

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 1 of 71

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Baby-sitter Ad](#)
- [4- Boys beat Britton-Hecla](#)
- [6- GDI Fitness Center Ad](#)
- [7- Girls beat Britton-Hecla](#)
- [9- Girls Region 1A Pairings](#)
- [9- GHS Senior Band Members Recognized](#)
- [10- SD SearchLight: Ban on advertising and dispensing abortion pills advances in South Dakota Legislature](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: Committee-endorsed plan would use some state revenue growth to reduce property taxes](#)
- [12- SD SearchLight: Data center regulation bill passes state Senate sans tax incentive ban](#)
- [13- SD SearchLight: Governors say Trump told them he won't force immigration enforcement surges on states](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Push for publicly funded charter schools fails in South Dakota Senate](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: Trump vows new tariffs, attacks Supreme Court justices after ruling](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: Committee endorses stricter regulations for economic development tools known as 'TIFs'](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: Bill defining 'man' and 'woman' advances in South Dakota Legislature](#)
- [19- SD SearchLight: US Supreme Court rules against Trump's tariffs in 6-3 opinion, dealing blow to trade agenda](#)
- [22- SD SearchLight: Kristi Noem: 'ICE does not target, and will not target, Native Americans'](#)
- [24- Weather Pages](#)
- [29- Daily Devotional](#)
- [30- Subscription Form](#)
- [31- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [32- News from the Associated Press](#)

## Saturday, Feb. 21

Pickleball. 9:30 a.m., elementary gym.  
Region 1B Boys Wrestling Tournament, 9:30 a.m., Webster  
Youth Wrestling Tournament Set-Up, 5 p.m.



## Sunday, Feb. 22

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.  
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.  
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Groton Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.  
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.  
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.  
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.  
Tuff Tigers Youth Wrestling Tournament, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., HS Gym and Arena  
Groton Soccer Association Clinics, 11:30 a.m., elementary gym  
4th Grade BB Practice, 2 p.m., HG Gym  
Dance Team, 5 p.m., Arena  
6th Grade Boys Basketball, 6 p.m., Arena

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 2 of 71

# 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.**

## **Trump's Tariffs Terminated**

The Supreme Court yesterday struck down President Donald Trump's tariffs on imports from nearly every US trading partner. Trump responded by ordering a global 10% tariff under a statute that lets presidents impose duties for up to 150 days.

Last year, Trump was the first president to invoke the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act to unilaterally impose sweeping tariffs on imported goods from over 100 countries. While the statute empowers the president to regulate imports to address extraordinary threats, it does not explicitly mention tariffs. Previous presidents have used it to place sanctions and embargoes on other countries, such as after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Citing historical precedent and the letter of the law, the justices ruled 6-3 that Trump exceeded his authority; only Congress can impose tariffs under the 1977 act.

The majority did not address whether companies would be refunded the over \$175B reportedly collected under the tariffs, leaving that question to lower courts. In dissent, Justice Brett Kavanaugh warned that issuing refunds would be complicated, particularly since many importers have passed on the costs to consumers.

## **Team USA and Canada to compete for Olympic men's hockey gold tomorrow.**

The puck is set to drop at 8:10 am ET tomorrow, marking the US men's hockey team's first gold medal game since 2010. Canada beat the US in that game to win its eighth of nine gold medals in men's hockey. The US beat Slovakia 6-2 yesterday to reach tomorrow's game, while Canada beat Finland 3-2. Slovakia and Finland will face off today at 2:40 pm ET for the bronze medal.

Separately, Norway broke its own record for the most gold medals won in a single Winter Games when biathlete Johannes Dale-Skjevdal earned the nation's 17th gold in the men's 15-kilometer mass start race. As of this writing, Norway has 37 total medals.

## **Trump administration revokes Biden-era limits on toxic power plant pollution.**

The White House yesterday reverted standards regulating mercury, arsenic, and other toxic emissions from coal-fired power plants back to those set in 2012. The move comes after industry groups said the Biden-era rules were prohibitively expensive. Meanwhile, environmental groups supported the stricter limits, citing that pollutants can harm brain development and contribute to health problems. As of 2022, burning coal also accounted for roughly 19% of US energy-related carbon dioxide emissions.

## **New federal data shows a slowdown in economic growth last quarter.**

Gross domestic product, adjusted for inflation, grew 1.4% in the final three months of 2025, according to a federal report released yesterday. That is down sharply from the 4.4% rate reported in the third quarter, a decline partly attributed to the record 43-day government shutdown that stretched from October to November. On the whole, GDP rose 2.2% last year, compared to 2.8% in 2024.

## **NASA targets March moon launch after latest rocket fueling test.**

The successful test comes after a first fueling test earlier this month was plagued by liquid hydrogen leaks. Now, NASA says it could launch four astronauts to the moon as soon as March 6. The three Americans and one Canadian slated for the trip were put into a two-week health quarantine last night in preparation. They're poised to be the first astronauts to fly to the moon since 1972.

## **Barcelona's Sagrada Familia reaches its maximum height.**

Over 140 years after the first stone was laid, the Catholic church designed by Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí reached its peak height of roughly 556 feet. After a crane installed the upper arm of a cross atop the Tower of Jesus Christ, the Sagrada Familia surpassed its own record as the world's tallest church. While no additional height is expected, the project remains years from completion.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 3 of 71

## Paleontologists discover a new dinosaur species as large as T. rex.

The new dinosaur species' fossils were discovered among 55 tons of specimens in a remote part of the Sahara Desert. Scientists believe the species, named Spinosaurus mirabilis, was a brightly colored carnivore that waded in the water to catch fish and lived about 95 million years ago. Mirabilis is Latin for astonishing.

## Humankind(ness)

*Dear readers— This month, we're pausing our usual act of kindness stories to share a sampling of your love stories. We hope this week's selection makes you laugh.*

"People have asked me, 'What is the most romantic thing/gift your husband has given you?' My answer is always the same: my heated toilet seat. Not only because my bathroom is cold—and NOBODY loves sitting on a cold toilet—but mainly because my husband heard me complain about being cold and DID something about it. He listened, people ... really listened."

— Viktoria S. in Glenpool, Oklahoma

"I was a graduate student living nickel to nickel. John, whom I'd just met, treated me to dinner at an expensive restaurant. Our first date. He ordered champagne, which we sipped as we browsed our textured linen menus. Unknowingly, I held my menu over the small table candle. My menu burst into flames! The waiter came running! Glasses of water doused the fire! Diners waved napkins to rid the smoke! And John pushed his chair back and laughed. Later that evening, he told me that I had a flaming-hot personality. Yes, we are still married after 40 wonderful years!"

— Sally S. in Tucson, Arizona

"I was at a convention in Toronto when a group decided to go to the top of the CN Tower for cocktails. At about the 35th floor, the elevator emerged from the shaft and continued to climb on the outside of the building. I'm deathly afraid of heights, and the elevator walls were all glass! Since I had a spectacular view of where I would land when I plummeted to my death, I gasped, spun around, and buried my face in the chest of the man behind me. Always a gentleman, he held me tightly for the rest of the ride up. One stray thought sneaked through my terror, 'Gee, he smells good!' We've been married over 40 years now."

— Bonita Z. in Pewaukee, Wisconsin

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## Boys Basketball

### Tigers cruise past Britton-Hecla, improve to 15-4



**Gage Sippel controlled the opening tip as he out jumps Britton-Hecla's Chaz Vietor.** (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Becker Bosma is being defended by Jaxon Zuehlke.** (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

GROTON — The Groton Area Tigers put together one of their most complete performances of the season Friday night, rolling past Britton-Hecla 67-27 in Northeast Conference boys basketball action.

Groton jumped out to a 9-0 lead and never looked back, building a 16-8 advantage after one quarter. The Tigers extended the margin to 40-14 by halftime and 53-19 after three quarters. The 30-point mercy rule was triggered midway through the third when Groton stretched the lead to 47-16, and the Tigers cruised home from there.

Despite a shortened week of practice due to weather, Groton head coach Greg Kjellsen was pleased with his team's focus and preparation.

"We've been working on it (1-3-1 zone) because we've seen it a little bit from some others," Kjellsen said of Britton-Hecla's zone looks. "We have to play them again in a couple of weeks, so we wanted to make sure they know it's not going to be fun to come back here."

The Tigers shot the ball efficiently all night, finishing 20-of-33 from two-point range (61 percent) and 8-of-15 from beyond the arc (53 percent). Groton added 31 rebounds, 17 assists and 10 steals, while committing 11 turnovers.

Kjellsen credited his team's work on the glass against a Braves squad with solid size.

"I thought defensively we did a good job, and I was really pleased with how we rebounded," he said. "They have as much size as a lot of teams we've seen. We shot it well in the first half. We didn't always take care of the ball — we threw some bad passes — but overall I liked how we played."

Groton's outside shooting proved to be a difference-maker against Britton-Hecla's 1-3-1 zone.

"We knew we were going to have to shoot a few threes against these guys," Kjellsen said. "They want to protect the inside and they're kind of daring you to shoot it. Luckily we made a few."

Four Tigers finished in double figures. Ryder Johnson led the way with 19 points, five rebounds, two assists and two steals. Karson Zak added 17 points, three rebounds, four assists and four steals. Keegen Tracy scored 13 points to go along with three rebounds, three assists and two steals, while Gage Sippel contributed 10 points and seven rebounds.

Easton Weber added six points, Anthony Tracy had two, and Groton also received contributions on the boards and defensively from Jayden Schwan, Logan Warrington and Asher Johnson.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 5 of 71



**Ryder Johnson dribbles past Bowen Micko (20) and Benjamin Folkman (3).** (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)



**Karson Zak goes up for the basket to score two of his 17 points on the night.** (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

Britton-Hecla, which fell to 12-8, was led by Jackson Zuhlke with nine points. Benjamin Folkman added five and Nathan Folkman had four. The Braves shot 9-of-37 from the field (24 percent), went 4-of-8 at the free throw line and committed 15 turnovers.

Groton also took care of business in the junior varsity game, posting a 71-38 victory. The Tigers led 20-12 after one quarter, 33-19 at halftime and 50-29 after three.

Jace Johnson paced the JV squad with 21 points, followed by Anthony Tracy with 16 and Asher Johnson with 12. Ethan Kroll scored six, J.J. Muller and Ryder Schelle each added five, Jordan Schwan had four and Wesley Borg chipped in two.

Britton-Hecla's JV was led by Nathaniel Schuller and Jace Reine with seven points apiece.

Groton completed the sweep with a 41-36 win in the C game.

With the victory, the Tigers improve to 15-4 on the season and will close out the regular season Friday, Feb. 27, when they host Aberdeen Christian.

"That's the only thing we can take care of," Kjellsen said of the playoff picture. "We can take care of business with Aberdeen Christian. Whatever else happens, happens. That's out of our control."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 6 of 71

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## Girls Basketball

### Balanced attack lifts Tigers past Britton-Hecla



**Jaedyn Penning eyes the basket on this shot.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)



**Jerrica Locke is triple teamed by Mia Kilker, Daynika Zuehlke and Karlie Zuehlke.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

GROTON- The Groton Area girls basketball team turned in one of its most complete performances of the season Friday night, rolling to a 60-26 Northeast Conference victory over Britton-Hecla in Groton.

The Tigers set the tone early, building a 15-7 lead after one quarter before breaking the game open in the second. Groton rattled off 11 straight points during the period and took a commanding 32-12 advantage into halftime.

"We really came out focused," said head coach Matt Locke. "Defensively, we were active, we were communicating, and that allowed us to get out and run. When we share the ball like we did tonight, we're tough to guard."

Groton continued to stretch the lead in the third quarter, hitting the 30-point margin for the continuous clock with 15 seconds left in the period and taking a 46-19 lead into the final frame.

The Tigers shot the ball efficiently throughout the night, finishing 16-of-25 from two-point range (64%) and 9-of-22 from three-point range (41%). Groton struggled at the free throw line, going 1-of-6 (17%), but made up for it with strong ball movement and defensive pressure.

Groton totaled 27 rebounds, committed just eight turnovers, and dished out 19 assists to go along with nine steals and four blocked shots.

"I loved the unselfishness," Locke said. "Nineteen assists tells you we were making the extra pass. That's what we talk about — trusting each other and playing for the best shot."

Balanced scoring was a key. Jerrica Locke led the Tigers with nine points, adding five rebounds and four assists. Jayden Penning, Riley Dunker, and Taryn Traphagen each scored eight points. Penning added five assists and two steals, while Dunker contributed two steals and two blocks. Traphagen finished with five rebounds and two blocks.

Kella Tracy added eight points and five rebounds, Mia Crank chipped in five points, and McKenna Tietz had four points, three assists, and two steals. Talli Wright and Tevan Hanson each scored three points, Ashlynn Warrington had two, Sydney Locke added two points with a rebound and assist, and McKenna Krause pulled down a rebound.

Britton-Hecla was led by Madelynn Micko with nine

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 8 of 71



**Mia Crank looks for a teammate to pass off the ball.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

points and Daynika Zuehlke with seven. Karlie Zuehlke and Ella Schuster each added four points. The Braves shot 11-of-44 from the field (25%) and 4-of-7 from the free throw line (57%), finishing with 10 turnovers.

With the win, Groton improves to 14-6 on the season and will open region tournament play Tuesday. Britton-Hecla falls to 4-16.

"We're playing our best basketball at the right time," Locke said. "Now it's about carrying that intensity and focus into the postseason."

Groton also dominated the junior varsity contest, earning a 42-4 victory.

The Tigers led 11-0 after the first quarter and 26-2 at half-time, using a 23-point run spanning the second and third quarters to put the game away.

Kella Tracy paced Groton with 16 points, while Tevan Hanson added eight. Taylynn Traphagen and Ashlynn Warrington each scored five points. McKenna Krause and Kinsley Rowen contributed two points apiece.

For Britton-Hecla, Livia Knecht and Lily Mundt each scored two points.

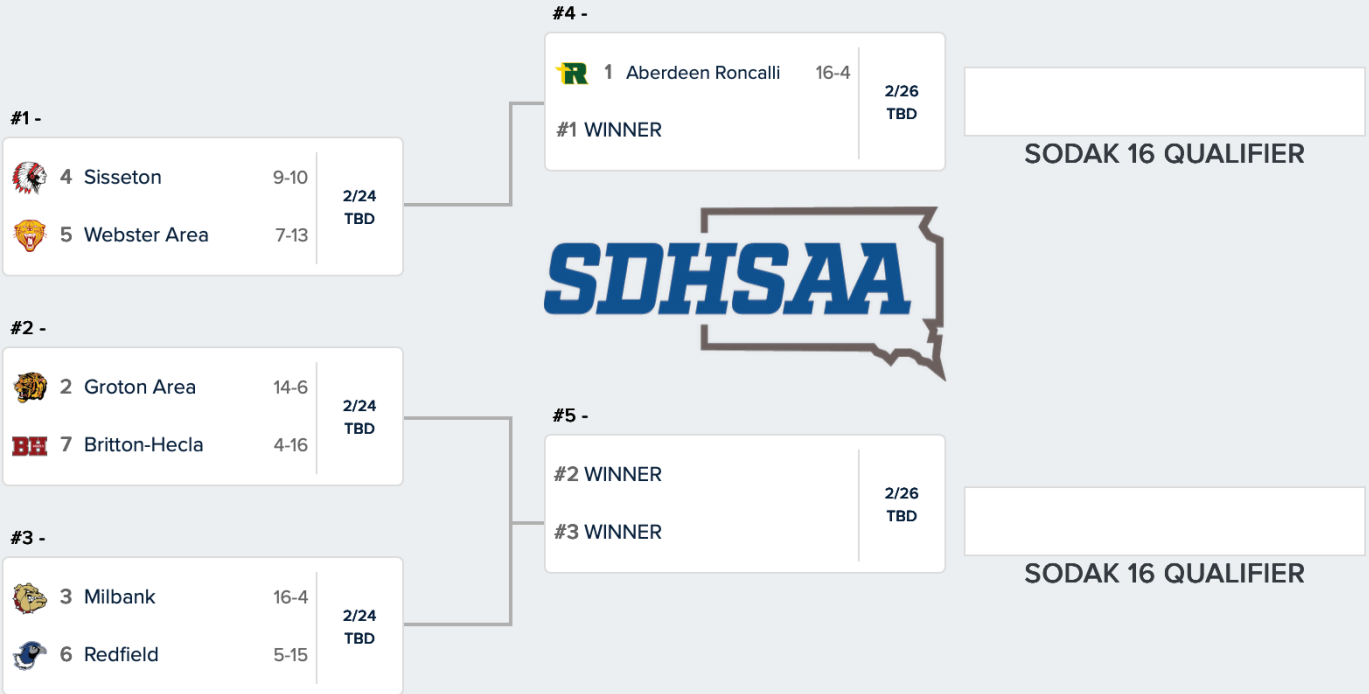


**Talli Wright passes off the ball as she got the rebound.** (Photo by Paul Kosel)

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 9 of 71

## Class A - Region 1



### Seed Points Averages (calculated Feb. 20)

#1 Aberdeen Roncalli 44.800 - #2 Groton Area 43.400 - #3 Milbank 43.300 - #4 Sisseton 40.105 - #5 Webster Area 38.650 - #6 Redfield 37.550 - #7 Britton-Hecla 37.150



The GHS senior band members were recognized at the games last night. They are Lincoln Krause, Nathan Unzen, Jayden Schwan, Natalia Warrington and Gentry Pigors. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### **Ban on advertising and dispensing abortion pills advances in South Dakota Legislature**

**BY: JOSHUA HAIAR**

South Dakota lawmakers advanced a bill on Friday at the Capitol in Pierre aimed at stopping abortion pills and other abortion-related items from being advertised and distributed in the state.

The House State Affairs Committee voted 10-2 to send the bill to the House floor. The bill would make it a felony to knowingly dispense, distribute, sell or advertise abortion pills and any other "article" or "instrument" intended to be used for an abortion. It would also allow the state attorney general to seek civil penalties of up to \$10,000 per violation, with payments deposited into the "life protection subfund," used to defend the state's anti-abortion laws.

Republican Attorney General Marty Jackley, who's seeking the Republican nomination for U.S. House in the June primary election, said the measure gives prosecutors tools to target out-of-state providers and marketers, and to intercept shipments without requiring proof that the drugs reached a pregnant person.

"We are not able to do that under the existing law," he said, because the drug "has to go to a pregnant female."

The bill empowers action if the attorney general "has reason to believe that a person is engaging in, has engaged in, or is about to engage in a violation."

Opponents, including the South Dakota State Medical Association, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, and the American Civil Liberties Union of South Dakota, said the bill would chill medical care, particularly miscarriage management and labor induction using drugs affected by the bill, and invite intrusive investigations into private health decisions.

Justin Bell, on behalf of the medical association, said even in cases of legal, non-abortion uses, manufacturers and distributors of drugs affected by the legislation may say, "I don't know what people are going to use this for. I am not taking the liability of a potential civil action. I'm not taking a risk of getting convicted of a class six felony because of it."

The bill comes as Jackley is in court trying to stop advertisements on gas station pumps around the state, asking, "Pregnant? Don't want to be?" The ads from New York-based Mayday Health include a link to the group's website, which provides information about the availability of abortion pills.

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

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

*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.*

## Committee-endorsed plan would use some state revenue growth to reduce property taxes

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

The Senate Taxation Committee endorsed a bill 4-3 on Friday that would create a new fund to offset taxes for all South Dakota property tax categories, using a portion of the state's annual general fund revenue growth to fill it.

The bill is one of several major property tax proposals moving through the legislative process. Some other proposals were rejected on Friday by the House and Senate.

Senate Bill 199, sponsored by Sen. Mark Lapka, R-Leola, would transfer 25% of the annual increase in general fund revenues starting in August of this year. In the years following, the state would continue transferring 25% of the annual revenue increase, plus an amount equal to the prior year's transfer.

Derek Johnson, state economist with the Bureau of Finance and Management, opposed the bill, saying it is "simple" at first glance, but that "the mechanism it uses is problematic" because it limits budget flexibility for the Legislature.

"This bill substitutes intentional decision making with automatic transfers. It creates structural commitments without flexibility, limits legislative authority and reduces accountability," Johnson told lawmakers. "Property tax relief should be pursued through thoughtful appropriations, not formulas that lock us into permanent obligations."

The committee rejected two other property tax relief proposals, including a bill to establish a new transaction tax to fund property tax reductions, and a resolution asking voters to amend the state constitution to reset property taxes to 2020 and then limit property tax increases to a flat rate until the property is sold. The Senate State Affairs Committee postponed action on a similar resolution after deadlocking 4-4 on whether to endorse it.

The Senate rejected a bill that would have raised the maximum home valuation that could be exempt from property taxes through a disabled veterans tax relief program from \$200,000 to \$300,000. The Legislature last raised the maximum value in 2024.

Opponents, including U.S. Air Force veteran and Rapid City Republican Sen. Taffy Howard, were primarily concerned that the increase would result in a "tax shift" toward other property owners.

"Our service should never be used as political cover for avoiding real property tax reform," Howard said. "South Dakotans are frustrated because the system itself need structural reform. Carveouts and expanding exemptions do not fix the system; they simply rearrange who pays."

In 2023, 2,808 households were approved for the program, according to data from the South Dakota Department of Revenue.

In the House of Representatives, lawmakers voted 65-2 in support of a bill, already approved by the Senate, that puts aside \$425,000 to pay property tax refunds to qualifying disabled veterans and elderly people. It's a companion to Senate Bill 21, which boosts the annual income eligibility level for both categories of refund, both of which have been available since the 1970s. The latter bill has not been heard on the House floor yet.

Other bills meant to address property taxes are still working through the legislative process, including proposals that would use revenue from an optional county sales tax or an increase in the statewide sales tax rate to reduce taxes for homeowners.

*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.*

## Data center regulation bill passes state Senate sans tax incentive ban

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

With support Friday from every member present, the South Dakota Senate passed a bill dubbed the "Data Center Bill of Rights for Citizens."

Senate Bill 135, which now moves to a House committee, requires data center companies to ensure a facility's water usage will not overburden local resources and to pay for their own electricity costs caused by the facility. It also prohibits the state from overruling local governments' authority in relation to data center ordinances.

The bill originally banned data center tax exemptions at the state and local levels, but the Senate voted to strike that language, even as the bill's sponsor said the language is under review and could return later.

Data centers — rooms or buildings full of computer servers — have been storing cellphone pictures, emails and social media accounts for years. What's new are 100- to 1,000-acre warehouses full of servers for cryptocurrency and artificial intelligence. Those massive data centers, needing 30 to 1,000 megawatts of energy, have electricity consumption equivalent to 29,000 to 800,000 residential customers.

South Dakota's biggest data center consumes 30 megawatts, and the state has none of the vastly larger data centers that have proliferated elsewhere. Data center legislation introduced this winter during the state's legislative session attempts to incentivize or regulate those larger data centers in South Dakota.

The bill's sponsor, Sioux Falls Republican Rep. Chris Karr, amended the bill to remove the ban on tax exemptions. But he hopes to push for amendments again as the bill makes its way through the House.

He told lawmakers that although he opposes new tax exemptions, he intended the bill to allow tax incentives currently used in the state — such as the Reinvestment Payment Program, which is a sales tax rebate program. He does not know if the original wording meets that intention, he said, and is working to clarify that language with the Legislative Research Council.

"I only want to present something to you that I understand and can assure you is happening in this bill," Karr said.

The bill, as amended, passed the Senate with a 34-0 vote. Sen. Arch Beal, R-Sioux Falls, was excused due to an extended health problem.

If Karr succeeds in amending the bill again to address tax incentives and the House supports an amended version of the bill, it'll come back to the Senate for further debate before heading to the governor's desk.

Two other data center-related bills were stopped on Friday.

