

# Groton Daily Independent

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## Sunday, March 8

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 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.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.

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

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

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

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

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

6th grade BB Practice, 6 pm., Arena

FCS St.Baldricks SHAVE TO SAVE Event, 3:30 p.m., GHS Gym.



## Monday, March 9

Senior Menu: Tater tot hot dish, corn, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast; Egg bake

School Lunch: Corn dog, chips

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

Groton Senior Citizens, 1 p.m., Community Center

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

HS Baseball Practice, 6 p.m., HS Gym

## Tuesday, March 10

Senior Menu: Pork sandwich, baked beans, tomato spoon salad, fruit.

End of Third Quarter

School Breakfast: Muffins.

School Lunch: Beef and broccoli, rice.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

ACT Testing

HS Baseball Practice, 6 p.m., HS Gym

SoDak16 Boys Basketball: Groton vs. Pine Ridge at Chamberlain, 5:30 p.m.

Pickleball, 6 p.m., Elementary Gym

Biogirls, 3:45 p.m., elementary gym

*We the People*

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



By David Adler

## Trump Unilaterally Slips the Dogs of War: What Lies Ahead?

President Donald Trump's unilateral decision to plunge the United States into war against Iran is a war of his own making, not a war of necessity, but a war of choice. He has yet to explain, in a clear, coherent fashion, his reasons for going to war, either to Congress or to the American people. Five days after initiating war, striking more than 2000 targets in Iran, with six U.S. servicemen killed and three fighter jets downed, Trump should, by now, have explained to the American people, in a nationally televised address, what his objectives are, what his theory of victory is, and on what legal authority the administration believes it is waging this war, which Congress has neither declared nor authorized.

It is demonstrably clear that this war is illegal and unconstitutional. Few grieve the death of Iran's Supreme Leader, a cruel, monster of man who has, for decades, repressed and executed Iranian citizens, and nobody wants Iran to possess nuclear weapons, but the Constitution requires governmental officials, including the president, to obey its allocation of powers and responsibilities. The War Clause—Article 1, section 8, vests the sole and exclusive authority to "Declare War" and order lesser military hostilities in Congress, not the president. The framers of the Constitution, in the words of James Madison, denied to the executive the authority to "decide on matters of war and peace." Congress, alone, Madison explained, has the power to "commence, continue and conclude war." Trump has usurped that authority and insists, imperiously, that "it is too late for talks."

This war is without legal scaffolding. The War Powers Act of 1973 does not afford a legal basis for Trump's War. A war of choice, by definition, cannot be justified by statutory language that permits the introduction of troops into "circumstances" where "hostilities are imminent" when it is the president who initiates the hostilities.

Those who wrote the Constitution feared the unpredictable twists and turns of war, the chaos, destruction and tragedy that may result when a government, to borrow from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar, decides to "let slip the dogs of war." Thomas Jefferson, in a September 6, 1789 letter to Madison, praised the shackles that the Constitutional Convention had imposed on unilateral executive warmaking. "We have already given one effectual check on the Dog of war, by transferring the power of letting him loose from the Executive to the Legislative body." But the constitutional wisdom summoned by the framers to render an "effectual check" on presidential warmaking can be rendered ineffectual by a recalcitrant executive.

The framers of the Constitution—to a man—agreed that the president should be barred from initiating war and military hostilities. They carved this unanimous commitment into the War Clause: "Congress shall have power to declare war." George Mason spoke for the Convention when he declared that he was "against giving the power of war to the Executive because he was not safely entrusted with it." Elbridge Gerry said a "motion to empower the executive" to "declare war" was antithetical to the premises of republicanism. James Wilson summed up the constitutional system for going to war. It is "calculated" to prevent a "single man" to "involve us in such distress."

The framers' wisdom on the assignment of the war power is as compelling today, indeed, likely more so, than it was in 1787. The founders were keenly aware of the calamitous consequences of warfare, but

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they could not have glimpsed the horrific effects of nuclear war. In a world in which a "single man" may "involve us in such distress," the president, alone, may incinerate the planet. If, for one moment, you allow your imagination to contemplate the planet set afire by the intemperate judgment, erratic behavior and whims of a single person, you will recognize the wisdom of the framers in denying to the president the authority to take the nation to war.

President Trump's choice to initiate hostilities, which he likened to the swift attack on Venezuela and the capture of President Maduro, what he called his "model" for Iran, crumbled in the first days of his strikes. Already, the broader Middle East War has engulfed 12 nations, killed more than 800 civilians, and caused the price of natural gas and oil to spike. Who knows how to predict what chaos, destruction and tragedy will afflict the world when the dogs of war have been slipped.

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



## Shilhaneks take over Rosewood Court

by Dorene Nelson

Mike and Regan Shilhanek are the new owners of Rosewood Court, an independent living facility originally built in 1996. Prior to their purchase, Monte and Sandi Sippel had owned Rosewood for fifteen years. The idea of this business was originally introduced to Groton by Gary and Patti Pitts from Mitchell. Dick and Kay Donovan had been the first managers.

Mike and Regan had been discussing potential business opportunities for a few months when the Shilhaneks discovered this one in Groton, making it very convenient for them.

Mike has a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering and a Master's Degree in Engineering Management. Regan is a dental assistant. They have two children, a four year old son and an eleven month old daughter. Mike's parents Bruce and Julie Shilhanek currently live in Rosewood Court.

"The opportunity to buy Rosewood Court came rather unexpectedly," Mike admitted. "We live in Groton, and I've been blessed by the community, the residents who live here, and by the school and the education I've received."

"Recently my family has experienced some incredibly challenging events, and time after time this community showed up to help in a way I can never repay," he explained.

"Purchasing Rosewood was a great way of giving back to the community by way of saying thank you to the people who helped shape and support us," Mike stated.

"Our professional experiences helped us make the decision to buy Rosewood," he said. "I love building and working with my hands while my wife provides organization and efficiency to provide a place where residents are treated like extended family as well as providing security and care."

Rosewood offers supervised living with three meals a day, laundry service, and light housekeeping. One room or two private rooms are available with their own bathrooms featuring a walk-in shower and a closet. Individuals are even invited to stay at Rosewood during the winter, returning to their homes in the spring.

Various individuals and groups visit with a variety of creative activities for the residents. Groups from the school, such as FCS and HOSA, often come with games, puzzles, crafts, or other group activities that provide interest and fun.

There are weekly Bible studies, monthly sing-a-long and piano playing, and several outside activities in the spring and summer. The residents enjoy working in the garden and especially getting to eat the produce that grows there.

The residents can participate in field trips, work on puzzles, and enjoy other group events. They especially like the Friday night pizza and wine suppers.

Friends and family members of the residents are welcome to visit any time. The residents are allowed to drive and live as if they were in their own home as well as having the advantage of their own private space.

There is no health care, but Prairie Heights provides onsite therapy to individuals who need it.

Some employees live in Rosewood, giving the residents an extra feeling of care and comfort.



**Pictured are Regan holding Isla, Oliver in front and Michael Shilhanek.**

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## Hanson County Fatal Crash

What: Single vehicle fatal crash

Where: Interstate 90, mile marker 351, seven miles east of Alexandria, SD

When: 5:36 p.m., Friday, March 6, 2026

Vehicle 1: 2006 Chevrolet Colorado

Driver 1: 60-year-old female from Sioux Falls, SD, fatal injuries

Seat belt Used: No

Hanson County, S.D.- A Sioux Falls woman died Friday evening in a single-vehicle crash on Interstate 90, seven miles east of Alexandria.



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

Preliminary crash information indicates the driver of a 2006 Chevrolet Colorado was traveling eastbound near mile marker 351 when she lost control of the vehicle and entered the south ditch. The vehicle rolled several times, ejecting the driver. She died at the scene.

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

### Class A - SoDak 16



#### #1 - Madison High School Main Gym

	1 West Central	21-0	3/10 7:00 PM CT
	16 Webster Area	14-8	



STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

#### #5 - Chamberlain School District Chambe...

	5 Groton Area	17-4	3/10 5:30 PM CT
	12 Pine Ridge	14-8	


#### #2 - Madison High School Main Gym

	2 Sioux Falls Christian	19-1	3/10 5:30 PM CT
	15 Wagner	16-6	



STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

#### #6 - Miller High School

	6 Stanley County	19-2	3/10 7:30 PM CT
	11 Flandreau	15-7	



#### #3 - Watertown High School Arena

	3 Clark/Willow Lake	19-2	3/10 8:00 PM CT
	14 McCook Central/Montrose	15-6	



STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

#### #7 - Winner High School

	7 Lennox	17-5	3/10 7:00 PM CT
	10 St. Thomas More	16-5	



#### #4 - Chamberlain School District Chambe...

	4 Hamlin	19-3	3/10 7:00 PM CT
	13 Rapid City Christian	14-8	

STATE QUALIFIER

STATE QUALIFIER

#### #8 -

	8 Mahpiya Luta	18-3	3/10 TBD
	9 Cheyenne-Eagle Butte	19-3	

### Seed Points Averages (calculated Feb. 27)

#1 West Central 46.700 - #2 Sioux Falls Christian 46.579 - #3 Clark/Willow Lake 45.750 - #4 Hamlin 45.350 - #5 Groton Area 44.800 - #6 Stanley County 44.400 - #7 Lennox 44.250 - #8 Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 43.850 - #8 Mahpiya Luta 43.850 - #10 St. Thomas More 43.500 - #11 Flandreau 43.450 - #12 Pine Ridge 42.900 - #13 Rapid City Christian 42.450 - #14 McCook Central/Montrose 41.900 - #14 Wagner 41.900 - #16 Webster Area 41.550

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to set up your appointment today!

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In the bottom right photo, Brent Wienk (right) and Paul Kosel put up the new Limited Edition South Dakota - US 250th Anniversary Flag at the Groton Legion Flag pole on Saturday. The photo below shows the design of the flag.



## Arts Conference focuses on healing and the arts

By Jim Speirs, Executive Director, Arts South Dakota

Wellness and good health are concerns for everyone in South Dakota—and the biennial State Arts Conference April 24 and 25 in Rapid City spotlights Arts in Healing SD. Now is the time to mark your calendar for this opportunity to learn more about South Dakota's leadership in promoting the arts as a path to wellness.

This year's conference explores the impact of the arts in health and healing, and the programs that have proven so effective in our state's health care facilities. Leaders who apply the healing power of the arts to communities, artists and arts administrators who make the arts happen will all be on hand for keynote addresses, learning workshops and informal interactions. You have a lot to talk about with our presenters—and this is your chance to join the conversation!

Keynote speaker is Christopher Bailey, former co-director of the Jameel Arts and Health Lab and founder of the WHO Arts and Health program in Geneva, Switzerland. Another highlight of this year's conference will be presenter Ariadne (Ari) Albright, Creative Aging SD Coordinator for the South Dakota Arts Council, visual artist and arts-in-health consultant working across healthcare, academic, community and correctional settings. For a complete program of opportunities at this year's conference, just check out the list at [ArtsSouthDakota.org](https://ArtsSouthDakota.org). Every session is packed with information that will improve your ability to advocate, create and connect the arts and healing.

Recent State Arts Conferences have proven that new lines of communication are formed, innovative alliances are created and South Dakota becomes more connected as we make our creative community stronger. Your participation in the conference strengthens the statewide network of people who care about the arts.

Please join me in Rapid City to help build the future of the arts across South Dakota and celebrate our unique creative environment. Registration is now open for the intensive Arts in Healing preconference sessions on Friday and the full Saturday conference schedule of events. To check out the program, performances, speakers and learning opportunities and to register for the 2026 State Arts Conference, visit [ArtsSouthDakota.org](https://ArtsSouthDakota.org).



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What can **\$20**  
get you?



for  
**SENIOR  
CITIZENS**

*Open 24/7*

**GDI Living**



**Fitness**

or anyone using physical therapy

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**BEST  
RATES  
AROUND!**

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

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

### MONTH-TO-MONTH

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



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

**Same rates for several years!**

## **GFP Commission Modifies Bounty Program - Focuses on Youth Trapping and Coyote Removal**

The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission passed a resolution to end the current Nest Predator Bounty Program at their March meeting in Pierre and create two separate programs within the existing budget and time period.

The Nest Predator Bounty Program began in 2019 with the implementation of the Second Century Initiative. This reinvigorated trapping as an outdoor recreational opportunity and a means to get youth engaged and spend more time outdoors.

Data collected from the program shows that the level of youth participation over the past 4 years has exceeded 30%. In 2024 and 2025, youth participation reached 46%.

"The Nest Predator Bounty Program has been incredibly successful at engaging youth in wildlife management and our tradition of trapping in South Dakota," said Kevin Robling, GFP Secretary.

In total, 342,743 nest predators were removed since the program's inception.

"Intense nest predator removal in localized areas during the nesting season can contribute to higher nest success and we encourage individuals to continue to participate in this management activity," continued Robling. "In 2026, we are going to focus on continuing to get youth outdoors and addressing our coyote population."

As part of this focus, the current Nest Predator Bounty Program is ending. The allocated \$500,000 for this program will be split into two separate programs: the Youth Trapping Recruitment Program and the Coyote Bounty Program.

### **Youth Trapping Recruitment Program**

The Youth Trapping Recruitment Program will be open for South Dakota youth age 17 and under. Tails from raccoon, striped skunk, badger, opossum, and red fox will be worth \$10.

The program will run from March 1-July 1, unless the \$200,000 limit is reached first.

"Youth recruitment and retention in trapping and wildlife management is a key component of this program," said Robling. "We are thrilled with the amount of youth participation we have seen, so we want to continue this momentum."

### **Coyote Bounty Program**

The Coyote Bounty Program will be open for all South Dakota residents. Tails from coyotes will be worth \$30.

The program will run from April 1-July 1, unless the \$300,000 limit is reached first.

"Controlling the coyote population is critical for both our agricultural industry and wildlife populations," stated Robling. "The newly created Coyote Bounty Program will assist in the management of these predators to help protect newborn calves and lambs for agricultural producers and enhance fawn survival for deer and antelope."

### **Tail Submission Opportunities**

Individuals wishing to participate in either of these programs may submit tails to their local GFP office during designated tail turn in opportunities. Households are eligible to submit up to \$590 worth of tails in each program.

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## GROTON AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT #06-6

School Board Meeting  
March 9, 2026 – 7:00 PM

Columbia American Legion Post 58 Community Center  
56 N Broadway St, Columbia, SD

### AGENDA:

1. Call to Order with members present. Approve agenda as proposed or amended.

### POTENTIAL CONFLICTS DISCLOSURE PURSUANT SDCL 23-3

### CONSENT AGENDA:

1. Approve of minutes of February 9, 2026 school board meeting as drafted.
2. Approve of February 2026 Financial Report, Custodial Accounts, and Investments.
3. Approve of February 2026 District bills for payment.
4. Approve of February 2026 School Lunch Report.
5. Approve of February 2026 School Transportation Report.
6. Authorize the Business Manager to pay district bills up to \$75,000 in advance, using the custodial advance payment account to be approved by the board for reimbursement at the following regular board meeting.

### OLD/CONTINUING BUSINESS:

1. Open Forum for Public Participation...in accordance with Board Policy & Guidelines.
2. Second reading and approval of recommended policy changes: DB Budget [Amendment], DBDA General Fund Balance [Amendment], DBJ Budget Implementation [Delete], DC Taxing and Borrowing Authority/Limitations [Amendment], DD Funding Proposals and Applications [Title Amendment], DFD Gate Receipts and Admissions [New], DH Bonded Employees and Officers [Amendment], DIB Types of Funds [Amendment], DIC Financial Reports and Statements [Amendment], DID Inventories [Amendment], DIE Audits [Amendment], DI Fiscal Accounting and Reporting [Amendment], GCPC Retirement of Professional Staff Members
3. Second reading and approval of recommended job description for Assistant Business Manager.
4. Discussion regarding ongoing Facilities Master Planning process.
5. Administrative Reports: (a) Superintendent's Report; (b) Principal's Reports; (c) Business Manager Report

### NEW BUSINESS:

1. Approve 2026 Driver's Education Fees and Instructor Agreement.
2. Review 5 Year Capital Outlay Plan
3. Approve resignation of Becky Hubsch, Business Manager, effective June 30, 2026.
4. Approve resignation of Teresa Davies, Food Service Team, effective at the end of the 2025-2026 school year.
5. Approve hiring Darren Dennert, Special Education Paraprofessional.
6. Approve hiring Kiya Stillman, English Language Arts Teacher, for the 2026-2027 school year.
7. First reading of recommended policy changes: DFG Insufficient Funds & No Account Checks, EBBA First Aid, DJC Bidding Requirements
8. Executive session pursuant SDCL 1-25-2.1 for personnel issues.

### ADJOURN

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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



We demolish arguments  
and every pretension  
that sets itself up against  
the knowledge of God,  
and we take captive every  
thought to make it  
obedient to Christ.

☞ 2 Corinthians 10:5 ☞

*Detail of "Man in Thought" by Hanns Kralik (1929)*

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IN THE SPIRIT  
OF FAIRNESS,  
HERE'S A  
REBUTTAL TO  
BOTH REPUBLICANS  
AND DEMOCRATS  
OVER THE STATE  
OF THE UNION...



KIRK

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emil.watersnork54@gmail.com

## BIBLE

## TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. Whose first chapter begins, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God"? *1 Timothy, Titus, James, 2 John*

3. From Acts 16, what Asian city was the home of Lydia? *Derbe, Thyatira, Samaria, Jericho*

4. In John 2, where did Jesus work his first miracle? *Ur, Cana, Antioch, Thessalonica*

5. From 2 Samuel, who killed a giant having 12 fingers and 12 toes? *Mephibosheth, Jambres, Abimelech, Jonathan*

6. In John 11, what city was home to Mary, Martha and Lazarus? *Corinth, Gaza, Bethany, Sardis*

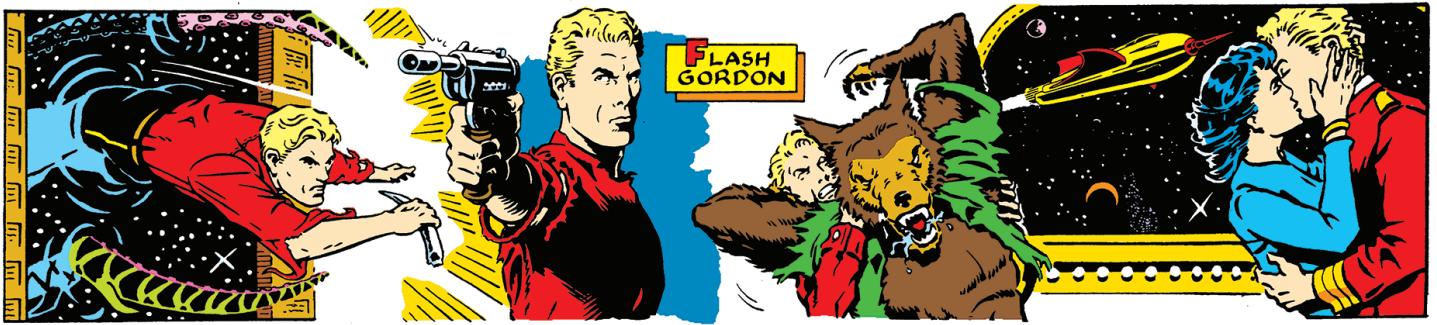
ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) 1 Timothy, 3) Thyatira, 4) Cana, 5) Jonathan, 6) Bethany

*Hardcore trivia fan? Visit Wilson Casey's subscribersite at [www.patreon.com/triviaguy](http://www.patreon.com/triviaguy).*

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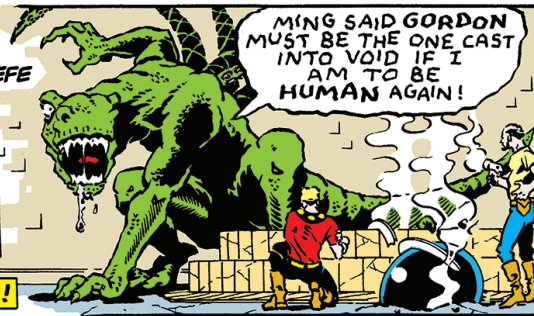
## FLASH GORDON

BY JIM KEEFE

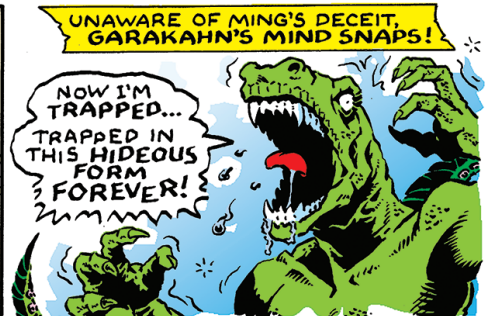
2-22

WITH A SINGLE RAY BLAST, THE PORTAL TO THE DARK DIMENSION IS CLOSED FOREVER...

...SEALING RENSHAW WITHIN!



MING SAID GORDON MUST BE THE ONE CAST INTO VOID IF I AM TO BE HUMAN AGAIN!

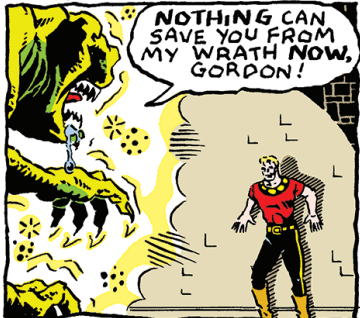


UNAWARE OF MING'S DECEIT, GARAKAHN'S MIND SNAPS!

NOW I'M TRAPPED... TRAPPED IN THIS HIDEOUS FORM FOREVER!

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NOTHING CAN SAVE YOU FROM MY WRATH NOW, GORDON!



FIRST YOU... THEN YOUR COMPANIONS!



I'LL KILL YOU ALL!

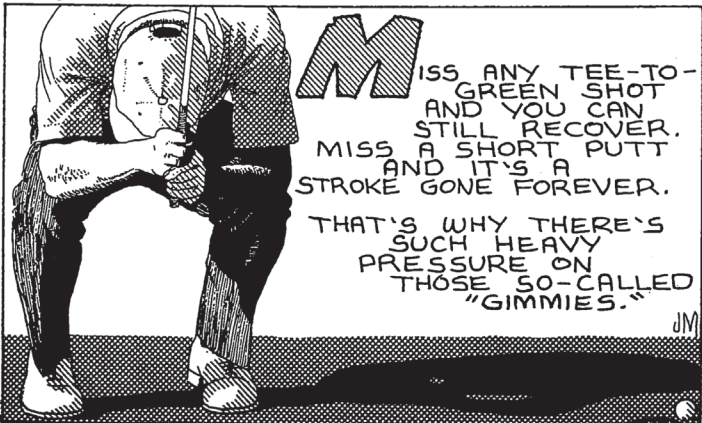
POW!

ACCESS THE COMPUTER IN THE CONTROL ROOM, DOC. TELL BARIN WHERE WE ARE.

IT'S TIME WE GOT OUT OF HERE.

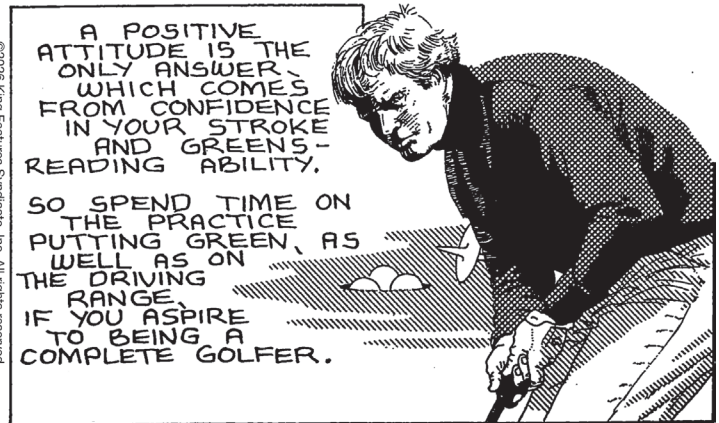
NEXT: JUST DESSERTS

## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



**M**ISS ANY TEE-TO-GREEN SHOT AND YOU CAN STILL RECOVER. MISS A SHORT PUTT AND IT'S A STROKE GONE FOREVER. THAT'S WHY THERE'S SUCH HEAVY PRESSURE ON THOSE SO-CALLED "GIMMIES."

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A POSITIVE ATTITUDE IS THE ONLY ANSWER, WHICH COMES FROM CONFIDENCE IN YOUR STROKE AND GREENS-READING ABILITY. SO SPEND TIME ON THE PRACTICE PUTTING GREEN, AS WELL AS ON THE DRIVING RANGE. IF YOU ASPIRE TO BEING A COMPLETE GOLFER.



