, he refused to wear an approved helmet that complied with IOC rules designed to keep the field of competition clean of political messages. Heraskevych also refused proposed IOC compromises of wearing a black armband or displaying the helmet once he was off the course.

Political neutrality is a foundational principle of the Olympic Charter, a 108-page document of 61 articles that effectively serves as the constitution of the IOC and the Olympic Games.

Rule 50 states: "No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas."

In addition, Rule 40 states that athletes comply with "conditions of participation established by the IOC," including where and how free expression can be displayed.

"It is not at all about the message," IOC spokesman Mark Adams said at a daily news conference dominated by the helmet issue. "It is simply about the sanctity of the field of play."

Sports law expert Antoine Duval told The Associated Press it was "a huge move" for the IOC to cite Rule 40 on free expression and not the one on political propaganda.

"That is demanding that athletes are like absolute robots," said Duval of the Asser Institute in the Netherlands, suggesting future Olympians could face scrutiny over their tattoos.

Heraskevych's Olympic history

Heraskevych, 27, is at his third Winter Games and the second under the shadow of Russia's war in Ukraine, which began Feb. 24, 2022 — four days after the end of the Beijing Winter Games.

On Feb. 11 of that year, Heraskevych completed his races in China and held a small sign for the TV cameras in the blue and yellow colors of his national flag with the slogan, "No War in Ukraine."

The IOC took no action against him, deciding this was "a general call for peace" and not an explicitly political statement.

He returned to the Olympics this year, with no end to the war in sight, and he again tried to state his views.

Neutral politics, protecting athletes

The IOC says its athlete expression rules were drafted after consulting with officially recognized athlete groups, including some from countries where they face political interference.

"We cannot have athletes having pressure put on them by their political masters to make messaging during the competition," Adams said.

The risks of the competition being overshadowed by political statements could be even greater at the larger Summer Games like those in 2028 in Los Angeles, when the IOC wants 206 national Olympic teams, plus a refugee team, to take part.

"Think of the Middle East, think of Africa, think of South America, if everyone is allowed to express themselves in that way beyond a black armband," Adams said "You can see where that would lead to a chaotic situation."

The IOC says its athlete expression rules were drafted after consulting with officially recognized athlete groups, including some from countries where they face political interference.

"We cannot have athletes having pressure put on them by their political masters to make messaging during the competition," Adams said.

A regular concern at Summer Games in recent years has been the issue of some athletes seeming to be pulled from competition to avoid facing an opponent from Israel.

The last major review of protest guidelines was overseen by Coventry while she was an IOC athlete

representative ahead of the Tokyo Olympics held in 2021.

Stricter rules were in place but eased just weeks before those Games, in which women's soccer teams took a knee before the first whistle to support racial justice.

Other incidents by athletes

Heraskevych's case has been compared to U.S. figure skater Maxim Naumov, who made an emotional tribute in Milan this week. After his skate, he displayed a photo of himself as a child with his parents, who were killed in January 2025 when American Airlines Flight 5342 struck a military helicopter on approach to Ronald Reagan National Airport in Washington, D.C., and fell into the icy Potomac River.

Adams said Naumov's display was "a spontaneous show of emotion" after his event.

At the Paris Olympics 18 months ago, Afghan refugee Manizha Talash competed in the breaking competition wearing a cape with the slogan, "Free Afghan Women." She was disqualified by the World DanceSport Federation.

Also in Paris, the opening ceremony saw a memorial gesture in which Algerian athletes tossed red roses from their boat into the Seine at the spot where in 1961 dozens of protesters died in a police crackdown.

Perhaps the most famous demonstration came at the 1968 Summer Games in Mexico City when U.S. sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos stood atop the medal podium after the 200 meters race. Shoeless and with their heads bowed, the two Black Americans each raised a gloved fist to protest racial injustice. They were expelled from the Games but allowed to keep their medals.