A bill introduced by Sen. Casey Crabtree, R-Madison, failed that would exempt large backup generators that are not connected to the grid — such as those used by large data centers — from regulatory and siting review by the state Public Utilities Commission. The vote was 17-17, and Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen, who was presiding, opted not to cast a tiebreaking vote. Crabtree announced his intent to seek reconsideration of the bill.

Crabtree said local governments could still engage in regulation, but Sen. Joy Hohn, R-Hartford, was among the senators who were hesitant to surrender state oversight.

"Not every county has planning and zoning," Hohn said. "And so the PUC process is not redundant."

A bill that would ban government bodies from entering into nondisclosure agreements for data center projects failed in a 30-37 vote on the House floor.

Rep. Kent Roe, R-Hayti, called the bill "well-intended but overbroad."

"Let's come back with a narrower bill that protects real transparency without scaring away legitimate projects," Roe said.

A bill that would expand the Reinvestment Payment Program to require separate regulations and tax incentive approaches for larger companies, such as a data center company, is expected to be debated in the Senate next week.

A bill from Roe that would have granted data centers 50-year exemptions from sales taxes on their

equipment and software purchases was rejected by a committee earlier this legislative session.

South Dakota Searchlight's John Hult and Joshua Haiar contributed to this report.

*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.*

## Governors say Trump told them he won't force immigration enforcement surges on states

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump told governors Friday during a meeting at the White House he has no plans to surge federal immigration operations in states where it's not wanted.

New York Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul said during an afternoon press conference with several other governors that Trump was asked during the closed-door meeting about what lessons he learned from immigration enforcement operations in Minnesota, where federal officers killed two U.S. citizens.

"The president said, 'We'll only go where we're wanted.' And said, for example, 'I won't go to New York unless Kathy calls and says she wants me to come to New York,'" she said. "I took that as a very positive outcome from this meeting. And I would want to hold him and the administration to that statement."

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore, vice chair of the National Governors Association, said Democratic governors were able to express "how problematic" actions by immigration enforcement officials have been, especially after Republicans in Congress drastically increased funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement as well as Customs and Border Protection in their signature tax and spending cuts law.

"We were actually encouraged to hear the president say that one of the takeaways from Minnesota was that he only wants to go places that he is welcomed. So we were very glad to hear that," he said. "I want to be very clear that until we can have an accountable agency, the type of surge that we saw in Minnesota is not welcome in the state of Maryland."

Louisiana Republican Gov. Jeff Landry said during the press conference at the NGA's winter conference there have been "no problems" with federal immigration enforcement actions in his state.

"Why? Because it was a completely integrated operation under which local, state and federal partners worked together," he said. "We did not allow people to break our laws and get in the way and impede law enforcement in doing their lawful duty."

Landry said Trump "made it very clear, if you don't want our help, we won't give you any help."

### Tariffs ruling interrupts meeting

Governors from throughout the country traveled to Washington, D.C., this week to attend their annual winter conference and meet with Trump at the White House, though that meeting was diverted somewhat after the Supreme Court ruled on tariffs.

Trump is scheduled to host a black tie dinner for some of the governors this weekend, though he decided not to invite certain Democrats to that event, provoking controversy throughout the lead-up to the governors' meeting.

Oklahoma Republican Gov. Kevin Stitt, chairman of the National Governor's Association, said during the afternoon press conference the morning meeting with Trump included 12 GOP and 10 Democratic governors.

"It was overall a really productive meeting and a great show of 'Hey, here is how the governors can come before the president and bring up issues that affect all of us,'" he said.

Moore said the White House meeting was "productive" and "a chance for us to be able to share our thoughts and our perspectives and our ideas with the Cabinet secretaries and the agency heads and with the president himself."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 14 of 71

"We had a chance to talk about the things that matter to the people of our states. We had a chance to speak with Cabinet secretaries about energy prices and how we have to have a singular focus to bring energy prices down," he said. "We had a chance to speak with the Transportation secretary about transportation issues. In the case of Maryland, it was the American Legion Bridge and the Francis Scott Key Bridge."

Moore added the meeting was an important opportunity to "speak truth to power" and show that bipartisanship still exists on certain issues.

## Sewage spill, Gateway Tunnel

Moore said he didn't bring up Trump blaming him for a sewage spill that began with a discharge into the Potomac River in the District of Columbia, opting instead to use the meeting to focus on talking with Cabinet secretaries on infrastructure, natural disaster relief and housing.

"I am here to focus on helping the people of my state," he said. "I am not going to spend a second talking about a petty attack that the president of the United States had."

Hochul said she appreciated the Cabinet secretaries were at the meeting and that governors were able to talk with them about several issues.

"I was able to talk about the Gateway Tunnel and keeping the funding on for the largest infrastructure project in America today," she said, referring to a project to build new rail track between New York and New Jersey under the Hudson River. "We'd like to keep our offshore wind on and not have to go to court constantly to get that turned back on."

North Carolina Democratic Gov. Josh Stein said he was able to speak directly with Trump about the state's ongoing recovery needs from Hurricane Helene.

"We've got to rebuild houses. We've got to rebuild roads and bridges. We've got to rebuild businesses. And we cannot do that in North Carolina without the partnership of the federal government," he said. "We have a \$13.5 billion request with (the Office of Management and Budget) and with the Congress. And I asked the president and he said that they are eager to talk about that."

"So I came away very encouraged that he will bring renewed focus from this administration to help western North Carolina recover from Hurricane Helene."

Landry said the Supreme Court's ruling on tariffs, which was released during the meeting, "completely overshadowed, which, in my opinion, was getting ready to be a very productive meeting with the president."

"It was unfortunate that the Supreme Court came out with a bad ruling at that time because I think we were going to have a great meeting," he said.

Trump vowed to keep the tariffs in place under other authorities he believes he holds during an afternoon press conference at the White House, where he also rebuked the six Supreme Court justices who wrote "that (the International Economic Emergency Powers Act) does not authorize the President to impose tariffs."

Hochul disagreed with the assertion the Supreme Court's decision wasn't the right one.

"I think the Supreme Court, many of whom are appointees by the president, sided with supporting the Constitution and doing what's right," she said. "So we support this decision and hope that we can continue to find ways to work together to drive down costs, not do the opposite as we saw tariffs do in our states."

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

## Push for publicly funded charter schools fails in South Dakota Senate

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — A proposal to allow charter schools in the state lost Thursday on a tie vote in the South Dakota Senate and failed on reconsideration Friday, after narrowly advancing out of a Senate committee.

A recent decision by the state Supreme Court confirmed Republican Lt. Gov. Tony Venhuizen's authority to break Senate ties while he's presiding over the chamber, but he sealed the bill's fate Thursday by choosing not to cast a vote in favor of the legislation. The possibility of a tie has been ever-present this legislative session in the Senate because of the absence of Sen. Arch Beal, R-Sioux Falls, who's been sidelined by a health problem.

"I think most of the time it makes sense to let the legislative process play out," Venhuizen said Friday in an interview with South Dakota Searchlight. "Senators can move to reconsider and try to find a vote to flip their way and pass it if they want."

Charter schools are privately run, tuition-free schools that run on public dollars. They're funded on a per student basis, and run independently from local school districts. Forty-six states and Washington, D.C., Guam and Puerto Rico allow charter schools, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Sen. Lauren Nelson, R-Yankton, introduced the bill. She told the Senate that charter schools would provide opportunities for students with more specialized needs.

"Public charter schools do not replace traditional public education," she said. "Rather, they expand the range of options available to families."

Sen. Jamie Smith, D-Sioux Falls, said charter schools could pull funding from the state's "already underfunded public schools."

"We're already struggling to come up with our obligation, per law, of what we're supposed to do to fund education in this state," he said.

South Dakota law requires the state to increase funding annually for public schools by 3% or inflation, whichever is less, although lawmakers routinely reset the prior year's baseline funding amount to get around that requirement. This year, the governor proposed no inflationary increase for public schools, but new revenue estimates since then have the governor and lawmakers talking about a potential bump in funding.

Other opponents worried that the board in charge of a charter school wouldn't be elected or held accountable by the public and expressed concern about a provision in the bill allowing only 75% of teachers to be certified.

Meanwhile, Gov. Larry Rhoden recently opted South Dakota into a federal education program under President Donald Trump's "One Big Beautiful Bill." Under that program, South Dakotans who owe federal income taxes can send up to \$1,700 to the federal government, or they can donate that \$1,700 to a government-recognized, scholarship-granting organization benefiting public, private or homeschool entities in the state. The program starts next year.

South Dakota also has a program called Partners in Education that provides tax credits to insurance companies that fund scholarships for lower-income students to attend private school.

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

## Trump vows new tariffs, attacks Supreme Court justices after ruling

BY: JENNIFER SHUTT

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Friday he plans to keep tariffs in place using different authorities after the Supreme Court ruled he exceeded his power under the International Economic Emergency Powers Act.

During the afternoon press conference in the White House briefing room, Trump repeatedly criticized the six justices who wrote “that IEEPA does not authorize the President to impose tariffs.”

“The Supreme Court’s ruling on tariffs is deeply disappointing and I’m ashamed of certain members of the Court, absolutely ashamed, for not having the courage to do what’s right for our country,” he said.

Trump’s disdain of Chief Justice John Roberts as well as Justices Amy Coney Barrett, Neil Gorsuch, Ketanji Brown Jackson, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor did not stop there.

He said the justices’ opposition to his tariff policies meant they were a “disgrace to our nation” as well as “unpatriotic and disloyal to our Constitution.”

Justices Clarence Thomas and Brett Kavanaugh wrote dissenting opinions. Justice Samuel Alito and Thomas joined Kavanaugh’s dissent.

Trump appointed Barrett, Gorsuch and Kavanaugh during his first term.

But, Trump said, the ruling would not change the tariffs he has implemented under IEEPA since he planned to institute the same tax on goods coming into the country under different laws.

“The good news is that there are methods, practices, statutes and authorities as recognized by the entire Court in this terrible decision, and also as recognized by Congress, which they refer to, that are even stronger than the IEEPA tariffs available to me as president of the United States,” he said.

Trump said he would sign an order later in the day to “impose a 10% global tariff under Section 122, over and above our normal tariffs already being charged.”

Trump didn’t commit to returning the tens of billions of dollars the U.S. government has collected from IEEPA tariffs, saying the ruling didn’t address that issue.

“They take months and months to write an opinion, and they don’t even discuss that point,” Trump said. “I guess it has to get litigated for the next two years.”

Trump said he didn’t plan to ask Congress to pass any new laws or give the president broader tariff authority.

“I don’t have to. I have the right to do tariffs. And I’ve always had the right to do tariffs. It has all been approved by Congress, so there’s no reason to do it,” he said. “All we’re doing is we’re going through a little bit more complicated process, not complicated very much, but a little more complicated than what we had. And we’ll be able to take in more tariffs.”

Trump is set to address a joint session of Congress, which will likely be attended by many, if not all, of the Supreme Court justices, on Tuesday night.

Trump said he “couldn’t care less” whether the justices attend the speech, which is held in the House chamber. He said they are “barely” still invited, even though the president, who leads the executive branch, doesn’t hold the authority to exclude guests from either chamber of Congress, which makes up the separate but equal legislative branch.

Justices can, however, choose not to attend.

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

## Committee endorses stricter regulations for economic development tools known as 'TIFs'

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

A South Dakota Senate Committee unanimously endorsed legislation on Friday to set new regulations around a common economic development tool used in the state.

A tax increment financing district is a defined geographic area where local governments use the new and higher property taxes generated by development — what's known as the "increment" — to finance and pay off public improvements, such as infrastructure, within the district. State law requires that a portion of the district be "blighted" before redevelopment, or that a portion of the district will stimulate economic growth.

There are 277 active TIF districts in the state totaling \$3.5 billion in increment value, according to the Department of Revenue, most of which use economic development as their justification.

Several bills were introduced earlier in the legislative session to further regulate or reform TIFs — including proposals to require an area be blighted and require a public vote to approve TIFs of over \$15 million. A handful of those bills, introduced by Rapid City Republican Sen. Taffy Howard, were tabled in favor of Senate Bill 228 on Wednesday. The bill was labeled as a "compromise" by nearly all proponents.

"When I say that no one is perfectly happy with this," Howard said, "that means it's a good bill."

Howard was a vocal critic of TIFs in the last year, helping to lead an effort in Rapid City to refer a \$125 million TIF to a public vote. Rapid City voters rejected the TIF.

SB 228, introduced by Sioux Falls Republican Sen. Chris Karr, received support from Howard as well as representatives of local governments, businesses and economic development organizations.

Karr told lawmakers the bill:

Prevents properties within a TIF district from receiving a tax break known as the discretionary formula.

Redefines a TIF district as "a contiguous geographic area," with a definition of that phrase.

Restricts the maximum value of TIFs for the state's largest cities to 7.5% of the total assessed value in the city, rather than 10%.

Raises the "blight" threshold from 25% to 50%, for TIFs that use blight as a legal justification.

Requires a developer agreement to detail uses of a discretionary grant in a TIF, such as TIF funding that could be used for something other than public infrastructure.

Reduces the threshold needed to amend a project plan without triggering a recalculation of the TIF from 35% to 25% of the project's cost.

Requires a third party review of the project from an expert who, as Karr said, "can't be in the developer's pocket."

Sara Rankin, executive director of the South Dakota Municipal League, said the proposal builds "thoughtful guardrails" around TIFs but still "keeps TIFs usable."

"If TIFs become overly rigid, overly burdensome or procedurally unworkable," Rankin said, "municipalities will be left without a viable mechanism to address redevelopment challenges."

*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.*

## Bill defining 'man' and 'woman' advances in South Dakota Legislature

Differing ideas about a person's sex and gender played out Friday at the South Dakota Capitol in Pierre as a legislative committee advanced a bill defining "man" and "woman."

The Republican speaker of the state House of Representatives, Jon Hansen, said he introduced the bill to answer a question he thinks has a simple answer: "What is a woman?"

"This legislation simply establishes clear, consistent definitions for terms like man, woman, male, female," Hansen said. "Definitions grounded in biological reality."

Lawmakers on the House State Affairs Committee voted 10-2 to advance the bill to the full House. In addition to serving on the committee and as speaker of the House, Hansen, of Dell Rapids, is one of four announced candidates for the Republican nomination for governor in the June primary election.

Under the definitions in the bill, "female" would be an individual who "naturally has, had, will have, or would have, but for a congenital anomaly or intentional or unintentional disruption, the reproductive system that produces, transports, and utilizes eggs for fertilization."

"Male" would be defined similarly, but for producing sperm. The bill defines "sex" as an individual's "biological sex, either male or female."

"These are not new or novel ideas," Hansen said. "The definitions in this bill reflect the biological reality that has existed since the beginning of humanity."

The bill defines women and men as adult, human females and males, and girls and boys as minor females and males.

The American Psychological Association and the World Health Organization define gender as being socially constructed, while sex is biological. Bill supporters, like Cindy Meyer of Hartford, see them as one and the same.

"I just believe that we are created man and woman, male and female," she said. "Just like the other animals that have been created male and female."

The committee's two Democratic members, Representatives Erin Healy of Sioux Falls and Eric Emery of Rosebud, cast the two no votes against the bill. Emery, a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, said the tribe's view of gender has long included language for people who do not fit into a man-woman binary. Those people are referred to as "two-spirited" today.

Matt Sharp, with Arizona-based Alliance Defending Freedom, said definitions tied to biology are necessary to protect the safety, fairness and equality of women and girls, particularly in intimate spaces and in sports. He said the bill accounts for "disorders of sex development" by treating anomalies as disruptions in development, not additional sexes.

Opponents focused on legal and administrative risk. They warned that imposing rigid definitions in the section of law governing terms used "throughout the code" would create complications that could lead to conflicts with civil rights law.

### Bill adjusting bathroom law also advances

Separately, what the sponsor called a "cleanup bill" in response to South Dakota's 2025 law prohibiting transgender people from using public restrooms or changing rooms aligned with their gender identity passed the committee 12-0.

Last year's bill was driven by supporters' concerns about privacy and safety in women's and girls' spaces and concerns about transgender women and girls accessing female-designated facilities.

The bill from Rep. David Kull, R-Brandon, would add targeted carveouts so spaces shared by firefighters, law enforcement personnel or theatrical performers of different sexes are not criminalized.

*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.*

## US Supreme Court rules against Trump's tariffs in 6-3 opinion, dealing blow to trade agenda

BY: JACOB FISCHLER AND ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court dealt a major blow to President Donald Trump's trade agenda Friday, ruling the tariffs he issued under the International Economic Emergency Powers Act are illegal.

In a 6-3 decision authored by Chief Justice John Roberts, the court said Congress alone holds the power to tax in almost all circumstances. The Trump administration's argument that trade deficits and illegal drug imports granted it emergency power to levy tariffs was not justified, the court said. Tariffs are taxes on imported goods.

The Trump administration had argued that a provision in the law, known as IEEPA, that said the executive branch could "regulate" imports empowered the president to levy tariffs.

"Based on two words separated by 16 others (in the law)—'regulate' and 'importation'—the President asserts the independent power to impose tariffs on imports from any country, of any product, at any rate, for any amount of time," Roberts wrote. "Those words cannot bear such weight."

Justices Sonia Sotomayor, Elena Kagan, Neil Gorsuch, Amy Coney Barrett and Ketanji Brown Jackson joined Roberts' opinion.

Justices Clarence Thomas and Brett Kavanaugh filed dissenting opinions. Thomas and Justice Samuel Alito joined Kavanaugh's.

Kavanaugh's dissent accepted the administration's reading of the law and said it was not the justices' role to decide a policy matter that has "generated vigorous" debate.

"The sole legal question here is whether, under IEEPA, tariffs are a means to 'regulate . . . importation,'" he wrote. "Statutory text, history, and precedent demonstrate that the answer is clearly yes: Like quotas and embargoes, tariffs are a traditional and common tool to regulate importation."

### New tariffs

Trump blasted the ruling at an afternoon press conference. Asked if he regretted nominating Gorsuch and Barrett, he said the decision was "an embarrassment to their families."

He said the judges were "being politically correct" and catering to special interests rather than fairly interpreting the law.

He also said he would impose global 10% tariffs under a provision of the Trade Act of 1974, which allows the president to unilaterally apply tariffs for up to 150 days.

"Today, I will sign an order to impose a 10% global tariff under Section 122 over and above our normal tariffs already being charged," he said.

Tariffs were an important tool to balance the country's trade and hold leverage over other countries, he said.

### 'Unchecked' presidential authority

In the opinion of the court, Roberts wrote that Trump's expansive use of the emergency tariff powers would upend the balance of powers between branches of government.

The administration's position would empower the president "to unilaterally impose unbounded tariffs," simply by declaring an economic emergency, Roberts wrote. Further, that declaration would be unreviewable and could be overturned only by a veto-proof majority in both houses of Congress.

That view "would replace the longstanding executive-legislative collaboration over trade policy with unchecked Presidential policymaking," he wrote.

When Congress intends to convey that kind of power to the executive branch, it generally does so in uncertain terms, Roberts said.

"In light of the breadth, history, and constitutional context of that asserted authority, he must identify clear congressional authorization to exercise it," he wrote.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 20 of 71

The government's argument that IEEPA authorized that power, "falls short," the opinion said. The chief justice added that it was telling that in the nearly 50 years since the IEEPA became law, no other president has read such broad powers into it.

## What to do about the taxes that were collected?

The ruling opens a new debate about how to handle tariff revenue that the government has already collected since Trump first imposed the IEEPA tariffs a year ago.

Kavanaugh noted the likely confusion the issue would cause.

"The Court says nothing today about whether, and if so how, the Government should go about returning the billions of dollars that it has collected from importers," he wrote. "But that process is likely to be a 'mess,' as was acknowledged at oral argument."

U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts Democrat and prominent economic liberal, said that revenue should be sent to small businesses that were harmed by the imposition of tariffs.

"Any refunds from the federal government should end up in the pockets of the millions of Americans and small businesses that were illegally cheated out of their hard-earned money by Donald Trump," she wrote in a statement.

Main Street Alliance, a national trade group representing small businesses, called for the revenue collected under the tariffs to be returned to small businesses.

"If the authority was unlawful, the collections were unlawful," Executive Director Richard Trent said in a statement. "Every penny taken from small businesses under this framework should be returned."

## Attention turns to Congress

With the court ruling that taxing power lies with Congress, efforts to codify the tariffs Trump had applied could become a priority for Republican lawmakers.

"No one can deny that the President's use of tariffs has brought in billions of dollars and created immense leverage for America's trade strategy and for securing strong, reciprocal America-first trade agreements with countries that had been taking advantage of American workers for decades," House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, wrote on social media. "Congress and the Administration will determine the best path forward in the coming weeks."

Adrian Smith, a Nebraska Republican who chairs the House Ways and Means Committee's subpanel on trade, said Congress should work with the president to legislate tariffs.

"Nebraska's farmers, ranchers, and manufacturers create world-leading products and deserve reliable access to global markets," he said. "I am committed to working with the administration to deliver long-term certainty through comprehensive and enforceable trade agreements. The President has made clear his intention to use every available tool to secure strong deals, but only Congress can ensure that these agreements provide lasting stability beyond any single administration."

Ohio Republican Sen. Bernie Moreno, though, said in a social media post that the ruling would severely hamper efforts to rebalance trade, and called for Congress to codify the tariffs.

"SCOTUS's outrageous ruling handcuffs our fight against unfair trade that has devastated American workers for decades," he wrote. "These tariffs protected jobs, revived manufacturing, and forced cheaters like China to pay up. Now globalists win, factories (sic) investments may reverse, and American workers lose again. This betrayal must be reversed and Republicans must get to work immediately on a reconciliation bill to codify the tariffs that had made our country the hottest country on earth!"

Democratic lawmakers praised the court's decision, while blasting the tariffs as a matter of policy.

"This is a win for the wallets of every American consumer," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said. "Trump's chaotic and illegal tariff tax made life more expensive and our economy more unstable. Families paid more. Small businesses and farmers got squeezed. Markets swung wildly. We've said from day one: a president cannot ignore Congress and unilaterally slap tariffs on Americans. That overreach failed."

Sen. Jeff Merkley, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Budget Committee, called the decision "a win

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 21 of 71

for farmers, small businesses, and hardworking, middle-class families across the country," he said in a statement.

"Trump's illegal and chaotic tariffs have harmed American consumers and businesses, leaving them to foot the bill for rising prices due to Trumpflation," the Oregon Democrat added. "While Trump continues his 'families lose, billionaires win' agenda, we're using every tool at our disposal to fight back against his reckless policies and build an economy where families thrive, and billionaires pay their fair share."

## Arguments were heard in November

The justices heard arguments in early November in what was the first major case of the second Trump term to move beyond the court's emergency docket and be heard on the merits of the case.

Small businesses and Democratic state attorneys general led the legal challenges against Trump's tariffs in the two separate cases, consolidated before the Supreme Court. They alleged Trump usurped taxing power, which belongs to Congress as outlined in Article I of the Constitution.

Victor Schwartz, founder and president of the family-owned, New York-based wine and spirits importer VOS Selections led the small business plaintiffs, which included a Utah-based plastics producer, a Virginia-based children's electricity learning kit maker, a Pennsylvania-based fishing gear company and a Vermont-based women's cycling apparel company.

State attorneys general who sued included those from Arizona, Colorado, Maine, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico and Oregon.

Two Illinois-based toy makers that primarily manufacture products in Asia filed a separate challenge.

For nearly three hours on Nov. 5, the justices dissected the language of IEEPA, a 1970s-era sanctions law that Trump invoked during the first year of his term in a series of emergency declarations and proclamations triggering import taxes on goods from nearly every country.