## Low-Risk Estradiol Treatment Comes With FDA-Boxed Warning

DEAR DR. ROACH: I'm a 70-year-old woman who has suffered with vaginal dryness ever since I went through menopause. My doctor has prescribed estradiol 0.01% hormone cream to help with the symptoms. The side effects and warnings are worrisome, even though my doctor assures me that it's safe to use. I value your opinion and would appreciate your thoughts. -- K.C.

ANSWER: The Food and Drug Administration requires boxed warnings, which are the highest level of concern, on systemic estrogen like pills. Until November 2025, the same warnings existed on topical treatments like creams and gels. In my opinion, the risks of estrogen cream like the estradiol that you have been prescribed are low. I agree with removing the

boxed warning since it can scare women from using these helpful, low-risk treatments for their symptoms of low estrogen, including vaginal dryness or painful sex.

As always, I do recommend that anyone who is prescribed estrogen and has a history of an estrogen-sensitive tumor (such as breast cancer) should discuss this treatment with their oncologist prior to starting it. For most healthy menopausal women, topical estradiol is an excellent and very safe choice.

\*\*\*

DEAR DR. ROACH: I've read that millions of people have parasites and aren't even aware of it. How do I cleanse myself safely? I'm hesitant to use animal medications like fenbendazole or ivermectin. I drink clove tea daily, but I don't believe that it's sufficient because it doesn't cross the blood-brain barrier. What are your thoughts since this is one of your fields of study? -- R.R.

ANSWER: It is probably true that millions of people in the United States alone have undiagnosed parasitic infections. The most common of these are intestinal parasites, such as Blastocystis or Strongyloides. While it may be unpleasant to think about intestinal parasites, we generally don't recommend treatment in asymptomatic people, even if it's been diagnosed.

Microorganisms are categorized into three groups: beneficial ones, like the healthy bacteria that are found in our intestines by the trillions; harmful (pathogenic) ones that cause disease; and commensals, which neither help nor hurt us much. For most people, protozoans like Blastocystis are commensals, so there is no need to treat them. There are very few instances of when an asymptomatic parasite needs to be treated, and it is quite rare among people who are born in the U.S.

Clove tea is a traditional herbal medicine to treat some parasites, but it is not particularly effective; I don't recommend it as a treatment.

The most common symptoms of intestinal parasites are diarrhea, abdominal pain, bloating, gas, anal itching and weight loss. Parasites are not a common cause of these symptoms in the U.S., but persistent symptoms deserve a thorough evaluation, not home remedies and certainly not powerful antiparasitic medicine -- unless it's been prescribed after a firm diagnosis.

Ivermectin is used in both animals and humans for parasitic infections. Although fenbendazole isn't approved for humans, similar medicines like albendazole can be used for humans in cases where a parasite is in need of treatment. Infectious disease doctors are the experts in the treatment of parasitic infections.

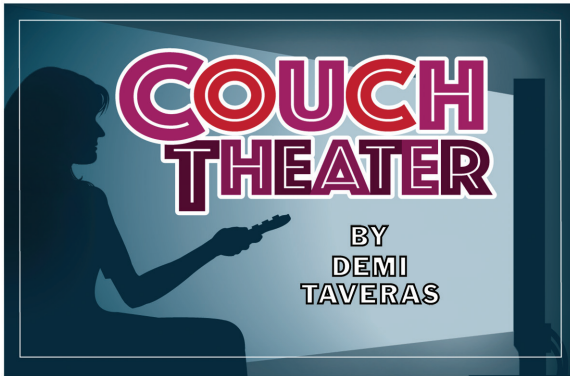
Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to [ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu](mailto:ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu).

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**Michelle Pfeiffer, left, and Beau Garrett star in "The Madison."** (Courtesy of MovieStillsDB)

"Scarpetta" (TV-MA) -- AMC Theaters spokesperson Nicole Kidman is back in a leading role for television with this new mystery series premiering on March 11. She plays Dr. Kay Scarpetta, a forensic pathologist who signs on to be a chief medical examiner again after the job had previously left her in shambles. Working alongside detective Pete Marino (Bobby Cannavale), Scarpetta starts investigating a murder case with similar ties to her very first case as an examiner and begins to wonder if both cases are connected. Jamie Lee Curtis ("Freakier Friday") plays Scarpetta's older sister, Dorothy, while Ariana DeBose ("Love Hurts") plays Dorothy's daughter. Look out for the following eight episodes to drop every Wednesday. (Amazon Prime Video)

"Nuremberg" (PG-13) -- This historical drama is led by the unlikely but talented duo of Russell Crowe ("Kraven the Hunter") and Rami Malek ("The Amateur"). The film follows U.S. Army psychiatrist Douglas Kelley (Malek), who is assigned to inspect and ensure the mental health of high-ranking Nazi prisoners as they await the Nuremberg trials. Hermann Goring (Crowe) intrigues Dr. Kelley the most; not only is Goring the highest-ranking military officer of all time, but he is also a charming narcissist who is ready to lay out an intellectual trap so that he can escape the hangman's noose. Other talented actors in the cast included LEO Woodall ("Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy"), Colin Hanks ("Nobody 2"), and Michael Shannon ("The Bikeriders"). Out now to stream. (Netflix)

"The Madison" (TV-MA) -- This six-episode neo-Western series hails from none other than "Yellowstone" creator Taylor Sheridan. Starring Michelle Pfeiffer ("Oh. What. Fun.") and Kurt Russell ("Smurfs"), the series follows the Clyburns - a family that is originally from New York City but relocates to southwest Montana after tragedy strikes. Set against a beautiful landscape of the Madison River valley, the show mostly focuses on Stacy Clyburn's (Pfeiffer) grief as the matriarch of the family. The family's success truly hinges on whether Stacy is able to take her sorrow and turn it into something worthwhile. The first three episodes release on March 14, and the last three release the week after. (Paramount+)

"It's Dorothy!" (TV-PG) -- The "Wicked" films opened up what feels like a giant wormhole where fans want to go back in time and travel to different points of the "Wizard of Oz" universe. This documentary film explores the many iterations/adaptations that Dorothy Gale has been featured in since her debut in L. Frank Baum's 1900 novel. Of course, Judy Garland's 1939 portrayal of Dorothy is highlighted in the doc, along with Diana Ross' in "The Wiz" and more! There are also interviews included of former Dorothys like Ashanti, who played her in "The Muppets' Wizard of Oz" (2005), as well as Fairuza Balk, who played her in "Return to Oz" (1985). Premieres March 13. (Peacock)

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1. Name the artist who released "Patches."
2. Which group released "Someday We'll Be Together"?
3. Who released "These Eyes"?
4. Which rock group included "Cold as Ice" on their debut album?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Just because I asked a friend about her, And just because I spoke her name somewhere."

Answers

1. Dickey Lee, in 1961. The song was banned by numerous radio stations because it dealt with teen suicide and young lovers. Lee also released "Laurie (Strange Things Happen)," another teen tragedy song.
2. It was listed as being done by Diana Ross & the Supremes, in 1969, but it was actually the first solo song for Ross after she left the Supremes.
3. The Guess Who, in 1969. It was written by group members Randy Bachman (guitar) and Burton Cummings (vocals). Both went on to successful careers after the group disbanded in 1975.
4. Foreigner, in 1977. When released as a single, it was the B-side to "Feels Like the First Time."
5. "She Thinks I Still Care," by George Jones, in 1962. Others released cover versions of the song, including Connie Francis and Anne Murray, with the lyrics changed to "He Thinks I Still Care."

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## GRIN *and* BEAR IT <sup>by Wayne</sup>

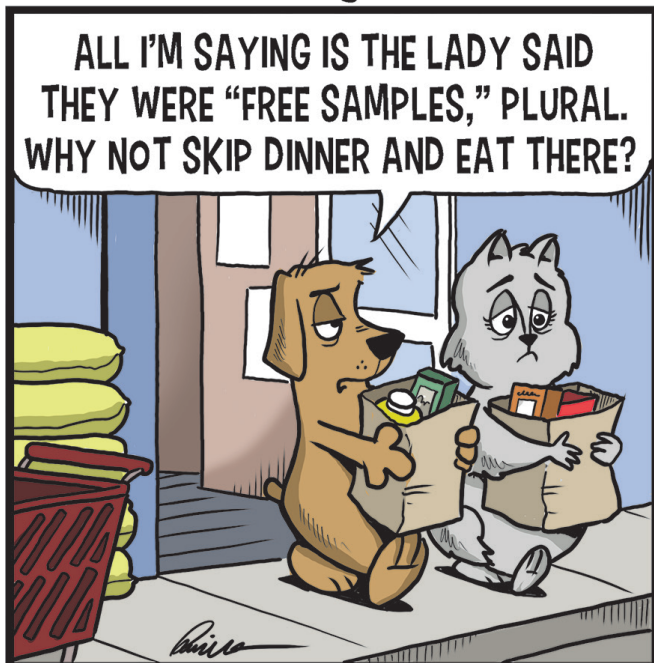
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"He should be coming out of hibernation any day now."

## Just Like Cats & Dogs

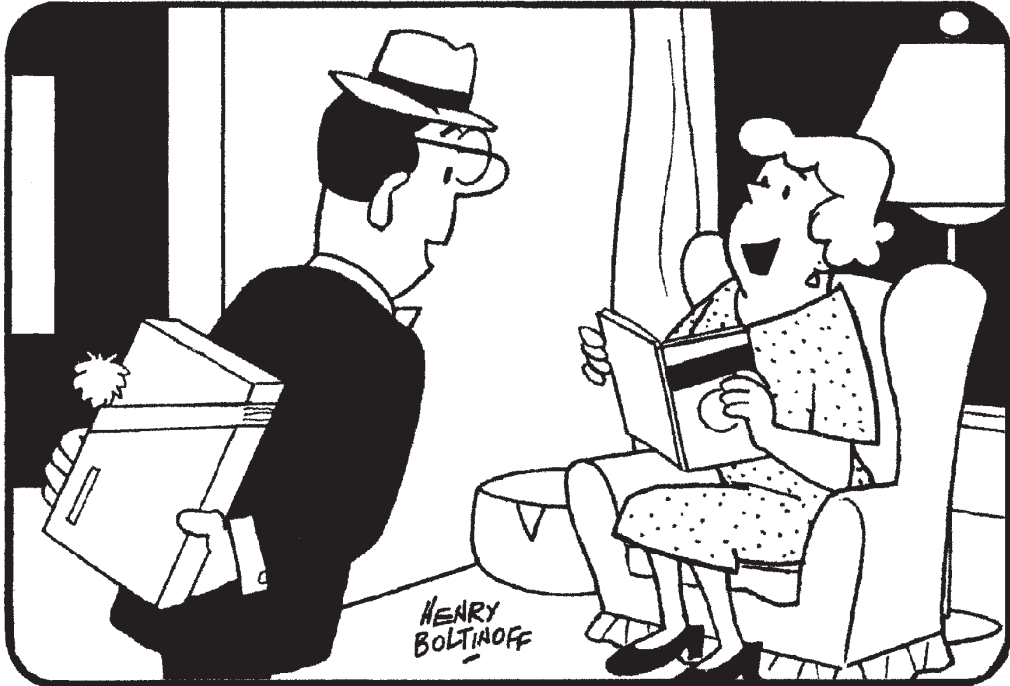
by Dave T. Phipps



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## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Hat is larger. 2. Bottom of lamp is not showing. 3. Ear is different. 4. Book cover is different. 5. Glasses are missing. 6. Ribbon is moved.

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\* "This tip is good for an inexpensive watch or piece of jewelry that tends to rust or discolor on the skin-facing side. Clean it well and "paint" the side facing your skin with clear nail polish."

-- M.T. in Alabama

\* "Here is a fun idea for a baby shower, especially if you have a small group: Have a supply of baby onesies, fabric paint and fabric markers, and have guests personalize a onesie for the baby. They are so easy to create and so necessary for Mom and Dad." -- T.B. in Florida

\* If you want to make a message station for dry-erase notes, try this cheap and fun DIY trick: Grab a picture frame with a glass insert. Use a photo, pretty piece of patterned paper or a piece of your child's artwork covered by a sheet of tracing paper

in the frame. Hang on the wall. You can write on the glass with a dry-erase marker and erase as needed.

\* Shower caps are an outstanding substitute for plastic wrap when covering a large plate or bowl. They are easily cleaned, super easy to use and can be found cheap at your local dollar store!

\* "Do you have a toddler or preschooler who likes to lock him- or herself in the bathroom? This happened to us, and we found a great solution. We slipped a small section of pool noodle, slit down the side, over the door out of reach of little hands. The door simply won't close (or slam!), but an adult can easily take it off if necessary. This has been a lifesaver, because we were about to take the doorknob off!" -- A.P. in Nevada

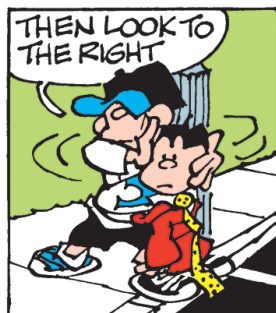
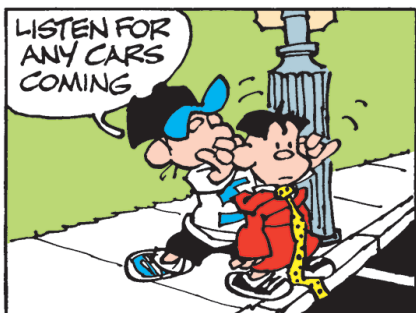
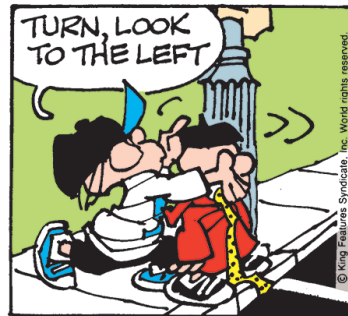
\* For a fun magnet board, paint inexpensive burner covers and mount on the wall. Since they are metal, kitchen magnets will work easily.

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

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## TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Makes a choice
- 5 Pear-shaped fruit
- 8 "The Black Prince" author Murdoch
- 12 High point
- 13 Hostel
- 14 Central point
- 15 "Citadel" actress Chopra
- 17 Only
- 18 Brooch
- 19 Rappers' improvisations
- 21 Signaled "Hi!"
- 24 — Bator
- 25 Battery fluid
- 26 Female royal
- 30 Roulette bet
- 31 Carried on, as war
- 32 Pickles on "Rugrats"
- 33 Inmate
- 35 Chorus syllables
- 36 "I dropped the fruitcake!"
- 37 How distant stars shine
- 38 Politico Nancy
- 41 Parcel of land
- 42 Latin 101 word

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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42					43	44				45	46	47
48					49				50			
51					52				53			

- 25 Battery fluid
- 26 Female royal
- 30 Roulette bet
- 31 Carried on, as war
- 32 Pickles on "Rugrats"
- 33 Inmate
- 35 Chorus syllables
- 36 "I dropped the fruitcake!"
- 37 How distant stars shine
- 38 Politico Nancy
- 41 Parcel of land
- 42 Latin 101 word
- 43 Archbishops, e.g.
- 48 Get overemotional
- 49 Slithery fish
- 50 Prime-time hour
- 51 Villa d'—
- 52 Tofu source
- 53 Bigfoot's cousin
- 5 Twain hero
- 6 Squid squirt
- 7 More knotted, as a tree
- 8 Harmonious
- 9 Leeway
- 10 Between jobs
- 11 Beholds
- 16 Help
- 20 Royal flush, e.g.
- 21 Get bent out of shape
- 22 Computer brand
- 23 Caesar's "I saw"
- 24 Implores
- 26 Primitive flutes
- 27 Wax-coated cheese
- 28 Ledge
- 29 Do in
- 31 Courts
- 34 Mollify
- 35 Lengthy list
- 37 — Perignon
- 38 Leaf
- 39 Flightless birds
- 40 Endure
- 41 Easter bloom
- 44 Classic car
- 45 Dead heat
- 46 Sinusitis doc
- 47 Six, in Sicily

### DOWN

- 1 Antonym (Abbr.)
- 2 Capita lead-in
- 3 — chi
- 4 Used a Zoom alternative

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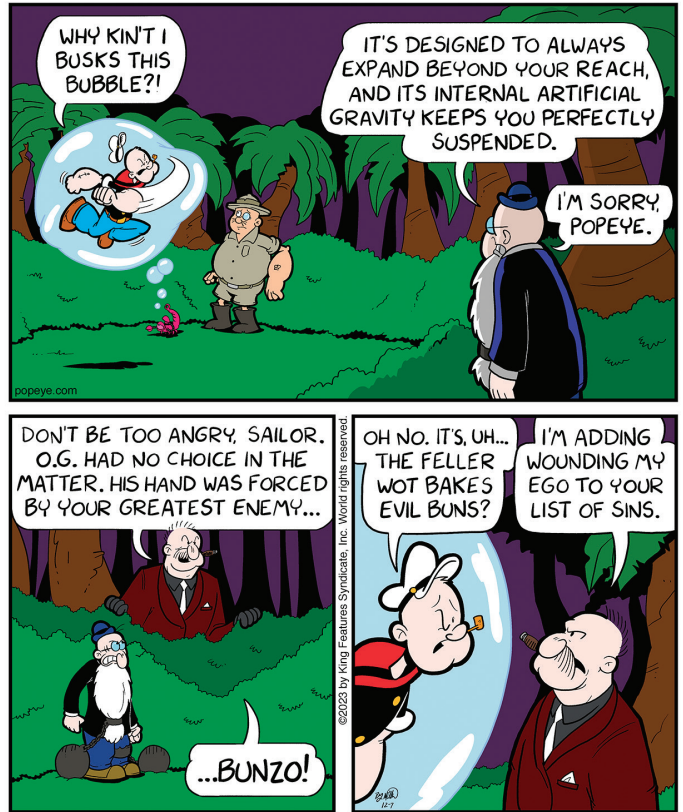
## King Crossword

Answers

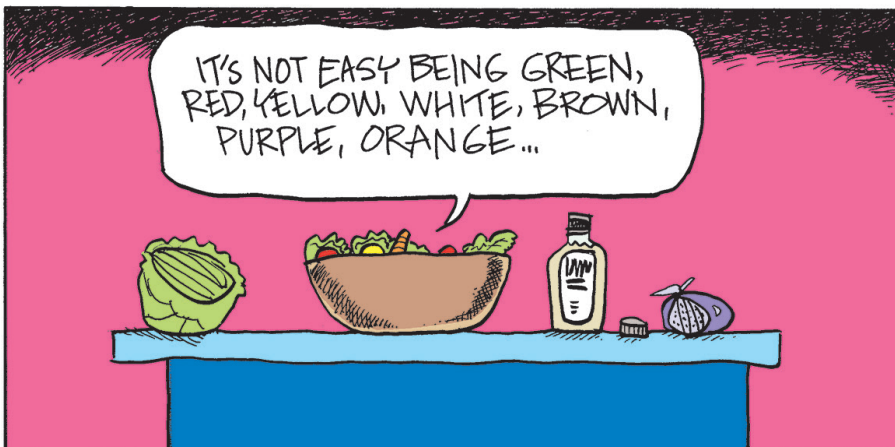
Solution time: 23 mins.

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## Olive



## Out on a Limb



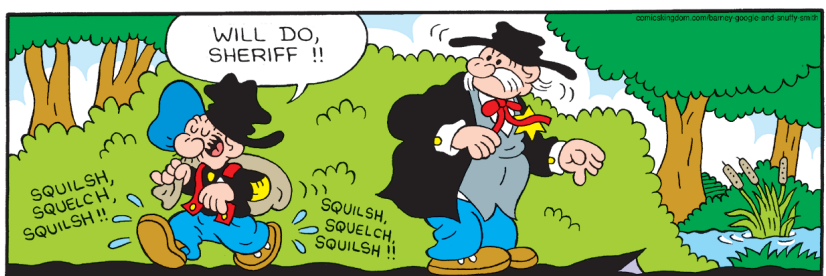
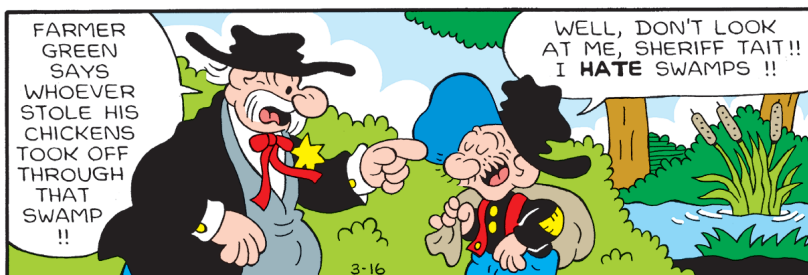
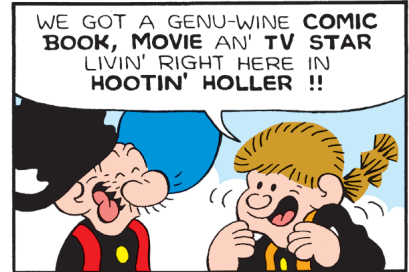
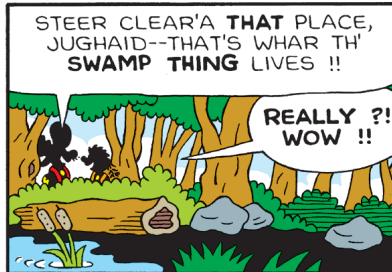
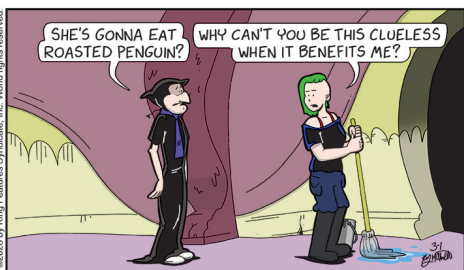
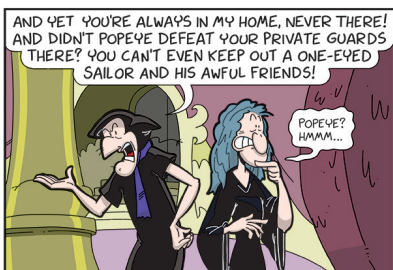
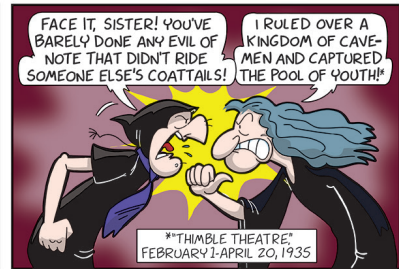
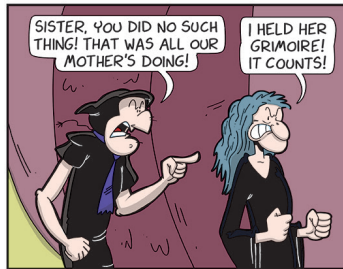
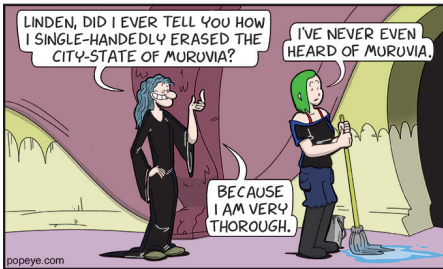
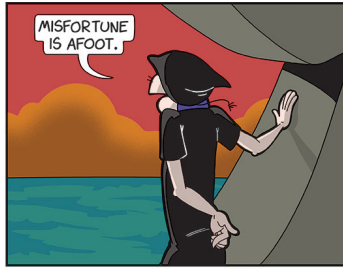
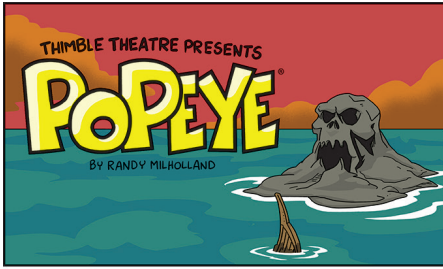
by Gary Kopervas



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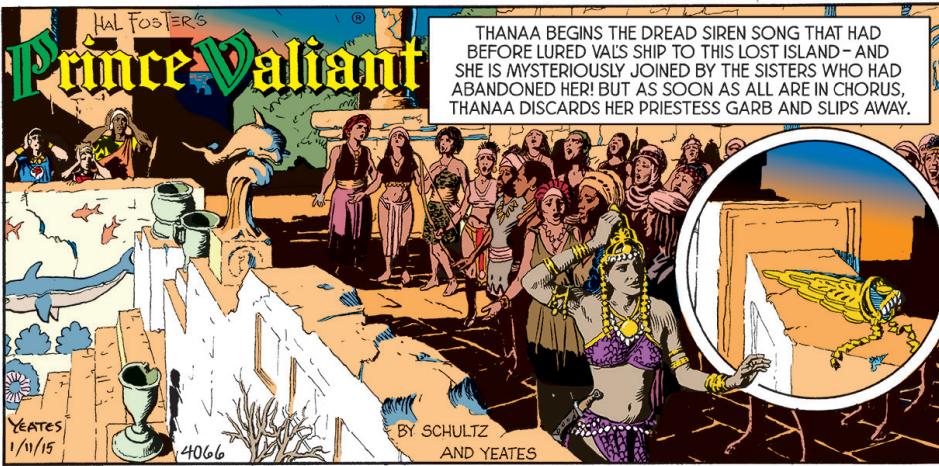
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EVEN WITH THEIR EARS WRAPPED, VAL, BUKOTA AND NATHAN MUST STRUGGLE TO RESIST THE TERRIBLE LURE AND REMAIN HIDDEN. THEN VAL NOTICES THANAA'S DEPARTURE...