Russia's impending return

The helmet issue has put Ukraine back in the Olympic news at what could be the last games before Russia returns to the IOC fold. Russian athletes and teams have faced varying restrictions on competing — without their national identity of flag, anthem and colors — at each Olympics in the past decade because of doping scandals and the war.

The IOC suspended the Russian Olympic Committee in October 2023 for breaking the Olympic Charter by incorporating sports councils in four regions of Ukraine that Moscow illegally annexed. The legal dispute is under review, and the IOC advised sports governing bodies in December to look at restoring Russian youth teams to international competitions with their full identity.

Ukrainian Sports Minister Matvii Bidnyi has urged the IOC not to make concessions before the war ends.

What independents think of Trump's recent immigration actions, according to a new AP-NORC poll

By STEVE PEOPLES and AMELIA THOMSON-DEVEAUX Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — About 6 in 10 U.S. adults say President Donald Trump has "gone too far" in sending federal immigration agents into American cities, according to a new AP-NORC poll that suggests political independents are increasingly uncomfortable with his tactics.

Views of Trump's handling of immigration — which fell over the course of his first year — remained steady over the past month, with about 4 in 10 saying they approve of the president's approach. But the poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research also found that the Republican Party's advantage on Trump's signature political issue has shrunk since October.

About 3 in 10 U.S. adults trust Republicans to do a better job handling immigration, while a similar share say the same of Democrats. An additional 3 in 10, roughly, don't think either party would do a better job handling the issue, and about 1 in 10 say both parties would handle it equally well.

The Republican president's core supporters remain overwhelmingly supportive of Trump's immigration tactics. But there are signs that more independents think he's going too far.

"I am glad that immigrants aren't just flooding across the border, but what he's doing now in our cities, pitting the military against our people, these are gestapo tactics," said independent Brenda Shaw, a 65-year-old human resources manager from South Haven, Michigan. "They're shooting U.S. citizens in the face and in the back."

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The new polling comes as the nation watches the human impact of Trump's crackdown in Minneapolis, where thousands of heavily armed masked agents descended upon the city to find and remove immigrants in the country illegally. The administration announced Thursday that it would end its operation there, saying it had left the state safer than before.

There have also been violent clashes with protesters, including two U.S. citizens killed by federal agents. About 6 in 10 Americans believe that Trump has "gone too far" when using federal law enforcement at public protests in U.S. cities, the poll found.

Republicans stay behind Trump on immigration

While about 9 in 10 Democrats and about 7 in 10 independents say Trump has "gone too far" in sending federal immigration agents into U.S. cities and using federal law enforcement at public protests, only about one-quarter of Republicans agree.

According to the new survey, about half of Republicans say that Trump's actions have been "about right," while about one-quarter of Republicans say he hasn't gone far enough. Their support for the president hasn't wavered despite the chaos in Minneapolis.

Tevis Crawford, a 20-year-old student from Baton Rouge, Louisiana, said he's pleased with Trump's leadership on immigration, although he wishes the president could find a way to deport more immigrants who are in the country illegally.

"I don't think the deportations have been enough, to be honest. I think it's much too lax," he said of Trump's crackdown. "If you crossed into our country illegally, it's just not right. You're taking things away from people who were born here."

Crawford added that Trump "should be focusing on violent criminals, but the violent criminals are probably harder to find."

Independents largely disapprove of the current immigration enforcement approach

Despite their strong support for Trump, Republicans are increasingly alone in supporting Trump on his immigration enforcement tactics.

Trump's approval on immigration appears to have fallen among independents since last spring, from 37% in March 2025 to 23% in the new poll. There is greater variability in surveying small groups, like independents, which creates more uncertainty about the magnitude of changes. About 6 in 10 independents now say Trump has "gone too far" in deporting immigrants living in the U.S. illegally, an apparent increase from 46% in an AP-NORC poll in April.