The high-profile case drew Cabinet officials to the court, including Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who sat shoulder-to-shoulder with Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer.

Members of Congress also attended. Among the crowded rows were U.S. House Ways and Means Chairman Jason Smith, R-Mo., Sen. Mike Lee, R-Utah, and Democratic Sens. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota and Ed Markey of Massachusetts.

## 'Liberation day'

Trump began imposing tariffs under IEEPA via executive order in February and March on products from China, Canada and Mexico, declaring the countries responsible for illegal fentanyl smuggled into the United States.

The president escalated the emergency tariffs April 2, which he dubbed "liberation day," when he declared trade imbalances a national emergency. In addition to a new baseline 10% global tariff, Trump announced hefty additional duties on products from countries that export more goods to the U.S. than they import from U.S. suppliers.

The White House calculations baffled economists, as the administration proposed steep duties on close trading partners — including 20% on products from the European Union, 25% on South Korea, 32% on Taiwan and 46% on Vietnam.

Inexplicably he also announced a 50% tariffs on goods from the landlocked, 11,000-square-mile African nation of Lesotho, and 10% on the Heard and McDonald Islands, only inhabited by penguins and seals.

Trump's announcement crashed markets, wiping trillions of dollars away in just a matter of days. He relented and delayed most of the tariffs, but escalated a trade war with China — shooting up the levy to 125%, and eventually to 145%.

The administration's trade war with China cooled a bit in May, but left the rate on some products at an effective 55%.

Trump maintains his tariffs have forced the hand of other governments to invest in the U.S. in exchange for lower tariffs. For example, Trump officials claimed victory in a framework deal with Japan that lowered duties on Japanese products to 15%, from 25%, with a promise from Japan to invest \$550 billion in the U.S.

As recently as late August, Trump imposed an extra 25% tariff on goods imported from India, bringing the total tariffs on Indian products to 50%, because of the country's usage of Russian oil.

In early August, Trump slapped a 40% tax on all Brazilian goods after he disagreed with the country's prosecution of its former right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro for plotting a coup to remain in power in 2022.

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## **Kristi Noem: 'ICE does not target, and will not target, Native Americans'**

**Homeland Security secretary denies claims that immigration personnel have detained tribal members**

**BY: AMELIA SCHAFER, ICT**

In a letter addressed to tribal leaders and citizens of federally recognized tribes, U.S. Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem denied claims of enrolled tribal citizens being detained by immigration officials and said to date, no ICE operations have occurred on tribal lands.

In Noem's letter obtained by ICT, she calls the claims of the detainment of enrolled citizens of federally recognized tribes "false," "misrepresenting facts and spreading misinformation." The letter was sent out to tribal leaders on Feb. 12.

"Let me be unequivocal, ICE's mission is singular and clear: to apprehend and remove individuals who are unlawfully present in the United States," Noem said in the letter. "ICE does not target, and will not target, Native Americans or any U.S. citizens based on appearance, ethnicity, or community affiliation. To date, there have not been any ICE operations in tribal lands."

ICT has collected accounts of several Native people being detained by ICE with documentation. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Red Lake Nation have both issued public notices saying tribal enrolled citizens were detained by immigration officials in Minneapolis. Standing Rock noted one tribal citizen's detainment, while Red Lake noted three detainments of enrolled citizens.

Peter Yazzie, a Navajo Nation citizen, was caught on video being detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents in Arizona on his way to work in mid-January. Yazzie told ABC15 that he was detained despite showing documentation of his Certificate of Indian Blood document, drivers license and birth certificate. The Navajo Nation confirmed the incident and responded on Jan. 16 by calling for increased communication and accountability from ICE.

"Federal agencies must ensure their agents are properly trained to recognize tribal identification and to respect the civil and constitutional rights of Native people," said Buu Nygren, President of the Navajo Nation in a statement then.

Just outside Minneapolis in January, Red Lake Nation descendant Jose Ramirez was detained by ICE. Ramirez's aunt recorded him on Facebook live being dragged out of her vehicle by agents. He was taken to the Bishop Henry Whipple Building for further processing and released 6 and a half hours later.

During historic immigration raids across the country, particularly in Minnesota, tribal leaders and Native people have voiced concerns regarding the detainment of tribal descendants and enrolled citizens.

The Red Lake Nation in Minnesota voted to pass a resolution restricting ICE from its lands in late January.

In South Dakota, several Oceti Sakowin (Lakota, Dakota, Nakota) tribes have recently banned ICE from their tribal lands in response to community members' fears. These same tribes banned Noem from their tribal lands in 2024 while she served as governor of South Dakota, in response to multiple derogatory statements made towards tribal leaders and families.

However, some tribes have entered into 287g contracts with the Homeland Security department allow-

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 23 of 71

ing for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials to delegate state and local law enforcement personnel the authority to perform specified immigration officer functions under ICE's direction.

"I've heard of tribes that do have cartel presences on their land because there's such large land bases and are welcoming those type agreements," J. Garrett Renville, chairman of the Coalition of Large Tribes and Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate, told ICT. "It's probably more controversial to even enter into those type of agreements, but essentially it does keep ICE activity away... and it delegates that authority to the local law enforcement to carry out."

Prior to the Noem's letter, Renville spoke with ICT about what he's been hearing from Coalition of Large Tribes members and Sisseton Wahpeton citizens. Coalition of Large Tribes is a membership group of the tribes with large landbases.

"Each tribal leader and tribal councils have their own way of approaching these type of things," he said. "I don't think there's a right or wrong way to go about it at this point because ultimately we're all still here. And so those are the types of things I think each individual tribe has to take into consideration on the type of actions that they want to take to keep their people safe. So I respect that."

As for the legality of banning ICE from tribal lands, Renville said his understanding is that ultimately if immigration officials have a signed, federal judicial warrant, they can come onto tribal lands to serve out that warrant.

"Sisseton, our interactions with our federal partners have been more along the lines of cooperation and acknowledgement," he said. "For instance, we had a federal warrant come down this past summer. So instead of the FBI coming to serve that warrant, they contacted our local law enforcement and we said we'll serve the warrant and we'll hand them over."

So Sisseton has that kind of interactions with our federal partners and even with our State."

In the Feb. 12 letter, Noem said when reviewing the Congressional Record from the Biden administration era, she found records of tribal leaders testifying to cartel and cartel affiliates operating on tribal lands and requests by leaders for government assistance in cartel removal.

"I was disappointed when some of those same leaders took tribal council action to ban ICE from your reservations, making false claims that tribal members have been detained by ICE, misrepresenting facts and spreading misinformation," she stated in the Feb. 12 letter. "Please don't turn away the very help you asked for from your testimony to different Congressional Committees just a few years ago."

Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out was unavailable for a comment on the letter. The letter was sent to the tribe's lawyers.

Tribes in the southwestern United States and California have noted cartel presence, as discussed during a June 2023 House Committee on Natural Resources hearing regarding cartel impacts on tribal land.

During a June 4, 2023 testimony, John Nores, a retired game warden Lieutenant of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, noted cartel presence or impact on Northern California's Hoopa Valley and Yurok tribes.

"Given an estimated hundreds of thousands of cartel operatives that have infiltrated reservations across the American West, and the extremely limited number of tribal enforcement personnel responsible for covering massive territories, tribal police forces cannot effectively combat this problem alone," Nores said.

Noem continued, saying under President Donald Trump, immigration control seeks to do what the last administration "failed to do," which she said is a lack of law enforcement and removal of violent undocumented immigrants.

"My senior advisor on Indian affairs and Intergovernmental Affairs teams is always available to take your call and answer your questions," she said before ending the letter. "I look forward to your continued partnership."

David Flute, Sisseton Wahpeton Dakota, is the Department of Homeland Security's senior advisor on Indian affairs. Flute previously served as Noem's secretary of tribal relations in South Dakota while governor of the state.

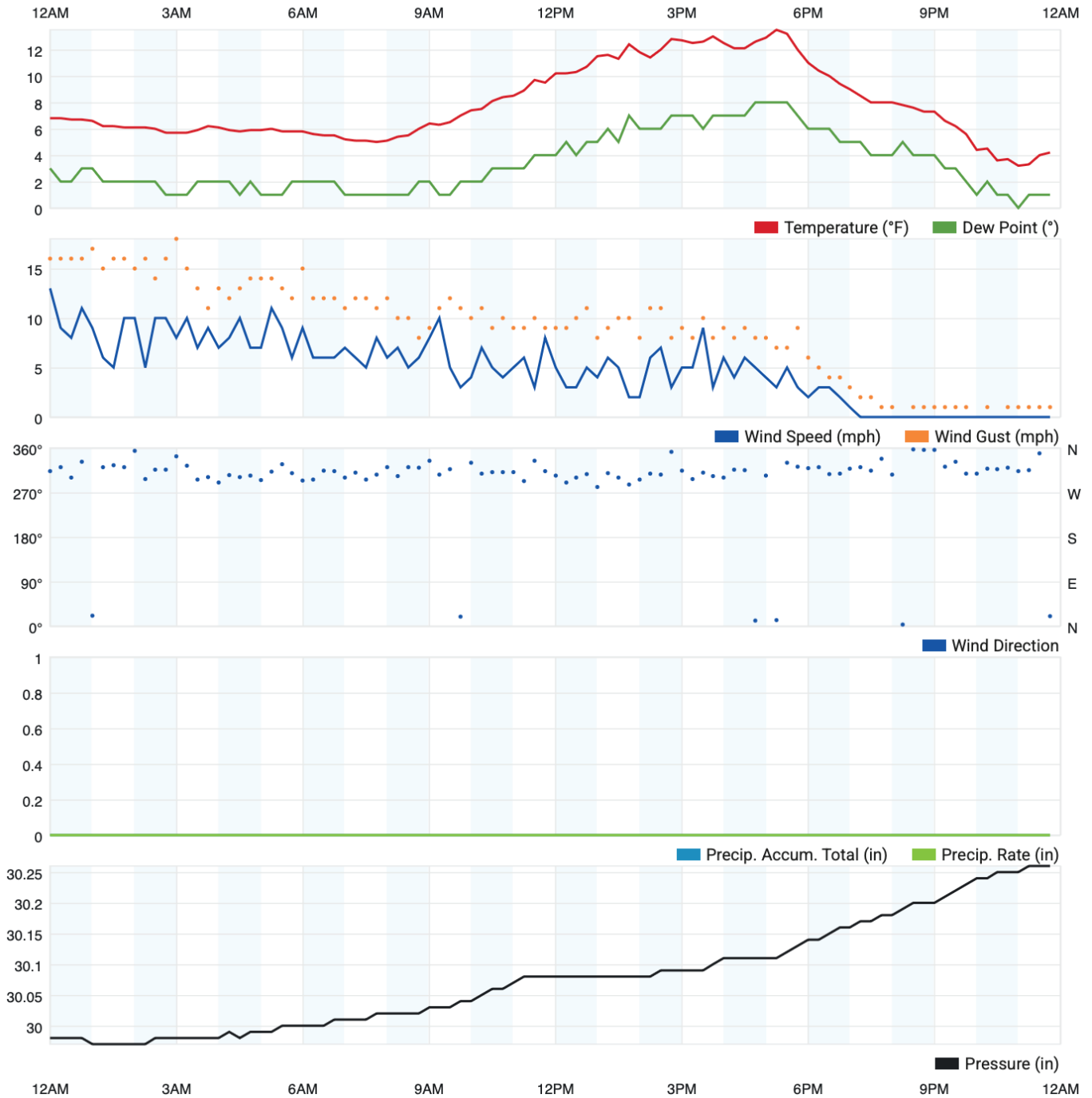
*Amelia Schafer is the Indigenous Affairs reporter for ICT and is based in Rapid City. She is of Wampanoag and Montauk-Brothertown Indian Nation descent.*

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 24 of 71

## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

February 20, 2026



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 25 of 71

Today

Tonight

Sunday

Sunday Night

Monday



High: 19 °F

Mostly Sunny



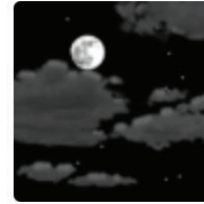
Low: 0 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 15 °F

Mostly Sunny



Low: -5 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 28 °F

Sunny

Weekend Outlook

Today  
  
High: 14 to 30°F  
(Warmest-Central SD)

Tonight  
  
Low: -4 to 8°F

Sunday  
  
High: 10 to 28°F

[weather.gov/abr](http://weather.gov/abr)

Dry and below normal temperatures look to be the general themes in the forecast for the weekend. Today's high temps will end up being about 10-15 degrees below. Sunday's high will be more like 15-20 degrees below normal. Areas that have snow cover will continue to play a role in keeping temperatures cooler than surrounding areas the next few days.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 26 of 71

## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 14 °F at 5:16 PM

Low Temp: 3 °F at 10:59 PM

Wind: 18 mph at 2:52 AM

Precip: 0.00

## Today's Info

Record High: 64 in 2017

Record Low: -30 in 1918

Average High: 31

Average Low: 9

Average Precip in Feb.: 0.44

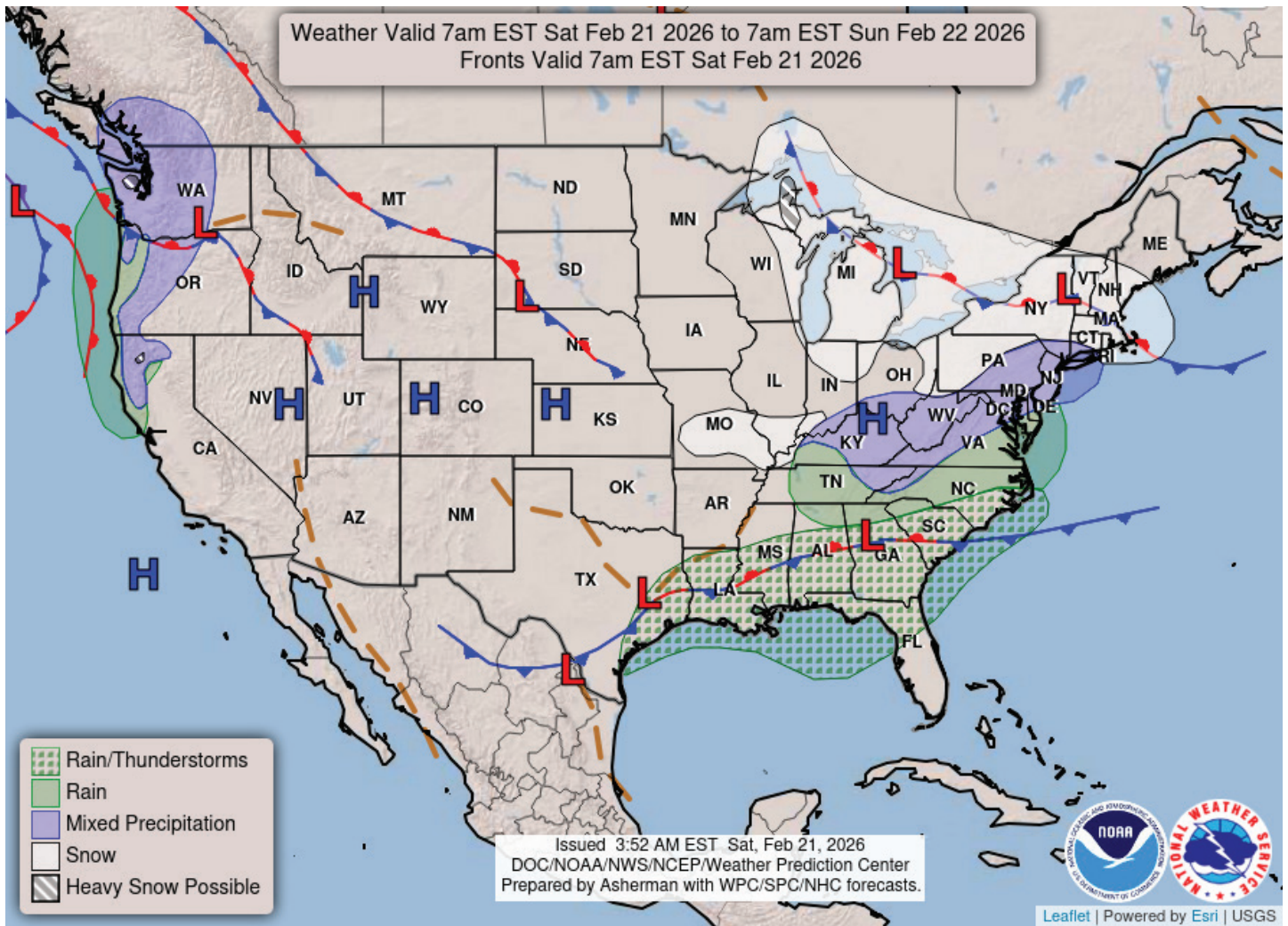
Precip to date in Feb.: 0.96

Average Precip to date: 0.99

Precip Year to Date: 0.96

Sunset Tonight: 6:07 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:22 am



# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 27 of 71

## Today in Weather History

February 21, 1918: Due to Chinook winds, a warm-up of 83 degrees in just 12 hours occurred in Granville, North Dakota. The temperature soared from an early morning low of 33 degrees below zero to an afternoon temperature of 50.

February 21, 1969: Heavy snow and winds of 15 to 25 mph caused blowing and drifting snow, which closed many roads. Snowfall amounts of 5 to 12 inches were typical across eastern South Dakota from the 20th to the 22nd. Some snowfall amounts included 5 inches at Clear Lake and Brookings, 6 inches at Wilmot, 7 inches at Milbank, Redfield, and Mitchell, 8 inches at Conde, and 9 inches at Webster, Sioux Falls, and Huron.

1935: Frequent dust storms occurred in eastern Colorado during the month, forcing schools to close and people to stay indoors. A fatality happened on this date when two section cars collided on the railroad near Arriba Colorado due to poor visibility.

1971: A tornado outbreak struck portions of the Lower Mississippi River Valley and the Southeastern United States on February 21–22nd. The two-day tornado outbreak produced at least 19 tornadoes, probably several more, primarily brief events in rural areas, and killed 123 people across three states. The tornadoes “virtually leveled” entire communities in the state of Mississippi.

In Mississippi, the storms killed 107 people, injured 1,060, and hospitalized 454 others. On March 23, 1971, the Mississippi Civil Defense Council estimated 17 million dollars in property damages. In addition, 131,308 individuals received disaster service from the Salvation Army in nine areas. As of 1971, in terms of fatalities, the outbreak produced the fourth-highest number of deaths in Mississippi from tornadoes on one day. The top five tornado events include 317 deaths on May 7, 1840, in Natchez, 216 deaths on April 5, 1936, in Tupelo, 160 deaths on April 20, 1920, in the northeast and east-central Mississippi, 107 deaths from the Mississippi Delta outbreak on February 21, 1971, and 100 deaths on April 24, 1908, in Lamar to Wayne Counties.

Aerial surveys showed that most storm reports from various sources fit into three main tracks. The surveys also found three principal tornadoes contributed to over 300 miles of tornado track, varying in width from 1/4 miles to more than 1/2 mile. One track extended 159 miles as a continuous storm, beginning southwest of Cary, passing west of Belzoni, Greenwood, and Oxford, with the tornado lifting near Abbeville. After passing over Abbeville, the tornado redeveloped to the southwest of Bethlehem in Marshall County and continued northeast to Selmer, Tennessee. Another tornado first developed near Delhi, Louisiana, and continued 102 miles to near Schlater, Mississippi. The tornado struck the towns of Delta City, Inverness, and Moorhead. A third major storm began south-southwest of Bovina, passed through Little Yazoo, and ended near Lexington for a path length of 69 miles. Although much shorter, about eight miles, a fourth track extended from north of Drew to near Rome.

The three significant tornadoes traveled at speeds of 50 to 60 mph. The speed was determined from a selected set of more reliable checks at various locations. All the death occurred along these three tornado tracks. Between 11:56 am and 9:00 pm, the Jackson, Mississippi River radar showed hook echoes in 28 observations. Some of the hooks were as far away as 90 miles. At one time, as many as four hook echoes were observed on the radar.

The Mississippi State Department of Education indicates more than \$1.2 million in damages to schools and their contents. At nine canteen sites established by the Salvation Army, there were 94,337 food servings through March 8, 1971. The Mississippi Power and Light Company reported its most significant wind damage in company history. A total of 68 115,000 volt transmission line structures were downed at 14 different locations, with damage that exceeded \$290,000, with about 50 percent in Humphrey County and 40 percent in Sharkey County. The South Central Bell Telephone Company's losses exceeded \$300,000. They lost 4,600 telephones, 3,250 long-distance circuits were affected, and 205 telephone poles were destroyed. Ten exchanges were on emergency power. The American Telephone and Telegraph Long Lines department lost its microwave tower adjacent to Bentonia, and 1,800 circuits were affected.

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 28 of 71**

At Inverness, at about 4:40 pm, a powerful tornado destroyed 90 percent of the small business district, and 75 percent of the homes were damaged. The storm caused 21 fatalities. Officials noted 153 homes destroyed, 52 had major damage, and 90 received minor damage. The businesses destroyed or damaged in Inverness totaled 61, and farm buildings destroyed was 30. In and near Inverness reports that some people sought shelter from the oncoming tornado by getting in bathtubs, curling up in mattresses, and crawling into haystacks. The tornado was reported to have struck for about 2 minutes, and all electrical powerlines, telephone, and water lines were destroyed. A man who resides on the north edge of Inverness told the newspaper, "At first, just before the storm, it was very quiet and calm...Then I heard (the tornado) for about 3 minutes before I saw it. It was a big funnel cloud..." The Indianola newspaper noted that along the path of the tornado, there was "lots of debris, that is visible on cropland, especially warped tin and larger pieces of lumber."

A tornado struck south-southwest of Bovina at about 5:06 pm and, during a 3-mile track, killed a man and his wife. A man to the south of Bovina "went out on the porch and looked down the road and saw the storm coming.: It was a "half mile down the road." There was "an unnatural calm" just ahead of the storm. "We could hear it coming through and could see lumber and debris flying in the air. It was yellow in the center."

A tornado struck Holmes County at about 6:10 pm. The Lexington newspaper noted, "A tornado touch down in the southwest corner of Holmes County in the Bronzville community. The damage in the Brozville area was not extremely heavy but caused extensive damage to barns, chicken houses, sheds, and a few homes." The tornado apparently lifted afterward and rose above Lexington as the storm continued to the northeast.

Another tornado crossed Yalobusha County from 5:53 pm to 6:23 pm. The cooperative weather observer at Water Valley wrote, "The damaged area, Cascilla (Tallahatchie County) to Tillatoba (Yalobusha County) was about 200 yards wide, but as it moved across Yalobusha County, it began to narrow and tip along, just bumping here and there." As the tornado crossed Highway 315, four miles northeast at the north end of the Yacona River bridge, it was no more than 150 feet wide. The timbered Yacona River bottom areas had roofing material, wallpaper, and insulation from least as far away as Tillatoba. The winds carried many items for some distances. A report was received that checks and/or portions of checks from the Bank of Anguilla, Sharkey County, were found in Panola County, around 140 miles away.

2013: An astonishing 515 cm (202.8" or almost 17') level of snow depth was measured at Sukayu Onsen, Aomori on Honshu Island in Japan, on February 21, 2013, the deepest snow measured at an official weather site in Japan records.



Daily Devotion

## The Truth About the Trinity

**There is one God consisting of three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

Galatians 4:4-6: 4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,  
5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.  
6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ``Abba! Father!''

The word Trinity is not found in the Bible, but the truth of it is. While there's only one God, the Godhead consists of three distinct persons—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All are equally omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, eternal, and unchanging, but each is unique in function.

Scripture not only shows how each member of the Trinity fulfills a specific role but also reveals how those three roles interrelate and work harmoniously to make salvation and sanctification possible.