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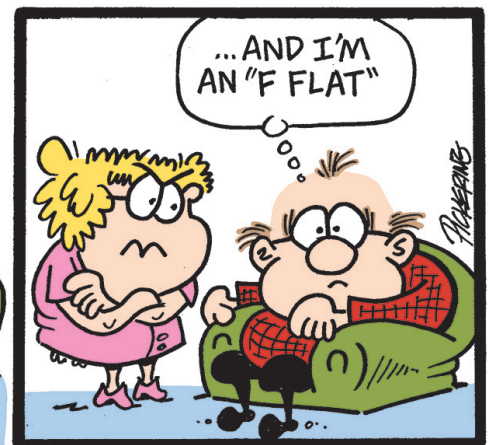
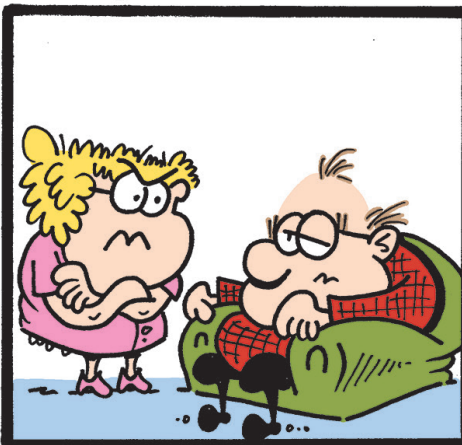


... AND HE TOO SLIPS AWAY. BEHIND THE HIGH WALL HE FINDS THANAA OPENING A CONCEALED ENTRANCE TO AN UNDERGROUND STAIRWAY. AND IT SEEMS TO VAL THAT SHE HAS BEEN EXPECTING HIM!



## The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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PICKERING

## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Scams on your phone

No, the IRS isn't going to send you a text message asking you to pay with a gift card.

No, your water company isn't going to send a message to your phone demanding that you immediately pay the next year's usage in advance because of "a new state law."

And no, you can't be sure the voice on the panic phone call you receive about needing money is really your grandchild.

Don't get taken in by a scam.

The IRS doesn't want gift cards. They want real money. And they'll let you know via letter, not on your phone.

The water company's demand for a year's payment in advance because of a state law you've never heard of ... fake.

And that pitiful voice on the phone that you believe is your grandchild asking for money, not so fast. One of the worst steps AI (artificial intelligence) has taken lately is the ability to mimic voices.

Some basic rules for this brave, new world:

\* Don't be so quick to hand out your cellphone number to just anyone who asks for it. Once it's out there, you have no control over how far (and to whom) it will go. Pause before you give the number out. Feel free to lie: "I don't have a cellphone." Or even just say, "I don't give that number out."

\* Create a family code word and use it to ensure who's really on the other end of the phone asking for money.

If you've had your phone for a long time, you have your work cut out for you to battle against those who would try to scam you using that number. Be on guard each time the phone rings or a text message comes through.

Remember: Don't click links!

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1. Name the German tennis player who won the 1991 Wimbledon men's singles championship and won an Olympic gold medal at the 1992 Barcelona Games playing doubles with Boris Becker.

2. What Canadian TV sports drama series debuted in 2025 and followed the romance between hockey players Shane Hollander (Hudson Williams) and Ilya Rozanov (Connor Storrie)?

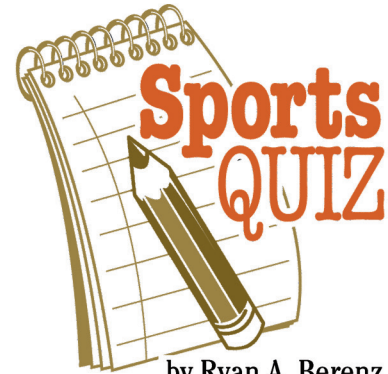
3. In the early 1900s, golf innovator Arthur F. Knight patented a center-shafted, mallet-headed putter named after what city in New York's Mohawk Valley?

4. Running back Carnell Williams, 2005 NFL Offensive Rookie of the Year for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, was nicknamed after what brand of luxury car?

5. The "Deep South's Oldest Rivalry" is the nickname of the college football series between what two teams?

6. In 1950, the Fort Wayne Pistons and Minneapolis Lakers played the lowest-scoring game in NBA history with how many combined points?

7. What facility, first opened in London in the 1840s, used pig lard, salt and copper sulfate to create the world's first indoor artificial ice rink for skating?



by Ryan A. Berenz

## Answers

1. Michael Stich.

2. "Heated Rivalry."

3. Schenectady.

4. Cadillac.

5. The Auburn University Tigers and the University of Georgia Bulldogs.

6. 37 (the Pistons beat the Lakers 19-18).

7. The Glaciarium.

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## Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps



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## Advancing animal rights starts in the home and community

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: I'm 11 years old, and I feel really strongly that all animals should be treated well. Not just pets. But how can I help animals when I'm just a kid? Will people take me seriously? -- May D., Omaha, Nebraska

DEAR MAY: People of all ages can make a difference for animals. Kudos to you for caring and wanting to make the world better. Pets, livestock, wildlife and animals used for testing all deserve consideration and humane treatment.

The first thing to do is get more people on your side. Talk to your parents about how you feel and how you

want to take meaningful action to help animals. Tell your friends. Talk to your teachers. Some may want to help right away, but others may not seem interested or even be against certain kinds of animal welfare. Expect that you'll get a little pushback from some people, and don't give up.

Second, educate the people in your life. Your voice is a powerful asset in advocating for animal rights. Knowledge is also essential. Pick one animal rights issue in your town or state, learn about it, and tell your family and friends what you've learned.

Third, get involved with groups that actively promote animal welfare. (You'll need your parents' support and permission.) Help with a cleanup, join a peaceful rally, volunteer at a local shelter or write a letter to your local congressperson. These small acts add up to big results that get legislation passed, raise awareness and directly help all kinds of animals.

Send your tips, comments or questions to [ask@pawscorner.com](mailto:ask@pawscorner.com).

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## Strange BUT TRUE

- \* Oysters can change genders back and forth.
- \* If the earth doubled in size, trees would fall over and dogs couldn't run without breaking a leg, due to the doubling of surface gravity.
- \* While we like to alter and decorate them, earlobes don't have any true biological purpose.
- \* Unlike any other rocky planet in the solar system, Mars isn't actually round, but shaped more like a rugby ball, with different sizes along its three axes.

- \* Platypuses sweat milk.
- \* Sorry, dieters, but there's no such thing as a zero-calorie food. Even things like celery and watercress contain more energy than the body needs to process them.
- \* Odors can pass through liquid.
- \* In 2013, an Indian woman was so badly constipated that doctors finally had to remove a football-size fecal mass from her body.
- \* A penguin can reach depths of up to 550 meters in a single dive.
- \* Research suggests that if you sleep badly and wake up multiple times during the night, you'll be more likely to recall any dreams you had.
- \* A lightning bolt is five times hotter than the surface of the sun.
- \* The world record for underwater breath-holding was set by Budimir Sobat in 2021, who held his breath for a total of 24 minutes and 37 seconds. Us average Joes, on the other hand, can typically hold ours between 30-90 seconds.
- \* You have a 50% chance of sharing a birthday with a friend.
- \* Wondering if you'll need an umbrella soon? Try looking at a pine cone. If it's closed, the air is humid and rain could be on the way.
- \* There are more algae in the oceans than stars in the universe.

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: "Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see." -- Mark Twain

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### The Garden Bug

#### Herbals



Many of the earliest medical writings were known as "herbals." They were books that described plants and how they might be used to heal illnesses. Most began as traditional oral information, written down so they could be shared more widely. These collections also included other natural materials in the environment which were thought to be useful as medicines, such as milk, salt, honey, and even gemstones.

– Brenda Weaver

Source: [circulatingnow.nlm.nih.gov](http://circulatingnow.nlm.nih.gov)

At left: "Gladiolus bulbs with leaves and flowers" from *De Historia Plantarum* (1644).



by Freddy Groves

## Thefts of taxpayer money

Note to thieves: Don't get stopped on a traffic violation while you're carrying a pile of stolen goods and electronics in your car, especially if you're crossing state lines. One pathetic criminal was stopped while transporting electronics that were bought by an in-house thief at the VA who was in charge of buying goods with government credit cards.

The VA thief had handed over part of his \$200,000 stash of stolen electronics to have them sold by his thief partner. Found in the traffic stop were phones, a gun with a magazine, credit cards belonging to other people and a pile of cash. At the VA thief's home additional electronic items were found, including soundbars, headphones and speakers.

Unfortunately, these thieves will only serve a year in prison, but they do have to pay back nearly \$200,000.

The VA's Office of Inspector General (along with the IRS and the Small Business Administration) was in on the investigation of a thief who stole \$1 million in CARES Act funds -- and bought himself a 9-hole golf course. The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security money was to help small businesses stay afloat through the Covid pandemic, a loan to be used for payroll, rent, mortgage and other business-related expenses.

The thief owned four companies at the time (including a bar, a bistro and a grill) and applied for economic injury money on all of them because he wasn't able to get a standard bank loan for the golf course purchase. When applying for the money, he neglected to mention that one of the companies was being sold to someone else at the time.

He could have gotten up to 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. Instead, he was sentenced to only 15 months in prison and a year of supervised release -- after fraudulently obtaining over a million dollars of taxpayer money.

Perhaps taxpayers will get the money back: The golf course is currently for sale.

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## Wishing Well®

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

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

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- MUSIC: Who composed the opera "The Magic Flute"?
- LITERATURE: Who wrote the novel "Wuthering Heights"?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: Which sport uses a shuttlecock?
- MATH: What is the next prime number after 11?
- GEOGRAPHY: Where is Pearl Harbor located?
- INVENTIONS: Who is credited with inventing the World Wide Web?
- SCIENCE: What is the name for plants that live for two years?
- MOVIES: What is Jack-Jack's real name in "The Incredibles"?
- ACRONYMS: What does VPN stand for?
- ASTRONOMY: Which moon is the largest in our solar system?

### Answers

- Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.
- Emily Bronte.
- Badminton.
- 13.
- Oahu, Hawaii.
- Tim Berners-Lee.
- Biennials.
- John Jackson Parr.
- Virtual Private Network.
- Ganymede of Jupiter.

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South Dakota Governor



## Larry Rhoden



**South Dakota:** *Under God, the People Rule*

### Security to Weather the Storm

About a week ago, I went to sleep on Friday night as a peacetime Governor, then woke up Saturday morning as Governor at a time of war. While we slept, President Donald J. Trump's Operation Epic Fury struck a decisive blow against state-sponsored terrorism in Iran. This mission decimated the Iranian government and killed the Ayatollah – his reign of terror and tyranny finally came to an end.

When actions like this happen on the international level, they impact us here at home. South Dakota's own Ellsworth Air Force Base played a key role in Operation Epic Fury, and we thank the brave men and women who spent long hours flying our military ordnance to deliver a crippling blow to our adversary.

This moment carries a great deal of gravity, and it deserves careful thought and discernment. It is the honor of my life to serve as Commander in Chief of our National Guard. When the nation enters a conflict, therein lies the potential that our Guardsmen will be called up to active duty. So, I received a briefing from the Adjutant General of our South Dakota National Guard on the situation in Iran and how it could potentially impact our Guard.

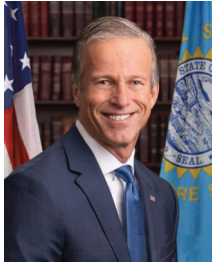
This situation also brings emerging threats. There's a heightened risk of cyber attacks or other nefarious activity from malicious actors. Keeping South Dakotans safe is my number one priority, so I am working with my Department of Public Safety and our National Guard to coordinate with our military, law enforcement, and intelligence partners to identify and monitor any emerging threats.

Last year, I established the Governor's Resilient Infrastructure Task Force (GRIT) to protect against potential threats to our infrastructure, including cybersecurity vulnerabilities. And GRIT got a bill to enhance our state's cybersecurity support to my desk – I was proud to sign it.

National Security should be something that each of us takes seriously. Earlier this year in my State of the State Address, I declared that National Security would be South Dakota's "Next Big Industry," and we're delivering on that commitment. From the new B-21 Raider that is soon coming to Ellsworth to our emerging cybersecurity program at Dakota State University, we have a lot to hang our hat on in national security. We're an ag state, meaning we grow the world's food — and food security is a matter of national security. Our energy industry continues to grow, and continuing to support that growth is a matter of national security.

By coordinating between all of these strengths and advancing them where necessary, we will expand South Dakota's role in our nation's security and guarantee that our state – and the 49 others – remain strong, safe, and free.

Every day, I am honored to serve as your Governor. That honor carries extra significance and weight at a time such as this, and I pledge to live up to the responsibility at all times – especially during this conflict. God bless America.



**JOHN THUNE**  
U.S. SENATOR FOR SOUTH DAKOTA

## **Lowering Health Care Costs** **By Sen. John Thune**

Whether it's a trip to the pharmacy or a hospital stay, accessing health care can be complicated and costly. And that is especially true for rural South Dakota, where even getting to a health care provider can be challenging. Republicans are committed to making health care more affordable and accessible, which is why we've taken up a number of measures to lower costs and increase access to care, especially in rural communities.

Republicans kicked off this year by taking concrete action to drive down costs at the pharmacy counter, which complements efforts by the Trump administration to lower the cost of prescriptions. We passed a new law removing incentives for pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) to promote higher-priced medications and to ensure that if a PBM gets a discount or rebate from a drugmaker, those savings are incorporated into the health plans that Americans rely on. These reforms not only benefit patients, they protect South Dakota's independent and community pharmacies by providing greater transparency, standardizing contract terms, and prohibiting PBMs from charging health plans more for a prescription drug than they reimburse the pharmacy.

We've also taken action to support access to health care at home. In the same bill, we extended telehealth waivers that are a critical lifeline for patients living far from health care providers, and we made it easier for patients to get in-home care, including by supporting family members who act as caregivers.

In our Working Families Tax Cuts legislation, Republicans made a generational investment in rural health care. The Rural Health Transformation Program gives states the resources and freedom to find solutions to their individual rural health challenges and to find sustainable ways of ensuring access to health care in rural communities going forward. South Dakota is receiving a significant amount of funding through this program, which will go toward a number of priorities, from strengthening the rural health care workforce to bolstering maternal care and emergency services in rural South Dakota.

The Working Families Tax Cuts also took aim at a Biden-era rule that would have imposed a one-size-fits-all staffing mandate that threatened the viability of nursing homes in rural communities. This rule was unworkable for many nursing homes in our state that simply could not find or afford to hire the number of health care professionals needed to meet the rule's unfunded mandate. Some nursing homes would have had to shut their doors if Republicans had not blocked this regulation. With this mandate repealed and support from the Rural Health Transformation Program, Republicans have put rural health care on a better footing going forward.

It's important that South Dakotans not only have access to quality care, but that they be able to afford that care as well. And thanks to Republicans' efforts, folks in rural areas will have more dependable access to care, and costs will be more manageable.

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February 23 - March 1, 2026



Welcome back to the Weekly Round[s] Up. This past week, I attended President Trump's State of the Union address. The president gave a great message to the American people. I look forward to working with him and my Senate colleagues to continue providing

Americans with real results. Our nation is safer, our economy is stronger and our military is the most powerful in the world. We will continue to build on these successes for an even brighter future for America.

In addition, this past weekend, President Trump took decisive action in Iran following weeks of unproductive conversations surrounding their nuclear program, as well as their short and mid-range ballistic missiles. President Trump has taken the right course of action in beginning to eliminate the Iranian regime's defensive and offensive capabilities. We should be thankful for our men and women in uniform and their ability to project power that keeps our borders safe. We will do everything we can to make sure they are the best led, the best trained and the best equipped fighting force on earth. Please keep them all in your thoughts and prayers, especially the families of the brave soldiers who have lost their lives in this operation. More on this and the rest of my week in the Weekly Round[s] Up:

South Dakota groups I visited with: Leaders from Heartland Energy; South Dakotans from Northern Plains Joint Venture Partnership; Marty Pennock, Adjutant DAV Department of South Dakota / Disabled American Veterans; South Dakota State Medical Association; South Dakota State University's National Institutes for Water Resources and Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching; Michael and Wanda Irwin with M&W Towing; South Dakotans with the Wounded Warrior Project; South Dakota members of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America; the South Dakota Wing of the Civil Air Patrol; and South Dakota Grasslands Initiative.

Met with South Dakotans from: Madison, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Wentworth, and Winner.

Other meetings: Sahrawi Negotiating Team; Mike Gitlin, CEO of Capital Group; Blake Lawit, Chief Global Affairs and Legal Officer at LinkedIn; Michelle Bowman, Vice Chair of Supervision of the Federal Reserve; Doug Worman, CEO of CAN Financial Corporation; Robin Vince, CEO of BNY; and Bruce Van Saun, CEO of Citizens Bank.

Hearings: On Thursday I went to a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, you can watch that here. I also attended a Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs hearing which you can watch here.

Briefings: I attended two classified briefings: one with the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and the other with the Strategic Forces subcommittee.

Votes taken: 5 – This week I voted yea on five items including Ryan McCormack, of Virginia, to be Under Secretary of Transportation for Policy and John DeLeeuw, of Texas, to be a Member of the National Transportation Safety Board for the remainder of the term. As well as the Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill which failed.

My Staff in South Dakota visited: Onida and Platte.

Steps taken: 60,785 steps or 28.38 miles.

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

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## Just Honing My Old Goat Skills

I'm rather new to this getting-old stage of life. Up to now, all my life has been young and innocent. Unfortunately, those days have passed.

It's hard to get adjusted to old age because I've never experienced it before. I remember when I was young, all of the fun that I had. But now, I'm at a new stage of life, and I don't know exactly what I should be doing.

Somebody should write a book sometime titled, "How To Get Old in 10 Easy Steps." I'll buy that book in a second.

I've been trying to find the good part of getting old, and I am still looking.

The other day The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said to me, "You are starting to act like some old goat."

When she said that, something clicked upstairs. I don't want to act like some old goat; I want to be one. It got me thinking, as I've never thought before. How can I use this "old goat stage?" The more I get to know it, the more I'll be able to use it for my benefit. Why not use what you have at hand for your own good?

I'm not sure what an old goat is, but I'm going to work on it and make sure I am the best version of an old goat I can be.

Every time The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage said that I was acting like an old goat, I stopped and thought about what she was talking about. How can I improve that in my life?

I asked her why she thought I was acting like an old goat. She said, "Well, for one you're always remembering things according to what you want to remember. You gotta remember the truth."

As I understand it, as an old goat, I have "selective memory." I never thought of that before. How can I use "selective memory" to make me a better old goat?

I've been working on this for a while, and every time I tell a story from the past, I make sure I am selecting that memory the way I want. Some story in my past, nobody knows all of the details. So, as a professional old goat, I can choose which memories I want to share with people. How do they know if it's right or wrong?

This has made my storytelling much more enjoyable. I sure have been having fun with all of these "selective memory" moments. One good thing is that I don't have to remember these to tell the same story over and over again as a professional old goat. I can make up things selectively as I go along. Oh, how I love being an old goat.

As we were coming home from a meeting with some of our friends The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage looked at me and said, "That story you told about when you were in high school was that the same story you told three weeks ago?"

Oh boy. I didn't even remember the story I told three weeks ago, so I just said to her, "No, that was a different story."

She just looked at me with one of her smiles, and I realized she did not believe me then.

Now, the next step in honing my old goat skills is remembering the stories that I tell. The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage cannot forget anything, and she always brings to my attention some of the mistakes that I have made in my stories. I didn't know she listened so attentively to my stories.

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So, along with my "selective memory" skill, I need to develop the next stage: "Once told never repeat." I don't know how I'm going to really work on this, but that's the next skill to develop as an old goat.

This will be the hardest skill for me to hone, but it's one I'll have to develop.

The next time I tell a story with our friends around, I'm going to keep my eye on The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. If I see a certain expression on her face, I'm going to take the story in an altogether different direction.

This is the third skill I need to hone as an old goat. That is, "Watch The Gracious Mistress Of The Parsonage Face." After 54 years of marriage, I should be able to read that face, and yet I find it rather difficult. But, being the professional old goat that I am, I'm going to work on it until I have it mastered.

Now that I have come to the stage of being an old goat, I'm beginning to like getting old. As a young person, I could never get away with acting like an old goat. But now that I have the years behind me, I can act like a professional old goat. Believe me, it has its rewards.

I have a long way to go in developing my old goat skills. I'm going to work at it until I get it as perfect as I can.

I was reminded of David's prayer in Psalm 71:18. "Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come."

## EARTHTALK

### Are You A Baddie? Then Why Are You Still Using Plastic Straws? by Marium Zahra

Dear EarthTalk: Are disposable plastic straws really so terrible for the environment and what are some good alternatives that won't get mushy in liquid?

—Mary B., San Francisco, CA

A single-use straw, also known as a disposable straw, is made of plastic and is intended to be thrown away after one drink. The materials that make these straws are non-biodegradable, meaning that their waste is not broken down naturally and often leads to landfill pollution. These plastic straws can take up to 200 years to decompose, and unlike organic materials, they are only fragmented into smaller pieces known as microplastics that have lasting impacts on ecosystems.

Straws are among the top waste items found in beach clean-ups and are often ingested by marine animals, leading to injury and death. According to the Journal of Science Advances, over eight million metric tons of plastic enter oceans annually, with single-use plastic straws being significant contributors.

When microplastics are consumed by marine life and enter the food chain, they eventually harm human health. "It's an ingestion issue," says Jon Forrest Dohlin, Director of the Wildlife Conservation Society New York Aquarium. "And as it does break down to smaller and smaller pieces, it works its way into the food chain and is absorbed by animals, including, by the way, humans." Moreover, due to the small size of disposable straws, they often fall through recycling machinery and are left to be discarded in landfills and oceans. Disposable straws also pose health risks to humans and animals through the harmful BPA chemicals that can lead to medical problems like reproductive issues, developmental delays and more.

Despite these environmental and health harms, disposable straws continue to be used as a result of the low production costs of plastic and convenience, but with plastic straws becoming an increasing climate concern, alternative straws have become a greater priority. These substitutes include straws that are either made of biodegradable or reusable materials, including paper, metal, bamboo, glass, silicone and more.

Oftentimes, the biggest complaint against low-cost biodegradable straws, specifically those made out of paper, is that they get mushy in liquid. However, it is possible to prioritize health and sustainability while also avoiding the awkward feeling of mushy materials in daily drinks. For example, metal and silicone straws drastically reduce waste, being both reusable for years and easy to clean without changing the taste of your favorite drinks. In 2019, Samantha Grindell, an author at Business Insider, wrote that while pasta straws (yes, made from pasta) worked for water, she preferred other alternatives for drinks like coffee. "I think they're a great alternative to plastic or paper straws in restaurants, but I'd prefer to use a reusable metal straw on a day-to-day basis," she says..