Most U.S. adults, including independents, have an unfavorable view of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, commonly referred to as ICE. Overall, only about 3 in 10 U.S. adults have a favorable view of the agency, the AP-NORC poll found.

There is an large partisan gap, with independents much closer to Democrats than Republicans. Only about 1 in 10 Democrats and roughly 2 in 10 independents have a favorable view of ICE, compared to about 7 in 10 Republicans.

"Having the border shut, that's OK. But what Trump is doing with ICE and Homeland Security? You don't go yanking people out of cars. You don't go shooting people," said independent Rick Kinnett, a 60-year-old Navy veteran from Crawfordsville, Indiana.

"I spent eight years in the military. This is not what I signed up for," he said. "This is not what we're supposed to do. This is not constitutional."

Trump's weak numbers hold steady

Trump's approval on immigration has not moved since January despite a month of immigration-related turmoil.

About 38% of U.S. adults approve of Trump's handling of immigration more broadly, in line with an January AP-NORC poll conducted just after the death of Renee Good, the first U.S. citizen in Minnesota killed by federal agents.

The president's overall approval rating has declined slightly since the beginning of his second term and remains low.

Overall, 36% of U.S. adults say they approve of the way Trump is handling the presidency. His approval ratings on the economy and foreign policy are similar to his overall approval and functionally unchanged from January.

Historically, such numbers would push members of a president's party to distance themselves from him — especially heading into a midterm election season. However, Trump's allies in Washington and in state capitals across the nation remain overwhelmingly united behind him, reflecting consistently strong support from Republicans in the polls.

But Trump's immigration approach seems to be a particularly sore spot for independents. While he appears to have slid with independents on immigration, Trump's approval on the economy — the other signature issue where he's recently been criticized for failing to deliver on campaign promises — is similar to where it was last spring.

And the narrowing of Republicans' advantage on immigration is a warning sign for Trump's party. In October, 39% of U.S. adults said they trusted the Republicans to better handle immigration, while 26% said that about the Democrats, giving the GOP a 13-point edge. In the new poll, the difference between the parties is only 4 points.

"What he's doing with ICE is the worst thing right now. I would say the economy is the second worst thing," said Shaw, the human resources manager from Michigan. "I'm getting ready to retire and I'm wondering how I'm going to make it."

"But I'm blessed," she added. "I don't have to hide in the basement because my skin is brown."

Russia fires 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 either 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 hammers civilian areas

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.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, urged Russia to stop hitting elec-

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tricity infrastructure, reminding Moscow in a statement that targeting civilian infrastructure is prohibited under international humanitarian law.

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.

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.

Temperatures have moved above freezing point in Kyiv, but it is still bitterly cold in the city.

Oleksii Kuleba, deputy prime minister for the restoration of Ukraine, said 2,600 buildings were left without heating after the Kyiv attack in addition to 1,100 buildings in the capital that already were without heating due to previous attacks.

In Odesa, nearly 300,000 residents were left without running water, Kuleba said, while in Dnipro the central heating system stopped working for some 10,000 people.

Ukrainian drone flies farthest yet

Ukraine has hit back at Russia with long-range strikes on military targets and oil refineries that generate a large slice of Russia's income.

Ukraine's military general staff said Thursday that one of its domestically developed long-range drones hit the Ukhta oil refinery in Russia's Komi region, around 1,750 kilometers (1,000 miles) from the Ukrainian border.

An official with Ukraine's Security Service, known as the SBU, told The Associated Press that it was the first time Ukrainian drones have flown so far. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Ukraine's general staff also said that one of its domestically produced, long-range "Flamingo" missiles hit one of the Russian military's biggest storage sites for missiles, ammunition and explosives in the Volgograd region and caused major explosions.

Separately, Ukrainian forces also hit and started a fire at the Michurinsk Progress Plant in Russia's Tambov region, a defense enterprise producing high-technology equipment for aviation and missile systems, the General Staff said.