Having designed the way mankind would be redeemed, the Father set into motion events and prophecies that culminated in the life and death of a Savior. The Son carried out the plan, following His Father's instructions to come to earth and die for our sins (John 6:37-38). The Holy Spirit sees to it that all people are exposed to evidence of God (Romans 1:19-20) so they can feel a call toward His saving grace (John 16:8). And He transforms the lives of those who receive Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal in their divine attributes. Yet each has a different responsibility when it comes to humanity's greatest need. Take a moment today to thank each member of the Trinity for the many blessings you've received.

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

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 30 of 71

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# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 31 of 71



## WINNING NUMBERS

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.20.26

15 40 48 58 63 2

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$438,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.18.26

6 14 19 25 44 6

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$15,800,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 34 Mins 2  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.20.26

10 24 30 36 42 11

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$7,000/week**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 49 Mins 2  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.18.26

2 8 10 24 27

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 49 Mins 2  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.18.26

6 13 14 16 47 26

TOP PRIZE:  
**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 18 Mins 2  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:  
02.18.26

9 33 52 64 66 1

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:  
**\$190,000,000**

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 18 Mins 2  
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 32 of 71

## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### **GIRLS PREP BASKETBALL**

Aberdeen Central 51, Brookings 40  
Bon Homme 48, Gregory 45  
Brandon Valley 56, Spearfish 21  
Dakota Valley 65, Madison 30  
Dell Rapids St Mary's 57, Baltic 27  
Groton 60, Britton-Hecla 28  
Harrisburg 56, Douglas 19  
Huron 50, Watertown 38  
Lemmon High School 65, McIntosh High School 37  
Little Wound 53, Stanley County 52  
Marty 60, Flandreau Indian 44  
Mitchell 60, T F Riggs High School 35  
Mobridge-Pollock 67, Winner 51  
Newell 53, Faith 46  
North Central 50, Sunshine Bible Academy 24  
Northwestern 52, Waverly-South Shore 27  
Oelrichs 69, Tiospaye Topa 42  
Parker/Marion 58, Chamberlain 41  
Philip 48, White River 39  
Rapid City Stevens 68, Rapid City Christian 62  
Redfield 44, Tiospa Zina 21  
Sioux Falls Washington 69, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 43  
St Thomas More 51, Hot Springs 10  
St. Francis Indian 62, Crow Creek Tribal School 34  
Todd County 57, Lower Brule 12  
Wagner 58, Platte-Geddes 30  
Wall 60, Belle Fourche 31  
Warner 52, Leola-Frederick High School 33  
Wessington Springs 54, James Valley Christian School 27  
Yankton 59, Tea 46

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

### **BOYS PREP BASKETBALL**

Aberdeen Central 47, Brookings 44  
Baltic 63, Dell Rapids St Mary's 38  
Bennett County 66, Jones County 55  
Brandon Valley 50, Spearfish 46  
Castlewood 60, Estelline-Hendricks 46  
Dakota Valley 55, Madison 48  
De Smet 65, Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 21  
Dupree 77, Harding County 60  
Emery 75, Mitchell Christian 43  
Faith 66, Wakpala 48  
Flandreau 59, Elkton-Lake Benton 49

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 33 of 71

Gettysburg 67, Highmore-Harrold 57  
Gregory 53, Bon Homme 50  
Groton 67, Britton-Hecla 27  
Harrisburg 71, Douglas 39  
Howard 67, Arlington 49  
Huron 61, Watertown 56  
Lennox 64, Dell Rapids 47  
Leola-Frederick High School 43, Warner 37  
Lyman 56, Kadoka 51  
Marty 83, Flandreau Indian 78  
McCook Central-Montrose 50, Elk Point-Jefferson 34  
Mobridge-Pollock 40, Winner 31  
North Central 61, Sunshine Bible Academy 40  
Northwestern 74, Waverly-South Shore 60  
Parker/Marion 70, Chamberlain 69  
Redfield 63, Tiospa Zina 60  
Sioux Falls Lincoln 51, Sioux Falls Jefferson 48  
Sioux Falls Washington 69, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 44  
St. Francis Indian 65, Crow Creek Tribal School 54  
T F Riggs High School 51, Mitchell 48, 2OT  
Vermillion 69, Ponca, Neb. 51  
Wagner 79, Platte-Geddes 66  
Wall 72, Belle Fourche 39  
Waubay/Summit 64, Sioux Falls Lutheran 57  
Wessington Springs 76, James Valley Christian School 60  
White River 66, New Underwood 63  
Yankton 51, Tea 38

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

## The British royal family faces its worst crisis in generations

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — King Charles III's brother was under arrest. Police were searching two royal properties, and news commentators were endlessly discussing the details of a sex scandal with tentacles that stretched to the gates of Buckingham Palace.

So how did Britain's royal family spend Thursday afternoon? The king sat in the front row on the first day of London Fashion Week. Queen Camilla attended a lunchtime concert, and Princess Anne visited a prison.

The decision to continue normal royal duties was more than just an example of British stoicism in the face of the monarchy's biggest crisis in almost a century. It was the opening act of the House of Windsor's fight for survival as the arrest of the former Prince Andrew threatens to undermine public backing for the monarchy.

After pledging to support the police investigation into his brother's friendship with the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, the king stressed his intentions.

"My family and I will continue in our duty and service to you all," he said in a statement signed "Charles R.," using the abbreviation for Rex, the Latin word for king.

Biggest crisis since 1936 abdication

The simple fact that Charles made the statement showed the scale of the problem created by the arrest of the king's 66-year-old sibling, now known as Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, who was held for 11 hours and then released under investigation, meaning he was neither charged nor exonerated.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 34 of 71

The event was so unprecedented that commentators had to reach back to the 1640s and the arrest and execution of King Charles I during the English Civil War to find a parallel.

Mountbatten-Windsor's arrest on suspicion of misconduct in public office is shaping up to be the monarchy's biggest crisis since Edward VIII abdicated in 1936 to marry an American divorcee, Wallis Simpson.

That scandal weakened public support for the monarchy, which did not fully recover for 15 years. The turnaround came only after Edward's successor, King George VI, refused to flee Britain during World War II, demonstrating his solidarity with a nation ravaged by Nazi bombs.

Even before she ascended the throne, Queen Elizabeth II followed her father's lead and publicly pledged her life in service to Britain.

But while the impact of Edward's abdication lingered for years, the crisis reached a crescendo in a few days. And the solution in that case was relatively simple: Edward stepped aside, and his oldest brother took his place.

By contrast, the drama surrounding Mountbatten-Windsor is ongoing, with no end in sight.

No 'clear route forward'

The current crisis stems from revelations about the relationship between the former prince and Epstein that were uncovered when the U.S. Justice Department released millions of pages of documents last month from its investigation into Epstein.

Police have previously cited reports that Mountbatten-Windsor sent trade information to Epstein, a wealthy investor, in 2010, when the former prince was Britain's special envoy for international trade.

At least eight U.K. police forces have said they are looking into issues raised by the documents.

Compared with previous royal scandals, "this time there doesn't seem to be any clear route forward," said Ed Owens, author of "After Elizabeth: Can the Monarchy Save Itself?" "There's no blueprint to follow" in terms of how the monarchy and associated organizations deal with the allegations.

The last time the monarchy had to manage these kinds of questions was after the death of Princess Diana, Charles' ex-wife. Elizabeth and Charles were criticized for failing to respond to the outpouring of public grief as tens of thousands of people swarmed to Kensington Gardens to lay flowers outside the late princess' home. Some even called for Charles to step aside as heir to the throne in favor of his son William.

The queen later commissioned focus groups to better understand the public mood and determine why people felt so strongly about a person they never met. The crisis forced the royals to recognize that Diana's common touch had connected with people in ways that had not yet occurred to the House of Windsor.

Those lessons have since inspired other royals, including Diana's sons, Princes William and Harry, to be more informal and approachable.

But this moment is different, in part because it is taking place in a rapidly changing media environment at a time when people are demanding transparency from their leaders.

Family could face uncomfortable questions

Moving forward also means facing uncomfortable questions about what the institution — and the family members themselves — may have known about Mountbatten-Windsor's activities. The palace has sought to draw a bold line separating the former prince and the rest of the monarchy by stripping him of his titles, including the right to be called a prince.

In another blow for the former prince, the British government is considering formally removing him from the line of succession to the crown. Despite losing his status and his honors, Andrew remains eighth in line to the throne. That can only be changed with legislation.

Charles is the first monarch "that has to meet our expectations of figures in public life, which is to be accountable and to explain yourself," said Craig Prescott, a royal expert at Royal Holloway, University of London. "And you always have to work to earn the support of the public. And that is a particular challenge when you're facing a controversy such as Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor."

Critics argue that the monarchy was slow to respond to the pressure, given that Mountbatten-Windsor's links to Epstein have been discussed for more than a decade.

The best outcome for the monarchy is for the police investigation to focus solely on the information in

the Epstein files and how that relates to Mountbatten-Windsor, said Peter Hunt, a former BBC royal correspondent. The worst outcome would be if police expand their inquiries to what the broader institution might have known and when.

"Were questions raised about his behavior as a trade envoy over those 10 years? Were they answered? What did people do about them?" Hunt said on the BBC.

And perhaps there's more to learn.

"Will there be files?" he asked.

## In war-weary Kyiv, wounded Ukrainian veterans turn epic poetry into living testimony

By ILLIA NOVIKOV Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Sitting in a circle the day before opening night, Ukrainian war veterans and drama students took turns reading their lines from a script that traveled centuries to reach them.

At the center was Olha Semioshkina, directing the group through her adaptation of "Eneida" by Ivan Kotliarevskiy — an 18th-century Ukrainian reimagining of Virgil's "Aeneid." This production, though, had a modern-day message about resilience in the face of the war that's nearing its fourth year since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The actors — men and women in their 20s to 60s — included Ukrainian military veterans who had returned from the front with amputations, severe burns and sight loss. Others had endured war on the homefront. Many had never set foot on a stage before this play.

The production was created by Theater of Veterans, an organization founded by members of Ukraine's Territorial Defense Forces that provides theatrical training and stage opportunities for former service members as part of their reintegration and recovery.

It took more than a year to prepare for Thursday's premiere at Kyiv's National Academic Molodyy Theatre.

"We knew the guys had just come back from rehabilitation, and we had to start from the very beginning," Semioshkina said.

"We spent about four months simply learning to communicate, to fall, to group, to roll, to get together," she said. "Then we began developing the body, taking off prosthetics and learning to exist without them."

The 51-year-old director's concept was simple: "Every man on stage is Aeneas. Every woman on stage is Dido."

In Virgil's epic, Aeneas wanders after the fall of Troy, searching for a new homeland. In Kotliarevskiy's satirical adaptation, the Trojan hero becomes a Cossack, rowdy and earthy.

On Kyiv's stage, Aeneas wears prosthetic limbs and bears scars from the war that began with Russia's Feb. 24, 2022, invasion of Ukraine.

"Aeneas is a hero who goes through a lot in search for his land," Semioshkina said. "He preserves humor, passion, he falls, he goes through horrors, drinks and parties. But he is a human, and he has a goal — to find his place and preserve his family."

She draws parallels between the veterans who endured combat and the character they play on stage. "Aeneas is the one who went to war. Yes, he returned mutilated, broken," she said, but the actors bringing this adaptation to life "are learning to live" again.

Where myth and reality converge

During rehearsal, Yehor Babenko, a veteran of Ukraine's Border Service who suffered severe burns early in the Russian invasion, delivered a line with a grin: "Feeling burned out at work? We have a lot in common."

Later in the play, his monologue also hit close to home as he spoke about fire taking his hands, ears and nose. "I won't be able to show children a trick with a missing finger," he says. "Maybe the one when all 10 fingers disappear."

The opportunity to perform onstage, Babenko said, has been a healing journey.

"For me, theater is both psychological and physical rehabilitation. I've noticed I feel my body better, feel more confident in public, express my thoughts better."

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 36 of 71

For Babenko, the story of Aeneas resonates beyond the stage. "It's about searching for your land," he said. "And for our country, that's very relevant now."

Breaking character to tell their own stories

The play's final act departed from epic poetry altogether as the actors stepped forward to tell their own stories — about combat injuries, lost brothers in arms, displacement and life under occupation.

One veteran described losing his leg in a drone strike and using a machine gun as a crutch to reach cover. A female actor recounted living under Russian occupation with her two daughters.

Another, who volunteered as a medic, first in 2014, when Russia illegally annexed Crimea and pro-Russian forces captured parts of Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions, and again after the 2022 Russian invasion, spoke of returning to war in her 60s.

Andrii Onopriienko, who lost his sight in a Russian artillery strike near Avdiivka, in the Donetsk region, in 2023, narrated much of the performance in a deep, resonant voice. At one point he sang: "Let our enemies dig up holes, install crosses, and lie down on their own," as the rest of the cast joined in.

Onopriienko initially refused to join the project. "I didn't understand what I would do on stage blind," he said. He later was persuaded that there would be a role for him.

"It's positivity, laughter, support," he said of rehearsals. "No matter what mood you come in, you leave with a big smile; Here you distract yourself from the present. You enter another world."

Despite war, the show must go on

Onstage, prosthetic legs and arms were removed and put back on as part of the play's visual language. Long metal rods doubled as swords, oars and crutches — used as both an artistic instrument and a tool to help actors with amputations keep balance.

The war intruded even before the curtain rose on Thursday. An announcement asked the audience to follow the usual theater protocol and silence their phones — then warned that in case of an air raid, they should head to the basement shelter. If a blackout occurred, it added, the show would pause for the backup power generators to be turned on.

As Babenko delivered his monologue minutes before the performance ended, the power did go out.

Semioshkina stepped onto the stage with a flashlight, followed by others holding flashlights. Babenko delivered his lines in the beam of the improvised spotlight. The audience, some quietly weeping, some laughing through tears, stayed.

When the last monologue ended and the curtain fell and rose again, the cast was met with a standing ovation. As they bowed a second time, the electricity returned, and the applause swelled.

For Semioshkina, the message of veterans on stage extends beyond epic poetry and the theater walls.

"I would like to send a message to all veterans who are sitting at home: Come out," she said. "Come out. You can do something. Live. Don't close yourself off. Live every single minute."

## Macron orders review of violent activist groups after fatal beating of far-right activist

By NICOLAS VAUX-MONTAGNY Associated Press

LYON, France (AP) — French President Emmanuel Macron will hold meetings next week to review violent activist groups, after a far-right student died from a beating in Lyon in an incident that highlighted a climate of deep political tensions ahead of next year's presidential vote.

Speaking at the Paris agriculture fair, Macron called on "everyone to remain calm" ahead of Saturday's tributes organized by far-right groups to Quentin Deranque, a 23-year-old who died of brain injuries in a hospital last week. The demonstrations will take place under heavy police scrutiny.

"This is a moment of remembrance and respect for this young compatriot who was killed, for his family and loved ones. That must come first. And then it is a moment of firmness and responsibility," Macron said.

Seven people have been handed preliminary charges. The Lyon public prosecutor's office requested that each of them be charged with intentional homicide, aggravated violence and criminal conspiracy. Six

of the accused were charged on all three counts. The seventh was charged with complicity in intentional homicide, aggravated violence and criminal conspiracy.

Deranque was attacked during a fight that erupted between far-left and far-right supporters on the margins of a student meeting where a far-left lawmaker, Rima Hassan, was a keynote speaker.

Macron said he will hold a meeting with ministers to carry out a comprehensive review of all violent activist groups that have links to political parties. He hinted that some groups could be dismantled.

"In the Republic, no violence is legitimate," he said. "There is no place for militias, wherever they come from. We must be absolutely uncompromising."

The main tribute to Deranque was scheduled later Saturday in Lyon, where clashes between far-right activists and far-left groups have become frequent. Lyon's far-left-leaning militant groups are more recent and were created in reaction to the many far-right groups that have been present for several decades. The city is seen by intelligence services as the cradle of far-right activism in France.

Deranque's parents have also called for calm and won't take part in the tribute, which has not been banned by French authorities.

Deranque's death triggered a storm of recriminations, mostly blaming France Unbowed and its leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon. Among the suspects is the parliamentary aide of a France Unbowed lawmaker, Raphaël Arnault, who set up the anti-fascist group The Young Guard.

France Unbowed's opponents accuse it of fomenting violence and tensions with its combative far-left politics. Mélenchon has condemned the violence and insisted that his party bore no blame for the tragedy.

Mélenchon stood for the presidency in 2012, 2017 and 2022, and failed to advance to the decisive runoff round. He is preparing for another expected run next year, when Macron's second and last term ends.

France is holding municipal elections next month and right-wing political forces have been using the incident to demonize France Unbowed. Far-right National Rally leader Jordan Bardella has called for a common front against Mélenchon's party while criticism also came from prominent figures on the left.

## Utah's Supreme Court rejects appeal to overturn congressional map with Democratic-leaning district

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Utah's Supreme Court rejected on Friday an appeal by Republican lawmakers and left in place a congressional map that gives Democrats a high chance of picking up one of the state's four Republican-held U.S. House seats in the fall.

In the order signed by Chief Justice Matthew B. Durrant, the court explained that they do not have "jurisdiction over Legislative Defendants' appeal."

The lawmakers had appealed a decision in November in which a Utah judge adopted a congressional map creating a Democratic-leaning district over one poised to protect all four of the state's U.S. House seats held by Republicans.

The map keeps Salt Lake County almost entirely within one district, instead of dividing the heavily Democratic population center among all four districts, as was previously the case.

Republicans have argued the court does not have legal authority to enact a map that wasn't approved by the Legislature.

Utah's Republican Senate President Stuart Adams pushed back on the ruling, saying the "chaos continues."

"We will keep defending a process that respects the Constitution and ensures Utah voters across our state have their voices respected," he said in a statement.

Katharine Biele, president of the League of Women Voters of Utah, one of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, applauded the ruling.

"We are encouraged that the court dismissed this improper appeal and allowed the process to move forward without disruption to voters or election administrators," she said in a statement.

The redistricting stems from an August decision in which Judge Dianna Gibson struck down the Utah congressional map adopted after the 2020 census because the Legislature had circumvented anti-gerrymandering standards passed by voters.

The ruling pushed the state into a national redistricting battle as President Donald Trump urged Republican-led states to take up mid-decade redistricting to try to help the GOP retain control of the House in 2026.

The approved map gives Democrats a much stronger chance to flip a seat in a state that last had a Democrat in Congress in early 2021.

Emma Petty Addams, co-executive director of Mormon Women for Ethical Government, another plaintiff in the lawsuit, said in a statement Friday that "the courts have provided an important check on the Legislature, affirming the people's constitutional right to alter and reform their government."

The ruling comes weeks before the deadline to file for reelection.

There is another appeal pending in federal court that was spearheaded by two of the state's Republican members of Congress. The lawsuit filed in February argues the state judge violated the U.S. Constitution by rejecting the congressional districts drawn by the Republican-led state Legislature.

## Murky outlook for businesses after tariff ruling prompts countermoves by Trump

By MAE ANDERSON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Businesses face a new wave of uncertainty after the Supreme Court struck down tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump under an emergency powers law and Trump vowed to work around the ruling to keep his tariffs in place.

The Trump administration says its tariffs help boost American manufacturers and reduce the trade gap. But many U.S. businesses have had to raise prices and adjust in other ways to offset higher costs spurred by the tariffs.

It remains to be seen how much relief businesses and consumers will actually get from Friday's ruling. Within hours of the court's decision, Trump pledged to use a different law to impose a 10% tariff on all imports that would last 150 days, and to explore other ways to impose additional tariffs on countries he says engage in unfair trade practices.

"Any boost to the economy from lowering tariffs in the near-term is likely to be partly offset by a prolonged period of uncertainty," said Michael Pearce, an economist at Oxford Economics. "With the administration likely to rebuild tariffs through other, more durable, means, the overall tariffs rate may yet end up settling close to current levels."

Efforts to claw back the estimated \$133 billion to \$175 billion of previously collected tariffs now deemed illegal are bound to be complicated, and will likely favor larger companies with more resources. Consumers hoping for a refund are unlikely to be compensated.

The fight against tariffs continues

With Trump's unyielding position on tariffs, many business are braced for years of court battles.

Basic Fun, a Florida-based maker of toys such as Lincoln Logs and Tonka trucks, last week joined a slew of other businesses in a lawsuit seeking to claw back tariffs paid to the government.

While company CEO Jay Foreman is concerned about any new tariffs Trump may impose, he doesn't think they will affect toys. Still, he said, "I do worry about some type of perpetual fight over this, at least for the next three years."

The new 10% tariff Trump announced Friday immediately raised questions for Daniel Posner, the owner of Grapes The Wine Co., in White Plains, New York. Since wine shipments take about two weeks to cross the Atlantic, he wonders if a shipment arriving Monday will be affected.

"We're reactive to what's become a very unstable situation," Posner said.

Ron Kurnik owns Superior Coffee Roasting Co. in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, across the border from Canada. In addition to U.S. tariffs, Kurnik faced retaliatory tariffs from Canada for much of last year when he exported his coffee.

"It's like a nightmare we just want to wake up from," said Kurnik, whose company has raised prices by 6% twice since the tariffs went into effect. While he's pleased with the Supreme Court's ruling, he doesn't think he will ever see a refund.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 39 of 71

## Industries pine for more stability

A wide array of industries, including retail, tech and the agricultural sector, used the Supreme Court ruling as an opportunity to remind Trump of how his trade policies have affected their businesses.

The Business Roundtable, a group that lobbies on behalf of more than 200 U.S. companies, released a statement encouraging the administration to limit the focus of tariffs going forward to specific unfair trade practices and national security concerns.

In the retail industry, stores of all stripes have embraced different ways to offset the effects of tariffs — from absorbing some of the costs themselves, to cutting expenses and diversifying their supply network. Still, they have had to pass on some price increases at a time when shoppers have been particularly sensitive to inflationary pressures.

Dave French, executive vice president of government relations for The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail industry trade group, said he hoped lower courts would ensure "a seamless process" to refund tariffs. That issue wasn't addressed in Friday's ruling.

For the technology sector, Trump's tariffs caused major headaches. Many of its products are either built overseas or depend on imports of key components. The Computer & Communications Industry Association, which represents a spectrum of technology companies employing more than 1.6 million people, expressed hope that the decision will ease the trade tensions.

"With this decision behind us, we look forward to bringing more stability to trade policy," said Jonathan McHale, the association's vice president for digital trade.

Farmers, who have been stung by higher prices for equipment and fertilizer since the tariffs went into effect, and reduced demand for their exports, also spoke out.

"We strongly encourage the president to avoid using any other available authorities to impose tariffs on agricultural inputs that would further increase costs," said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall.

## Industries that aren't feeling any relief

The Supreme Court ruled 6-3 that the International Emergency Economic Powers Act did not give the president authority to tax imports, a power that belongs to Congress. But the decision only affects tariffs imposed under that law, so some industries will see no relief at all.

The decision leaves in effect tariffs on steel, upholstered furniture, kitchen cabinets and bathroom vanities, according to the Home Furnishings Association, which represents 15,000 furniture stores in North America.

At Revolution Brewing in Chicago, the aluminum they use for cans costs as much as the ingredients that go inside them because of tariffs Trump has placed on metals that are not affected by the Supreme Court ruling. While the cans are made in Chicago, the aluminum comes from Canada, said Josh Deth, managing partner at the brewery.

Tariffs have been just one challenge for his business, which is also affected by volatile barley prices and a slowdown in demand for craft beer.

"Everything kind of adds up," he said. "The beverage industry needs relief here. We're getting crushed by the prices of aluminum."

## Reaction overseas

Italian winemakers hard-hit by the tariffs greeted the Supreme Court decision with skepticism, warning that the decision may just deepen uncertainty around trade with the U.S.