**Plastic straws can take up to 200 years to decompose, fragmenting into smaller "microplastics" that have lasting impacts on ecosystems.**

Credit: Pexels.com

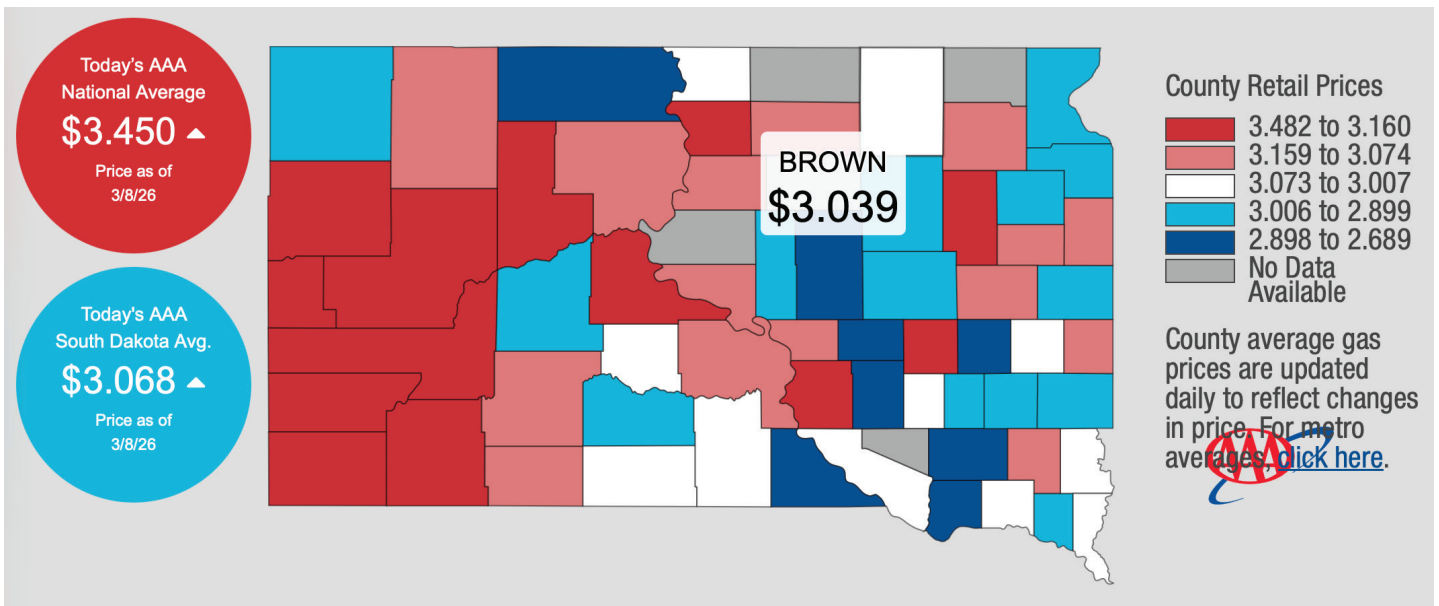
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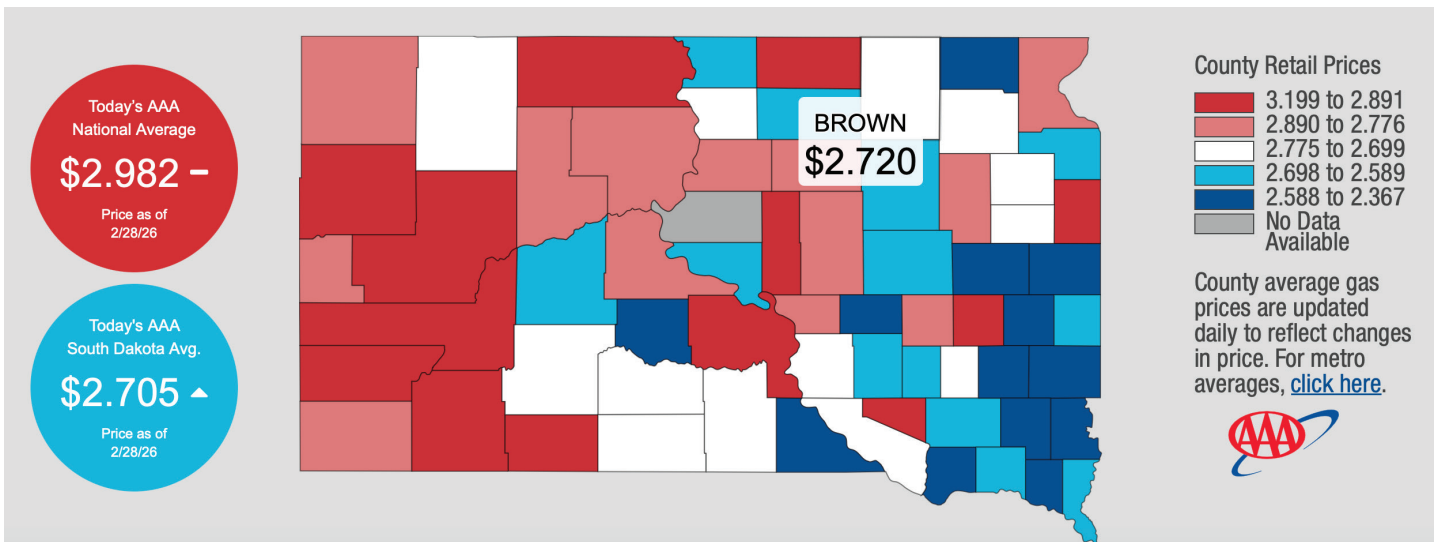
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.068	\$3.238	\$3.750	\$4.011
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.055	\$3.218	\$3.705	\$3.936
Week Ago Avg.	\$2.698	\$2.886	\$3.396	\$3.472
Month Ago Avg.	\$2.619	\$2.799	\$3.272	\$3.335
Year Ago Avg.	\$2.989	\$3.191	\$3.618	\$3.310

### This Week



### Last Week



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## Drought Classification

None

D0 (Abnormally Dry)

D1 (Moderate Drought)

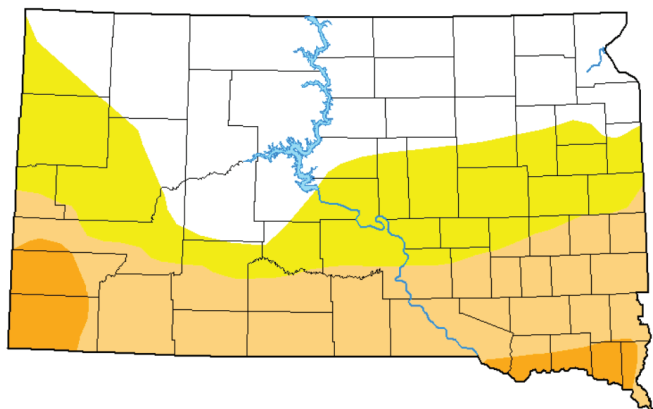
D2 (Severe Drought)

D3 (Extreme Drought)

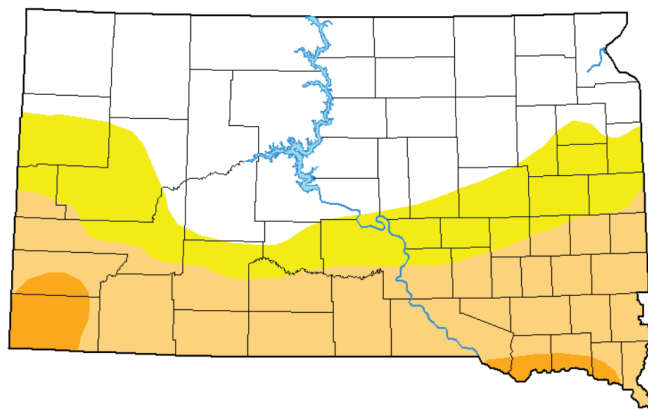
D4 (Exceptional Drought)

No Data

## Drought Monitor



March 3



Feb. 24

Although late winter is a relatively dry time of year across the Central Great Plains, periods of unseasonably warm temperatures and enhanced winds this past month led to intensifying drought across northeastern Colorado and Nebraska. 30-day temperatures averaged 6 to 10 degrees F above normal throughout the Great Plains. A 1-category degradation was made this past week to parts of Kansas and South Dakota. Widespread drought of varying intensity remains designated for much of Colorado and Wyoming. As of March 3, snow water equivalent is less than 70 percent of normal across the Central Rockies.



## SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

### Temporarily banning data centers draws more interest from state, local officials

**Moratoriums would give state legislators more time to determine whether to continue investing in the massive facilities**

**BY: MADYSON FITZGERALD**

As communities' concerns grow over rising electricity prices and the environmental effects of data centers, some local and state officials want to halt development of the facilities.

Lawmakers in at least 11 states — Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, Virginia and Wisconsin — have introduced legislation this session that would temporarily ban data centers, according to Good Jobs First, a watchdog group that focuses on economic development incentives.

While some of the measures would establish an indefinite moratorium, others would ban new data centers for several years. The Vermont measure, for example, would ban new data center projects through July 2030.

The New Hampshire, New York, Oklahoma and Vermont bills would also require state agencies to study the impacts of data centers on local economies, the environment and more.

Over the past month, state lawmakers in Pennsylvania and Minnesota have also announced plans to introduce moratoriums on data center development.

A handful of the bills have stalled as some state legislatures near the end of their 2026 session. A bill in South Dakota, for example, was tabled by the Senate State Affairs Committee last month after failing to pass.

Likewise, Michigan Democratic Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has said that she opposes any effort to block data center development, according to the Michigan Advance.

While no states have successfully enacted a moratorium, several cities and counties have banned new data center projects over the past year. In August, St. Charles, Missouri, became one of the first cities in the nation to ban data center construction for a year.

Last year, three counties in Indiana also suspended data center developments. This week, Fulton County, Indiana, did the same, with a temporary ban that will be in effect for the next year. DeKalb County, Georgia, has also pushed off new developments through June 2026.

But proposals to ban data centers have fizzled out in other local communities. After Hood County, Texas, received a letter from a state senator threatening legal action and saying that the county did not have the authority to issue a moratorium, commissioners rejected a proposal to ban new data center projects, according to The Texas Tribune.

Beyond moratoriums, state and local leaders are hoping to pass data center regulations to protect consumers from rising utility bills and prevent states from losing millions of dollars through tax breaks.

*Stateline reporter Madyson Fitzgerald can be reached at [mfitzgerald@stateline.org](mailto:mfitzgerald@stateline.org).*

*This story was originally produced by Stateline, which is part of States Newsroom, a nonprofit news network which includes South Dakota Searchlight, and is supported by grants and a coalition of donors as a 501c(3) public charity.*

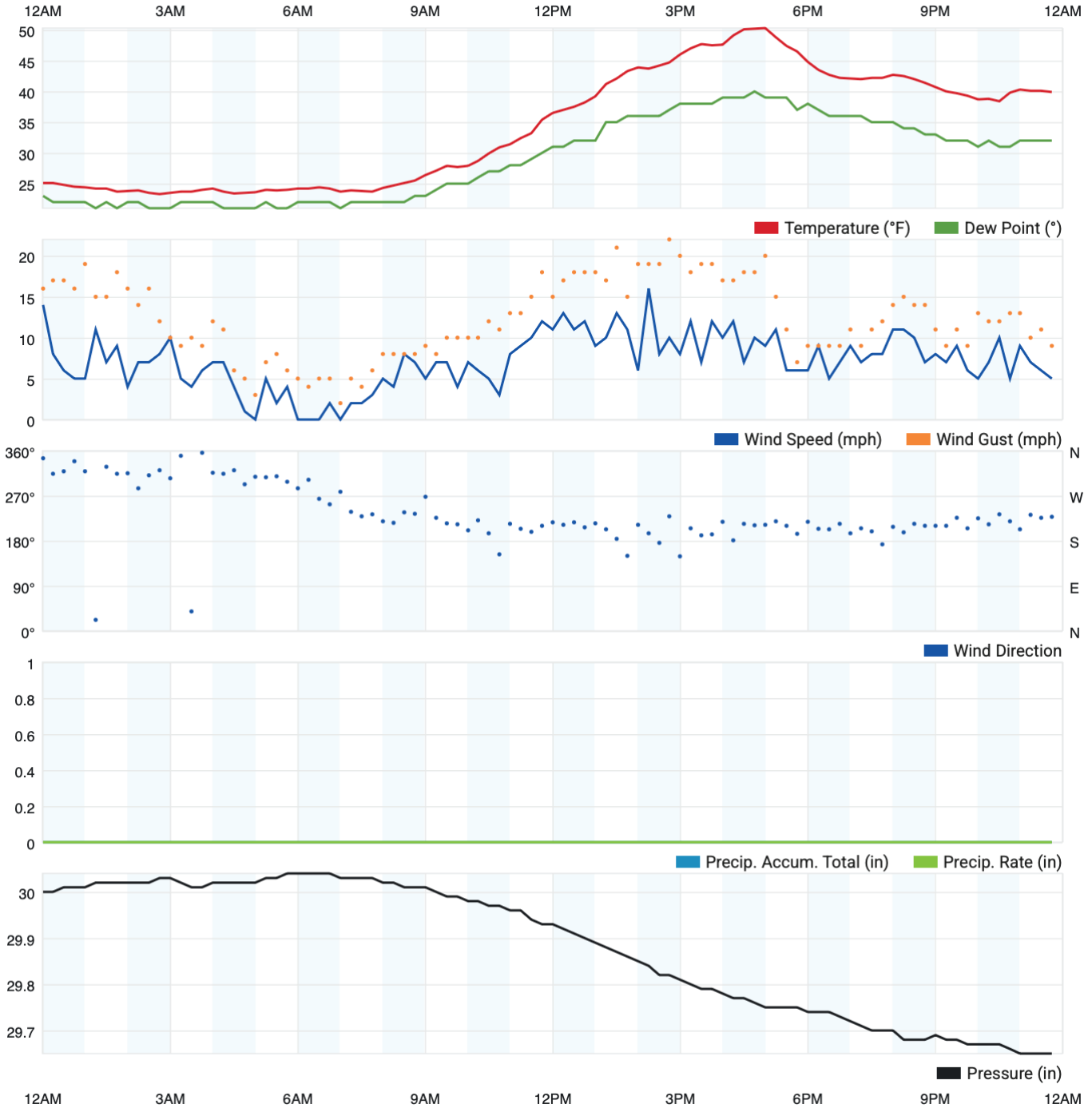
*Madyson Fitzgerald is a content producer and staff writer for Stateline.*

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

March 7, 2026



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Today

Tonight

Monday

Monday Night

Tuesday



High: 67 °F

Partly Sunny  
then Mostly  
Sunny and  
Breezy



Low: 32 °F

Partly Cloudy



High: 47 °F

Mostly Sunny



Low: 25 °F

Chance Snow



High: 38 °F

Mostly Cloudy  
then Chance  
Snow



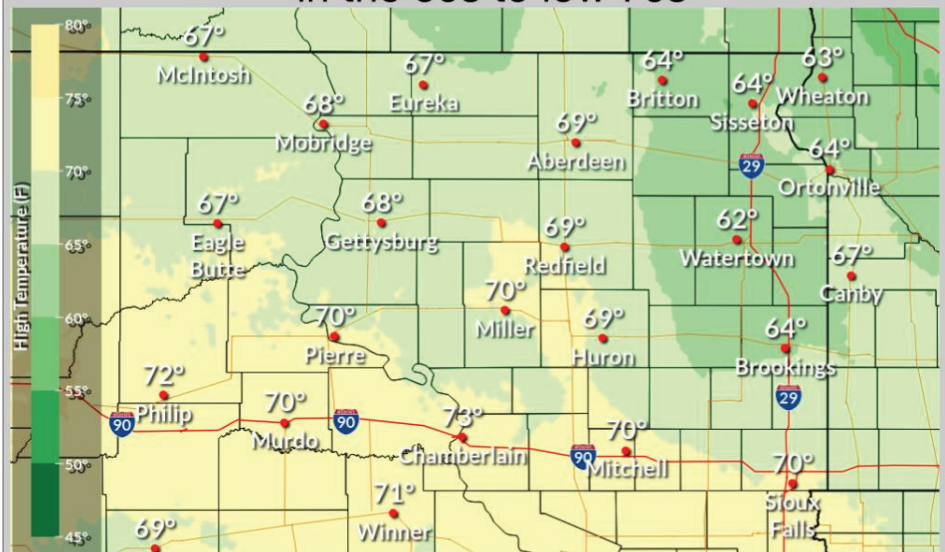
## Near Record High Temperatures Today

March 8, 2026  
7:24 AM CDT

### Forecast High Temperatures Today in the 60s to low 70s

#### Record Highs for Sunday, March 8th

<b>Aberdeen</b>	<b>65° in 2021</b>
<b>Watertown</b>	<b>67° in 1987</b>
<b>Pierre</b>	<b>68° in 2021</b>
<b>Mobridge</b>	<b>65° in 2021</b>
<b>Sisseton</b>	<b>68° in 1987</b>



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

Temperatures in the 60s to low 70s today will be near record highs for this time of year.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 51 °F at 4:58 PM

Low Temp: 23 °F at 2:42 AM

Wind: 23 mph at 2:43 PM

Precip: : 0.00

## Today's Info

Record High: 65 in 2021

Record Low: -32 in 1995

Average High: 37

Average Low: 16

Average Precip in Mar.: 0.19

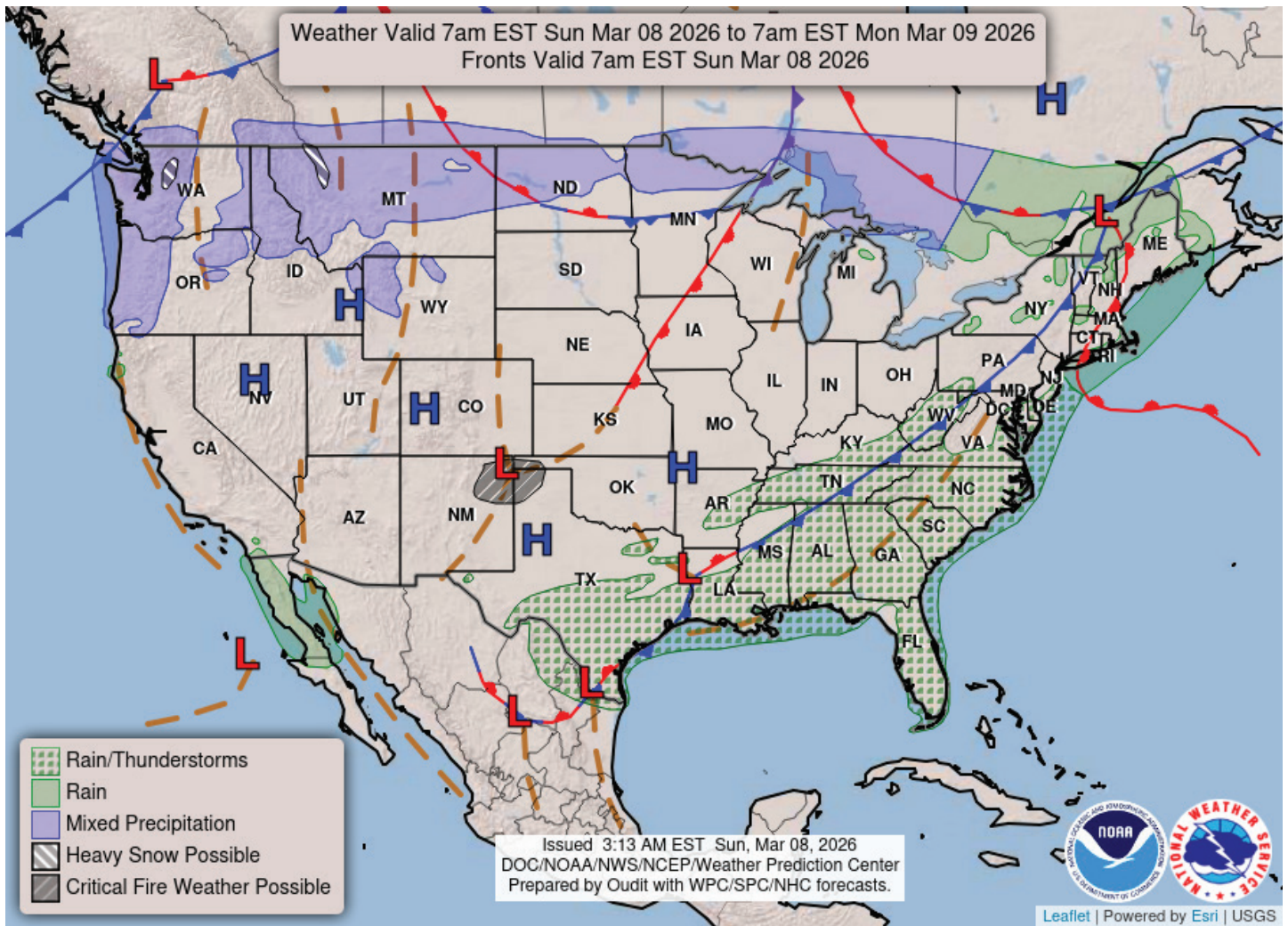
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 1.36

Precip Year to Date: 1.33

Sunset Tonight: 7.28 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:56 am



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## Today in Weather History

March 8th, 2000: High winds of 30 to 50 mph, combined with 3 to 7 inches of snow, caused widespread blizzard conditions across north-central South Dakota. As a result, many schools were closed early in the day, and travel was significantly disrupted. Telephone service between Mobridge and Selby went down for several hours. Some heavy snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Eagle Butte, Selby, and Hoven and 7 inches southwest of Keldron.

March 8th, 2013: An area of low pressure moving across the region brought warm, moist air overtop low-level cold air, which resulted in the widespread freezing rain across much of northeast South Dakota during the evening and into the early morning hours of the 8th and 9th. For much of the area, the precipitation changed to all rain before ending as temperatures rose above freezing. Ice accumulations ranged from a tenth to a half of an inch. Some ice accumulation reports include 0.25 inches at Garden City, Hayti, Waubay, Clear Lake, Sisseton, and Summit and 0.50 inches near Florence and Clark. Travel became hazardous, with no significant accidents reported. Also, no problems with power outages or tree damage were reported.

1717 — On Fishers Island in Long Island Sound, 1200 sheep were discovered to have been buried under a snow drift for four weeks. When finally uncovered, one hundred sheep were still alive. (The Weather Channel)

1909 — The town of Brinkley AR was struck by a tornado which killed 49 persons and caused 600,000 dollars damage. The tornado, which was two-thirds of a mile in width, destroyed 860 buildings. Entire families were killed as houses were completely swept away by the tornado. Tornadoes killed 64 persons and injured 671 others in Dallas and Monroe counties during the Arkansas tornado outbreak. (David Ludlum)

1984 — A freak thunder snowstorm produced high winds, vivid lightning, and up to seven inches of snow in the northern suburbs of Washington D.C. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 — Thirty-two cities in the eastern U.S. reported new record high temperatures for the date, including Madison WI with a reading of 71 degrees. Afternoon highs of 68 degrees at Houghton Lake MI and 72 degrees at Flint MI smashed their previous records for the date by fourteen degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — A cold front brought wintry weather to the north central U.S. Snowfall totals in northwestern Minnesota ranged up to eight inches at Roseau and Hallock. Winds in South Dakota gusted to 61 mph at Brookings. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — While arctic cold gripped the northeastern U.S., unseasonably warm weather prevailed across the southwestern states. Albany NY reported a record low of 2 degrees below zero. Tucson AZ reported a record high of 90 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1990 — Late afternoon thunderstorms produced severe weather in east central Iowa and west central Illinois. Thunderstorms spawned a tornado south of Augusta IL which traveled 42 miles to Marbleton. Golf ball size hail was reported at Peoria IL and near Vermont IL. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004 — The California coast warms up. San Francisco broke a 112-year record by reaching 82 degrees. Los Angeles soared to 93 degrees.

2005 — A line of strong to severe thunderstorms affected the eastern portions of North and South Carolina, with wind damage and a few tornadoes reported. Winds gusted over 70 MPH with some of the stronger storms.

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 In Touch Ministries

Daily Devotion

## Living by Faith

**The faithful move forward, even in the midst of uncertainty.**

Genesis 15:4-6: 4 Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ``This man will not be your heir; but one who will come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.”

5 And He took him outside and said, ``Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, ``So shall your descendants be.”

Separation is often a part of our development as Christians. Before we can take on something new, the Lord may ask us to let go of something we already have. In Genesis 12:1-3, God told Abraham he was going on a journey that would require leaving his country, his people, and his father’s household. Obedience meant saying goodbye to relationships and things dear to him. But this godly man didn’t hesitate. His strong faith enabled him to say yes to the Lord’s command.

To faithfully follow God, moving ahead in the midst of uncertainty may be required. Abraham was told to travel without knowing his destination. Try to imagine explaining to friends that you’re moving away but have no idea where you are going. This lack of detail did not stop Abraham. Unwavering trust in his heavenly Father enabled him to answer the divine call wholeheartedly—even though specific details were lacking. Abraham was spiritually ready to answer affirmatively when God called.

Following God requires living by faith. That means trusting the Holy Spirit to guide us when we don’t see how all the pieces fit together (John 16:13); believing that God always works for our good and His glory; and desiring to please our Father. May we all, like Abraham, be ready when the Lord calls.