Ukraine's military also confirmed it damaged the Volgograd oil refinery in a strike the previous day.

In other developments:

The White House announced Thursday that first lady Melania Trump helped to reunite a small group of Russian and Ukrainian children with their families after they became separated by the invasion.

Five children — four boys and one girl, from 4 to 15 years old — were reunited with their families in Ukraine, while one child returned to its family in Russia, according to Maria Lvova-Belova, the Kremlin's commissioner for children's rights.

Lvova-Belova is sought for war crimes by the International Criminal Court for allegedly deporting children from Ukraine.

It was the third such family reunification involving the first lady.

Trump's defamation lawsuit against the BBC is set to go to trial in 2027, US judge says

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — President Donald Trump's \$10 billion lawsuit against the BBC can go to trial in 2027, a U.S. judge has said.

Judge Roy K. Altman of the federal court for the Southern District of Florida rejected an attempt by Britain's national broadcaster to delay proceedings.

He set a provisional start date of Feb. 15 2027 for a two-week trial. Altman's court order was issued Wednesday.

Trump filed a lawsuit in December over the way the BBC edited a speech he gave on Jan. 6, 2021. The claim seeks \$5 billion in damages for defamation and \$5 billion for unfair trade practices.

The speech took place before some of Trump's supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol as Congress was poised to certify President-elect Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 election that Trump falsely alleged was stolen from him.

The BBC had broadcast the documentary — titled "Trump: A Second Chance?" — days before the 2024 U.S. presidential election. It spliced together three quotes from two sections of the 2021 speech, delivered almost an hour apart, into what appeared to be one quote in which Trump urged supporters to march with him and "fight like hell." Among the parts cut out was a section where Trump said he wanted supporters to demonstrate peacefully.

The broadcaster has apologized to Trump over the edit of the Jan. 6 speech. But the publicly funded BBC rejects claims it defamed him. The furor triggered the resignations of the BBC's top executive and its head of news.

Papers filed last month said the BBC plans to file a motion to dismiss the case on the basis that the court lacks jurisdiction, because the program was not broadcast in Florida, and that Trump failed to state a claim.

Ahead of that motion it asked the court to postpone discovery — the pretrial process in which parties must turn over documents and other information — pending a decision on the motion to dismiss. The discovery process could require the BBC to hand over reams of emails and other materials related to its coverage of Trump.

The judge said the motion "is premature" because it's too early in the legal process for the BBC to request such a stay.

The BBC said "we will be defending this case. We are not going to make further comment on ongoing legal proceedings."

US applications for jobless benefits fall to 227,000 last week, remaining at recent healthy levels

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of Americans applying for unemployment benefits fell last week, remaining within the historically healthy range of the past few years.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending Feb. 7 fell by 5,000 to 227,000 from the previous week, the Labor Department reported Thursday. That's basically in line with the 226,000 new applications that analysts surveyed by the data firm FactSet had forecast.

Filings for unemployment benefits are viewed as representative of U.S. layoffs and are close to a real-time indicator of the health of the job market.

On Wednesday, the government reported that U.S. employers added a surprisingly strong 130,000 jobs in January and the unemployment rate fell to a still-low 4.3% from 4.4%. However, government revisions cut 2024-2025 U.S. payrolls by hundreds of thousands. That reduced the number of jobs created last year to just 181,000, a third of the previously reported 584,000 and the weakest since the pandemic year of 2020.

While weekly layoffs have remained in a historically low range mostly between 200,000 and 250,000 for

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the past few years, a number of high-profile companies have announced job cuts recently, including UPS, Amazon, Dow and the Washington Post in recent weeks.

Mounting layoff announcements in the past year, combined with the government's own sluggish labor market reports, have left Americans increasingly pessimistic about the economy.

The Labor Department also recently reported that job openings fell in December to the lowest level in more than five years, another sign that the American labor market remains sluggish, even though the economy is registering solid growth.