The U.S. is Italy's largest wine market, with sales having tripled in value over the past 20 years. New tariffs on the EU, which the Trump administration initially threatened would be 200%, had sent fear throughout the industry, which remained even after the U.S. reduced, delayed and negotiated down.

"There is a more than likely risk that tariffs will be reimposed through alternative legal channels, compounded by the uncertainty this ruling may generate in commercial relations between Europe and the United States," said Lamberto Frescobaldi, president of UIV, a trade association that represents more than 800 winemakers.

Elsewhere in Europe, initial reaction focused on renewed upheaval and confusion regarding costs facing businesses exporting to the US.

Trump's tariffs could hit pharmaceuticals, chemicals and auto parts, said Carsten Brzeski, an economist at ING bank. "Europe should not be mistaken, this ruling will not bring relief," he said. "The legal authority may be different, but the economic impact could be identical or worse."

## The Supreme Court struck down Trump's tariffs. Now comes the hard work of issuing refunds

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Friday struck down President Donald Trump's biggest and boldest tariffs. But the justices left a \$133 billion question unanswered: What's going to happen to the money the government has already collected in import taxes now declared unlawful?

Companies have been lining up for refunds. But the way forward could prove chaotic.

When the smoke clears, trade lawyers say, importers are likely to get money back — eventually. "It's going to be a bumpy ride for awhile," said trade lawyer Joyce Adetutu, a partner at the Vinson & Elkins law firm.

The refund process is likely to be hashed out by a mix of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection agency, the specialized Court of International Trade in New York and other lower courts, according to a note to clients by lawyers at the legal firm Clark Hill.

"The amount of money is substantial," Adetutu said. "The courts are going to have a hard time. Importers are going to have a hard time."

Still, she added, "it's going to be really difficult not to have some sort of refund option" given how decisively the Supreme Court repudiated Trump's tariffs.

In its 6-3 opinion on Friday, the court ruled Trump's attempt to use an emergency powers law to enact the levies was not valid. Two of the three justices appointed by Trump joined the majority in striking down the first major piece of his second-term agenda to come before them.

At issue are double-digit tariffs Trump imposed on almost every country in the world last year by invoking the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). The Supreme Court ruled that the law did not give the president authority to tax imports, a power that belongs to Congress.

The U.S. customs agency has already collected \$133 billion in IEEPA tariffs as of mid-December. But consumers hoping for a refund are unlikely to be compensated for the higher prices they paid when companies passed along the cost of the tariffs; that's more likely to go to the companies themselves.

In a dissenting opinion, Justice Brett Kavanaugh dinged his colleagues for dodging the refund issue: "The Court says nothing today about whether, and if so how, the Government should go about returning the billions of dollars that it has collected from importers."

Borrowing a word that Justice Amy Coney Barrett — who sided with the majority — used during the court's November hearing on the case, Kavanaugh warned that "the refund process is likely to be a 'mess.'"

"I guess it has to get litigated for the next two years," Trump told reporters at a press conference Friday, in which he decried the court's decision and said he was "absolutely ashamed" of some justices who ruled against his tariffs. "We'll end up being in court for the next five years."

The end of the IEEPA tariffs could help the economy by easing inflationary pressures. The tariff refunds — like other tax refunds — could stimulate spending and growth. But the impacts are likely to be modest.

Most countries still face steep tariffs from the U.S. on specific sectors, and Trump intends to replace the IEEPA levies using other options. The refunds that do get issued will take time to roll out — 12 to 18 months, estimates TD Securities.

The U.S. customs agency does have a process for refunding duties when importers can show there's been some kind of error. The agency might try to build on the existing system to refund Trump's IEEPA tariffs, said trade lawyer Dave Townsend, a partner with the law firm Dorsey & Whitney.

And there has been a precedent for courts making arrangements to give companies their money back in trade cases. In the 1990s, the courts struck down as unconstitutional a harbor maintenance fee on

exports and set up a system for exporters to apply for refunds.

But the courts and U.S. customs have never had to deal with anything like this — thousands of importers and tens of billions of dollars at once.

“Just because the process is difficult to administer doesn’t mean the government has the right to hold on to fees that were collected unlawfully,” said trade lawyer Alexis Early, partner at the law firm Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner.

Ryan Majerus, a partner at King & Spalding and a former U.S. trade official, said it’s hard to know how the government will deal with the massive demand for refunds. It might try to streamline the process, perhaps setting up a special website where importers can claim their refunds.

But Adetutu warns that “the government is well-positioned to make this as difficult as possible for importers. I can see a world where they push as much responsibility as possible onto the importer” — maybe forcing them to go to court to seek the refunds.

Many companies, including Costco, Revlon and canned seafood and chicken producer Bumble Bee Foods, filed lawsuits claiming refunds even before the Supreme Court ruled, essentially seeking to be at the head of line if the tariffs were struck down.

There are likely to be more legal battles ahead. Manufacturers might, for example, sue for a share of any refunds given to suppliers that jacked up the price of raw materials to cover the tariffs.

“We may see years of ongoing litigation in multiple jurisdictions,” Early said.

Consumers, though, are unlikely to enjoy a refund windfall. The higher prices they’ve had to pay would likely be hard to attribute to a specific tariff. Should they pursue refunds anyway? Early wouldn’t advise wasting money on legal fees, but said: “In America, we have the ability to file a lawsuit for anything we want.”

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker, a Democrat and Trump antagonist, is demanding a refund on behalf of his state’s 5.11 million households. In a letter addressed to Trump and released by Pritzker’s gubernatorial campaign, the governor said the tariffs had cost each Illinois household \$1,700 — or \$8.7 billion. Pritzker said failure to pay will elicit “further action.”

Nevada Treasurer Zach Conine submitted a payment request to the federal government for \$2.1 billion to recoup the costs of the tariffs, his office announced Friday.

“As Nevada’s chief investment officer, I have a responsibility to try to recoup every single dollar that the Trump Administration takes from Nevada families,” Conine said in a statement.

## **A mom wrote a book to help her kids process their dad’s death. Now she’s on trial for his killing**

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A year after her husband died, a mother of three in Utah self-published a children’s book that she said helped her sons cope with the sudden loss. Kouri Richins promoted her book “Are You With Me?” on a local TV station and drew praise for helping young children process the death of a parent.

Weeks after the book’s publication in 2023, she was arrested in her husband’s death and charged with murder.

The arrest sent shock waves through her small mountain town just outside Park City, where a 12-person jury is set to decide her fate in a monthlong trial that starts Monday.

Richins, 35, faces nearly three dozen counts in connection with her husband’s death, including aggravated murder, attempted murder, forgery, mortgage fraud and insurance fraud. She has pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutors say she killed her husband, Eric Richins, at their home in March 2022 by slipping fentanyl into a cocktail that he drank. They say she was deep in debt and killed him for financial gain while planning a future with another man she was seeing on the side.

The chilling case of a once-respected local author accused of profiting off her own violent crime has captivated true-crime enthusiasts in the years since her arrest. Once lauded as a touching read, her book

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 42 of 71

has since become a tool for prosecutors in arguing that she carried out a calculated killing.

Her defense attorneys, Wendy Lewis, Kathy Nester and Alex Ramos, said they are confident the jury will rule in Richins' favor after hearing her side of the story.

"Kouri has waited nearly three years for this moment: the opportunity to have the facts of this case heard by a jury, free from the prosecution's narrative that has dominated headlines since her arrest," her legal team said in a statement. "What the public has been told bears little resemblance to the truth."

Documents allege two poisonings

On the night of her husband's death, Richins called 911 to report that she had found him "cold to the touch" at the foot of their bed, according to the police report. He was pronounced dead, and a medical examiner later found five times the lethal dose of fentanyl in his system.

That was not her first attempt on his life, charging documents allege.

A month earlier, on Valentine's Day, Eric Richins told friends he broke out in hives and blacked out after taking one bite of a sandwich that Richins had left for him. She had bought the sandwich the same week police say she also purchased fentanyl pills from the family's housekeeper. Opioids, including fentanyl, can cause severe allergic reactions.

After injecting himself with his son's EpiPen and chugging the allergy medication Benadryl, Eric Richins woke from a deep sleep and called a friend to say, "I think my wife tried to poison me," the friend said in a written testimony.

A day after Valentine's Day, Kouri Richins texted her alleged lover, "If he could just go away ... life would be so perfect."

Key witnesses

The friend Eric Richins called that night and the housekeeper who claims to have sold his wife the drugs could be key witnesses in the upcoming trial. Others may include family members and the man with whom Kouri Richins was allegedly having an affair.

The prosecution's star witness, housekeeper Carmen Lauber, told police she gave Richins fentanyl pills she bought from a dealer a couple of days before Valentine's Day. Later that month, Richins allegedly told the housekeeper that the pills she provided were not strong enough and asked her to procure stronger fentanyl, according to charging documents.

Defense attorneys are expected to argue that Lauber did not actually give Richins fentanyl and was motivated to lie for legal protection. Lauber is not charged in connection with the case, and detectives said at an earlier hearing that she had been granted immunity.

No fentanyl pills were ever found in Richins' home, and the housekeeper's dealer said he was in jail and detoxing from drug use when he told detectives in 2023 that he had sold Lauber fentanyl. He later said in a sworn affidavit that he only sold her the opioid OxyContin.

Money as motivation

Charging documents indicate Eric Richins met with a divorce attorney and an estate planner in October 2020, a month after he discovered that his wife made some major financial decisions without his knowledge. She had a negative bank account balance, owed lenders more than \$1.8 million and was being sued by a creditor, according to court documents.

Prosecutors say Kouri Richins mistakenly believed she would inherit her husband's estate under terms of their prenuptial agreement. She had also opened numerous life insurance policies on her husband without his knowledge, with benefits totaling nearly \$2 million, prosecutors allege.

She is also accused of forging loan applications and fraudulently claiming insurance benefits after her husband's death.

## Officials work to lower risk of deadly slides to recover bodies of California avalanche victims

By GODOFREDO VASQUEZ, JULIE WATSON and JANIE HAR Associated Press

TRUCKEE, Calif. (AP) — Officials worked to lower the risks of more deadly slides Friday in the area where an avalanche struck in California's Sierra Nevada so crews could safely recover the bodies of the people killed.

Rescue crews loaded up a snow vehicle with skis and other supplies and headed toward the area near Castle Peak, northwest of Lake Tahoe, while helicopters circled overhead. Avalanche mitigation work is designed to intentionally release unstable snowpack to reduce the risk when rescue crews go in.

The Nevada County Sheriff's office previously said the mitigation work would include controlled explosions, but later said Friday's efforts only involved using water to break up snow. The work was done in partnership with Pacific Gas & Electric.

Brutal weather and the threat of more avalanches have kept crews from safely recovering the bodies of the eight people killed and another still missing from Tuesday's avalanche, which was roughly the size of a football field.

Authorities are investigating the avalanche, including whether criminal negligence played a role in the tragedy, a sheriff's office leading one of several investigations said Friday.

Why the tour company that organized the backcountry ski trip didn't cancel in the face of a powerful storm and what their guides knew as the weather worsened are the questions being considered.

Both the Nevada County Sheriff's office and a state agency that regulates workplace safety have opened investigations. Ashley Quadros, a spokesperson with the sheriff's office, declined on Friday to share more information, saying it is an open investigation.

Six of the people who died were part of a close-knit group of friends who were experienced backcountry skiers and knew how to navigate the alpine wilderness, their families said. The three others who are dead or presumed dead were guides.

"We are devastated beyond words," the families said in a statement released Thursday through a spokesperson. The women were mothers, wives and friends who "connected through the love of the outdoors," they said, and were carrying avalanche safety equipment and prepared for backcountry travel.

Victims were loved by their neighbors

The six were identified as Carrie Atkin, Liz Clabaugh, Danielle Keatley, Kate Morse, Caroline Sekar and Kate Vitt, and they lived in the San Francisco Bay Area, in Idaho and in the Lake Tahoe area. The families asked for privacy while they grieve.

Just north of San Francisco, where Keatley lived with her family in the city of Larkspur, resident Rob Bramble was shocked to learn that the friendly woman he would say hello to in passing was among the victims.

"She was just a great mom. I'd always see her with the kids, picking them up, just seemed like a great mom and a great family," said Bramble, whose daughter babysat for the family a few times.

Keatley and her husband owned a wine business and often shared their namesake wines at community events, Larkspur Mayor Stephanie Andre said.

"She was warm, kind and exuded a special quality that drew people to her," Andre said in a statement.

Morse also lived with her husband and three children north of San Francisco, and worked in the biotech industry, according to her LinkedIn profile. Vitt previously worked at SiriusXM and Pandora, according to her online profile, and lived north of the city with her two sons and husband.

Atkin was a former corporate executive who lived in Lake Tahoe with her husband and two children, according to her leadership coaching website. She's a talented student who could "run like the wind" and made it to state finals for hurdling two years in a row, recalled Jerome Bearden, her high school hurdling coach. She later had a track and field scholarship to Harvard.

"Everybody liked Carrie," said Bearden, who heard about her death from a former student on Friday. "She was a good person."

Sekar and Clabaugh were sisters, their brother, McAlister Clabaugh, told The New York Times. Sekar was a mother of two who lived in San Francisco.

Liz Clabaugh was a nurse who oversaw a new graduate nursing residency program at St. Luke's Health System in Boise, Idaho. She was also a mom and ran a Facebook page featuring encouragement and advice for new nurses. Photos showed that her family were frequent adventurers outdoors.

Clabaugh also had served as a health volunteer in Zambia with the Peace Corps, according to a Facebook page for Peace Corps alumni.

The names of the other victims have not been released.

The 15 skiers began their three-day trip Sunday, just as warnings about the storm were intensifying. By early Tuesday, officials cautioned that avalanches were expected.

Avalanche safety experts say it is not uncommon for backcountry skiers to go out when there is an avalanche watch or even a warning.

Blackbird Mountain Guides, which was leading the expedition, said the guides who were on the trek were trained or certified in backcountry skiing and were instructors with the American Institute for Avalanche Research and Education.

"We don't have all the answers yet, and it may be some time before we do," founder Zeb Blais said in a statement. "In the meantime, please keep those impacted in your hearts."

The slide was the deadliest in the U.S. since 1981, when 11 climbers were killed on Mount Rainier in Washington state.

## **Court clears way for Louisiana law requiring Ten Commandments in classrooms to take effect**

By HANNAH SCHOENBAUM and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

A U.S. appeals court has cleared the way for a Louisiana law requiring poster-sized displays of the Ten Commandments in public school classrooms to take effect.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals voted 12-6 to lift a block that a lower court first placed on the law in 2024. In the opinion released Friday, the court said it was too early to make a judgment call on the constitutionality of the law.

That's partly because it's not yet clear how prominently schools may display the religious text, if teachers will refer to the Ten Commandments during classes or if other texts like the Mayflower Compact or the Declaration of Independence will also be displayed, the majority opinion said.

Without those sorts of details, the panel decided it did not have enough information to weigh any First Amendment issues that might arise from the law. In other words, there aren't enough facts available to "permit judicial judgment rather than speculation," the majority wrote in the opinion.

In a concurring opinion, Circuit Judge James Ho, an appointee of Republican President Donald Trump, wrote that the law "is not just constitutional — it affirms our nation's highest and most noble traditions."

The six judges who voted against the decision wrote a series of dissents, with some arguing that the law exposes children to government-endorsed religion in a place they are required to be, presenting a clear constitutional burden.

Circuit Judge James L. Dennis, an appointee of Democratic President Bill Clinton, wrote that the law "is precisely the kind of establishment the Framers anticipated and sought to prevent."

The ruling is the result of the court's choice to rehear the case with all judges present after three of them ruled in June that the Louisiana law was unconstitutional. The reversal comes from one of the nation's most conservative appeals courts, and one that's known for propelling Republican policies to a similarly conservative U.S. Supreme Court.

Republican Gov. Jeff Landry celebrated the ruling Friday, declaring, "Common sense is making a comeback!"

The ACLU of Louisiana, one of several groups representing plaintiffs, pledged to explore all legal pathways

to continue fighting the law.

Arkansas has a similar law that has been challenged in federal court. And a Texas law took effect on Sept. 1, marking the widest reaching attempt in the nation to hang the Ten Commandments in public schools.

Some Texas school districts were barred from posting them after federal judges issued injunctions in two cases challenging the law, but they have already gone up in many classrooms across the state as districts paid to have the posters printed themselves or accepted donations.

The laws are among pushes by Republicans, including Trump, to incorporate religion into public school classrooms. Critics say it violates the separation of church and state, while backers say the Ten Commandments are historical and part of the foundation of U.S. law.

Joseph Davis, an attorney representing Louisiana in the case, applauded the court for upholding America's "time-honored tradition of recognizing faith in the public square."

Families from a variety of religious backgrounds, including Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism, have challenged the laws, as have clergy members and nonreligious families.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation, another group involved in the challenge, called the ruling "extremely disappointing" and said the law will force families "into a game of constitutional whack-a-mole" where they will have to separately challenge each school district's displays.

Louisiana Attorney General Liz Murrill said after the ruling that she had sent schools several correct examples of the required poster.

In 1980, the Supreme Court ruled that a similar Kentucky law violated the Establishment Clause of the U.S. Constitution, which says Congress can "make no law respecting an establishment of religion." The court found that the law had no secular purpose but served a plainly religious purpose.

And in 2005, the Supreme Court held that such displays in a pair of Kentucky courthouses violated the Constitution. At the same time, the court upheld a Ten Commandments marker on the grounds of the Texas state Capitol in Austin.

## **US military strikes another alleged drug boat in eastern Pacific, killing 3**

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military said Friday that it has carried out another deadly strike on a vessel accused of trafficking drugs in the Eastern Pacific Ocean.

U.S. Southern Command said on social media that the boat "was transiting along known narco-trafficking routes in the Eastern Pacific and was engaged in narco-trafficking operations." It said the strike killed three people. A video linked to the post shows a boat floating in the water before bursting into flames.

Friday's attack raises the death toll from the Trump administration's strikes on alleged drug boats to at least 148 people in at least 43 attacks carried out since early September in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific Ocean.

President Donald Trump has said the U.S. is in "armed conflict" with cartels in Latin America and has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs. But his administration has offered little evidence to support its claims of killing "narcoterrorists."

Critics have questioned the overall legality of the strikes as well as their effectiveness, in part because the fentanyl behind many fatal overdoses is typically trafficked to the U.S. over land from Mexico, where it is produced with chemicals imported from China and India.

The boat strikes also drew intense criticism following the revelation that the military killed survivors of the very first boat attack with a follow-up strike. The Trump administration and many Republican lawmakers said it was legal and necessary, while Democratic lawmakers and legal experts said the killings were murder, if not a war crime.

## 5 European nations pledge millions to use Ukrainian know-how to make cheap drone defenses

By SAM McNEIL and CLAUDIA CIOBANU Associated Press

WARSAW (AP) — Five European nations have announced a new program to produce low-cost air defense systems and autonomous drones using Ukrainian expertise hard-won over the past four years of war against Russia.

Friday's initiative of the E5 nations — France, Poland, Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy — comes as one of many European efforts to bolster defense along their borders, like a "drone wall" with Russia and Ukraine to better detect, track and intercept drones violating Europe's airspace.

Both Moscow and Kyiv have cutting-edge drone warfare capabilities forged in the grim laboratory of war where battlefield innovations have rewritten modern battle tactics. Poland is already working with Ukraine on drone technology in joint military training programs and manufacturing projects.

Those efforts were sparked by a spate of incidents in which Europe's borders and airports have been tested by rogue drones. Russia has been blamed for some of them but denies that anything was done on purpose or that it played a role.

"The UK and our E5 partners are stepping up — investing together in the next generation of air defense and autonomous systems to strengthen NATO's shield," said Luke Pollard, Britain's minister for defense readiness and industry.

"We have some of the best kit on the entire planet for shooting down air threats. The problem is to be effective at shooting down relatively low-cost missiles, drones, and other threats facing us," he said. "We need to make sure that we're matching the cost of the threats with the cost of defense."

Poland's defense minister, Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz, said the group of countries signed an agreement to jointly invest in the production and procurement of drone-based strike capabilities as well as cheap drone defense systems in a program called called Low-Cost Effectors and Autonomous Platforms, or LEAP.

"Combat technologies and techniques are changing rapidly — we must respond quickly and appropriately," Kosiniak-Kamysz said. "We also signed a crucial commitment regarding the joint development of drone-based strike capabilities, low-cost joint production, and joint procurement of drone effectors, i.e., combat payloads, using artificial intelligence."

When Russian drones entered Polish airspace in September 2025, Warsaw and its NATO allies used multimillion-dollar jets to respond to drones that cost thousands and that ended up crashing into the Polish countryside. Low-cost kinetic or electronic effectors would allow the detection and destruction of drones at a fraction of the price.

Europe has scrambled to arm itself in the wake of U.S. President Donald Trump's deep criticism of NATO, European defense spending and once iron-clad alliances. The EU has ramped up spending and is openly questioning even deeper military projects.

"Europe's security is more uncertain than it has been in decades," said Kaja Kallas, the EU's foreign policy chief, citing Russian aggression, instability in the Middle East, China and a "redefined" alliance with the U.S. She said that the low-cost interceptor program exemplifies the European commitment to its own security.

"If we want to keep our country safe, we must strengthen our hard power. The good news is that we are already investing record sums in defense. Europe is stepping up. but it's not about competing with NATO. It's about making Europe stronger within NATO. A stronger Europe makes the alliance also stronger."

Yet the 32-nation military alliance has been shaken by Trump's second administration. Most recently, his repeated threats to seize Greenland, a semiautonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark, and disparaging remarks about his NATO allies' troops in Afghanistan drew another outcry.

While tensions over Greenland have subsided for now, the infighting has seriously undercut the ability of the world's biggest security alliance to deter adversaries.

## Ramadan's first Friday prayers are held at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque

By SAM MEDNICK Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP) — Tens of thousands of Palestinians gathered under heavy Israeli restrictions at Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque compound for the first Friday prayers of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, including some who were allowed to enter from the occupied West Bank.

The Ramadan prayers at Al-Aqsa took place for the first time since a shaky ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas went into effect in October. It was the first opportunity many had to leave the West Bank and pray at the site in Jerusalem's Old City since Ramadan last year.

Israel restricted the number of Palestinians allowed to enter from the West Bank to 10,000 on Friday, and only allowed men over 55 and women over 50 as well as children up to 12. It has imposed similar restrictions in the past, citing security concerns.

A frequent flashpoint

The hilltop, which Jews refer to as the Temple Mount, is the holiest site in Judaism and was home to the ancient biblical temples. Muslims call the site the Noble Sanctuary. Today it is home to Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam.

It has frequently been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Israeli police said more than 3,000 police were deployed across Jerusalem. They said their presence was not meant to show aggression or force but was aimed at providing help in case of an emergency.

Many Palestinians view the heightened Israeli security presence, and increasing visits by religious and nationalist Israeli Jews, as a provocation. They fear that Israel intends to take over or partition the compound. The Israeli government denies having any such plans.

Jerusalem's Islamic Waqf, the Jordanian religious authority that administers the compound, said there were 80,000 in attendance. In normal times, Ramadan Friday prayers at Al-Aqsa can draw up to 200,000.

Ezaldeen Mustafah, a Palestinian from the West Bank, was among those lamenting the restrictions.

"We need more people than this," he said.

Some Palestinians from the West Bank on Friday said they were turned away from crossing into Jerusalem even though they had permits. Jihad Bisharat said he was told his permit had been canceled and was sent back. Israel's army didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Old City, home to major religious sites sacred to Jews, Christians and Muslims, is in east Jerusalem, which Israel captured in the 1967 Mideast war, along with the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Palestinians want all three territories for a future state with its capital in east Jerusalem. Israel annexed east Jerusalem, a move not recognized by most of the international community, and considers the entire city to be its capital.