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

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.07.26

10 32 45 53 54 2

TOP PRIZE:

**\$1,000,000/year**

NEXT DRAW: 13 Hrs 21 Mins 41 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.06.26

8 19 26 38 42 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$533,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.07.26

6 8 17 18 45 5

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$17,620,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.07.26

1 2 6 22 26

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$20,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.07.26

21 34 46 53 56 23

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.07.26

17 18 30 50 68 24

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$46,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the **AP** Associated Press

## BOYS PREP BASKETBALL

SDHSAA Playoffs

Region 5 Semifinal=

Class B=

Lower Brule 87, Andes Central/Dakota Christian 62

Lyman 61, Corsica/Stickney 39

Region 4 Semifinal=

Class B=

Freeman 63, Parkston 54

Viborg-Hurley 58, Centerville 35

Region 3 Semifinal=

Class B=

Sanborn Central-Woonsocket 51, Ethan 47, OT

Sioux Falls Lutheran 52, Bridgewater-Emery 43

Region 2 Semifinal=

Class B=

Castlewood 55, Wessington Springs 53

De Smet 53, Deubrook 51

SDHSAA Playoffs=

First Round=

Class AA=

Brandon Valley 72, Sioux Falls Jefferson 58

Harrisburg 69, Yankton 59

Huron 68, T F Riggs High School 40

Sioux Falls Lincoln 88, Sturgis Brown High School 44

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 74, Sioux Falls Washington 48

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 67, Rapid City Central 38

Tea 66, Spearfish 56

Watertown 57, Mitchell 43

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

## Uelmen's 28 lead North Dakota over St. Thomas in Summit League Tournament 67-66

By The Associated Press undefined

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Greyson Uelmen had 28 points and George Natsvlishvili made a free throw with 0.1 seconds left in No. 3 seed North Dakota's 67-66 victory against second-seeded St. Thomas on Saturday night in the Summit League Tournament.

North Dakota (18-16) plays No. 1 seed North Dakota State in the championship game Sunday.

Uelmen shot 9 of 11 from the field and 9 for 12 from the free-throw line for the Fightin' Hawks. Eli King scored 17 points, shooting 5 for 10 (3 for 6 from 3-point range) and 4 of 6 from the free-throw line. Garrett Anderson shot 4 of 10 from the field, including 1 for 4 from 3-point range, and went 2 for 4 from the foul line to finish with 11 points.

Nolan Minessale led the way for the Tommies (23-8, 12-4) with 23 points and nine rebounds. Ben Oosterbaan added 16 points for St. Thomas. Nick Janowski also had eight points and eight rebounds.

## Democrat Roy Cooper needs to defy North Carolina history to keep winning streak alive in Senate race

By GARY D. ROBERTSON and BILL BARROW Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina does not mind electing Democrats as governor, but it is a different matter when it comes to sending them to the U.S. Senate.

Roy Cooper, who led the state for two terms, is trying to change that with a campaign that could reshape power in Washington.

Standing in his way is Michael Whatley, who has Donald Trump's full backing after previously serving as the president's chosen Republican National Committee chairman.

Both Cooper and Whatley easily won their party's primaries this week, solidifying one of this year's marquee Senate races. The campaign will draw hundreds of millions in spending because North Carolina is critical to Democratic efforts to pick up the four seats necessary to win a Senate majority.

Republicans want to frame Cooper as too far left for a state that Trump won three times. That tried-and-true tactic echoes past victories over Democrats they cast as out-of-step rubber stamps for liberal leaders, and it will test Cooper's bond with voters established across four decades of winning campaigns as a state lawmaker, attorney general and governor.

Cooper wants to turn that narrative on its head, charging his Republican opponent with being a tool of "well-connected friends in Washington" who cannot effectively represent the state.

"Look, I'm going to be a strong, independent senator for North Carolina," Cooper said Wednesday. He said he would work with Trump when it made sense.

Whatley does not shrink from his alliance with the president.

"His leadership has changed our country, and I am proud to stand with him in the fight to secure our border, to strengthen our economy and put America first," Whatley said.

Whatley has history on his side but isn't well known

North Carolina is a perennial political battleground that often renders a split verdict. Democrats have kept their grip on the governor's office for more than a century, ceding it to only three Republicans during that time. Since 1968, Republican presidential candidates have won the state in every election except for 1976 and for 2008 — the same year a Democrat last won a Senate race.

Whatley needs those trends to make up for his lack of name recognition as a first-time candidate. As a former political staffer, lobbyist and party leader, he has deep ties in Raleigh and Washington, but less exposure to voters.

"It's one thing to be the party guy, and it's another to be the guy on the ballot yourself," said former Gov. Pat McCrory, a Republican who narrowly lost to Cooper in 2016. "We're going to see find out whether he has it or not."

Whatley and his supporters began an advertising campaign in the primary even though he did not face a serious challenge for the nomination.

"I went to school, I went to church. I played sports. And I worked. I was able to pay my own way through college, through graduate school and law school," Whatley said on Tuesday night. "I have lived the American dream right here in North Carolina."

Martha Goodson, 71, is not so sure. She voted for Cooper in the Democratic primary and has doubts about Whatley's commitment to the state.

"I'm just very hesitant about people that I haven't seen be thoroughly invested in North Carolina," Woodson said. "I know he has served the Republican Party in a leadership role," but "I don't know that I had heard his name before it came up for this."

Republican wants to poke holes in Cooper's record

Republicans in Washington say they are eager to mine Cooper's terms as governor, trying to turn his perceived strength into a weakness.

Although Democrats emphasize that Cooper has never lost a campaign for state office, McCrory cautioned

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that he never has faced the kind of negative attacks that he may this year. Looser rules on campaign spending "have changed the game," he said.

Republicans want to mix national fights over issues such as immigration and transgender rights with state-specific matters including crime and how Cooper managed hurricane responses and COVID-19 policy.

They have pointed to Cooper's veto of legislation that would have required sheriffs to cooperate with immigration agents seeking to pick up inmates believed to be in the country unlawfully.

"Roy Cooper chose criminal illegal aliens over North Carolina communities," Whatley said during his nomination acceptance speech.

Republicans have also focused on last summer's fatal stabbing of Ukrainian refugee Iryna Zarutka on a Charlotte light-rail train. The murder suspect had more than a dozen prior criminal arrests before his most recent charges in federal and state court. Trump highlighted the slaying during his State of the Union with Zarutka's mother in the gallery.

Democrats see health care as a strength for Cooper

The former governor has countered with a focus on the economy, including health care costs. He notes that he persuaded the Republican-controlled General Assembly to expand Medicaid coverage. The issue is back in the spotlight after Republicans refused to extend pandemic-era subsidies for insurance plans purchased through the Affordable Care Act.

Meanwhile, Cooper already is trying to turn discussion of crime and immigration back on Trump and Republicans after two protesters, both U.S. citizens, were killed by federal immigration agents in Minneapolis.

He said Wednesday that he wants "secure borders" and would "insist on federal resources to deport violent criminals" and "fight violent crime."

But, he said, "I think this administration is losing focus on that."

Trump will be a constant, even when not named

Cooper is not criticizing Trump in harshly personal terms, as some Democrats are. That is likely recognition that his gubernatorial victories came in part from winning votes from at least some Trump supporters. Rather, Cooper criticizes administration policies that he says hurt the state, especially working-class and middle-class voters, and then hammers Whatley for supporting that agenda.

Democrats see that as a way to capitalize on Trump's declining public support overall without Cooper risking alienating right-leaning voters he might be able to attract.

For Whatley, there is no option to continue embracing Trump while trying to maximize Republican voters, McCrory said.

"I don't think he has any choice but to bring him in," McCrory said. "The president hand-selected him."

That message is tailored to Republican voters such as Kevin Cattell, 71, who said he wants representatives in Washington who "support and see the value and the vision that President Trump is putting forward."

McCrory knows firsthand how powerful Trump's backing can be. In 2022, he unsuccessfully ran against Ted Budd for the Republican Senate nomination.

Once Trump endorsed Budd, McCrory said, "I might as well have been at the beach."

## **Oil built the Persian Gulf. Desalinated water keeps it alive. War could threaten both**

By ANNIKA HAMMERSCHLAG Associated Press

As missiles and drones curtail energy production across the Persian Gulf, analysts warn that water, not oil, may be the resource most at risk in the energy-rich but arid region.

On Sunday, Bahrain accused Iran of damaging one of its desalination plants. Earlier, Iran said a U.S. airstrike had damaged an Iranian plant.

Hundreds of desalination plants sit along the Persian Gulf coast, putting individual systems that supply water to millions within range of Iranian missile or drone strikes. Without them, major cities could not sustain their current populations.

In Kuwait, about 90% of drinking water comes from desalination, along with roughly 86% in Oman and

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about 70% in Saudi Arabia. The technology removes salt from seawater — most commonly by pushing it through ultrafine membranes in a process known as reverse osmosis — to produce the freshwater that sustains cities, hotels, industry and some agriculture across one of the world's driest regions.

For people living outside the Middle East, the main concern of the Iran war has been the impact on energy prices. The Gulf produces about a third of the world's crude exports and energy revenues underpin national economies. Fighting has already halted tanker traffic through key shipping routes and disrupted port activity, forcing some producers to curb exports as storage tanks fill.

But the infrastructure that keeps Gulf cities supplied with drinking water may be equally vulnerable.

"Everyone thinks of Saudi Arabia and their neighbors as petrostates. But I call them saltwater kingdoms. They're human-made fossil-fueled water superpowers," said Michael Christopher Low, director of the Middle East Center at the University of Utah. "It's both a monumental achievement of the 20th century and a certain kind of vulnerability."

Early signs of risk

The war that began Feb. 28 with U.S. and Israeli attacks on Iran has already brought fighting close to key desalination infrastructure. On March 2, Iranian strikes on Dubai's Jebel Ali port landed some 12 miles from one of the world's largest desalination plants, which produces much of the city's drinking water.

Damage also was reported at the Fujairah F1 power and water complex in the United Arab Emirates, and at Kuwait's Doha West desalination plant. The damage at the two facilities appeared to have resulted from nearby port attacks or debris from intercepted drones.

On Sunday, Bahrain accused Iran of indiscriminately attacking civilian targets and damaging one of its desalination plants, though it didn't say supplies have gone offline. The island nation, home to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet, has been among the countries targeted by Iranian drones and missiles.

Earlier, Iran said a U.S. airstrike damaged an Iranian desalination plant. Abbas Araghchi, the country's foreign minister, said the strike on Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz had cut into the water supply for 30 villages. He warned that in doing so "the U.S. set this precedent, not Iran."

Many Gulf desalination plants are physically integrated with power stations as co-generation facilities, meaning attacks on electrical infrastructure could also hinder water production. Even where plants are connected to national grids with backup supply routes, disruptions can cascade across interconnected systems, said David Michel, senior fellow for water security at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"It's an asymmetrical tactic," he said. "Iran doesn't have the same capacity to strike back at the United States and Israel. But it does have this possibility to impose costs on the Gulf countries to push them to intervene or call for a cessation of hostilities."

Desalination plants have multiple stages — intake systems, treatment facilities, energy supplies — and damage to any part of that chain can interrupt production, according to Ed Cullinane, Middle East editor at Global Water Intelligence, a publisher serving the water industry.

"None of these assets are any more protected than any of the municipal areas that are currently being hit by ballistic missiles or drones," Cullinane said.

A long-standing concern

Gulf governments and U.S. officials have long recognized the risks these systems pose for regional stability: if major desalination plants were knocked offline, some cities could lose most of their drinking water within days. A 2010 CIA analysis warned attacks on desalination facilities could trigger national crises in several Gulf states, and prolonged outages could last months if critical equipment were destroyed.

More than 90% of the Gulf's desalinated water comes from just 56 plants, the report stated, and "each of these critical plants is extremely vulnerable to sabotage or military action."

A leaked 2008 U.S. diplomatic cable warned the Saudi capital of Riyadh "would have to evacuate within a week" if either the Jubail desalination plant on the Gulf coast or its pipelines or associated power infrastructure were seriously damaged.

Saudi Arabia has since invested in pipeline networks, storage reservoirs and other redundancies designed

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to cushion short-term disruptions, as has the UAE. But smaller states such as Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait have fewer backup supplies.

Climate change could threaten water plants

As warming oceans increase the likelihood and intensity of cyclones in the Arabian Sea and raise the chances of landfall on the Arabian Peninsula, storm surge and extreme rainfall could overwhelm drainage systems and damage coastal desalination.

The plants themselves contribute to the problem. Desalination is energy-intensive, with plants worldwide producing between 500 and 850 million tons of carbon emissions annually, approaching the roughly 880 million tons emitted by the entire global aviation industry.

The byproduct of desalination, highly concentrated brine, is typically discharged back into the ocean, where it can harm seafloor habitats and coral reefs, while intake systems can trap and kill fish larvae, plankton and other organisms at the base of the marine food web.

As climate change intensifies droughts, disrupts rainfall patterns and fuels wildfires, desalination is expected to expand in many parts of the world.

The threat is not hypothetical

During Iraq's 1990-1991 invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Gulf War, Iraqi forces sabotaged power stations and desalination facilities as they retreated, said the University of Utah's Low. At the same time, millions of barrels of crude oil were deliberately released into the Persian Gulf, creating one of the largest oil spills in history.

The massive slick threatened to contaminate seawater intake pipes used by desalination plants across the region. Workers rushed to deploy protective booms around the intake valves of major facilities.

The destruction left Kuwait largely without fresh water and dependent on emergency water imports. Full recovery took years.

More recently, Yemen's Houthi rebels have targeted Saudi desalination facilities amid regional tensions.

The incidents underscore a broader erosion of long-standing norms against attacking civilian infrastructure, Michel said, noting conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza and Iraq.

International humanitarian law, including provisions of the Geneva Conventions, prohibit targeting civilian infrastructure indispensable to the survival of the population, including drinking water facilities.

The potential for harmful cyberattacks on water infrastructure is a growing concern. In 2023 and 2024, U.S. officials blamed Iran-aligned groups for hacking into several American water utilities.

Iran's own water supply at risk

After a fifth year of extreme drought, water levels in Tehran's five reservoirs plunged to some 10% of their capacity, prompting President Masoud Pezeshkian to warn the capital may have to be evacuated.

Unlike many Gulf states that rely heavily on desalination, Iran still gets most of its water from rivers, reservoirs and depleted underground aquifers. The country operates a relatively small number of desalination plants, supplying only a fraction of national demand.

Iran is racing to expand desalination along its southern coast and pump some of the water inland, but infrastructure constraints, energy costs and international sanctions have sharply limited scalability.

"They were already thinking of evacuating the capital last summer," Cullinane of Global Water Intelligence said. "I don't dare to wonder what it's going to be like this summer under sustained fire, with an ongoing economic catastrophe and a serious water crisis."

## Trump's 'roaring' economy meets a rough start to 2026: What the latest numbers show

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump promised that 2026 would be a bumper year for economic growth, but instead it has kicked off with job losses, rising gasoline prices and more uncertainty about America's future.

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In his State of the Union address less than two weeks ago, the Republican president confidently told the country: "The roaring economy is roaring like never before." The latest batch of data on jobs, pump prices and the stock market suggests that Trump's roar has started to sound far more like a whimper.

There is a gap between the boom that Trump has predicted and the volatile results he has produced — one that could set the tone in this year's midterm elections as he tries to defend his party's majorities in the House and Senate. With Trump's tariffs drama ongoing, the war in Iran has suddenly created inflationary concerns regarding oil and natural gas. To the White House, it is still early in the year and stronger growth is coming.

No signs of a jobs boom

"WOW! The Golden Age of America is upon us!!!" Trump posted on social media Feb. 11 after the monthly jobs report showed gains of 130,000 jobs in January.

Since then, the job market has evaporated in worrisome ways.

Friday's employment report showed job losses of 92,000 in February. The January and December figures were revised downward, with December swinging to a loss of 17,000 jobs. Monthly data can be rocky, but a trend has emerged that shows an enduring weakness. Without the health care sector, the economy would have shed roughly 202,000 jobs since Trump became president in January 2025. Still, his administration notes that construction job gains outside of the housing sector point to future hiring growth.

Trump often brags that jobs are going to people born in the United States, rather than to immigrants. But the latest report punctured some of that argument.

The unemployment rate for people born in the U.S. has climbed over the past 12 months to 4.7% from 4.4%. This means a greater share of the people who Trump said would get jobs because of his immigration crackdown are, in fact, searching for work.

Prices at the pump are going up

"Slashing energy costs is among the most important actions we can take to bring down prices for American consumers," Trump said in a February speech in Texas just before the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran. "Because when you cut the cost of energy, you really cut -- you just cut the cost of everything."

The president has repeatedly told Americans that keeping gas costs low would be key to defeating inflation. He has talked up the decline, citing figures that were far below the national average to assure the public that driving was getting cheaper.

But the strikes against Iran that began Feb. 28 have, for the moment, crushed that narrative. Prices at the pump have jumped 19% over the past month to a national average of \$3.45, according to AAA. The investment bank Goldman Sachs warned in an analyst note that, if higher oil prices persist, inflation could rise from its 2.4% reading in January to 3% by the end of the year.

The administration is banking on plans to contain any energy price increases, essentially betting that either the conflict will end shortly or the administration can succeed in getting more tankers through the Strait of Hormuz.

"The president has been clear about short term disruptions due to Operation Epic Fury even as U.S. and allied forces make stunning progress against the Iranian terrorist regime," said White House deputy press secretary Kush Desai. "The long run trend, however, has been clear: President Trump's economic agenda continues to unleash robust private sector job, investment, and economic growth that's driving America's resurgence."

Stocks are off their highs

"You know, we set the all-time record in history with the Dow going to 50,000," Trump said Thursday at the White House.

This frequently repeated talking point has grown stale. The Dow Jones Industrial Average, one of Trump's preferred measures of success, has dropped 5% over the past month. Stocks are up during his presidency, just as they were previously when Democrat Joe Biden was president. The recent decline could be reversed if the war with Iran ends and companies see solid profits over the next year and beyond. The recent dip, however, should be a warning sign as the administration has stressed the importance of more people investing in the stock market through vehicles such as "Trump accounts" for children.

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The stock market has become a barometer of how people feel about the economy, with stock investors tending to have more confidence and those without money in the markets being more pessimistic.

Joanna Hsu, the director of the University of Michigan's surveys of consumers, noted that in February a "sizable" increase in sentiment among people owning stocks "was fully offset by a decline among consumers without stock holdings."

Productivity is up, but workers aren't benefiting

Trump can point to a win in that the economy has become more productive — generating more value for each hour of work. That is a positive sign for long-term growth in the U.S. and a reflection of its strong tech sector.

Business sector labor productivity climbed 2.8% in the fourth quarter of last year, the Labor Department reported Thursday. But the challenge is that the gains might not be spread to workers in the form of higher pay as labor's share of income last year fell to the lowest level on record, noted Mike Konczal, senior director of policy and research at the Economic Security Project, a nonprofit aligned with liberal economic issues.

Economy grew at a faster pace under Biden

"Under the Biden administration, America was plagued by the nightmare of stagflation, meaning low growth and high inflation — a recipe for misery, failure and decline," Trump said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January.

The scoreboard tells a far different story, one that makes Biden's track record in 2024 look better than Trump's performance last year. The U.S. economy grew at a 2.8% pace during Biden's last year, compared with 2.2% under Trump in 2025.

As for inflation, the primary measure used by the Federal Reserve is the personal consumption expenditures price index. It was 2.6% in both 2024 and 2025.

Trump has staked his economic argument on doing better than Biden. But while he has avoided the inflation spikes that haunted Biden's presidency, he has not delivered stronger growth or more hiring.

## Iran's border with Turkey offers a way out, but few are leaving for good

By SERRA YEDIKARDES Associated Press

KAPIKOY BORDER CROSSING, Turkey (AP) — A land crossing near eastern Turkey's Van province is one of the few routes connecting Iranians to the rest of the world amid an airspace shutdown in Iran since the U.S. and Israel launched strikes on Tehran over a week ago, triggering war in the Middle East.

Most travelers at the border gate in recent days had connections with Turkey through work, family, and friends, and many had moved up preplanned visits because of the war. Some had residency or citizenship in a third country and were transiting through Turkey.

Only a small number of Iranians who spoke to The Associated Press at the Kapikoy crossing said they planned to stay in Turkey to escape the war for an indefinite period.

Reza Gol, a 38-year-old plastic surgeon, said the war was not the only reason for his trip. He was traveling from Urmia in western Iran to see patients in Istanbul, where he used to live.

"It's not clear whether we will leave Iran for good, but I can clear my head a little bit in the meantime," he said. "You can see it's not that crowded at the border. Everyone is staying in their houses. For now, people are not leaving everything they have behind and running away."

Pooneh Asghari and her husband, Iranian-Canadian citizens, were reluctantly preparing to fly to Canada, although they no longer have a house there and both of them work in Iran. Asghari said they are hoping the trip will be brief.

"We've been living in Iran for over the last five years," she said. "All our life is there."

Fariba, a woman who asked to be identified only by her first name out of security concerns, was headed to Izmir in western Turkey to wait out the war with her son.

She said most of her friends and neighbors don't have the means to escape — which might explain the

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lack of a major exodus across the border.

"People are very poor now," she said. "So they are staying at home, and they are scared."

Border restrictions and canceled flights

Iranians normally enter Turkey without visas. On Monday, Turkey's trade minister announced the mutual suspension of crossings for day-trips, while Iranian border officials have restricted the passage of some Iranian nationals, according to travelers and local media.

However, since Thursday morning, both Iranians and third-country nationals have been crossing the mountain ringed Kapıköy border gates normally.

Turkey's Interior Minister Mustafa Çiftçi said in a statement that 2,032 travelers entered Turkey from Iran on Wednesday, while 1,966 of them departed to Iran. More recent figures were not available.

Most of those who crossed then made their way to the Van airport to continue their journey. On Friday night, about 20 passengers, mostly Iranians, were lying on rows of chairs waiting to get a flight the next morning.

Mehregan, a 26-year-old who studies in China, was visiting her family in Ahvaz for the winter holidays when the war broke out. She drove more than 15 hours across Iran to cross into Turkey. She asked not to be identified by her full name out of fear that speaking to media would cause her problems with Iranian authorities.

The cash-strapped student decided to sleep in the airport while waiting for the next day's flight to Istanbul, from which she would fly to China. But on Saturday, her flight was canceled because of snowstorms and she was preparing to look for a hotel in the city rather than sleeping in the airport for a second night.

"If I can't get on a flight tomorrow from here I will miss my flight to China" and lose the cost of the nonrefundable ticket, she said.

Van, which is a 1.5-hour drive from the border, has long been a popular destination for Iranians for work, travel, and trade. The hotels and shops that normally do bustling business during Iran's Nowruz holidays in mid-March are now expecting to take a hit.

"It gets really lively here over Nowruz. A lot of our friends come and spend their holidays here with us," says Resat Yeşilağaç, owner of two hotels in Van. "Now it's mostly quiet, apart from people who come because of the war. Most of them are dual nationals and they stop in Van for a day or so before flying out."

Fears around migration in Turkey

Migration is a sensitive topic in Turkey, which was at one point hosting nearly 4 million Syrian refugees.

Turkey has been further enhancing its border defenses to be able to respond to a potential influx of people fleeing unrest after mass anti-government protests in Iran were met by a brutal crackdown in January.

Turkey's defense ministry said in January that Turkey had 380 kilometers (235 miles) of concrete walls, 203 optical towers and 43 elevator-equipped towers along the country's 560-kilometer (350-mile) border with Iran.

On Wednesday, Interior Minister Mustafa Ciftci said Turkey had drawn up contingency plans that involve tent camps and buffer zones to respond to a potential influx of people fleeing the war from Iran. So far that influx has not materialized.

Harrison Mirtar, 53, an Iranian-Canadian, crossed the border at Kapıköy before continuing his journey back to Canada, after a visit to his parents in Tehran. He said he was angry about the foreign intervention in his country, but he was not too worried about leaving his parents behind. They had lived through the brutal Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s.

"They are in their homeland," he said. "Life is going on, but with some bombs."

## China hopes 2026 will be a 'landmark year' for relationship with US

By HUIZHONG WU Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China said it hopes this year will be a "landmark year" for its relationship with its biggest competitor, the U.S., striking a largely positive tone ahead of an expected summit between the leaders of

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the two countries later this month.

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, speaking Sunday at a press briefing on the sidelines of an annual meeting of China's ceremonial legislature, said that it was a "big year" for the relationship between the two world powers. He said that while there are many differences, "the two heads of state have personally maintained good exchanges at the highest level," providing a level of "strategic guarantee" for the bilateral relationship.

U.S. President Donald Trump is due to visit Beijing for a summit with China's President Xi Jinping at the end of March. While Wang did not confirm the visit, he signaled that Beijing is looking for a less fraught relationship.