Data over the past year has broadly revealed a labor market in which hiring has clearly slowed, hobbled by uncertainty raised by President Donald Trump's tariffs and the lingering effects of the high interest rates the Fed engineered in 2022 and 2023 to tamp down a spike of pandemic-induced inflation.

Economists are conflicted about whether the stronger-than-expected January job gains are a one-off or possibly the first sign of a recovering labor market, which 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 shows that borrowing costs are weighing on growth and discouraging companies from expanding. A sustained pickup in hiring could undercut that theory.

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.

Thursday's unemployment benefits report from the Labor Department also showed that the four-week moving average of jobless claims, which balances out some of the weekly volatility, rose by 7,000 to 219,500.

The total number of Americans filing for jobless benefits for the previous week ending Jan. 31 increased by 21,000 to 1.86 million, the government said.

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

By RAJESH ROY and PIYUSH NAGPAL 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 governing Bharatiya Janata Party, and underscoring the political risks of pushing market-oriented policies before key state elections later this year.

In New Delhi, a protesting farmer activist, Hannan Mollah, said that India's recent free trade agreements with New Zealand, Europe and now the U.S. were poised to ruin India's farm sector as the local markets would be inundated by cheaper products.

"The fight will go on till our demands are met," Mollah said "If not, the public will gather in large numbers and uproot the Modi government."

A union leader said that 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. announced this month that 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.

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 believed. 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.

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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.

Today in History: February 13 The World War II bombing of Dresden

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Friday, Feb. 13, the 44th day of 2026. There are 321 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Feb. 13, 1945, Allied forces in World War II began a three-day bombing raid on Dresden, Germany, killing as many as 25,000 people and triggering a firestorm that swept through the city center.

Also on this date:

In 1935, a jury in Flemington, New Jersey, found Bruno Richard Hauptmann guilty of first-degree murder in the kidnap-slaying of Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., the 20-month-old son of Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh. (Hauptmann was executed the following year.)

In 1965, during the Vietnam War, President Lyndon B. Johnson authorized Operation Rolling Thunder, an extended bombing campaign against the North Vietnamese.

In 1980, the 13th Winter Olympics opened in Lake Placid, New York.

In 1996, the rock musical "Rent," by Jonathan Larson, premiered off-Broadway less than three weeks after Larson's death.

In 2002, John Walker Lindh, who was captured by U.S. forces as an enemy combatant in 2001, pleaded

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not guilty in federal court in Alexandria, Virginia, to conspiring to kill Americans and supporting the Taliban and terrorist organizations. (Lindh later pleaded guilty to lesser offenses and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.)

In 2016, Justice Antonin Scalia, the influential conservative member of the U.S. Supreme Court, was found dead at a private residence in the Big Bend area of West Texas; he was 79.

In 2017, President Donald Trump's embattled national security adviser, Michael Flynn, resigned following reports he had misled Vice President Mike Pence and other officials about his contacts with Russia.

In 2018, President Donald Trump's personal attorney, Michael Cohen, said he had paid \$130,000 out of his own pocket to Stephanie Clifford (aka Stormy Daniels), a porn actor who claimed to have had a sexual encounter with Trump.

In 2021, Donald Trump was acquitted by the Senate at his second impeachment trial -- the first to involve a former president -- in which he was accused of inciting the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6. Seven Republicans joined all 50 Democrats in voting to convict, less than the two-thirds threshold required.

Today's birthdays: Actor Kim Novak is 93. Actor Stockard Channing is 82. Democratic Sen. Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut is 80. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Mike Krzyzewski is 79. Musician Peter Gabriel is 76. Musician Peter Hook is 70. Singer-writer Henry Rollins is 65. Hockey Hall of Famer Mats Sundin is 55. Singer Robbie Williams is 52. Football Hall of Famer Randy Moss is 49. Actor Mena Suvari (MEE'-nuh soo-VAHR'-ee) is 47. Actor Sophia Lillis is 24.