Ramadan in Gaza

Many Palestinians said the month's typically festive spirit is eluding them as they struggle with grief and losses following two years of conflict in Gaza sparked by Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack into Israel.

"All the mosques have been bombed," said Ramiz Firwana, a Gaza resident who gathered with other worshippers for a Friday sermon and prayers held in schoolyard.

On Thursday evening, families sat amid the rubble and destruction for iftar, the meal held at the end of the daily dawn-to-dusk fast.

"Despite the displacement, the pain and the destruction, we want to rejoice and live," said Mohammad Kollab, from Khan Younis. "We are not a people destined only for destruction and killing."

Israel's military offensive has killed more than 72,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, and caused widespread destruction and displaced most of the territory's residents. Israel launched the offensive after Hamas-led militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took another 251 hostage in the initial attack.

The Oct. 10 U.S.-brokered ceasefire deal has brought an end to major military operations and the release of the remaining hostages. But Palestinians, including many civilians, are still being killed in near-daily strikes that Israel says are aimed at militants who threaten or attack its forces.

## What happens next after the Supreme Court slapped down Trump's tariffs

By JOSH BOAK and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — There's little that Donald Trump has cherished more in his second term than tariffs, a symbol of his imperious approach to the presidency. He has raised and lowered them at will, rewriting the rules of global commerce and daring anyone to stop him.

Now that may be over, the victim of a stunning rebuke from the Supreme Court on Friday. After more than a year of expanding his power, Trump had run into a rare limit.

It was a loss that Trump couldn't quite accept, and the president claimed he would use other laws to impose alternative tariffs. He even said that the end of this particular legal battle would bring "great certainty" to the economy.

But if anything, Friday opened a new chapter in Trump's ongoing tariffs drama and raised urgent questions about his ability to make good on his promises of an economic revival. The ruling will most likely prolong chaos over international trade through the midterm elections, with much unknown about Trump's next steps and whether roughly \$175 billion in import taxes that the Supreme Court struck down will be refunded.

The president chose, as he often does, to scorn the patriotism of those who disagree with him.

He said the ruling was "deeply disappointing" and "ridiculous," adding that he was "absolutely ashamed" of the six Supreme Court justices who ruled against him "for not having the courage to do what's right for our country."

Trump described the justices as "fools and lapdogs" who are "very unpatriotic and disloyal to our Constitution."

The president said on social media Friday night that he had signed an executive order enabling him to bypass Congress and impose a 10% tax on imports from around the world. The government would begin national security investigations in order to charge new tariffs on specific products as well. The 10% tariffs are legally capped at 150 days, but Trump brushed off a question about the limit by saying "we have a right to do pretty much what we want to do."

All of that means Trump's tariff timelines are likely to collide with the midterm elections for control of the House and Senate.

Tariffs have been politically unpopular

Trump learned of the Supreme Court's decision during a private meeting with governors in the morning when he was handed a note, according to two people with knowledge of the president's reaction who spoke on the condition of anonymity. They said he called it "a disgrace."

Another person, who was briefed on the conversation, disclosed that Trump said he has "to do something about these courts."

The meeting with the governors ended shortly thereafter.

Looming over Trump's legal debacle has been voters' frustration with the tariffs, which have been linked to higher prices and a slowdown in hiring.

The president has consistently misrepresented his tariffs, claiming despite evidence to the contrary that foreign governments would pay them and that the revenues would be sufficient to pay down the national debt and give taxpayers a dividend check.

After Trump announced worldwide tariffs last April, an AP-NORC poll found that 76% of Americans said the policies would increase the cost of consumer goods — a worrisome sign for a president elected on the promise of addressing years of inflation.

Another poll, conducted in January, said about 6 in 10 Americans said Trump had gone too far in imposing new tariffs on other countries.

Trump used tariffs to reshape Republican trade agenda

Trump's aggressive use of tariffs had left many Republican lawmakers uneasy, publicly and privately, forcing them to defend what were essentially tax increases on the American public and businesses.

At various points during Trump's second term, at least seven senators from the president's party have voiced their concerns. Earlier this month, six House Republicans joined with Democrats to vote for a resolution against Trump's tariffs on Canada.

Indeed, free trade had long been a central plank of the Republican Party before Trump's rise to power. Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell described Trump's assertion that he can bypass Congress to implement tariffs as "illegal" in a statement praising the Supreme Court's decision.

"Congress' role in trade policy, as I have warned repeatedly, is not an inconvenience to avoid," the former top Senate Republican said. "If the executive would like to enact trade policies that impact American producers and consumers, its path forward is crystal clear: convince their representatives under Article 1" of the Constitution.

Former Vice President Mike Pence, who served during Trump's first term, cheered the ruling.

"American families and American businesses pay American tariffs — not foreign countries," Pence wrote on social media. "With this decision, American families and businesses can breathe a sigh of relief."

Democrats were quick to seize on the Supreme Court ruling to say Trump broke the law and middle-class families suffered as a result.

Rep. Suzan DelBene, D-Wash., said Trump "is not a king" and his "tariffs were always illegal."

"Republicans in Congress could have easily ended this economic crisis by standing up for their communities," said DelBene, chair of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "Instead, they chose to bend the knee to Trump while families, small businesses and farmers suffered from higher prices."

Tariffs were central to Trump's economic pitch

Trump has claimed that his tariffs were the difference between national prosperity and deep poverty, a pitch he made Thursday to voters in the swing state of Georgia.

The president used the word "tariff" 28 times in his speech at a Georgia steel company, Coosa Steel, which credited the import taxes as making its products more competitive with goods from China.

"Without tariffs, this country would be in such trouble right now," Trump insisted.

Trump also complained that he had to justify his use of tariffs to the Supreme Court.

"I have to wait for this decision. I've been waiting forever, forever, and the language is clear that I have the right to do it as president," he said. "I have the right to put tariffs on for national security purposes, countries that have been ripping us off for years."

By a 6-3 vote, the high court said no.

## Netflix releases a posthumous interview with Eric Dane after his death from ALS

By ALICIA RANCILIO Associated Press

Eric Dane did not believe in an afterlife.

"I think when the lights go out, it's over," he said in an interview for "Famous Last Words," a Netflix series that's available now. "I do believe that once we go to sleep or however it is we — we go, once we're gone, we're gone."

He also hoped in the interview that his two daughters, Billie and Georgia, would remember how he was present in their lives. He went to beach volleyball games and dance recitals, adding that he'd seen "The Nutcracker" many times and his review was, "That thing drones on, man."

The "Grey's Anatomy" and "Euphoria" actor died Thursday less than one year after he announced he was diagnosed with ALS, or Lou Gehrig's disease, which is a fatal nerve system disease.

"Famous Last Words" is based on a show that originated in Denmark. The premise is that a person is interviewed — executive producer Brad Falchuk does the questioning in the Netflix show — and it will not be released until their death.

Dane's interview is the second episode. The first was with primatologist and conservationist Jane Goodall, who died last October. Falchuk tells The Associated Press he's recorded five conversations already with plans for more.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 50 of 71

No one else was present on set for the taping last November and even the camera operators were in a different room.

"The guest needs to be totally safe to speak honestly and say whatever they want and know that they're leaving something for people to experience with them not here," Falchuk said on Friday. Only a small number of people work on the production of the show afterward. "Very, very few people have seen it and very, very people even know whose done it," explained Falchuk.

"Famous people don't often get an opportunity to speak honestly about themselves and about what they think in the world," said Falchuk who is married to Oscar winner Gwyneth Paltrow. "They have to be very protective, especially nowadays. They say things and it goes everywhere and it gets misinterpreted and they also want to keep working or keep you know doing what they do, so this is an opportunity for them not to have to be guarded."

Dane's ALS advocacy lives on

After his ALS diagnosis, Dane became an advocate to raise awareness and money to fight the disease. After his death, the organization I AM ALS released clips of him recorded for an upcoming documentary.

"It's a tough thing to respond to, it's a tough thing to live with, yeah. But it's really hard for the people around me too. And it's almost like — in a weird way, it's to some benefit, because I spend a lot of my time consoling others," he said in a clip released Friday.

Filmmaker Chris Burke also captured Dane on a trip to Washington D.C. where he lobbied politicians for a bill that would help accelerate research, expand access to treatment and secure one billion dollars in federal funding for ALS patients.

"He understood that ALS is not just a diagnosis; it is a call to action for families, for answers, and for change," the organization said in a statement after Dane's death.

Dane's last message to his daughters

In the Netflix show, Dane also reflected on the lifelong impact of losing his father at age 7 and subsequent struggles with addiction to drugs and alcohol. He said he immediately knew he would marry Rebecca Gayheart when he met her and shared a memory of a family vacation to France where he spent a car ride speaking with a "spot on" French accent that made everyone laugh.

The most poignant part of the taping was at the end — when Falchuk left the room for Dane to look into the camera and deliver a final message which he dedicated to his daughters. Dane shared that his diagnosis with ALS taught him to be present. He also hoped the girls would "fall in love," whether it be with a person or something that would make them want to wake up each morning.

"I hope you won't just listen to me. I hope you'll hear me," he said.

Falchuk said this final message is something each guest has the opportunity to do. "People do all different kinds of stuff. Some people write it. Jane improvised hers. Eric wrote his," said Falchuk, who was visibly emotional at the idea of Dane's daughters watching his message.

"It's hard to think about that," he said. "They're grieving and he loved them so much. They loved him so much and they're just a beautiful family. I don't know. Maybe they'll watch it. Maybe they'll never watch it, whatever it may be."

Falchuk and Dane had dinner prior to filming and they didn't know each other well, but a new friendship had developed from the experience.

"I'm grieving Eric a lot right now. It's very hard. I was not expecting this to happen this soon. And I miss him," said Falchuk. "It's hard when they die. It is hard."

The exchange seemed to also have an impact on Dane, who told Falchuk, "This is probably the most revealing and in-depth conversation I've had with just about anybody."

## Supreme Court strikes down Trump's sweeping tariffs, sparking fierce pushback and vow of new levies

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court struck down President Donald Trump's far-reaching global tariffs on Friday, handing him a stinging loss that sparked a furious attack on the court he helped shape.

Trump said he was "absolutely ashamed" of some justices who ruled 6-3 against him, calling them "disloyal to our Constitution" and "lapdogs." At one point he even raised the specter of foreign influence without citing any evidence.

The decision could have ripple effects on economies around the globe after Trump's moves to remake post-World War II trading alliances by wielding tariffs as a weapon.

But an unbowed Trump pledged to impose a new global 10% tariff under a law that's restricted to 150 days and has never been used to apply tariffs before.

"Their decision is incorrect," he said. "But it doesn't matter because we have very powerful alternatives."

The court's ruling found tariffs that Trump imposed under an emergency powers law were unconstitutional, including the sweeping "reciprocal" tariffs he levied on nearly every other country.

Trump appointed three of the justices on the nation's highest court during his first term, and has scored a series of short-term wins that have allowed him to move ahead with key policies.

Tariffs, though, were the first major piece of Trump's broad agenda to come squarely before the Supreme Court for a final ruling, after lower courts had also sided against the president.

The majority found that it is unconstitutional for the president to unilaterally set and change tariffs because taxation power clearly belongs to Congress. "The Framers did not vest any part of the taxing power in the Executive Branch," Chief Justice John Roberts wrote.

Justices Brett Kavanaugh, Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas dissented.

"The tariffs at issue here may or may not be wise policy. But as a matter of text, history, and precedent, they are clearly lawful," Kavanaugh wrote. Trump praised his 63-page dissent as "genius."

The court majority did not address whether businesses could get refunded for the billions they have collectively paid in tariffs. Many companies, including the big-box warehouse chain Costco, have already lined up in lower courts to demand refunds. Kavanaugh noted the process could be complicated.

"The Court says nothing today about whether, and if so how, the Government should go about returning the billions of dollars that it has collected from importers. But that process is likely to be a 'mess,' as was acknowledged at oral argument," he wrote.

The Treasury had collected more than \$133 billion from the import taxes the president has imposed under the emergency powers law as of December, federal data shows. The impact over the next decade has been estimated at some \$3 trillion.

The tariffs decision doesn't stop Trump from imposing duties under other laws. Those have more limitations on the speed and severity of Trump's actions, but the president said they would still allow him to "charge much more" than he had before.

Vice President JD Vance called the high court decision "lawlessness" in a post on X.

Questions about what Trump can do next

Still, the ruling is a "complete and total victory" for the challengers, said Neal Katyal, who argued the case on behalf of a group of small businesses.

"It's a reaffirmation of our deepest constitutional values and the idea that Congress, not any one man, controls the power to tax the American people," he said.

It wasn't immediately clear how the decision restricting Trump's power to unilaterally set and change tariffs might affect trade deals with other countries.

"We remain in close contact with the U.S. Administration as we seek clarity on the steps they intend to take in response to this ruling," European Commission spokesman Olof Gill said, adding that the body would keep pushing for lower tariffs.

The Supreme Court ruling comes after victories on the court's emergency docket have allowed Trump to

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 52 of 71

push ahead with extraordinary flexes of executive power on issues ranging from immigration enforcement to major federal funding cuts.

The Republican president had long been vocal about the tariffs case, calling it one of the most important in U.S. history and saying a ruling against him would be an economic body blow to the country. But legal opposition crossed the political spectrum, including libertarian and pro-business groups that are typically aligned with the GOP. Polling has found tariffs aren't broadly popular with the public, amid wider voter concern about affordability.

While the Constitution gives Congress the power to levy tariffs, the Trump administration argued that a 1977 law allowing the president to regulate importation during emergencies also allows him to set import duties. Other presidents have used the law dozens of times, often to impose sanctions, but Trump was the first president to invoke it for tariffs.

"And the fact that no President has ever found such power in IEEPA is strong evidence that it does not exist," Roberts wrote, using an acronym for the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

Trump set what he called "reciprocal" tariffs on most countries in April 2025 to address trade deficits that he declared a national emergency. Those came after he imposed duties on Canada, China and Mexico, ostensibly to address a drug trafficking emergency.

A series of lawsuits followed, including a case from a dozen largely Democratic-leaning states and others from small businesses selling everything from plumbing supplies to women's cycling apparel.

The challengers argued the emergency powers law doesn't even mention tariffs and Trump's use of it fails several legal tests, including one that doomed then-President Joe Biden's \$500 billion student loan forgiveness program.

Justices reject use of emergency powers for tariffs

The three conservative justices in the majority pointed to that principle, which is called the major questions doctrine. It holds that Congress must clearly authorize actions of major economic and political significance.

"There is no exception to the major questions doctrine for emergency statutes," Roberts wrote. The three liberal justices formed the rest of the majority, but didn't join that part of the opinion.

The Trump administration had argued that tariffs are different because they're a major part of Trump's approach to foreign affairs, an area where the courts should not be second-guessing the president.

But Roberts, joined by Justices Neil Gorsuch and Amy Coney Barrett, brushed that aside, writing that the implications for international relations don't change the legal principle.

Small businesses celebrated the ruling, with the National Retail Federation saying it provides "much needed certainty."

Illinois toy company Learning Resources was among the businesses challenging the tariffs in court. CEO Rick Woldenberg said he expected Trump's new tariffs but hoped there might be more constraint in the future, both legal and political. "Somebody's got to pay this bill. Those people that pay the bill are voters," he said.

Ann Robinson, who owns Scottish Gourmet in Greensboro, North Carolina, said she was "doing a happy dance" when she heard the news.

The 10% baseline tariff on U.K. goods put pressure on Robinson's business, costing about \$30,000 in the fall season. She's unsure about the Trump administration's next steps, but said she's overjoyed for now. "Time to schedule my 'Say Goodbye to Tariffs' Sale!"

## Wall Street keeps calm after the Supreme Court strikes down Trump's tariffs

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Wall Street kept calm Friday after the Supreme Court struck down President Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs, which had triggered panic in financial markets when announced last year, and stocks ticked higher.

The S&P 500 rose 0.7%. It had been flipping between small gains and losses before the court's ruling,

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 53 of 71

following discouraging reports showing slowing growth for the U.S. economy and faster inflation.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 230 points, or 0.5%, and the Nasdaq composite rose 0.9%.

Many on Wall Street were likely expecting such a ruling from the Supreme Court, according to Brian Jacobsen, chief economic strategist at Annex Wealth Management. That likely led to the relatively muted reactions across financial markets, and trading remained tentative as investors tried to suss out the long-term effects.

Tariffs also aren't going away, even with the Supreme Court's ruling. Trump in the afternoon said he would use other avenues to put taxes on imports from other countries after calling the court's decision terrible.

"Just so you understand, we have tariffs, we just have them in a different way," Trump told reporters in an afternoon briefing. He said he would sign an executive order to impose a 10% global tariff under a law that could limit it to 150 days. The president also said he's exploring other tariffs through other avenues, ones that would require an investigation through the Commerce Department.

"During that period of about five months, we are doing the various investigations necessary to put fair tariffs – or tariffs, period – on other countries," Trump said.

Earlier in his comments, Trump said that the Supreme Court's ruling had other countries "dancing in the streets, but they won't be dancing for long."

Among the tentative moves across markets, Treasury yields edged a bit higher in the bond market.

If investors thought the tariff ruling would improve inflation significantly, it could have sent yields lower. On the other hand, if investors were worried about the U.S. government's debt rising faster in the future because of the loss of revenue from tariffs, long-term yields could have jumped. For now, at least, yields held relatively steady.

The stock price of Ralph Lauren, meanwhile, rushed from an early loss to a gain of 3.3% after investors learned of the Supreme Court's ruling. But it quickly flipped back to a loss before finishing with a rise of 2.2%. During April last year, the stock had dropped nearly 23% in four days after Trump announced his tariffs because of worries about how they would hurt its profits.

In other markets, gold's price slumped briefly after the ruling and then erased the loss. Stock indexes in Europe added to their gains from earlier in the day, while the U.S. dollar's value edged down against other currencies.

Heading into the day, the main event for markets had seemed to be discouraging reports showing slowing U.S. economic growth and accelerating inflation. They found a relatively muted response from investors.

While the reports underscore the tricky situation the Federal Reserve faces as it sets interest rates, they did not change traders' expectations much for what the Fed will ultimately do. Traders are still betting that the Fed will lower rates at least twice this year, according to data from CME Group. Some shifted bets for the timing of when the cuts could begin to slightly later in the summer.

Lower interest rates would give the economy and investment prices a boost, but they also risk worsening inflation. Fed officials said at their last meeting that they want to see inflation fall further before they would support cutting rates further.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury remained at 4.08%, where it was late Thursday. The two-year yield, which more closely tracks expectations for Fed action, inched up to 3.48% from 3.47%.

On Wall Street, Akamai Technologies dropped 14.1% for one of the market's sharpest losses. The cybersecurity and cloud computing company reported stronger results for the end of 2025 than analysts expected, but it gave a profit forecast for the upcoming year that fell short of estimates.

Akamai plans to spend a bigger percentage of its revenue this upcoming year on equipment and other investments. It's the latest potential indicator of how shortages of computer memory created by the AI boom are affecting customers throughout the economy.

On the winning side of the market was Comfort Systems, which rose 6.5% after the provider of heating, ventilation, air conditioning and electrical services reported a stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. CEO Brian Lane said his company is seeing "unprecedented demand."

All told, the S&P 500 rose 47.62 points to 6,909.51. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 230.81 to

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 54 of 71

49,625.97, and the Nasdaq composite rose 203.34 to 22,886.07.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose in Europe following a more mixed finish in Asia.

The Hang Seng fell 1.1%, but South Korea's Kospi jumped 2.3% to a record, led by major defense contractors like Hanwha Aerospace. The company is one of many benefiting from a ramp up in military spending in many countries.

## All truckers and bus drivers will be required to take commercial driver's license tests in English

By JOSH FUNK AP Transportation Writer

All truckers and bus drivers will have to take their commercial driver's license tests in English as the Trump administration expands its aggressive campaign to improve safety in the industry and get unqualified drivers off the road.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy announced the latest effort Friday to ensure that drivers meet the federal requirements to understand English well enough to read road signs and communicate with law enforcement officers. Florida already started administering its tests in English.

Currently, many states allow drivers to take their license tests in other languages even though they are required to demonstrate English proficiency. California offered tests in 20 other languages. Duffy said that a number of states have hired other companies to administer commercial driver's license tests, and those companies aren't enforcing the standards that drivers are supposed to meet to demonstrate their driving and English skills.

These latest enforcement efforts come just days after the Transportation Department said 557 driving schools should close because they failed to meet basic safety standards. The department has been aggressively going after states that handed out commercial driver's licenses to immigrants who shouldn't have qualified for them ever since a fatal crash in August.

A truck driver who Duffy says wasn't authorized to be in the U.S. made an illegal U-turn and caused a crash in Florida that killed three people. Other fatal crashes since then, including one in Indiana that killed four members of an Amish community earlier this month, have only heightened concerns.

Duffy says truckers should be well qualified

States are expected to ensure drivers can speak English before giving them a commercial license, and then law enforcement is supposed to check driver's language skills during any traffic stops or inspections. Drivers who can't communicate effectively are supposed to be pulled off the road. A recent federal effort involving 8,215 inspections led to nearly 500 drivers being disqualified because of their English skills. California initially resisted enforcing the English rules, but the state recently pulled more than 600 drivers off the highways.

Duffy said every American wants drivers who get behind the wheel of a big rig to be well-qualified to handle those vehicles. But he said that for too long the problems in the trucking industry were "allowed to rot and no one's paying attention to it for decades."

"Once you start to pay attention, you see that all these bad things have been happening. And the consequence of that is that Americans get hurt," Duffy said. "When we get on the road, we should expect that we should be safe. And that those who drive those 80,000-pound big rigs, that they are well-trained, they're well-qualified, and they're going to be safe."

More efforts to crack down on fraudulent companies

The campaign will also now expand to prevent fraudulent trucking companies from getting into the business while continuing to go after questionable schools and ensure states are complying with all the regulations for handing out commercial licenses.

Duffy said that the registration system and requirements for trucking companies will be strengthened while Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration inspectors conduct more spot checks of trucks and commercial driver's license schools.

Officials are also trying to make sure that the electronic logging devices drivers use are accurate, and

that states are following all the regulations to ensure drivers are qualified to get commercial licenses.

'Chameleon carriers' avoid enforcement

Currently, companies only have to pay \$300 and show proof of insurance to get registered to operate, and then they might not be audited until a year or more later. And even then the audits might be done virtually, which makes it less likely to identify fraudulent companies.

That has made it easy for fraudulent companies that are known in the industry as "chameleon carriers" to register multiple times under different names and then simply switch names and registration numbers to avoid any consequences after crashes or other violations.

Dan Horvath, who is the chief operating officer for the American Trucking Associations trade group, said this longstanding problem has made it far too easy for companies that have been ordered to shut down to just change their name and registration number and keep operating the same way.

"What we think at ATA has happened over the years is that we have a lack of true enforcement and intervention with motor carriers that are in operation," Horvath said. Only a small fraction of trucking companies ever undergo a full compliance review with an in-person inspection, he said.

Past enforcement efforts

After that Indiana crash, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration knocked the company that employed the driver out of service and pulled the DOT numbers assigned to two other companies that were linked to AJ Partners. Tutash Express and Sam Express in the Chicago area were also disqualified, and the Aydana driving school that the trucker involved in the crash attended lost its certification.

Immigration authorities arrested that driver because they said the 30-year-old from Kyrgyzstan entered the country illegally. Authorities say he pulled out and tried to go around a truck that had slowed in front of him, and his truck slammed into an oncoming van.

In December, the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration took action to decertify up to 7,500 of the 16,000 schools nationwide, but that included many defunct operations.