"The agenda for high-level exchanges is already on our table. What needs to be done now is for both sides to make thorough preparations for this, foster a suitable atmosphere, manage existing differences, and eliminate unnecessary distractions," said Wang. "China's attitude has always been positive and open, and the key is for the U.S. side to meet us halfway."

The two countries have been at loggerheads for years, especially since Trump launched a trade war with China during his first term. Last year, he hit China with the highest trade duties of his worldwide tariffs, citing a major trade imbalance with the country. Trump and Xi agreed to a temporary trade truce last October that hit pause on the highest of the tariffs, but did not resolve any of the deeper underlying issues.

The minister's speech has set the overall tone for U.S.-China relations for the year, said George Chen of consultancy The Asia Group, indicating "a welcoming gesture from Beijing for Trump to come and visit."

The "Chinese side is prepared to talk," he said, adding that Beijing wants to be clear that China is ready to host Trump.

Wang's comments also reflected a China that views itself on the ascendant. In this role, it would defend the position of the United Nations, which is undergoing layoffs and reductions after the U.S. withdrew from multiple U.N. initiatives.

Beijing is one of the five members of the U.N. Security Council that holds a permanent seat and veto power, and has been able to leverage its position to build relationships, while also filing a diplomatic void left by the U.S. since Trump's first term.

The minister spoke about the Global Governance Initiative, a security initiative that China's Xi first unveiled last September. Beijing is now saying that the initiative will center the United Nations. "The clearest signal from global governance initiatives is that the U.N.'s leading role must be upheld and cannot be shaken; its core role should be strengthened, not weakened."

"Although the U.N. is not perfect, without it the world would only be worse. Bypassing the U.N. to set up alternative arrangements, going one's own way, or cobbling together various small groupings will win no support and are not sustainable," he also said.

Wang also reiterated his call for an immediate stop to military actions in Iran.

"This is a war that shouldn't have happened, and is one that doesn't bring any benefit to anyone," said Wang, without mentioning the U.S. by name, he issued a thinly-veiled criticism. "Might does not equal right, and the world cannot revert to the law of the jungle."

He called on major powers to "play a constructive role" and to return to the negotiations table to end the war.

## **NFL's free-agent spending frenzy begins first with a legal tampering period**

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

Ready, set, negotiate multi-million contracts.

The NFL's free agency period opens Monday with a 52-hour legal tampering period ahead of the official start of the new league year Wednesday.

Edge rusher Trey Hendrickson, six-time Pro Bowl wide receiver Mike Evans and Super Bowl MVP Ken-

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neth Walker III head the list of high-profile players who will be free to sign a contract with a new team. Quarterbacks Kirk Cousins and Kyler Murray also will be seeking new teams because they're going to be released by their teams.

Here's an explanation of rules and terms:

What does legal tampering mean?

At noon EDT Monday, teams can start negotiating with certified agents of players who will become unrestricted free agents when their contracts expire at the start of the new league year on 4 p.m. EDT Wednesday. Teams aren't permitted to speak directly to the players, who can't sign a new contract until the league year officially begins. The two-day negotiating period applies only to players who will be unrestricted free agents.

Who are unrestricted free agents?

Any player with four or more accrued seasons — six or more regular-season games on a club's active/inactive, reserve/injured or reserve/physically unable to perform lists — whose contract has expired becomes an unrestricted free agent and may negotiate and sign with any team.

Who are restricted free agents?

Restricted free agents are players with three accrued seasons who have received a qualifying offer when their current deals expire on Wednesday.

What is a franchise tag?

Each team can designate one potential free agent a franchise player. Cowboys receiver George Pickens, Falcons tight end Kyle Pitts and Jets running back Breece Hall received the tag before the March 3 deadline.

An exclusive franchise player is not free to sign with another club and is offered the greater of the average of the top five salaries at the player's position for the current year as of the end of the restricted free agent signing period on April 17; or the amount of the required tender for a nonexclusive franchise player.

A nonexclusive franchise player can sign with another team, but that club will owe his previous team two first-round draft picks. All the players tagged this year are nonexclusive.

What is a transition tag?

The transition tag is a one-year offer for the average of top 10 salaries at the position. It guarantees the original club the right of first refusal to match any offer the player might receive from another team.

The tagging team is awarded no compensation if it chooses not to match a deal. Colts quarterback Daniel Jones received the transition tag this year.

The signing period for transition players begins at 4 p.m. EDT on March 11 and ends on July 22. After July 22 and until 4 p.m. EDT on the Tuesday following the 10th week of the season, the prior club has exclusive negotiating rights.

Teams can decide to withdraw franchise and transition tags and the player automatically becomes an unrestricted free agent.

What is the salary cap for 2026?

The salary cap is \$301.2 million per club, up from \$279.2 million last year. Teams must be under the salary cap by 4 p.m. EDT Wednesday.

What is salary cap rollover?

A team may carry over salary cap space from one league year to the following league year by submitting notice to the NFL prior to 4 p.m. EDT on the day following the team's final regular-season game. A team can carry over 100% of its remaining 2025 room to its adjusted salary cap for 2026.

## **A new Nepali party led by an ex-rapper is set for a landslide win in parliamentary election**

By BINAJ GURUBACHARYA Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — A Nepali political party led by an ex-rapper is set for a landslide victory in the country's first parliamentary election since Gen Z protests ousted the old leadership that has ruled the Himalayan nation for decades.

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The Rastriya Swatantra, or National Independent Party, formed only four years ago, had already won 117 of 165 directly elected seats and led in eight other constituencies in the results published Sunday morning by Nepal's Election Commission.

Other political parties and independent candidates had won 36 seats in total so far. Officials were still counting the votes Sunday and final results were expected later in the week.

The party's prime ministerial candidate is rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah, who won the 2022 Kathmandu mayoral race. He emerged as a leading figure in the 2025 uprising that ousted former Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli.

In Nepal, voters directly elect 165 members to the House of Representatives, the lower chamber of Parliament. The remaining 110 seats in the 275-member body are allocated through a proportional representation system, under which political parties are assigned seats based on their share of the vote. On Sunday, RSP also led that, with about 51% of the 110 seats.

The relatively new RSP has unseated the two long-dominant parties: the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), who have taken turns ruling the country.

Local papers called the sweeping win a historic moment. "RSP set for a landslide victory," said the popular Himalayan Times. "People's ballot revolt; shift in political paradigm," said Annapurna Post.

RSP supporters have been celebrating the win in several constituencies, offering the winners flower garlands, bouquets, scarves and smearing them with red vermilion powder.

"The future prime minister (Shah) has clearly spoken that there will be no compromise when it comes to developing the country," said RSP party member and volunteer Khagendra Chapagain, who was at the party headquarters in Kathmandu. "Our first agenda is to develop nation, and focus will be to work for health, education and the fight against corruption."

The party officials, however, have asked their candidates and supporters to refrain from victory rallies or any other public celebrations out of respect for the dozens of lives lost during last year's youth-led protests.

In Nepal, voters get two ballot papers, one to choose a candidate of their choice who is usually a political party nominee and the other to choose a party they prefer.

RSP clearly has more than half the directly elected seats and the results of the second ballot also show the party has more than 50% of the votes in its favor. They require the support of half the total number of members in the lower chamber of Parliament to form a government.

Analysts say the party would have comfortable numbers in the parliament to form a single-party government but faces challenges running the government.

"The problem or challenge with this new party would be to deliver things, given the limited resources and the limited institutional support. Because people have high expectations, that doesn't necessarily mean that the new party can fulfill it," said Keshab Prasad Poudel, an independent analyst.

Last year's protests against corruption and poor governance were triggered by a social media ban before snowballing into a popular revolt against the government. Dozens were killed and hundreds wounded when protesters attacked government buildings and police opened fire on them.

## **A singing circle at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw offers support for people with dementia**

By MIKE CORDER Associated Press

AMSTERDAM (AP) — Megan Worthy still recalls singing in a choir in the Australian capital, Canberra, as she was growing up.

Now, as a rare form of early-onset dementia chips away at her vision and other brain functions, the 58-year-old is transported back to her musical youth as she and her daughter, Bronte, sing together with other people with neurological conditions in an Amsterdam concert hall, the Concertgebouw.

"It's pretty brutal," Worthy said of her rare neurological condition. "I'm starting to lose everything, you know, and this is really rewarding and seeing all these people, yeah, it did make me have a lot of memories."

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She was taking part in a so-called "singing circle" run by opera singer Maartje de Lint at the landmark concert venue for seniors with what she calls "vulnerable brains," many of whom have a form of dementia or Parkinson's disease.

Millions of people have some form of dementia, a progressive loss of memory, reasoning, language skills and other cognitive functions. People can experience changes in personality, emotional control, even visual perception. Alzheimer's is the most widely recognized type, but there are many others, with their own symptoms and underlying biology. Small strokes, for example, can impair blood flow to the brain and trigger what's called vascular dementia.

The singers in Amsterdam, who each pay 20 euros (\$23.50) to attend, are arranged with their carers in a circle of chairs under a ceiling hung with 14 crystal chandeliers in the venue's ornate Mirror Hall.

"We always say, music is like vitamins," said Selien Kneppers, 78, who once managed a Dutch boogie woogie and blues band and now regularly attends the singing circle.

Roving around the middle, often dropping to one knee and reaching out her hands to connect with a singer, is De Lint. She and other singers in her organization crisscross the Netherlands and Europe, leading singing workshops.

Singing, De Lint says, is a way of keeping the brain active and bringing family members and their loved ones closer together.

"So we give people perspective," she says before one of her singing sessions in Amsterdam. "It's like actually a training for the brain, for the body, to get more resilient and understand the perspective that you still have."

The hour-long session clearly has an emotional effect on the singers and their carers. Helpers regularly hand out paper tissues for people to dab away tears. One man tenderly reached out a hand to touch the face of the woman next to him as they sang songs ranging from Elvis Presley's "Love Me Tender" to Frank Sinatra's "Fly Me to the Moon" and "Amazing Grace."

Neurobiologist Brankele Frank, who is not connected to De Lint's project, agrees that singing can be beneficial to people with dementia or Alzheimer's or other kinds of neurodegenerative diseases.

Music "speaks to brain areas that haven't really been degenerated yet," she told The Associated Press. "So, for example, their verbal skills often are compromised, but music speaks to parts of the brain that don't necessarily need verbal skills. And so it taps into their emotion, their sense of self, their identity."

Scientists are studying the potential benefits of music for people with dementia, traumatic brain injuries, Parkinson's disease and stroke. Music lights up multiple regions of the brain, strengthening neural connections between areas that govern language, memories, emotions and movement.

Megan's daughter, Bronte Henfling, said that even getting her mother to a new environment that was not a medical appointment to discuss her posterior cortical atrophy felt good.

"Just hearing everyone come together and sing ... it reminds us that we're all human and there's a humanity out there which is really pleasing and nice to be a part of," she said.

## 12 years on, renewed hunt for missing Flight MH370 comes up empty as families press for answers

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP) — Twelve years after Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 vanished with 239 people aboard, a renewed deep-sea search in the southern Indian Ocean has so far failed to locate the missing aircraft, Malaysian authorities said Sunday, as families pressed for the effort to continue.

The Air Accident Investigation Bureau said in a statement that a seabed search conducted by marine robotics company Ocean Infinity between March 2025 and January 2026 surveyed thousands of square kilometers of ocean floor but has not produced any confirmed findings of the aircraft wreckage.

Malaysia gave the nod to the Texas-based company last year to renew the search for Flight 370 under a "no-find, no-fee" contract at a new 15,000-square-kilometer (5,800-square-mile) site in the southern Indian Ocean where it was believed to have crashed. Ocean Infinity will be paid \$70 million only if wreckage is discovered.

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The search was carried out for 28 days in two phases — March 25–28 last year and Dec 31, 2025, to Jan 23 this year, covering about 7,571 square kilometers (2,923 square miles) of seabed, the bureau said. Weather periodically disrupted operations, it said.

“The search activities undertaken have not yielded any findings that confirm the location of the aircraft wreckage,” it said in a statement. It didn’t give details on when the search will resume.

The Boeing 777 plane vanished from radar shortly after taking off on March 8, 2014, carrying 239 people, mostly Chinese nationals, on a flight from Malaysia’s capital, Kuala Lumpur, to Beijing. Satellite data showed the plane turned from its flight path and headed south to the far-southern Indian Ocean, where it is believed to have crashed.

An expensive multinational search failed to turn up any clues to its location, although debris washed ashore on the east African coast and Indian Ocean islands. A private search in 2018 by Ocean Infinity also found nothing.

Voice 370, representing the families of some of those aboard the missing plane, urged the government to extend Ocean Infinity’s contract and to consider similar arrangements with other deep-sea exploration companies.

Although Ocean Infinity’s contract runs until June, the group said the company’s vessel has been redeployed for other work and is unlikely to return soon to complete the remaining search areas due to the approaching winter months and deteriorating sea conditions.

“The government pays nothing unless the aircraft is found. Any request by Ocean Infinity to extend the search contract should therefore be granted without hesitation,” it said in a statement. “If the present search is unsuccessful, we would also urge Malaysia to kindly consider extending similar no find, no fee opportunities to other capable deep sea exploration companies.”

The group vowed to “continue the fight for answers. We will never give up!”

## George Russell wins Formula 1’s Australian GP as Mercedes goes 1-2

By STEWART BELL Associated Press

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Mercedes’ George Russell has won a thrilling season-opening Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix, with teammate Kimi Antonelli following him home, after a double-stacked pit stop under the virtual safety car outmaneuvered a lightning quick start by Ferrari.

It was McLaren’s 61st one-two result and first since 2024’s Las Vegas Grand Prix.

“We knew it was going to be challenging,” Russell said. “I go onto the grid; I saw my battery level. I have nothing in the tank, made a bad start and honestly some really tight battles with Charles (Leclerc).”

“I was really glad to cross the finish line, but honestly, thank you so much for the whole team because it’s been a long time coming to have this car beneath us, and I’m yeah, going to start off in a better way.”

Pole sitter Russell had a sluggish start, as did Antonelli who dropped to seventh, allowing Ferrari’s Leclerc — making best use of his smaller turbo for a quicker spool-up and getaway — to take the lead into turn one.

The Monégasque then dived for the top spot with Russell, passing and repassing, before the lap 12 deployment of the virtual safety car to cover the stopped Red Bull car of Isack Hadjar saw both Mercedes cars take an opportunistic pit stop — a move that proved decisive.

Russell’s teammate was again relieved to fight back to second, having dropped down to seventh at the start before weaving his way back into the podium positions.

“Yeah, the racing was incredible,” Antonelli said. “The first few laps, the overtake is so powerful that you can give a lot of action. So, it was really good fun at the beginning and yeah, now, a bit of rest and looking forward to China.”

Ferrari outmaneuvered

Leclerc was third for his first podium for Ferrari since Mexico last year, with the 28-year-old frustrated to not go one place higher after the Scuderia erred by failing to follow Mercedes’ quick thinking for a cheap

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pit stop under the virtual safety car, as the rest of the field drove at a slower pace.

Leclerc, though, didn't think the win was possible.

"I don't think so, but maybe I'm wrong," he said. "Yeah, it looked like Mercedes maybe had a bit more pace than us today. But, maybe not as much as what we saw yesterday, so that's a good thing. But I don't think we could have won."

Leclerc's teammate Lewis Hamilton was fourth, 0.6 seconds behind at the flag, having chased him hard in the closing laps. The seven-time world champion was vocal over the radio at Ferrari's strategic blunders.

"At least one of us should have come in," Hamilton said as both Mercedes' pitted.

Sorry day for McLaren

Earlier, the local fans in the stands were heartbroken after McLaren's Oscar Piastri crashed out on the way to the grid at the exit of turn four, likely due to an energy spike in his power unit, which ruled him out of his home race before the start.

Lando Norris, the sole McLaren in the race after Piastri's crash, closed out the top-five. The reigning world champion not only clawed his way back from outside the top-10 after a slow start — but in the closing laps, fought off Red Bull's Max Verstappen, who rocketed from 20th on the grid to finish sixth after 58 laps. The Dutchman was the last racer to finish on the lead lap, albeit 54.6 seconds behind winner Russell.

Oliver Bearman was seventh, up from 12th on the grid, and the sole Haas to finish in the points, with his teammate Esteban Ocon finishing 11th. Bearman finished ahead of 2026's sole rookie, Arvid Lindblad, who scored four points on his F1 debut for eighth place — but was as high as fourth during the race.

Gabriel Bortoleto was ninth for German giant Audi's first points in its first race, while Alpine's Pierre Gasly closed out the top-10, earning his first point since last year's São Paulo Grand Prix.

## Cocoa beans rot and West African farmers seek other options after commodity crash

By EDWARD ACQUAH and OPE ADETAYO Associated Press

KONA, Ghana (AP) — Manu Yaw Fofie was born into the cocoa farming business, but the land bequeathed to him has become more of a burden than a blessing. A sharp fall in cocoa prices over the past year has left beans rotting in some West African warehouses, while global chocolate makers scramble for supplies and consumers seek their fix.

With less money coming in, the 52-year-old Fofie in Ghana has taken the desperate step of giving part of his land to illegal sand miners, a lucrative practice driven by high construction demand since sand is used in concrete.

The cost is severe, however: the sand mining makes the land infertile.

Aware of the danger, Fofie said he had been left with little choice. He said annual cocoa bean yields has been declining over the years, from the past heyday of 300 bags to 50 bags in 2025, affected by factors including climate change.

Fofie is one of many cocoa farmers in Ghana and Ivory Coast — countries responsible for nearly 70% of the global cocoa bean supply — who are putting their land for other uses after the price of the once high-flying commodity crashed.

Ivory Coast, the world's leading cocoa producer, had to purchase an excess supply of cocoa beans from farmers in January and this week slashed the price by more than half for 2026.

While a global commodity like cocoa beans is prone to occasional crisis, Ghanaian authorities were not prepared for one at this scale, said Edward Karaweh, former general secretary of the General Agricultural Workers Union.

"Preparation allows you to mitigate the crisis. It is not that you prevent the crisis altogether," Karaweh said.

Cocoa futures soared, then crashed

Hundreds of thousands of farmers in West Africa rely on cocoa farming for a living. In Ivory Coast, cocoa bean exports make up 40% of the total export revenue. In neighboring Ghana, they make up nearly 15%.

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Government regulators set a fixed price for the cocoa bean at the beginning of every planting season, and the majority of the beans are sold through government-licensed parties to protect farmers from price fluctuations on the international market.

However, after a surge in cocoa futures in 2024 on international markets, the futures — a contract to buy a commodity at an agreed-upon price on a future date — reached more than \$12,000 per metric ton, the highest in decades. Then it crashed to around \$4,000 as supply outstripped demand.

The downturn in price meant global traders would run at a loss if they purchased cocoa beans from the two African countries.

That led to a mounting stockpile of rotting cocoa beans in warehouses, while farmers who already sold their stocks to governments have not been paid for months.

With structural issues, farmers said they missed out on benefiting from the original surge. The whiplash in prices made some decide enough was enough.

Climate also plays a role

Walking through his cocoa trees in Ivory Coast, François N'Gbin pointed to blackened, dried-up pods caused by disease and a lack of rain.

He said he also has given up part of his land, for a fee, to illegal gold miners, then obtained a mining license out of fear of the authorities.

The mining area, partly filled with murky, yellowish water, covers at least 1,000 square meters (1,200 square yards) on his farm.

"Today, gold is more profitable than cocoa," he said. "We get 1,500 CFA francs (\$2.67) per gram of gold, and we're about to negotiate an increase."

Many other farmers are finding other uses for their farms, including leasing them to illegal gold miners, according to Moussa Koné, president of the Ivorian cocoa farmers' union.

"Cocoa is not selling, but farmers still need money to feed their families," he said.

Governments race to find solutions

Ghana has initiated efforts to loosen regulations on price controls, and in January slashed its fixed price for cocoa beans by 28% to 41,392 cedis (\$3,881) per metric ton, in an attempt to make the beans more accessible to buyers.

This week, Ivory Coast also slashed the price paid to cocoa farmers by more than half to 1,200 CFA (\$2.13) per kilogram (\$0.97 per pound) for 2026.

Farmers say the price cut has left their profit margin very slim when they factor in the costs of production.

"Accepting the current price means my son will have to drop out of school," said Mercy Amponsah, a 50-year-old cocoa farmer in Ghana. Shee was among the farmers who visited the capital, Accra, in January to protest the price cut.

Some cocoa producers elsewhere in the world — South America and Asia — have improved their supply but West Africa still makes up the bulk of production.

Farmers like Fofie say they must find other ways to survive, however.

"If I keep this cocoa farm for the next 10 years, I would die a poor man," he said.

## **Decades after violence in Selma spurred the Voting Rights Act, organizers worry about its fate**

SELMA, Ala. (AP) — Sixty-one years after state troopers attacked Civil Rights marchers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, thousands are gathering in the Alabama city this weekend, amid new concerns about the future of the Voting Rights Act.

The March 7, 1965, violence that became known as Bloody Sunday shocked the nation and helped spur passage of the landmark legislation that dismantled barriers to voting for Black Americans in the Jim Crow South.

But this year's anniversary celebrations — events run all weekend and end with a commemorative march across the bridge Sunday — come as the U.S. Supreme Court considers a case that could limit a provi-

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sion of the Voting Rights Act that has helped ensure some congressional and local districts are drawn so minority voters have a chance to elect their candidate of choice.

"I'm concerned that all of the advances that we made for the last 61 years are going to be eradicated," said Charles Mauldin, 78, one of the marchers who was beaten that day.

Justices are expected to rule soon on a Louisiana case regarding the role of race in drawing congressional districts. A ruling prohibiting or limiting that role could have sweeping consequences, potentially opening the door for Republican-controlled states to redistrict and roll back majority Black and Latino districts that tend to favor Democrats.

Democratic officeholders, civil rights leaders and others have descended on the southern city to pay homage to the pivotal moment of the Civil Rights Movement and to issue calls to action. Like the marchers on Bloody Sunday, they must keep pressing forward, organizers said.

Former state Sen. Hank Sanders, who helped start the annual commemoration, said the 1965 events in Selma marked a turning point in the nation and helped push the United States closer to becoming a true democracy.

"The feeling is a profound fear that we will be taken back — a greater fear than at any time since 1965," Sanders said.

U.S. Rep. Shomari Figures won election in 2024 to an Alabama district that was redrawn by the federal court. He said what happened in Selma and the subsequent passage of the Voting Rights Act "was monumental in shaping what America looks like and how America is represented in Congress."

"I think coming to Selma is a refreshing reminder every single year that the progress that we got from the Civil Rights Movement is not perpetual. It's been under consistent attacks almost since we've gotten those rights," Figures said.

In 1965, the Bloody Sunday marchers led by John Lewis and Hosea Williams walked in pairs across the Selma bridge headed toward Montgomery. Mauldin, then 17, was part of the third pair behind Williams and Lewis.

At the apex of the bridge, they could see the sea of law enforcement officers, including some on horseback, waiting for them. But they kept going. "Being fearful was not an option. And it wasn't that we didn't have fear, it's that we chose courage over fear," Mauldin recalled in a telephone interview.

"We were all hit. We were trampled. We were tear-gassed. And we were brutalized by the state of Alabama," Mauldin said.

## **AI is spurring a big expansion of high-voltage power lines. Landowners and locals are fighting back**

By MARC LEVY Associated Press

SUGARLOAF, Pa. (AP) — For John Zola, the 40 acres were like a paradise: apple orchards tucked into northern Pennsylvania's rolling hills, a barn, meadows and more than enough land for four houses: one for himself and his wife and each of his three adult children.

It's been "hell," however, since a contractor hired by the local power utility knocked on Zola's door in late 2024 and informed him that it planned to build a 500-kilovolt power line through his property.

The 240-foot metal towers would reach 10 times as high as the century-old apple trees they'd plow through and loom over the Zolas' homes and the basketball court and swimming pool where his grandchildren play.

This line and others like it are being planned in accelerating numbers in the United States to deliver power, sometimes across hundreds of miles, to enormous data centers run by the world's biggest tech companies.

Although advances in artificial intelligence are seen by President Donald Trump as critical to the nation's economic and national security, their energy needs are threatening to overwhelm the power grid — and people like Zola are caught in the middle.

The local utility, PPL, said it did everything it could to balance the impact on people with its obligation

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to deliver electricity and protect grid reliability. But to Zola, all they care about is money.

"They don't look at whose lives they are destroying, whose property they are destroying," Zola said.

Big power lines, big data centers

These high-voltage power lines are the latest front line in the battle over tech firms' massive operations. Angry local opposition has sprouted against dozens of the behemoth data centers amid fears of rising electricity costs and irreparable damage to their communities.