Duffy said the companies involved in that Indiana crash were all registered at the same apartment. In other cases, there might be hundreds of these chameleon companies registered at a single address.

## Trump warns he's considering limited strikes as Iranian diplomat says proposed deal is imminent

By FARNOUSH AMIRI and SEUNG MIN KIM Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump warned on Friday that limited strikes against Iran are possible even as the country's top diplomat said Tehran expects to have a proposed deal ready in the next few days following nuclear talks with the United States.

In response to a reporter's question on whether the U.S. could take limited military action as the countries negotiate, Trump said, "I guess I can say I am considering that." A few hours later, he told reporters that Iran "better negotiate a fair deal."

Earlier Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a TV interview that his country was planning to finalize a draft deal in "the next two to three days" to send to Washington.

"I don't think it takes long, perhaps, in a matter of a week or so, we can start real, serious negotiations on the text and come to a conclusion," Araghchi said on MSNOW's "Morning Joe" show.

The tensions between the longtime adversaries have ramped up as the Trump administration pushes for concessions from Iran and has built up the largest U.S. military presence in the Middle East in decades, with more warships and aircraft on the way.

On Friday, the USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group passed through the Strait of Gibraltar and entered the Mediterranean Sea after being sent by Trump from the Caribbean, according to images of the ship by maritime photographers posted to social media.

Both Iran and the U.S. have signaled that they are prepared for war if talks on Tehran's nuclear program fizzle out. "We are prepared for diplomacy, and we are prepared for negotiation as much as we are prepared for war," Araghchi said Friday.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 56 of 71

Ali Vaez, an Iran expert at the International Crisis Group, said Iran “would treat any kinetic action as an existential threat.”

Vaez said he doesn't think Iran's leaders are bluffing when they say they would retaliate, while they likely believe they could maintain their hold on power despite any U.S. airstrikes.

What Iran and the US are negotiating

Trump said a day earlier that he believes 10 to 15 days is “enough time” for Iran to reach a deal following recent rounds of indirect negotiations, including this week in Geneva, that made little visible progress. But the talks have been deadlocked for years after Trump's decision in 2018 to unilaterally withdraw the U.S. from Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. Since then, Iran has refused to discuss wider U.S. and Israeli demands that it scale back its missile program and sever ties to armed groups.

Araghchi also said Friday that his American counterparts have not asked for zero enrichment of uranium as part of the latest round of talks, which is not what U.S. officials have said publicly.

“What we are now talking about is how to make sure that Iran's nuclear program, including enrichment, is peaceful and will remain peaceful forever,” he said.

He added that in return, Iran will implement some confidence-building measures in exchange for relief on economic sanctions.

In response to Araghchi's claim, a White House official said Trump has been clear that Iran cannot have nuclear weapons or the capacity to build them and that it cannot enrich uranium. The official wasn't authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Tehran has long insisted that any negotiations should only focus on its nuclear program and that it hasn't been enriching uranium since U.S. and Israeli strikes last June on Iranian nuclear sites. Trump said at the time that the strikes had “obliterated” Iran's nuclear sites, but the exact damage is unknown as Tehran has barred international inspectors.

Although Iran insists its nuclear program is peaceful, the U.S. and others suspect it is aimed at eventually developing weapons.

What Congress has to say

Trump's comments have faced pushback from some lawmakers who say the president should get Congress' approval before any strike.

Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia said Friday that he has filed a war powers resolution that would require that step. Though it has no chance of becoming law — in part because Trump himself would have to sign it — some bipartisan consensus has arisen recently among senators who forced votes on previous resolutions on military action in Venezuela.

None of those resolutions passed, but they were successful in showing how lawmakers are troubled by some of Trump's aggressive foreign policy maneuvers.

“If some of my colleagues support war, then they should have the guts to vote for the war, and to be held accountable by their constituents, rather than hiding under their desks,” Kaine said in a statement.

## **Nathan MacKinnon scores late as Canada beats Finland to reach the Olympic gold-medal game**

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writer

MILAN (AP) — Falling behind for a second consecutive game at the Olympics, after never trailing throughout group play, Canada dug itself an even deeper hole in the semifinals against Finland.

Down two goals against an opponent also full of NHL players, the tournament favorite did not look the slightest bit shook.

“There wasn't really any panic,” center Nick Suzuki said. “We were going to get our chances eventually.”

Then, the most talented roster in Milan buried those chances. Sam Reinhart deflected Cale Makar's shot in to start the comeback, Shea Theodore tied it on a blast through traffic and Nathan MacKinnon scored the go-ahead goal with 35.2 seconds left to advance to the gold medal game with a 3-2 victory Friday night.

“You could definitely feel the sense of calm, having been through that before,” McDavid said. “We un-

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 57 of 71

derstood we were in a tough spot, and we had to find a way to get out of it. And we did.”

Makar thought he and his teammates were more comfortable down 2-0 against Finland than when they fell behind against Czechia twice in the quarterfinals, including with seven minutes left.

It showed. After Erik Haula scored shorthanded to make it a two-goal deficit early in the second period, Canada outshot Finland 31-8 the rest of the way.

Juuse Saros was terrific in net for Finland, and Canada coach Jon Cooper was worried only about getting shut out by a hot goaltender. Reinhart’s goal with 4:40 left in the second cut some of the tension, and it was clear the game was turning.

“We definitely felt the momentum shift a little bit,” forward Sam Bennett said. “We thought our pressure was good. It was just a relentless pressure that we knew eventually we’d be able to crack them.”

Cooper was also glad his players didn’t want until three minutes left to tie it like in the quarterfinals. Theodore’s goal came with 9:26 left in regulation after Brad Marchand was on top of Saros following a shove from Haula.

“Brad’s being Brad, and I like to have Brad,” Cooper said of Marchand, who got pushed but didn’t do much to stop falling into the opposing goalie.

Nathan MacKinnon took over late, looking like a man on a mission and drawing a second high-sticking penalty on Niko Mikkola. On the ensuing power play, McDavid sent a perfect cross-ice saucer pass over penalty killer Roope Hintz’s stick to MacKinnon, who sneaked the puck short side through a miniscule hole with Macklin Celebrini setting a screen by jumping.

It held up on video review after Finland challenged that the play was offside.

“It was a five-man effort,” MacKinnon said. “Connor made an amazing play, Cale was doing his thing, Reino same thing. Obviously happy one squeaked in. Yeah, great pass.”

Canada came back again without injured captain Sidney Crosby, who left the quarterfinal game Wednesday night with an apparent right knee injury. McDavid wore the “C” in Crosby’s absence and had two assists to break the record for the most points by an NHL player at a single Olympics with 13.

“We’re a deep team with leaders all up and down the lineup,” McDavid said. “It doesn’t matter who’s wearing the ‘C,’ who’s in the lineup, who’s out of the lineup. Everybody can play a big role and lead, and you saw that again.”

Cooper said there’s still time to decide if Crosby can play in the final on Sunday.

Canada’s stacked lineup, even missing Crosby, eventually broke through the Finnish trap that slows players down and intercepts the puck before an opponent can go deep into the offensive zone. Instead of getting frustrated, some of the best players on the roster led the way, with Celebrini shooting just about every chance he had.

Celebrini, Canada’s youngest player at 19, put eight pucks on net himself. That’s almost as many shots on goal Finland had as a team in the second and third periods combined, with nine.

“I’ve seen him play enough for a while,” winger Mitch Marner said. “He’s got a lot of skill and a lot of confidence. He’s not afraid of the big moments.”

The comeback kept alive the possibility of an all-North America gold-medal game a year after Canada and the U.S. met in the final of the 4 Nations Face-Off following their epic matchup earlier in that NHL and NHLPA-run tournament.

The U.S. still has to hold up its end of the bargain to make that happen. The unbeaten Americans faced Slovakia in the second semifinal on Friday night.

## **US economic growth weaker than thought in fourth quarter with government shutdown, consumer pullback**

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER and MATT OTT AP Economics Writers

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. economic growth slowed in the final three months of last year, dragged down by the six-week shutdown of the federal government and a pullback in consumer spending.

The nation’s gross domestic product — the total output of goods and services — increased at a 1.4%

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 58 of 71

annual rate in the fourth quarter, the Commerce Department reported Friday, down from 4.4% in the July-September quarter and 3.8% in the quarter before that.

The figures point to what could be a more modest pace of growth in the coming quarters, as consumers have taken on more debt and saved less to maintain their spending, a process that may be difficult to sustain. Business investment, other than data centers and equipment dedicated to artificial intelligence, grew at only a moderate pace.

Still, a measure of underlying growth that focuses on consumer and business spending was mostly healthy at 2.4%, economists said. The sharp slowdown in government outlays because of the shutdown shaved a full percentage point from growth.

Consumers and companies spent at a "reasonably solid" pace, said Martha Gimbel, executive director of the Budget Lab at Yale and former economist in the Biden White House. "This is not a disastrous report."

Also Friday, the Supreme Court struck down many of President Donald Trump's tariffs, which have lifted inflation slightly and likely discouraged many companies from hiring by raising their costs. At a news conference, Trump quickly promised to reimpose the tariffs under different laws than the one the court invalidated.

Consumer spending also rose 2.4% in the fourth quarter, a solid increase but notably below the third quarter's healthy 3.5% gain. Federal government outlays plunged nearly 17% amid the shutdown. That decline should mostly reverse in the coming quarters, however.

The outsize growth last summer and fall — when the economy expanded at about a 4% annual pace — partly reflected sharply lower imports. Companies ramped up imports in the first quarter of last year to get ahead of President Donald Trump's tariffs. After boosting growth in the second and third quarters, trade had little impact at the end of last year.

Diane Swonk, chief economist at KPMG, said the report reflected a "one-legged" economy boosted mostly by artificial intelligence, which is fueling business spending and has also lifted wealth for those households that own stocks and have benefited from rising share prices.

Many households, however, have had to take on more debt to fuel their spending. The saving rate dropped to just 3.6% in the fourth quarter, the second-lowest figure since August 2008, when the economy was mired in the Great Recession.

"The economy looks golden on paper, but beneath the surface is lead," Swonk said.

Early Friday, before the figures were released, Trump attacked congressional Democrats for shutting down the government last fall. He also reiterated his criticism of Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell for not cutting interest rates more quickly.

"The Democrat Shutdown cost the U.S.A. at least two points in GDP," Trump posted on his social media site. "That's why they are doing it, in mini form, again. No Shutdowns! Also, LOWER INTEREST RATES. "Two Late" Powell is the WORST!!!"

A separate report Friday showed that inflation, according to the Fed's preferred measure, accelerated in December, as the cost of goods such as furniture, clothes, and groceries picked up. That makes it less likely the Fed will reduce its key interest rate in the coming months.

Earlier this month, Trump predicted a blowout gain in GDP of more than 5% even if the government shutdown was factored into the figures. Trump has been trying to claim that the economy is at its strongest point in history, even though the new data shows that growth slowed, compared with 2024, following his return to the White House.

The data arrives before Trump delivers the State of the Union address on Tuesday, where he is expected to say that the economy is booming.

The report also underscores an odd aspect of the U.S. economy: It is growing steadily, but without creating many jobs. Growth was a solid 2.2% in 2025, yet a government report last week showed that employers added less than 200,000 jobs last year — the fewest since COVID struck in 2020.

Economists point to several possible reasons for the gap: The Trump administration's crackdown on immigration has sharply slowed population growth, reducing the number of people available to take jobs. It's one reason that the unemployment rate rose only slightly — to 4.3% from 4% — last year, even with

the nearly non-existent hiring.

Some businesses may also be holding back on adding jobs out of uncertainty about whether artificial intelligence will enable them to produce more without finding new employees. And the cost of tariffs has reduced many companies' profits, possibly leading them to cut back on hiring.

The economy is also unusual right now because growth is solid, inflation has slowed a bit, and unemployment is low, but surveys show that Americans are generally gloomy about the economy. In January, a measure of consumer confidence fell to its lowest level since 2014, yet consumers have kept spending, propelling growth.

Some of that spending may be disproportionately driven by upper-income consumers, in a phenomenon known as the "K-shaped" economy. Yet data from many large banks suggests lower-income consumers are still raising their spending, even if by not as much.

## **Trump has other tariff options after Supreme Court strikes down his worldwide import taxes**

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump still has options to keep taxing imports aggressively even after the Supreme Court struck down the tariffs he imposed last year on nearly every country on earth.

The Justices didn't buy the president's sweeping claims of authority to impose tariffs as he sees fit. But Trump can re-use tariff powers he deployed in his first term and can reach for others, including one that dates back to the Great Depression.

"Their decision is incorrect," Trump said Friday, calling the Supreme Court justices who ruled against his tariffs "fools and lapdogs" during a press conference. "But it doesn't matter because we have very powerful alternatives."

Indeed, the president has already said he will impose a 10% global tariff under a trade law that allows such duties for 150 days. After that, they can only be extended by Congress.

Trump also said he would use a range of other laws and regulations to impose new tariffs, though most of those statutes would require a legal process before duties could be imposed. And he pointed to his ability to use licenses to restrain imports, but offered few details.

Trump had claimed nearly boundless authority to impose tariffs under 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA). But opponents argued before the Supreme Court that that power wasn't necessary because Congress delegated tariff power to the White House in several other statutes — though it carefully limited the ways the president could use the authority.

Tariffs have been a cornerstone of Trump's foreign and economic policy in his second term, with double-digit "reciprocal" tariffs imposed on most countries, which he has justified by declaring America's long-standing trade deficits a national emergency.

The average U.S. tariff has gone from 2.5% when Trump returned to the White House in January to nearly 17% a year later, the highest since 1934, according to calculations by Yale University's Budget Lab.

The president acted alone even though the U.S. Constitution specifically gives the power to tax — and impose tariffs — to Congress.

"The Good News is that there are methods, practices, Statutes, and other Authorities, as recognized by the entire Court and Congress, that are even stronger than the IEEPA TARIFFS, available to me as President of the United States of America," Trump posted on his social media site.

Countering unfair trade practices

The United States has long had a handy cudgel to wallop countries it accuses of engaging in "unjustifiable," "unreasonable" or "discriminatory" trade practices. That is Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974.

And Trump has made aggressive use of it himself — especially against China. In his first term, he cited Section 301 to impose sweeping tariffs on Chinese imports in a dispute over the sharp-elbowed tactics that Beijing was using to challenge America's technological dominance. The U.S. is also using 301 powers to counter what it calls unfair Chinese practices in the shipbuilding industry.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 60 of 71

There are no limits on the size of Section 301 tariffs. They expire after four years but can be extended. But the administration's trade representative must conduct an investigation and typically hold a public hearing before imposing 301 tariffs. On Friday, Trump also said the administration would initiate several more Section 301 investigations.

Experts have said Section 301 is useful in taking on China. But it has drawbacks when it comes to dealing with the smaller countries that Trump has hammered with reciprocal tariffs.

"Undertaking dozens and dozens of 301 investigations of all of those countries is a laborious process," Veroneau said.

## Targeting trade deficits

In striking down Trump's reciprocal tariffs in May, the U.S. Court of International Trade ruled that the president couldn't use emergency powers to combat trade deficits.

That is partly because Congress had specifically given the White House limited authority to address the problem in another statute: Section 122, also of the Trade Act of 1974. That allows the president to impose tariffs of up to 15% for up to 150 days in response to unbalanced trade. The administration doesn't even have to conduct an investigation beforehand.

But Section 122 authority has never been used to apply tariffs, and there is some uncertainty about how it would work.

## Protecting national security

In both of his terms, Trump has made aggressive use of his power — under Section 232 of Trade Expansion Act of 1962 — to impose tariffs on imports that he deems a threat to national security.

In 2018, he slapped tariffs on foreign steel and aluminum, levies he's expanded since returning to the White House. He also plastered Section 232 tariffs on autos, auto parts, copper, lumber.

In September, the president even levied Section 232 tariffs on kitchen cabinets, bathroom vanities and upholstered furniture.

Section 232 tariffs are not limited by law but do require an investigation by the U.S. Commerce Department. It's the administration itself that does the investigating — also true for Section 301 cases — "so they have a lot of control over the outcome," Veroneau said.

## Reviving Depression-era tariffs

Nearly a century ago, with the U.S. and world economies in collapse, Congress passed the Tariff Act of 1930, imposing hefty taxes on imports. Known as the Smoot-Hawley tariffs (for their congressional sponsors), these levies have been widely condemned by economists and historians for limiting world commerce and making the Great Depression worse. They also got a memorable pop culture shoutout in the 1986 movie "Ferris Bueller's Day Off."

Section 338 of the law authorizes the president to impose tariffs of up to 50% on imports from countries that have discriminated against U.S. businesses. No investigation is required, and there's no limit on how long the tariffs can stay in place.

Those tariffs have never been imposed — U.S. trade negotiators traditionally have favored Section 301 sanctions instead — though the United States used the threat of them as a bargaining chip in trade talks in the 1930s.

In September, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told Reuters that the administration was considering Section 338 as a Plan B if the Supreme Court ruled against Trump's use of emergency powers tariffs.

## Police search former Prince Andrew's home a day after his arrest

By PAN PYLAS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Police searched the former home of Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor again on Friday, a day after he was arrested and held in custody for nearly 11 hours on suspicion of misconduct in having shared confidential trade information with the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

In another blow for the former Prince Andrew, the British government is considering formally removing him from the line of succession to the crown. Despite losing his status as prince and facing a police

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 61 of 71

investigation, Andrew remains eighth in line to the throne. That can only be changed with new legislation. When the king stripped his brother of his titles in the fall, the government said passing a new law would not be a good use of Parliament's time.

But that view has changed and the government is now considering legislation once the police investigation is finished. James Murray, the government's chief secretary to the treasury, said "the government is considering any further steps that might be required, and we're not ruling anything out."

The last time a royal was removed from the line of succession was after the abdication of King Edward VIII in 1936, when the law was changed to strike him and any descendants from the list.

Removing Andrew would also require agreement from more than a dozen other countries, including Jamaica, Canada and Australia, that have the British monarch as head of state.

Following one of the most tumultuous days in the modern history of Britain's royal family, the former prince was back at his new residence on the Sandringham estate, King Charles III's private retreat, around 115 miles (185 kilometers) northeast of London.

Police have concluded their search there, but are still searching Royal Lodge, his 30-room former home in the parkland near Windsor Castle, just west of the capital, where the king's younger brother had lived for decades until his eviction earlier this month. Unmarked vans, believed to be police vehicles, have been entering the grounds Friday morning.

The search is expected to continue for several days.

Mountbatten-Windsor, who was pictured slouched in the back of his chauffeur-driven car following his release Thursday evening from a police station near Sandringham, remains under investigation, which means he has neither been charged nor exonerated by Thames Valley Police, the force responsible for areas west of London.

Arrest was years in the making

His arrest follows years of allegations over his links with Epstein, who died by suicide in a New York jail in 2019.

The accusation at the heart of his arrest is that Mountbatten-Windsor — who was known as Prince Andrew until October when his brother stripped him of his titles and honors and banished him from Royal Lodge — shared confidential trade information with the disgraced financier when he was a trade envoy for the U.K.

Emails released last month by the U.S. Department of Justice appeared to show Mountbatten-Windsor sharing reports of official visits to Hong Kong, Vietnam and Singapore, and sending Epstein a confidential brief on investment opportunities in Afghanistan.

Thames Valley Police has previously said it was also reviewing allegations that a woman was trafficked to the U.K. by Epstein to have a sexual encounter with Andrew. Thursday's arrest had nothing to do with that.

Other police forces are also conducting their own investigations into Epstein's links to the U.K., including the assessment of flight logs at airports, large and small. They are coordinating their work within a national group.

On Friday, London's Metropolitan Police said it was assessing, with the help of U.S. counterparts, whether the capital's airports, which include Heathrow, "may have been used to facilitate human trafficking and sexual exploitation."

It also said that it's asking past and present officers who protected Mountbatten-Windsor to "consider carefully" whether they saw or heard anything that may be relevant to the investigations.

As of now, it said no new criminal allegations have been made regarding sexual offenses within its jurisdiction.

Mountbatten-Windsor has consistently denied any wrongdoing in his association with Epstein but has not commented on the most recent allegations that have emerged with the release of the so-called Epstein files.

Arrest was sudden, investigation will take time

Police swept into the grounds of Mountbatten-Windsor's home to arrest him at 8 a.m. Thursday — his 66th birthday — before taking him to Aylsham police station for questioning.

It's not known what he told them. He may have said nothing, or "no comment," as is his right.

Experts said that misconduct in a public office is notoriously difficult to prove.

"Firstly, it must be determined if Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor was in a role within government that constitutes the title of public officer," said Sean Caulfield, a criminal defense lawyer at Hodge Jones & Allen. "There is no standard definition to clearly draw on."

The Crown Prosecution Service will ultimately make a decision about charging Mountbatten-Windsor.

Andrew Gilmore, a partner at Grosvenor Law, said that prosecutors will apply the two-stage test known as the "Code for Crown Prosecutors."

"That test is to determine whether there is a more realistic prospect of a conviction than not based on the evidence and whether the matter is in the public interest," he said. "If these two tests are met, then the matter will be charged and proceed to court."

Arrest is not just unusual, it's historic

Mountbatten-Windsor was the first royal since King Charles I nearly four centuries ago to be placed under arrest. That turned into a seismic moment in British history, leading Charles' beheading and the temporary abolition of the monarchy.

Mountbatten-Windsor's arrest is arguably one of the gravest crises for the House of Windsor since its establishment more than 100 years ago. Arguably, only the abdication of King Edward VIII in 1936, and the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, in 1997, have been as grave for the institution of the British monarchy in modern times.

In a statement Thursday, the king said the "law must take its course," but that as "this process continues, it would not be right for me to comment further on this matter."

The allegations are not related to Epstein's sex trafficking

The allegations being investigated Thursday are separate from those made by Virginia Giuffre, who claimed she was trafficked to Britain to have sex with the prince in 2001, when she was just 17. Giuffre died by suicide last year.

Still, Giuffre's sister-in-law Amanda Roberts said that she was overjoyed when she got a phone call at 3 a.m. telling her the news of the arrest. But those feelings of elation were quickly complicated by the realization that she couldn't share the feelings of "vindication" with Giuffre.

"We can't tell her how much we love her, and that everything that she was doing is not in vain," Roberts added tearfully.

## Norway wins its 17th gold medal, breaking record for most golds won in a single Winter Olympics

By MARTHA BELLISLE Associated Press

ANTERSELVA, Italy (AP) — Johannes Dale-Skjevdal of Norway was the only biathlete to hit all 20 of his targets in the 15-kilometer mass start race Friday and skied his way to gold — Norway's 17th gold medal of the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics — breaking the record for the most gold medals won by a nation at a single Winter Olympics.

Norway had set the record at the 2022 Beijing Olympics with 16 gold medals.

"It's quite a good ending to my first Olympics, and it is also my first time shooting 20 out of 20," Dale-Skjevdal said. "What a day to do it on. It's real, and I can't find the words, but it's just amazing, of course."

Dale-Skjevdal had taken the lead after the first standing bout with clean shooting and completed the five laps on newly packed snow and gusty winds in 39 minutes, 17.1 seconds. His teammate Sturla Holm Laegreid only missed one target and finished 10.5 seconds back for silver. It was his fifth medal of these Olympic Games: three silver and two bronze.

"After the third shooting, I was really hoping for something special, because then I got quite a solid gap, and then I knew that on my last shooting I would be alone on the range," Dale-Skjevdal said. "It was a situation that you dream of: coming alone on to the range, shooting in Antholz, in the Olympics, in my favorite discipline in mass start. I'm so happy."

Laegreid, who turned 29 on Friday, said it was a special day.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 63 of 71

"It was a tough race," he said. "The snow is very slow. The conditions on the range are windy, so it was like a race I had to fight for. Today I was in fighter mode, so it suited me well."