Opponents of transmission projects are similarly motivated: they say the lines are intruding on the sanctity of private land and threatening long-lasting harm to sensitive public lands, farms, property values and pristine waterways — all for electricity that they don't think benefits them.

Transmission projects have always faced challenges and yearslong permitting processes, and two decades of relatively flat power demand didn't inject much urgency.

But analysts say the grid remains inefficient, aging and, with demand spiking, on the verge of causing widespread blackouts on the coldest or hottest days. Utilities contend that any new transmission line — even those driven primarily by large customers, like data centers or industrial sites — benefits everyone by adding capacity to the grid.

Some members of Congress want to exclude lines from state or certain environmental reviews, while some tech companies are trying to build their own power plants, or next to one, in part to avoid a quagmire.

These transmission projects aren't local power lines on wooden poles. Rather, these are lines on steel towers five or six times as tall, carrying power in bulk across long distances.

Some — like the Sugarloaf project that could cross Zola's property — require 200-foot-wide corridors.

Caught in the middle

Utility giants are forecasting that their spending growth will be driven primarily by transmission projects, with transmission spending projected to double to nearly \$50 billion a year from 2019 to 2028.

But the expansion is eliciting opposition from landowners, conservationists, local officials, consumer advocates and even states.

In Texas' Hill Country, the Hill Country Preservation Coalition sprang up against the construction of the southernmost of three 765-kilovolt lines — the highest voltage used in the United States — that Texas regulators commissioned to cross the state in east-west "superhighway" corridors.

The coalition's founder, Jada Jo Smith, calls it a "Goliath" that will be nearly impossible to defeat. To at least minimize the damage, the coalition is pressing state regulators to adopt a different, slightly longer path that follows existing highway corridors.

"Why would you choose a route that would potentially harm our most iconic rivers that we have left in the state of Texas?" Smith said.

'These are real dollars'

Pennsylvania's state consumer advocate, Darryl Lawrence, is protesting a \$1.7 billion proposed line spanning more than 200 miles from West Virginia across half Pennsylvania.

He questions whether cheaper alternatives are available, whether the data center demand it's designed to serve will truly materialize and why grid operators want to import power into a state that, as a large power producer, normally exports it.

West Virginians are also fighting a pair of proposed transmission lines connecting coal-fired power plants there to northern Virginia, home to the so-called "data center alley."

In the Midwest grid territory, a \$22 billion transmission package is embroiled in a monthslong fight, as utility regulators in North Dakota, Montana, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana urge federal regulators to block it.

"I think you may see more of those," said Todd Snitchler, president and CEO of the Electric Power Supply Association, which represents independent power plant owners. "These are real dollars and consumers are paying a lot of attention."

The Indiana-based Midcontinent Independent System Operator told federal regulators in a filing that the lines are necessary to address growing demand from manufacturing and data centers, and that the need

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for new power transmission “has never been greater.”

‘There’s no amount of money for me’

In eastern Pennsylvania, Amazon and other developers have so many data center projects in the works that PPL projected its peak electricity demand will more than triple by 2030.

PPL, which serves more than 1.5 million electric customers, argues that the 12-mile Sugarloaf project will minimize disruptions by reusing and expanding a power line corridor that once carried a since-removed residential line, rather than establishing a new corridor.

The utility has offered to pay property owners to access their land, but landowners worry that, if they don’t accept, PPL will go to court to use eminent domain to force a settlement.

The new line would run perhaps 100 feet from where Zola’s grandkids sleep at night. In recent days, Zola said holdout landowners got higher cash offers from PPL.

“My offer went from \$17,000 to \$85,000,” Zola said. “Just like that. And there’s no amount of money for me. And when you come here, you’ll understand why.”

## Colombians are electing a new Congress and choosing presidential candidates

By ASTRID SUÁREZ Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Colombians head to the polls Sunday to elect a new Congress and select candidates from three major coalitions in a primary-style contest ahead of a presidential election this May.

The election unfolds under high alert for political violence across the South American country, particularly in rural regions dominated by illegal armed groups.

At the same time, President Gustavo Petro — the nation’s first left-leaning leader — has cast doubt on the country’s election software, pointing to the 2022 legislative elections, when his Historic Pact movement gained over 390,000 votes following a recount. He attributed this shift to the presence of election observers.

The European Union deployed 40 election observers in early February and said it intended to increase the size of the delegation for the upcoming congressional vote.

More than 3,000 candidates are vying for 285 legislative positions — 102 in the Senate and 183 in the House of Representatives — with 41.2 million citizens eligible to cast their ballots.

Sunday’s election is set to define the political landscape for Colombia’s next head of state.

Petro is ineligible for reelection because the constitution bars a sitting president from running for a consecutive second term.

Colombia’s current Congress approved Petro’s pension and labor overhaul, but rejected his proposed reforms to the health care and tax reforms, and there were often tensions between him and lawmakers.

Meanwhile, the right-wing opposition is looking to reclaim its status as a dominant political force. The Democratic Center, the nation’s primary opposition party, continues to be guided by the influence of former President Álvaro Uribe, who is mobilizing his base to secure a strong legislative presence ahead of the presidential vote.

Alongside the congressional vote, Colombians will vote to choose presidential candidates for the country’s three major political blocs: the center, the center-left and the right. The winners of the three “inter-party consultations,” similar to American primary elections, will go on to compete in the presidential election, whose first round is set for May 31.

Presidential hopefuls have long used the primaries to gauge their support before entering the first round of voting. This strategy proved successful four years ago for Petro, who consolidated his base by winning the left-wing primary alongside Francia Márquez, who became his vice president.

However, the two candidates currently leading in the polls — leftist Iván Cepeda, from Petro’s party, and far-right Abelardo de la Espriella — are not participating in the primaries, which are optional.

Political analyst Gabriel Cifuentes said the primaries are a high-stakes gamble for the participants, noting that a victory on Sunday is only meaningful if it demonstrates enough strength to compete with the leading candidates, such as Cepeda and de la Espriella.

More than 126,000 law enforcement officers are expected to be deployed across the country during election day.

## Russia sits back as the Iran war escalates, expecting long-term gains

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV Associated Press

MOSCOW (AP) — As U.S. and Israeli missiles and bombs rain on Iran, Russia has responded with words of indignation but no visible action to support its Middle Eastern ally.

That cautious stance is driven by President Vladimir Putin's focus on Ukraine and his apparent hope that the Iran war will play into Moscow's hands by boosting its oil revenues and eroding Western support for Kyiv.

Putin sent his condolences to Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian, condemning the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei last weekend as a "cynical violation of all norms of human morality and international law."

While Moscow's failure to help another ally after the 2024 ouster of former Syrian ruler Bashar Assad and January's U.S. arrest of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro highlighted the limits to its influence, the Kremlin expects to reap benefits from the Iran war.

Russia already is profiting from a surge in energy prices over the war's disruptions to tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and damage to energy facilities in Gulf countries. If hostilities escalate, a continued windfall would help fill Moscow's coffers to finance military operations in Ukraine and patch the budget deficit.

The Kremlin also hopes the Iran war will distract global attention from Ukraine, deplete Western arsenals and force the U.S. and its NATO allies to reduce military support for Kyiv.

A swift Russian rebuke

Hours after the war began Feb. 28, the Russian Foreign Ministry denounced the U.S. and Israeli attack on Iran as a "deliberate, premeditated, and unprovoked act of armed aggression against a sovereign and independent U.N. member state, in direct violation of the fundamental principles and norms of international law."

A week into the war, Putin had a call with Pezeshkian, saying Moscow wants to see a quick end to hostilities. But before that, he had a series of calls with Gulf leaders in an apparent bid to cement ties with the countries that are increasingly important for Moscow as part of the OPEC+ grouping controlling global oil prices and key trade partners helping bypass Western sanctions.

The Kremlin said Putin will convey to Tehran the Gulf leaders' "deep concern about the strikes on their infrastructure" and "make every effort to facilitate at least minor easing of tensions."

In a subsequent call with his Iranian counterpart, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov "underscored the priority of ensuring the safety of civilians and protecting civilian infrastructure in all the countries of the region."

Mark Galeotti, an expert on Russian politics who heads the Mayak Intelligence consultancy, noted that "Russia has actually been quite an effective operator within the Middle East." He said that as the war escalates, many regional powers may have reason "to look a little bit more to Moscow."

Uneasy partners

While Moscow and Tehran signed a "comprehensive strategic partnership" treaty in January 2025, their relationship had a troubled past and remained tinged with rivalry.

Even though Russia and Iran shared opposition to the Western-led "rules-based order," "Iran was always something of a strategic frenemy" to Russia, Galeotti said in a recent podcast.

Tensions ran high between Moscow and Tehran during the Cold War, when Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was a staunch U.S. ally. When Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini led the 1979 Islamic Revolution, branding the U.S. as the "Great Satan," he labeled the Soviet Union as the "Lesser Satan."

Russia-Iran ties warmed quickly after the USSR's 1991 breakup as Moscow became an important trade partner and helped build Iran's first nuclear power plant in Bushehr. When Syria's civil war erupted in 2011,

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Russia and Iran pooled efforts to shore up Assad's government but failed to prevent the swift collapse of his rule in December 2024.

After Putin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022, Tehran provided Russia with Shahed drones and later licensed their production in Russia.

But even as it has built ties with Iran, Russia also has remained friendly with Israel, angering many in the Iranian leadership who were suspicious of Moscow's intentions.

"Russia's relationship with Iran, despite the latter's staunch opposition to the U.S., has always been complex and challenging," Moscow-based military analyst Sergei Poletaev said in a commentary.

When the U.S. and Israel struck Iran in June 2025, Russian officials underlined that their "strategic partnership" didn't envisage mutual military assistance in case of aggression.

Asked Thursday whether Moscow could go beyond rhetoric and provide Iran with weapons, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded that it has received no such requests from Tehran.

On Friday, two officials familiar with U.S. intelligence told The Associated Press that Russia has provided Iran with information that could help Tehran strike American warships, aircraft and other assets in the region.

The people, who were not authorized to comment publicly on the sensitive matter and spoke on the condition of anonymity, cautioned that the U.S. intelligence has not uncovered that Russia is directing Iran on what to do with the information.

Peskov said Friday that Russia is "in dialogue with the Iranian side, with representatives of the Iranian leadership, and will certainly continue this dialogue." Pressed on whether Russia has provided any military or intelligence assistance to Tehran since the war's start, he refrained from comment.

Little damage seen to Putin's authority

While Khamenei's killing revived talk of Russia's failure to protect an ally, some observers warned against exaggerating the damage to Putin's authority.

Galeotti noted that Russia and Iran "were always very pragmatic allies rather than anything else."

"Iran is a rival for authority in the Middle East and indeed within the South Caucasus," he said. "If this regime doesn't actually fall, but has its wings clipped, from Russia's point of view that actually might make it a rather more amenable temporary strategic partner."

China — a key customer for Iranian oil — will likely boost imports of Russian crude as hostilities expand. After pressuring India to halt its imports of Russian oil, the U.S. on Thursday issued a 30-day waiver allowing its refineries to buy those supplies currently at sea. Turkey could boost its natural gas imports from Russia if supplies from Iran are disrupted.

Sam Greene, a professor at King's College London, also observed that "the idea that Putin suffers when he loses allies — whether Assad, Maduro or Khamenei — exists entirely in the heads of Western analysts and has no basis in observable fact."

There's zero evidence "that he cares, that it affects his authority at home or his legitimacy abroad," he said in a post on X.

The Putin-Trump relationship

Putin will not risk his relationship with U.S. President Donald Trump to help Iran, Greene said, arguing that "as miffed as Putin might be personally, he's not going to throw his relationship with Trump under the bus."

The president, he said, "is Putin's greatest source of leverage over Europe. He'll keep his eye on the ball."

As the U.S. and its allies quickly use up their arsenals of Patriot interceptors to fend off Iranian missiles targeting Israel and the Gulf countries, Russia can only be gleeful over the scenario.

"A prolonged conflict would not only draw attention away from Ukraine but would also redirect crucial resources like missile defense systems to the Persian Gulf," Poletaev said.

Noted Galeotti: "The more Patriots that get used up in this conflict ... the fewer available to the Americans generally and more uncomfortable they will feel about passing or selling any of them to the Ukrainians."

## Trump encourages Latin American leaders to use military action to help US fight cartels

By AAMER MADHANI, JOSHUA GOODMAN and ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press DORAL, Fla. (AP) — President Donald Trump said Saturday that the United States and Latin American countries are banding together to combat violent cartels as his administration looks to demonstrate it remains committed to sharpening U.S. foreign policy focus on the Western Hemisphere even while dealing with five-alarm crises around the globe.

Trump encouraged regional leaders gathered at his Miami-area golf club to take military action against drug trafficking cartels and transnational gangs that he says pose an “unacceptable threat” to the hemisphere’s national security.

“The only way to defeat these enemies is by unleashing the power of our militaries,” Trump said. “We have to use our military. You have to use your military.” Citing the U.S.-led coalition that confronted the Islamic State group in the Middle East, the Republican president said that “we must now do the same thing to eradicate the cartels at home.”

The gathering, which the White House called the “Shield of the Americas” summit, came just two months after Trump ordered an audacious U.S. military operation to capture Venezuela’s then-president, Nicolás Maduro, and whisk him and his wife to the United States to face drug conspiracy charges.

Looming even larger is Trump’s decision to launch a war on Iran with Israel one week ago, a conflict that has left hundreds dead, convulsed global markets and unsettled the broader Middle East.

Trump’s time with the Latin American leaders was limited: Afterward, he set out for Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, to be on hand for the dignified transfer of the six U.S. troops killed in a drone strike on a command center in Kuwait, one day after the U.S. and Israel launched their military campaign against Iran.

Trump called the American deaths a “very sad situation” and praised the fallen troops as “great heroes.”

With the summit, Trump aimed to turn attention to the Western Hemisphere, at least for a moment. He has pledged to reassert U.S. dominance in the region and push back on what he sees as years of Chinese economic encroachment in America’s backyard.

Trump also said the U.S. will turn its attention to Cuba after the war with Iran and suggested his administration would cut a deal with Havana, underscoring Washington’s increasingly aggressive stance against the island’s communist leadership. “Great change will soon be coming to Cuba,” he said, adding that “they’re very much at the end of the line.”

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel on Saturday described the summit as “small, reactionary, and neo-colonial.” He wrote in a social media post that the U.S. has committed right-wing governments from the region “to accept the lethal use of US military force to resolve internal problems and maintain order and tranquility in their countries.”

Who was there

The leaders of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guyana, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay, and Trinidad and Tobago joined the Republican president at Trump National Doral Miami, a golf resort where he is also set to host the Group of 20 summit later this year.

The idea for a summit of like-minded conservatives from across the hemisphere emerged from the ashes of what was to be the 10th edition of the Summit of the Americas, which was scrapped during the U.S. military buildup off the coast of Venezuela last year.

Host Dominican Republic, pressured by the White House, had barred Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela from attending the regional gathering. But after leftist leaders in Colombia and Mexico threatened to pull out in protest — and with no commitment from Trump to attend — the Dominican Republic’s president, Luis Abinader, decided at the last minute to postpone the event, citing “deep differences” in the region.

The Shield of the Americas moniker was meant to speak to Trump’s vision for an “America First” foreign policy toward the region that leverages U.S. military and intelligence assets unseen across the area since the end of the Cold War.

To that end, Ecuador and the United States conducted military operations this week against organized

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crime groups in the South American country. Ecuadorian and U.S. security forces attacked a refuge belonging to the Colombian illegal armed group Comandos de la Frontera in the Ecuadorian Amazon on Friday, authorities reported.

This joint fight against drug traffickers "is only the beginning," said Ecuador's president, Daniel Noboa. Notably missing at the summit were the region's two dominant powers — Brazil and Mexico — as well as Colombia, long the linchpin of U.S. anti-narcotics strategy in the region.

Trump grumbled that Mexico is the "epicenter of cartel violence" with drug kingpins "orchestrating much of the bloodshed and chaos in this hemisphere."

"The cartels are running Mexico," Trump said. "We can't have that. Too close to us. Too close to you."

The challenge from China

Trump made no mention of his administration's insistence that countering Chinese influence in the hemisphere is a top priority for his second term.

His national security strategy promotes the "Trump Corollary" to the 19th century Monroe Doctrine, which had sought to ban European incursions in the Americas, by targeting Chinese infrastructure projects, military cooperation and investment in the region's resource industries.

The first demonstration of the more muscular approach was Trump's strong-arming of Panama to withdraw from China's Belt and Road Initiative and review long-term port contracts held by a Hong Kong-based company amid U.S. threats to retake the Panama Canal.

More recently, the U.S. capture of Maduro and Trump's pledge to "run" Venezuela threatens to disrupt oil shipments to China — the biggest buyer of Venezuelan crude before the raid — and bring into Washington's orbit one of Beijing's closest allies in the region. Trump is scheduled to travel to Beijing later this month to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

For many countries, China's trade-focused diplomacy fills a critical financial void in a region with major development challenges ranging from poverty reduction to infrastructure bottlenecks. In contrast, Trump has been slashing foreign assistance to the region while rewarding countries lined up behind his crackdown on immigration — a policy widely unpopular across the hemisphere.

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Sunday its diplomacy in the region wasn't targeted at any third party, but "nor should it be interfered with by any third party."

"The international stage of the 21st century should no longer be a stage for the old dramas of the 19th century," he said.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio then hosted the leaders for a working lunch after Trump left for the event in Delaware. The lunch gave Kristi Noem, whom Trump fired as homeland security secretary on Thursday, the chance to make her debut in her new role as a special envoy for the "Shield of the Americas."

"We want our hemisphere to be safer, to be more sovereign, and to be more prosperous," Noem told the leaders.

## Police investigating after device thrown at anti-Islam protest in New York City

NEW YORK (AP) — A counterprotester demonstrating against a "Stop the Islamic Takeover of New York City" event Saturday lit and threw a device containing nuts, bolts and screws at the protesting crowd after someone from that group used pepper spray on the counterprotest, police said.

Police are investigating the incident that started late Saturday morning when someone from the anti-Islam protest associated with conservative influencer Jake Lang shot pepper spray into a counterprotesting group near the mayoral residence Gracie Mansion, Commissioner Jessica Tisch said.

Tensions continued to heighten, she said, when someone in the counterprotest lit and threw a device she described as smaller than a football into the protesting crowd of about 20 people.

The device struck a barrier and extinguished itself "a few feet from police officers," she said. The same person then ran, and another person gave a him a second device, which he then dropped. The devices, which Tisch said were smaller than a football, were wrapped in black tape with nuts, bolts, and screws, as

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well as a hobby fuse that could be lit. She said it was unclear if they were functioning devices or a hoax. All three people have been arrested, and an investigation is underway, Tisch said.

Tisch didn't report any injuries during a news conference and said she believed Mayor Zohran Mamdani was not in the residence at the time.

Lang was previously charged with assaulting an officer with a baseball bat, civil disorder and other crimes before receiving clemency as part of President Donald Trump's sweeping act of clemency for Jan. 6 defendants last year. Lang recently announced that he is running for U.S. Senate in Florida.

Lang has also protested in Minneapolis during the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.

Tisch said about 20 people showed up to the protest tied to him on Saturday, and the counterprotest had about 125 people at its peak.

## Iran war deaths could resurface Trump's complicated history with military sacrifice

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

It's delicate for any president to watch flag-draped transfer cases return home from overseas, a solemn tradition that honors the dead and shines a spotlight on the human costs of conflict.

Donald Trump's visit Saturday to Dover Air Force Base, honoring the six American service members killed in the war in the Middle East, presented a potentially fraught moment for a president whose White House has done little to build public support for the conflict. He also has a record of controversy when it comes to talking about military service and sacrifice.

Trump can be reverential, such as when he recently awarded the Medal of Honor to troops for bravery during previous conflicts.

But he can also be terse or even dismissive. After launching attacks on Iran in coordination with Israel a week ago, Trump warned that there could be American casualties. When it comes to war, he said in a video message, "that's the way it is."

On Saturday, Trump — wearing a blue suit, red tie and a white USA hat — did not speak during the transfer.

"It's a very sad day," Trump told reporters on Air Force One as he returned to Florida later Saturday afternoon, saying that he was "glad we paid our respects."

Trump often highlights military bravery

The president frequently emphasizes the strength of U.S. armed services and stories of individual heroism.

"Today you entered the ranks of the bravest warriors ever to stride the face of the earth," Trump told retired Command Sgt. Maj. Terry P. Richardson last week before presenting the Medal of Honor for actions during the Vietnam War that were credited with saving the lives of 85 other service members.

During his State of the Union address last month, Trump presented the same medal to Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 Eric Slover, a helicopter pilot who in Venezuela was shot four times but maintained control of the aircraft, saving the men on board.

"The success of the entire mission and the lives of his fellow warriors hinged on Eric's ability to take searing pain," Trump said.

But when honoring injured service members, he sometimes interjects partisanship or other asides.

"Their valor gave us the freest, greatest and most noble republic ever to exist on the face of the earth," Trump said during a Memorial Day ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery last year.

Then he added a dig at his predecessor, Democrat Joe Biden, describing the country as "a republic that I am fixing after a long and hard four years."

He sometimes questions military sacrifice

One of Trump's first controversies after entering politics involved criticism of Sen. John McCain's military service.

"He is a war hero because he was captured. I like people who weren't captured," he said in 2015.

McCain was tortured during more than five years as a prisoner of war in Vietnam, refusing an offer to

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be released ahead of other Americans because his father was a high-ranking Navy admiral.

Some former officials who served during Trump's first term have claimed the president disparaged fallen service members as "suckers" and "losers" when, they said, he did not want to travel in 2018 to a cemetery for American war dead in France. Trump denied the allegation, saying, "What animal would say such a thing?"

Former Trump aides also alleged that he did not want to be seen in the presence of military amputees, saying, "it doesn't look good for me."

In 2017, he told the widow of a slain soldier that he "knew what he signed up for," according to a Florida congresswoman who heard the call. The father of another slain soldier accused the president of going back on a promise to send a check for \$25,000. The White House said the money was sent after controversy erupted.

And in 2020, Trump downplayed the severity of traumatic brain injuries service members suffered when Iran fired missiles at a U.S. base in Iraq in retaliation for a U.S. strike that killed Iran's most powerful general, Qassem Soleimani.

"I heard that they had headaches and a couple of other things, but I would say and I can report it is not very serious," Trump said.

Trump jokes about unearned military honors

Trump, who received deferments to avoid the draft during the Vietnam War, has remarked several times about wanting to receive military medals.

"I always wanted to get the Purple Heart. This was much easier," Trump told a veteran who presented his medal to Trump during his 2016 campaign. The Purple Heart is awarded to service members wounded or killed from enemy action.

And at his Medal of Honor ceremony Monday, Trump again joked getting a medal for himself, calling it "a great honor."

"I've tried numerous times to get one by myself," Trump said. "I keep getting shut down. They say: 'You can't do it, sir. Bad protocol.'"

"Very bad, I would say the worst," he added. "But I'm only kidding."

## Authorities search debris after suspected tornadoes kill 6 in Michigan, Oklahoma

By DAVE COLLINS, STEVE KARNOWSKI and MIKE HOUSEHOLDER Associated Press

UNION CITY, Mich. (AP) — Authorities searched through rubble and debris in southern Michigan on Saturday after suspected tornadoes tore through the region and killed four people, including a 12-year-old boy, during powerful storms also blamed for two deaths in eastern Oklahoma.

First responders from multiple agencies in the Union Lake area near Union City looked for more possible victims and worked to clear roads, authorities said. Photos and videos posted on social media showed flattened homes and downed trees in a lakeside neighborhood.

The National Weather Service said an initial assessment confirmed that an EF3 tornado with winds of at least 150 mph (241 kph) struck the Union Lake area Friday.

The weather service also reported seven preliminary tornado tracks in eastern Oklahoma that same day, according to the state's emergency operations center.

The threat of severe weather continued Saturday in the nation's midsection, with tornado watches posted in the afternoon for eastern Ohio, northern West Virginia and western Pennsylvania and New York.

Severe thunderstorms that began in northern Indiana appeared to spawn multiple tornadoes in southern Michigan the previous day, said meteorologist Lonnie Fisher of the National Weather Service, which sent teams to the region to evaluate the damage and confirm tornadoes.

"Mostly likely there were three distinct tornadoes, but we won't know 100% for sure until they finish the survey," Fisher said, adding that the storms intensified rapidly in southern Michigan after hitting northern Indiana.

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Three people were killed and 12 were injured in the Union Lake area, according to the Branch County Sheriff's Office. It was the second tornado to hit Union City in two years. An EF1 tornado with 95 mph (153 kph) winds touched down briefly in May 2024 and destroyed a machine shed.