Philipp Horn of Germany only missed one target on his last shooting bout and left the range in third place, but Quentin Fillon Maillet of France, who missed four on the day, chased Horn and passed him on a big hill, and took the bronze, 25.6 seconds behind Dale-Skjevdal.

Fillon Maillet said he felt strong on the skiing and was excited to win his ninth Olympic medal.

"I didn't feel pain in my legs, so I could push hard," he said. "I wasn't so good on the shooting range, but you know, never mind. It's still a medal, and with these Olympics it makes it nine in total right now. That's incredible."

Horn said it was a huge disappointment.

"I was great on the shooting range," he said. "I kept calm and relaxed, and did my job, but on the last loop I was just not strong enough. It was a fourth place, which is worth nothing at the Olympics."

Fillon Maillet, who was on the gold medal winning team in the mixed relay and men's relay, also won gold in the sprint.

Campbell Wright, America's last hope for its first Olympic medal in biathlon, struggled on the shooting range. He missed seven out of 20 and finished in last place.

Italy's Tommaso Giacomel, who sits second in overall World Cup standings, cleaned all 10 of his prone shots, and was leading the race, but dropped out of the race on the third lap. A message sent out by the Italian biathlon federation said he retired due to a "sudden pain in his side which affected his breathing."

Only the top 30 biathletes compete in the mass start race — based on World Cup rankings and Olympic performance. They ski five, 3-kilometer loops, shooting twice in the prone position and twice standing.

The women's 12.5-kilometer mass start is scheduled for Saturday — the final day of the Olympic biathlon competition.

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# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 64 of 71

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## What is ALS, the disease that killed actor Eric Dane?

By LAURA UNGAR AP Medical Writer

Eric Dane, known for his roles on "Grey's Anatomy" and "Euphoria," died this week from amyotrophic lateral sclerosis at age 53.

The fatal nervous system disease, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, killed Dane less than a year after he announced his diagnosis.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ALS is rare. In 2022, there were nearly 33,000 estimated cases, say researchers, who project that cases will rise to more than 36,000 by 2030.

The disease is slightly more common in men than in women and tends to strike in midlife, between the ages of 40 and 60.

Here's what to know.

What is ALS?

It affects nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord, causing loss of muscle control and getting worse over time.

ALS causes nerve cells in the upper and lower parts of the body to stop working and die. Nerves no longer trigger specific muscles, eventually leading to paralysis. People with ALS may develop problems with mobility, speaking, swallowing and breathing.

The exact cause of the disease is unknown, and Mayo Clinic experts said a small number of cases are inherited.

It's called Lou Gehrig's disease after the Hall of Fame New York Yankees player. Gehrig was diagnosed with ALS in 1939 on his 36th birthday, died in 1941 and was the face of ALS for decades.

What are some signs of ALS?

Experts say the first symptoms are often subtle. The disease may begin with muscle twitching and weakness in an arm or leg.

Over time, muscles stop acting and reacting correctly, said experts at University of California San Francisco Health. People may lose strength and coordination in their arms and legs; feet and ankles may become weak; and muscles in the arms, shoulders and tongue may cramp or twitch. Swallowing and speaking may become difficult and fatigue may set in.

The ability to think, see, hear, smell, taste and touch are usually not affected, UCSF experts said.

Eventually, muscles used for breathing may become paralyzed. Patients may be unable to swallow and

inhale food or saliva. Most people with ALS die of respiratory failure.

How is ALS diagnosed and treated?

The disease is difficult to diagnose because there's no test or procedure to confirm it. Generally, doctors will perform a physical exam, lab tests and imaging of the brain and spinal cord.

A doctor may interpret certain things as signs of ALS, including an unusual flexing of the toes, diminished fine motor coordination, painful muscle cramps, twitching and spasticity, a type of stiffness causing jerky movements.

There's no known cure for ALS, but the drug riluzole has been approved for treatment. According to the Mayo Clinic, it may extend survival in the early stages of the disease or extend the time until a breathing tube is needed.

Another much-debated drug, Relyvrio, was pulled from the U.S. market by Amylyx Pharmaceuticals in 2024. Its development had been financed, in part, by the ALS Association, the major beneficiary of the 2014 "ice bucket challenge" viral phenomenon.

Other medications are sometimes prescribed to help control symptoms.

Choking is common as ALS progresses, so patients may need feeding tubes. People may also use braces, wheelchairs, speech synthesizers or computer-based communication systems.

After the onset of the disease, experts say patients may survive from two years to a decade. Most people live from two to five years after symptoms develop, and about a fifth live more than five years after they are diagnosed.

## **Saudi Arabia may have uranium enrichment under proposed deal with US, arms control experts warn**

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Saudi Arabia could have some form of uranium enrichment within the kingdom under a proposed nuclear deal with the United States, congressional documents and an arms control group suggest, raising proliferation concerns as an atomic standoff between Iran and America continues.

U.S. Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden both tried to reach a nuclear deal with the kingdom to share American technology. Nonproliferation experts warn any spinning centrifuges within Saudi Arabia could open the door to a possible weapons program for the kingdom, something its assertive crown prince has suggested he could pursue if Tehran obtains an atomic bomb.

Already, Saudi Arabia and nuclear-armed Pakistan signed a mutual defense pact last year after Israel launched an attack on Qatar targeting Hamas officials. Pakistan's defense minister then said his nation's nuclear program "will be made available" to Saudi Arabia if needed, something seen as a warning for Israel, long believed to be the Middle East's only nuclear-armed state.

"Nuclear cooperation can be a positive mechanism for upholding nonproliferation norms and increasing transparency, but the devil is in the details," wrote Kelsey Davenport, the director for nonproliferation policy at the Washington-based Arms Control Association.

The documents raise "concerns that the Trump administration has not carefully considered the proliferation risks posed by its proposed nuclear cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia or the precedent this agreement may set."

Saudi Arabia did not respond to questions Friday from The Associated Press.

Congressional report outlines possible deal

The congressional document, also seen by the AP, shows the Trump administration aims to reach 20 nuclear business deals with nations around the world, including Saudi Arabia. The deal with Saudi Arabia could be worth billions of dollars, it adds.

The document contends that reaching a deal with the kingdom "will advance the national security interests of the United States, breaking with the failed policies of inaction and indecision that our competitors have capitalized on to disadvantage American industry and diminish the United States standing globally in

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 66 of 71

this critical sector." China, France, Russia and South Korea are among the leading nations that sell nuclear power plant technology abroad.

The draft deal would see America and Saudi Arabia enter safeguard agreements with the United Nations' nuclear watchdog — the International Atomic Energy Agency or IAEA. That would include oversight of the "most proliferation-sensitive areas of potential nuclear cooperation," it added. It listed enrichment, fuel fabrication and reprocessing as potential areas.

"This suggests that once the bilateral safeguards agreement is in place, it will open the door for Saudi Arabia to acquire uranium enrichment technology or capabilities — possibly even from the United States," Davenport wrote. "Even with restrictions and limits, it seems likely that Saudi Arabia will have a path to some type of uranium enrichment or access to knowledge about enrichment."

Saudi Arabia is a member state of the IAEA, a Vienna-based agency which promotes peaceful nuclear work but also inspects nations to ensure they don't have clandestine atomic weapons programs.

The IAEA told the AP in a statement on Friday that it "maintains regular contact with both parties and is able to apply verification measures in connection with bilateral cooperation agreements."

"If the parties will request the agency to apply verification measures in connection with their bilateral cooperation agreements, the agency will continue to consult with the parties concerned and address the request in accordance with its established procedures," the IAEA added.

Enrichment isn't an automatic path to a nuclear weapon — a nation also must master other steps including the use of synchronized high explosives, for instance. But it does open the door to weaponization, which has fueled the concerns of the West over Iran's program.

The United Arab Emirates, a neighbor to Saudi Arabia, signed what is referred to as a "123 agreement" with the U.S. to build its Barakah nuclear power plant with South Korean assistance. But the UAE did so without seeking enrichment, something nonproliferation experts have held up as the "gold standard" for nations wanting atomic power.

Saudi-US proposal comes amid Iran tensions

The push for a Saudi-U.S. deal comes as Trump threatens military action against Iran if it doesn't reach a deal over its nuclear program. The Trump military push follows nationwide protests in Iran that saw its theocratic government launch a bloody crackdown on dissent that killed thousands and saw tens of thousands more reportedly detained.

In Iran's case, it long has insisted its nuclear enrichment program is peaceful. However, the West and the IAEA say Iran had an organized military nuclear program up until 2003. Tehran also had been enriching uranium up to 60% purity, a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels of 90% — making it the only country in the world to do so without a weapons program.

Iranian diplomats long have pointed to 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's comments as a binding fatwa, or religious edict, that Iran won't build an atomic bomb. However, Iranian officials increasingly have made the threat they could seek the bomb as tensions have risen with the U.S.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the kingdom's day-to-day ruler, has said if Iran obtains the bomb, "we will have to get one."

## Inflation rose more quickly than expected in December

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — A key inflation gauge accelerated in December to the fastest pace in nearly a year, showing how prices are still rising more quickly than most Americans would prefer — and faster than the Federal Reserve's target of 2% a year.

Prices rose 0.4% in December from the previous month, up from 0.2% in November, the Commerce Department said Friday in a report that was delayed by the six-week government shutdown last fall. The monthly increase was the highest since last February. Compared with a year ago, inflation rose 2.9% in December, up from 2.8% in November. That is the largest yearly increase since March 2024.

Core prices — which exclude the volatile food and energy categories — also rose 0.4% in December from

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 67 of 71

the previous month, up from 0.2% in November. That is also the highest since last February. Core prices jumped 3% in December from a year ago, faster than November's 2.8% increase.

The figures show that inflation remains elevated, though it's down from a peak of near 7% in 2022. With many prices still rising more quickly than they did before the pandemic, the report points to a key reason that many Americans remain unhappy with the economy, even as unemployment remains low and growth is solid.

The report covers what is known as the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, which the Federal Reserve prefers over the better-known consumer price index. The CPI cooled noticeably in January, the government said last week.

But the reason the PCE index is running higher than the consumer price index is because it puts much less weight on some areas where price growth has sharply cooled, such as apartment rents and car prices.

Friday's report also showed that consumers kept spending at a solid clip in December, when spending rose 0.4% from the previous month, the same as in November.

In December, prices climbed for furniture, clothing, and groceries. Gas prices fell, but the cost of electricity rose and natural gas costs soared 3.7% just in December from the previous month.

The Fed's interest-rate setting committee met in late January and agreed to keep its short-term rate unchanged at about 3.6% despite repeated demands from President Donald Trump to reduce it. According to minutes from the meeting released Wednesday, most officials want to see inflation fall closer to the Fed's target before supporting further rate cuts.

## **Trump has stocked his administration with people who have backed his false 2020 election claims**

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Associated Press

President Donald Trump has long spread conspiracy theories about voting designed to explain away his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden. Now that he's president again, Trump has stocked his administration with those who have promoted his falsehoods and in some cases helped him try to overturn his loss.

Those election conspiracists now holding official power range from the attorney general to lawyers filing lawsuits for the Justice Department. Kurt Olsen, a lawyer who unsuccessfully pushed the Justice Department in 2020 to back the president's false claims, is now leading a sweeping probe of the vote from that election.

The most dramatic action from that mandate was the seizure in late January of ballots and 2020 election records from Fulton County in Georgia, a Democratic stronghold that includes Atlanta. The county has long been a target of election conspiracy theorists aligned with Trump, and the affidavit for the search warrant shows the action was based on 2020 claims that in many cases had been thoroughly investigated.

Election officials across the country, especially those in states controlled politically by Democrats, are bracing for more turmoil during this year's elections, when control of Congress is on the line.

"The election denial movement is now embedded across our federal government, which makes it more powerful than ever," said Joanna Lydgate, chief executive officer of States United Democracy Center, which tracks those who promote election conspiracy theories. "Trump and his allies are trying to use all of the powers of the federal government to undermine elections, with an eye to the upcoming midterms."

Trump has remade the federal government as an arm of his own personal will, and his attorney general, Pam Bondi — who helped try to overturn Trump's 2020 loss — has declared that everyone working at the Justice Department needs to carry out the president's demands. Even with all the issues facing him in his second term, from persistent concerns about the economy to his immigration crackdown, Trump continues to push the false claim that he won the 2020 presidential election.

Some of the people who populate his administration are, like Bondi, longtime supporters who continued to help Trump even as he sought to overturn an election. Some played minor roles in supporting the false claims about the 2020 presidential election. Still others have pushed conspiracy theories, often fantastical or debunked, that have helped persuade millions of Republicans that Trump had the 2020 election stolen from him.

## Life is harsh and dangerous in Russian-run parts of Ukraine, activists and former residents say

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

TALLINN, Estonia (AP) — Even now, safely in her new home of Estonia, Inna Vnukova says she can't purge the terrifying memory of living under Russian occupation in eastern Ukraine early in the war and her family's harrowing escape.

They hid in a damp basement for days in their village of Kudriashivka after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. In the streets, soldiers waving machine guns bullied residents, set up checkpoints and looted homes. There was constant shelling.

"Everyone was very scared and afraid to go outside," Vnukova told The Associated Press, with troops seeking out Ukrainian sympathizers and civil servants like her and her husband, Oleksii Vnukov.

In mid-March, she decided that she and her 16-year-old son, Zhenya, would flee the village with her brother's family, even though it meant leaving her husband behind temporarily. They took a risky trip by car to nearby Starobilsk, waving a white sheet amid mortar fire.

"We had already said our goodbyes to life, cursing this Russian world," said Vnukova, 42. "I've been trying to forget this nightmare for four years, but I can't."

Many Ukrainians like Vnukova fled the invading forces. Those who stayed risked being detained — or worse — as Russian forces eventually took control of about 20% of the country and its estimated 3 million to 5 million people.

A new, Russian life in the seized regions

After four years of war, life in shattered cities like Mariupol and villages like Kudriashivka remains difficult, with residents facing problems with housing, water, power, heat and health care. Even President Vladimir Putin has acknowledged they have "many truly pressing, urgent problems."

In the illegally annexed regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, Russian citizenship, language and culture is forced on residents, including in school lessons and textbooks. By spring 2025, some 3.5 million people in the four regions had been given Russian passports — a requirement to receive vital services like health care.

Some in the regions say they live in fear of being accused of sympathizing with Ukraine. Many have been imprisoned, beaten and killed, according to human rights activists.

Oleksii Vnukov, a court security officer, stayed behind in the village for nearly two weeks. Russian soldiers twice threatened to kill him, including an instance where he and a friend were dragged off the street by soldiers. But he survived and soon also escaped the village.

The family traveled through Russia before making it to Estonia, where Inna works in a printing house and Oleksii, 43, is an electrician.

"All life is leaving the occupied territories," Vnukov said. "The people there aren't living, they're just surviving."

Mykhailo Savva of the Center for Civil Liberties in Ukraine said the Russian military's practice of wielding "systemic and total control" in the regions continues today.

"Even though a significant number of socially active people have already been detained, Russian special services continue to identify disloyal Ukrainians, extract confessions, and continue to detain people," Savva said. "Residents face such practices as document checks, mass searches, and denunciations on a daily basis."

Human rights groups say Russian authorities used "filtration camps" to identify potentially disloyal individuals, as well as anyone who worked for the government, helped the Ukrainian army or had relatives in the military, along with journalists, teachers, scientists and politicians.

Stanislav Shkuta, 25, who lived in occupied Nova Kakhovka in the Kherson region, said he narrowly escaped arrest several times before reaching Ukrainian-controlled territory in 2023. He recalled being on a bus that was stopped by Russian soldiers.

"It was horrific. Men and women were asked to strip to the waist to see if they had Ukrainian tattoos,"

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 69 of 71

said Shkuta, who now lives in Estonia. "I turned white with fear, wondering if I'd cleared everything on my phone."

He said his friends who stayed in Nova Kakhovka say life has worsened, with suspected Ukrainian sympathizers stopped on the street or in surprise door-to-door inspections.

"Today, my friends complain that life there has become impossible," he said.

Russia established a "vast network of secret and official detention centers where tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians" are held indefinitely without charge, said Oleksandra Matviichuk, head of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Center for Civil Liberties.

"Everyone knows that if you end up in the basement, your life is worth nothing," she said.

Russian officials have refused to comment on past allegations by U.N. human rights officials that it tortures civilians and prisoners of war.

About 16,000 civilians have been detained illegally, but that number could be much higher because many are held incommunicado, said Ukrainian Human Rights Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets.

A U.N. report released last summer said that between July 2024 and June 2025, it spoke to 57 civilians who were detained in the occupied regions, and that 52 of them told of severe beatings, electric shocks, sexual violence, degradation and threats of violence.

One particularly famous case is that of Ukrainian journalist Victoria Roshchyna, 27, who disappeared in 2023 while reporting near the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and died in Russian custody. When her body was handed over to Ukraine in 2025, it bore signs of torture, with some of her organs removed, a prosecutor said.

"Russia uses terror in the occupied territories to physically eliminate active people working in certain fields: teachers, children's writers, musicians, mayors, journalists, environmentalists. It also intimidates the passive majority," Matviichuk says.

## Destruction in Mariupol

At the start of the war, Russian forces besieged Mariupol before the port city fell in May 2022. The Russian bombing of the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theater on March 16 of that year killed close to 600 people in and around the building, an AP investigation found, in the single deadliest known attack against civilians in the war.

Most of the city's population of about a half-million fled but many hid in basements, said a former actor who huddled for months with his parents, saying they were nearly killed by the Russian bombing.

The former actor, now in Estonia, spoke on condition of anonymity to not endanger his 76-year-old parents, still in Mariupol. They had to take Russian citizenship to get medical care, as well as a one-time payment equivalent to \$1,300 per person as compensation for their destroyed home, he said.

As in other occupied cities, Russification is taking place in Mariupol, changing street names, teaching Moscow-approved curriculum in schools, using Russian phone and TV networks and putting the city in Moscow's time zone.

"But even today, the threat of death has not gone away. Only those who have Russian passports can survive," the former actor said, adding that his parents have asked him not to send postcards in Ukrainian because "it could be dangerous."

Putin "openly states that there is no Ukrainian language, no Ukrainian culture, no Ukrainian nation. And in the occupied territories, these words are turning into terrible practice," Matviichuk said.

But not everyone opposes the Russian takeover in Mariupol. The former actor says half of the members of his old troupe now support the Kremlin and believe Kyiv "provoked the war."

Housing is a sore point in Mariupol, where the population is about half of what it was before 2022. New apartment blocks rose from the ruins, but rather than going to those who lost their homes, they are sold to Russian newcomers.

Some who lost their homes have made video appeals to Putin. "You said we 'don't abandon our own.' Do we not count as your own?" said one resident at a mass rally.

At least 12,191 apartments in Mariupol were added to a list of purportedly "ownerless" and abandoned flats to be expropriated in the first half of 2025. Thousands more are being seized elsewhere.

# Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 70 of 71

Moscow is encouraging Russian citizens to move to the occupied regions, offering a range of benefits. Teachers, doctors and cultural workers are promised salary supplements if they commit to living there for five years.

Crumbling infrastructure and a shortage of doctors

Years of war and neglect have saddled many occupied cities in eastern Ukraine with serious problems in supplying heat, electricity and water.

The northeastern city of Sievierodonetsk suffered significant destruction before falling to Russia in June 2022. Once home to 140,000 people, only 45,000 remain, mostly elderly or disabled.

Only one ambulance crew serves the whole city, and doctors and other health workers rotate in from Russian regions like Perm to work at its hospital, said a 67-year-old former engineer who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution.

But she still supports "the great work Putin is doing," because she was born and raised in the former Soviet Union.

In Alchevsk, a city in the Luhansk region, over half the homes have been without heat for two bitterly cold months. Five warming stations have been set up and utility companies said over 60% of municipal heating networks are in poor shape, without funds for repairs.

Even a pro-Moscow politician, Oleg Tsaryov, has accused authorities of freezing "an entire city." When the heating system failed in 2006, he noted on social media that Ukrainian authorities "and the entire country stepped in to help and completely replaced the faulty equipment." But after the Russian takeover, officials had "contrived to repeat this Armageddon scenario all over again," he added.

In the Donetsk region, water trucks fill barrels outside apartment blocks — but they freeze solid in winter, said a resident who spoke on condition of anonymity because she feared repercussions.

"There's constant squabbling over water," she said, adding that lines to get the precious resource are "insane," and people who are away at work often miss the trucks' arrival.

Donetsk residents wrote an appeal for Putin to intervene in what has become "a humanitarian and environmental catastrophe."

Putin last year acknowledged the plight in the four regions.

"I know how difficult it is now for the residents of the liberated cities and towns. There are many truly pressing, urgent problems," he said, marking the third anniversary of incorporating those areas into Russia. He cited the need for reliable water supplies and access to health care, among other issues, and said he has launched a "large-scale socioeconomic development program" for the regions.

Meanwhile, Inna Vnukova is building a new life in Estonia: She and Oleksii now have a 1-year-old daughter, Alisa. Their son is now 20.

Only about 150 people — including the couple's parents — remain in the village that once was home to 800, Vnukova said, adding that she would like to show her daughter the family's native Luhansk region someday.

"We've been dreaming of returning for four years, but we increasingly wonder — what will we see there?" she asked.

## Today in History: February 21 Malcolm X is shot and killed at age 39

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Feb. 21, the 52nd day of 2026. There are 313 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Feb. 21, 1965, civil rights activist Malcolm X, 39, was shot to death inside Harlem's Audubon Ballroom in New York. Three men identified as members of the Nation of Islam were convicted of murder and imprisoned; all were eventually paroled. (The convictions of two of the men were dismissed in November 2021, when prosecutors said new evidence had undermined the case against them.)

Also on this date:

# Groton Daily Independent

**Saturday, February 21, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 261 ~ 71 of 71**

In 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels published "The Communist Manifesto" in London.

In 1885, President Chester Arthur dedicated the Washington Monument.

In 1911, composer Gustav Mahler, despite a fever, conducted the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall in what turned out to be his final concert. (He died the following May.)

In 1916, the Battle of Verdun, the longest battle of World War I, began in northeastern France.

In 1972, President Richard M. Nixon began a historic visit to China, where he met with Chinese leader Mao Zedong.

In 1973, Israeli fighter planes shot down Libyan Arab Airlines Flight 114 after it strayed into Israeli-controlled airspace over the Sinai Desert, killing all but five of the 113 people on board.

In 1975, former Attorney General John N. Mitchell, former White House Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman, and former White House Domestic Affairs Adviser John D. Ehrlichman were sentenced to 2 1/2 to 8 years in prison for their roles in the Watergate cover-up. (Each ended up serving less than two years.)

In 1992, Kristi Yamaguchi of the United States won the gold medal in women's figure skating at the Albertville Winter Olympics; Midori Ito of Japan won the silver, and American Nancy Kerrigan the bronze.

In 1995, American adventurer Steve Fossett became the first person to fly solo across the Pacific Ocean by balloon, landing in Saskatchewan, Canada, after a 5,400-mile, four-day flight from South Korea.

Today's birthdays: Film and music executive David Geffen is 83. Actor Tyne Daly is 80. Actor Anthony Daniels is 80. Actor William Petersen is 73. Actor Kelsey Grammer is 71. Country musician Mary Chapin Carpenter is 68. Baseball Hall of Famer Alan Trammell is 68. Actor William Baldwin is 63. Democratic Sen. Mark Kelly of Arizona is 62. Actor Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor is 57. Musician Rhiannon Giddens is 49. Actor Tituss Burgess is 47. Actor Jennifer Love Hewitt is 47. Filmmaker-comedian Jordan Peele is 47. Singer Charlotte Church is 40. Actor Joe Alwyn is 35.