Lisa Piper stood on her back deck and took video of a terrifying scene that played out on the other side of frozen Union Lake as a funnel cloud formed and then dropped toward the ground Friday. Trees were torn from their roots, and debris flew into the air.

"It's lifting houses!" she said. As the devastation continued, she exclaimed: "Oh my heart is pounding. Oh, I hope they're OK."

Dan Taylor raced home to Union City from his cleaning job at a nearby hospital that day to find his brother and two dogs safe. But a tree fell on his home of 20 years, and portions of the roof of a house across the street blew into his yard.

"I didn't know what to say. I was lost for words," he said Saturday. "I'm just thankful that my brother's all right, my dogs, because it could have turned bad. We're not guaranteed of anything."

About 50 miles (81 kilometers) southwest of Union Lake, a 12-year-old boy died and several other people were injured during a possible tornado, the Cass County Sheriff's Office said. Sheriff Clint Roach said in a Facebook post that Silas Anderson's parents found him injured and provided first aid, but he later died at a hospital.

Disaster relief workers went door to door in the Union City and Three Rivers areas to offer meals and cleanup supplies. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said she would declare a state of emergency in Branch, Cass and St. Joseph counties.

In Beggs, about 30 miles (50 kilometers) south of Tulsa, Oklahoma, a tornado was blamed for the deaths of two people in a house on Friday, the Okmulgee County Sheriff's Office said. Two others were taken to a hospital.

The tornado cut a roughly 4-mile (6.4-kilometer) path of damage in Okmulgee County including Beggs, said Jeff Moore, the county's emergency manager. Large trees toppled and power outages were reported.

Suspected tornadoes also were reported in northern parts of Tulsa, where a building at the Tulsa Tech Peoria campus was damaged.

Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt declared a state of emergency in several counties to free up support and resources.

The Oklahoma deaths came a day after storms killed a 47-year-old woman and her 13-year-old daughter in their vehicle in Fairview, in the western part of the state.

The spring storms come near the start of what many call tornado season, which generally begins at various times in different parts of the U.S. Experts recommend a few simple safety steps to take before tornadoes hit, including having a weather radio and a plan for where to take shelter.

In parts of the South, the weather pattern was expected to usher in extremely warm temperatures for this time of year by the weekend.

## At least 10 killed in Ukraine's Kharkiv as Russian missile hits apartment building

By SUSIE BLANN Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Two children were among at least 10 people killed on Saturday in a Russian missile that hit a five-story residential building in Ukraine's second-largest city, Kharkiv, officials said. Sixteen others were wounded.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy condemned the attack and called for an international response. He said that Russia struck Ukraine overnight with 29 missiles and 480 drones, targeting energy facilities in Kyiv and other central regions and with damage reported in at least seven other locations across the country.

According to preliminary data, air defense systems downed 19 missiles and 453 drones with hits from 9 missiles and 26 strike drones recorded at 22 locations.

In Kharkiv, in Ukraine's northeast, emergency workers were combing the rubble, looking for survivors.

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Among the dead was a primary schoolteacher and her son, a second-grade student, who were killed in their home and an eighth-grader who also died with her mother, according to the city's mayor, Ihor Terekhov.

The regional Prosecutors's Office said the building was hit by a new Russian cruise missile, known as Izdeliye-30. Ukrainian reports said that the new subsonic air-launched weapon that Russia has recently started to use against Ukraine has a range of 1,500 kilometers (930 miles) and is equipped with a new satellite navigation system more resistant to jamming.

In the Kyiv region, damage from debris was reported in three districts, according to local authorities. In the southern Odesa region, 80 firefighters were called in to help battle massive fires at infrastructure facilities following an attack with multiple drones. Ukraine's state rail operator Ukrzaliznytsia said damage to the rail infrastructure forced changes to a number of routes in the center-west of the country.

Russia's Defense Ministry said the overnight strike targeted Ukrainian military factories, energy facilities and air bases.

"There must be a response from partners to these savage strikes against life," Zelenskyy said in a post on X. "Russia has not abandoned its attempts to destroy Ukraine's residential and critical infrastructure, and therefore support must continue. We count on active work with the European Union to guarantee greater protection for our people. I am grateful to everyone who helps strengthen our protection."

Russia has fired tens of thousands of Iranian-designed drones at Ukraine since it invaded its neighbor just over four years. It has launched a large-scale domestic production of them and battered Ukraine with hundreds of drones in a single night — more than were used during some entire months in 2024.

Iran has responded to joint U.S.-Israeli strikes by launching the same type of Shahed drones at countries in the Middle East.

Zelenskyy said he had received a U.S. request for support to defend against the Iranian drones in the Middle East and had given the order for equipment to be provided along with Ukrainian experts.

The war in the Middle East has drawn international attention away from Europe's biggest conflict since World War II, and forced the postponement of a new round of U. S.-brokered talks between Russia and Ukraine planned for this week.

## Oil and gas prices rapidly rise as Iran war shows no signs of letting up

By CATHY BUSSEWITZ AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The price of oil surged higher and showed no signs of halting its rapid climb a week after the U.S. and Israel launched major attacks on Iran that escalated into a war in the Middle East.

The conflict, in which nearly every country in the Middle East has sustained damage from missiles or drone strikes, has left ships that carry roughly 20 million barrels of oil a day stranded in the Persian Gulf, unable to safely pass through the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Gulf that is bordered on its north side by Iran.

The shipping disruption and damage to key Middle East oil and gas facilities has interrupted supplies from some of the world's largest oil producers. Kuwait, for example, said on Saturday that it would reduce its oil production as a "precautionary" measure due to the war, which could jolt global energy markets even further.

Oil prices surpassed \$90 a barrel Friday, with American crude settling at \$90.90, up 36% from a week ago, and Brent, the international standard, climbing 27% over the course of the week to land at \$92.69.

The fallout is ratcheting up what consumers and business will pay for gasoline, diesel and jet fuel, with some drivers already feeling it at the pump.

"It's crazy. It's not needed, especially at a time when people are already struggling, but not unexpected from all this turmoil that's going on," said Mark Doran, who was pumping gas in Middlebury, Vermont Friday. "I don't think there's been an end in sight to any Middle East conflict that's been started by us, so the fact that they say that there's going to be an end that quickly is not believable, and the Middle East is, you know, a place that the U.S. is not going to solve."

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President Donald Trump said Monday that the U.S. expected its military operations against Iran to last four to five weeks but has "the capability to go far longer." On Friday, Trump appeared to rule out talks with Iran absent its "unconditional surrender."

"The more news we get, the more it seems like this is going to last a really long time," said Al Salazar, head of macro oil and gas research at Enverus.

In the U.S., a gallon of regular gasoline rose to \$3.41 on Saturday, up about 43 cents from a week ago, according to AAA motor club. Diesel was selling for \$4.51 a gallon Saturday, up about 75 cents from last week.

The price shocks were felt even more heavily in Europe and Asia, markets that rely more heavily on energy supplies from the Middle East. Diesel prices doubled in Europe, and jet fuel prices rose by close to 200% in Asia, according to Claudio Galimberti, chief economist at Rystad Energy.

Energy prices climbed throughout the week as Iran launched a series of retaliatory attacks, including a drone strike on the U.S. Embassy in Saudi Arabia, and the conflict widened. Iran also hit a major refinery in Saudi Arabia and a liquefied natural gas (LNG) facility in Qatar, halting flows of refined products and taking about 20% of the world's LNG supply offline.

"We keep seeing news of vessels being hit or refineries or pipelines, so the list is very long," Galimberti said. As a result, roughly 9 million barrels of oil per day are off the market because of facilities being hit or producers taking precautionary measures, he said. "Right now, with all of this shut in, we are in a situation of extreme deficit."

The U.S. is a net exporter of oil, but that does not mean it is immune to increases in the price of oil or gasoline, or that its producers can just make up the difference.

Oil is traded on global markets, so even the oil produced in the U.S. has risen in price based on what's happening in the Middle East. And for many American oil producers, "if you put more wells in the ground, there's about a six-month lag before you get that production uplift," Salazar said.

In addition, the U.S. can't simply turn all of its crude oil into gasoline. That's because most of the oil produced in the U.S. is light, sweet crude, and refineries on the East and West coasts are primarily designed to process heavier, sour crude. As a result, the U.S. exports some of its crude oil and imports some refined products such as gasoline.

Jerry Dalpiaz of Covington, Louisiana, said he started filling up his cars and gas cans on "the day that they announced that the United States has started military operations against Iran" because he assumed gas prices would climb.

"I can weather the storm because I'm in good financial position, but I feel sorry for my fellow citizens who are living paycheck to paycheck because they have to drive to get to work and they have to change their oil and all those things," Dalpiaz said. "And they need some relief and it doesn't seem to be coming anytime soon."

Trump issued a plan Friday to insure losses up to approximately \$20 billion in the Gulf region, aiming to restore confidence in maritime trade, help stabilize international commerce and support American and allied businesses operating in the Middle East.

But some energy experts said extra insurance won't solve the problem.

"The problem is that in the oil trading, oil shipping world, people are worried about counterterrorism," said Amy Jaffe, director of the Energy, Climate Justice and Sustainability Lab at New York University, adding that they're worried about automated drone speedboats, weapon-carrying, flying drones and mines or other devices. "In order for the United States to create the atmosphere that undoes the current bottleneck at the Strait of Hormuz, there has to be some credible demonstration of solutions to the counter-terrorism problem."

Salazar wondered what the "new normal" would look like if the Strait of Hormuz was effectively re-opened, and what effective security would look like.

"All it takes is one individual with a RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) to stand on the shore and take out a tanker, right?" Salazar said. "And this is forever, do you know what I mean?"

## Trump grieves with families during return of soldiers killed in war in the Middle East

By SEUNG MIN KIM and JULIA DEMAREE NIKHINSON Associated Press

DOVER AIR FORCE BASE, Del. (AP) — President Donald Trump on Saturday joined grieving families at Dover Air Force Base at the dignified transfer for the six U.S. soldiers killed in the war in the Middle East.

The dignified transfer, a ritual that returns the remains of U.S. service members killed in action, is considered one of the most somber duties of any commander in chief. During his first term, Trump said bearing witness to the transfer was “the toughest thing I have to do” as president.

“It’s a very sad day,” Trump told reporters on Air Force One as he returned to Florida later Saturday afternoon, saying that he was “glad we paid our respects.” He said the relatives of the deceased are “great people, great parents, wives, family” and said that the “parents were so proud.”

Both Trump and Vice President JD Vance were present for the transfer, as were their spouses. A host of top administration officials were in attendance, including Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, who wrote in a social media post Friday of “an unbreakable spirit to honor their memory and the resolve they embodied”; Attorney General Pam Bondi, White House chief of staff Susie Wiles, special envoy Steve Witkoff and Tulsi Gabbard, the director of national intelligence.

Also present for the solemn event were governors and senators from Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska and Florida.

Those killed in action were Maj. Jeffrey O’Brien, 45, of Indianola, Iowa; Capt. Cody Khork, 35, of Winter Haven, Florida; Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert Marzan, 54, of Sacramento, California; Sgt. 1st Class Nicole Amor, 39, of White Bear Lake, Minnesota; Sgt. 1st Class Noah Tietjens, 42, of Bellevue, Nebraska; and Sgt. Declan Coady, 20, of West Des Moines, Iowa, who was posthumously promoted from specialist.

As is protocol, Trump — wearing a blue suit, red tie and a white USA hat — did not speak during the transfer. The president saluted as each flag-draped transfer case was carried from the military aircraft to awaiting transfer vehicles, which would take them to a mortuary facility to prepare them for their final resting place. The families were largely silent as they observed the ritual, which lasted about a half hour.

The six members of the Army Reserve, who were killed by a drone strike at a command center in Kuwait, were all from the 103rd Sustainment Command based in Des Moines, Iowa, which provides food, fuel, water and ammunition, transport equipment and supplies. They died just one day after the U.S. and Israel launched its military campaign against Iran.

“These soldiers engaged in the most noble mission: protecting their fellow Americans and keeping our homeland secure,” Republican Sen. Joni Ernst of Iowa, a combat veteran, said earlier this week after the six were identified. “Our nation owes them an incredible debt of gratitude that can never be repaid.”

During the ritual, transfer cases draped with the American flag and holding the remains of the fallen soldiers are carried from the military aircraft that transported them to an awaiting vehicle to take them to the mortuary facility at the base. There, the service members are prepared for their final resting place.

Amor’s husband, Joey Amor, said earlier this week that she had been scheduled to return home to him and their two children within days.

“You don’t go to Kuwait thinking something’s going to happen, and for her to be one of the first – it hurts,” Joey Amor said.

O’Brien had served in the Army Reserve for nearly 15 years, according to his LinkedIn account, and his aunt said in a post on Facebook that O’Brien “was the sweetest blue-eyed, blonde farm kid you’d ever know. He is so missed already.”

Marzan’s sister described him in a Facebook post as a “strong leader” and loving husband, father and brother.

“My baby brother, you are loved and I will hold onto all our memories and cherish them always in my heart,” Elizabeth Marzan wrote.

Coady was among the youngest people in his class, trained to troubleshoot military computer systems,

but he impressed his instructors, his father, Andrew Coady, told The Associated Press.

"He trained hard, he worked hard, his physical fitness was important to him. He loved being a soldier," Coady said. "He was also one of the most kindest people you would ever meet, and he would do anything and everything for anyone."

Khork's family described him as "the life of the party" who was known for his "infectious spirit" and "generous heart" and who had wanted to serve in the military since childhood.

"That commitment helped shape the course of his life and reflected the deep sense of duty that was always at the core of who he was," according to a statement from his mother, Donna Burhans, his father, James Khork, and his stepmother, Stacey Khork.

Tietjens, who came from a military family, previously served alongside his father in Kuwait. When he returned home in February 2010, he reunited with his overjoyed wife in a local church's gym.

Tietjens' cousin Kaylyn Golike asked for prayers, especially for Tietjens' 12-year-old son, wife and parents, as they navigate "unimaginable loss."

Trump most recently traveled to Dover in December to honor two Iowa National Guard members and a U.S. civilian interpreter who were killed in an ambush attack in the Syrian desert. He attended dignified transfers several times during his first term, including for a Navy SEAL killed during a raid in Yemen, for two Army officers whose helicopter crashed in Afghanistan and for two Army soldiers killed in Afghanistan when a person dressed in an Afghan army uniform opened fire.

## **A nightclub bombing in Peru injures 33, including minors, authorities say**

LIMA, Peru (AP) — A bombing at a nightclub in Peru has injured 33 people, including minors, authorities said Saturday.

The explosion happened in the pre-dawn hours at the Dali nightclub in the province of Trujillo along Peru's northern coast, according to a statement from the local Emergency Operations Center. It's a region that has recently been plagued by violence and crime.

It wasn't immediately clear who was responsible and a motive wasn't immediately known.

At least five of the injured were in serious condition, according to the executive director of the Trujillo Health Network, Gerardo Florián Gómez. Some of the victims suffered amputations and shrapnel wounds and were undergoing surgery, he told reporters. Among the injured are three minors: one 16-year-old and two 17-year-olds, Florián said.

Fiorella Mantilla, who was at the nightclub when the blast took place, told reporters that she had glass embedded in her legs and recalled that "it sounded as if the sound system had suddenly been turned off."

The explosion took place less than a month after another blast in the same city that damaged 25 homes but caused no injuries or fatalities.

Extortion and illegal mining plague the La Libertad region, whose Andean portion is home to the largest gold-producing area in Peru. In 2025, the region experienced 286 explosions, 136 of which occurred in the city of Trujillo, according to official figures.

In January 2025, an explosive device was detonated in a prosecutor's office building in Trujillo, while in August and September, two explosions damaged dozens of homes and left more than 20 people injured.

Authorities have said such incidents are linked to an extortion scheme run by organized criminal gangs, including Los Pulpos, which has extended its criminal activities to Chile and other countries in the region.

## **US detainees in Iran risk becoming collateral damage in war, families and supporters fear**

By PHILIP MARCELO and ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Families and supporters of Americans detained in Iran say their loved ones face new dangers during the intensifying war, including the risk of becoming unintended casualties of Israeli and

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American bombardment or victims of retaliation from Iran's repressive regime.

"For Americans imprisoned in Iran, this is about as terrifying a moment as it gets," said Siamak Namazi, an Iranian American who was detained for nearly eight years before being released as part of a deal with the U.S. in 2023. "What these families are facing now is days of war with no clear end in sight."

The U.S. government would not confirm how many Americans are being held in Iran, but the James W. Foley Legacy Foundation, a hostage advocacy organization, said there are six and that they face "unprecedented danger" because of the military conflict.

The known cases include a reporter formerly based in Washington and a Jewish Iranian American from New York who traveled to Iran last year for family reasons and hasn't been permitted to return to the U.S.

At least two of the known detainees are housed in Evin Prison, the notorious Tehran penitentiary where Namazi was held, according to representatives for the individuals. The high-security facility holds many of the Islamic Republic's political prisoners and has been the target of past Israeli bombardment.

Kamran Hekmati, a 61-year-old from Long Island detained at Evin, spoke with his wife on Monday, a few days into the war, to assure her that he was safe for now, according to Shohreh Nowfar, his cousin.

But the family worries his condition could quickly deteriorate because he hasn't been receiving regular treatments for his bladder cancer in the months since he was detained, she said.

"It's an uncertain time in an uncertain country," said Nowfar, a Los Angeles resident.

Trump administration calls for detainees' release

Ryan Fayhee, a lawyer for Reza Valizadeh, an Iranian American reporter also detained at Evin, said he's stressed the urgency of the moment in his regular talks with White House and State Department officials.

Israel's military has taken to social media in recent days to warn residents living near the prison that they should evacuate amid the continuing airstrikes. The families of other foreign nationals imprisoned at Evin have told European news outlets that bombs have been hitting close enough to the detention center to blow out windows.

"It's my job to let the administration and the Israeli government know that there are innocent American citizens within that prison," Fayhee said. "They should take great care with this military action to avoid any unfortunate collateral damage."

White House and State Department officials declined to respond to specific questions about the status of the detainees out of concern for their safety and security, but called on Iran to immediately release them.

"President Trump has been clear that he wants every American wrongfully detained to be returned home safe and sound, and that there will be dire consequences for regimes who treat Americans as political pawns," said Anna Kelly, a White House spokesperson.

Valizadeh is among at least 15 reporters currently jailed in Iran, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists.

The 50-year-old fled the country in 2009 after reporting on its pro-democracy protests, according to a petition his lawyers submitted to the United Nations in January.

Valizadeh obtained U.S. citizenship in 2022 while working in Washington for Radio Farda, the Persian-language arm of Radio Free Europe, which receives U.S. government funding.

He was detained in 2024 after returning to Iran to visit his elderly parents and sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges that he was collaborating with the U.S. government.

The U.S. has since officially designated Valizadeh as wrongfully detained, a classification that moves a case under the supervision of the State Department's special presidential envoy for hostage affairs, the government's chief hostage negotiator.

Americans imprisoned on dubious charges

Among the other Americans whose plight has become public is Afarin Mohajer, a California resident originally from Iran.

She was detained in September and charged with posting propaganda critical of the Islamic Republic on social media and insulting its Supreme Leader and Islam, according to her son Reza Zarrabi, a political activist who lives in Germany.

Zarrabi didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment this week, but he has told European

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media outlets that his mother isn't politically active and that he believes she was arrested to silence his outspoken opposition to the regime.

Hekmati's family, meanwhile, is convinced the New York City jewelry business owner is just the latest victim of Iran's "hostage diplomacy."

The country for decades has detained Americans in the hopes of securing the release of Iranians locked up in the U.S. or exacting concessions from Washington. Just last week, the U.S. sought to impose costs on Iran for hostage-taking, with the State Department a day before the conflict began designating the country as a state sponsor of wrongful detention.

Nowfar said her cousin, Hekmati, left Iran after the 1979 revolution but has returned several times without issue.

Then in May, Iranian authorities stopped him at the airport, seized his passport and forbade him from leaving the country. He was eventually charged under an Iranian law that makes it illegal to have visited Israel within the past 10 years.

Hekmati's family maintains that his last trip to Israel was some 13 years ago for his son's Bar Mitzvah. They also dispute espionage-related charges that accuse him of having met with Mossad agents.

"They just wanted to have a hostage. An American hostage," Nowfar said.

There are also concerns that Hekmati's faith exposes him to further mistreatment, says Kieran Ramsey, the chief investigative officer at Global Reach, a nonprofit working on Hekmati's case.

"He's not only American, he's also Jewish — and we had had some concerns early on in this case of him" getting bullied, said Ramsey, who previously led the U.S. government's Hostage Recovery Fusion Cell.

As for Namazi, he sympathizes with families seeking solace, recalling a chaotic 2022 fire that killed at least eight inmates during his time at Evin.

"I remember the smoke, the confusion, and the total absence of reliable information," the 54-year-old Washington resident said. "For us prisoners it was terrifying. My mother says that night was one of the hardest she endured."

## **NFL teams are becoming more willing to trade two first-round picks for elite defensive players**

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

Defense wins championships.

That's why NFL teams are becoming more willing to part with valuable draft picks for elite defenders.

Trading two first-rounders for a player has been rare with fewer than 20 such deals over the past 40 years. However, three of those have occurred in the past 6 1/2 months and each was for a superstar defensive player.

Five-time Pro Bowl edge rusher Maxx Crosby became the latest premier talent traded for two No. 1s when the Baltimore Ravens acquired the 28-year-old star from the Las Vegas Raiders on Friday night, two people with knowledge of the deal told The Associated Press on Friday night.

Both people spoke on condition of anonymity because the trade can't be announced until the league's new year starts next week.

The last two Super Bowls were decided by superior defenses. Seattle's "Dark Side" defense sacked Drake Maye six times in a 29-13 victory over New England last month.

Last year, the Eagles sacked Patrick Mahomes six times in Philadelphia's 40-22 victory over the Chiefs.

Adding Crosby is a significant boost for the Ravens, who've fallen short in the playoffs several times despite successful regular seasons led by two-time NFL MVP Lamar Jackson.

Crosby upgrades a defense that had just 30 sacks in 2025, tied for 28th in the NFL. He could thrive under new coach Jesse Minter, a former defensive coordinator.

Here's a look at some other trades involving two first-round picks over the past five years:

Sauce Gardner

The Colts sent two first-rounders and wide receiver Adonai Mitchell to the Jets for the two-time All-Pro

cornerback last November. Indianapolis was 7-2 at the time but injuries to quarterback Daniel Jones and Gardner helped derail their season.

Micah Parsons

The Packers traded two first-rounders and three-time Pro Bowl defensive tackle Kenny Clark to Dallas for the three-time All-Pro edge rusher a week before the start of last season.

Parsons had 12 1/2 sacks in 14 games, helping Green Bay start 9-3-1. They didn't win a game without him after he tore an ACL.

Russell Wilson

The Denver Broncos made a blockbuster deal to acquire the 10-time Pro Bowl quarterback in March 2022, sending two first-round picks, two second-round picks, a fifth-round pick, QB Drew Lock, tight end Noah Fant, and defensive lineman Shelby Harris to Seattle. Wilson went 11-19 in only two seasons in Denver before he was released.

Deshaun Watson

In March 2022, the Cleveland Browns made what turned out to be one of the worst trades in NFL history when they acquired Watson and a 2024 sixth-round pick from the Houston Texans in exchange for three first-round picks, a third-round pick and two fourths.

The Browns then signed Watson to a \$230 million contract fully guaranteed. He's played just 19 games in four years, going 9-10.

Matthew Stafford

The Los Angeles Rams traded quarterback Jared Goff, two first-rounders and a third to the Detroit Lions for Stafford in January 2021. The three-time Pro Bowl QB led the Rams to a Super Bowl title that season and was AP NFL MVP in 2025.

## **At least 25 dead in Kenya after heavy rain brings flash floods and flight disruption to Nairobi**

By EVELYNE MUSAMBI Associated Press

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — At least 25 people have died after flash flooding in the Kenyan capital caused flight disruption and left motorists stranded for hours.

George Seda, the police chief in Nairobi, said some of the victims were drowned and others were electrocuted. He warned that the death toll may rise as search and rescue operations continue.

Kenya Airways said flights were disrupted, with some diverted to the coastal city of Mombasa, and that disruptions would continue for hours.

The military was deployed to assist emergency rescue services, and the local toll road operator waived fees for an elevated road.

The heavy rain began on Friday and continued overnight, submerging vehicles and forcing motorists in some areas to wade through hip-high water to reach higher ground.

Seda also said that more than 100 vehicles were damaged, with some overturning on the roadside and in parking bays.

Videos of flooded homes and overturned vehicles were shared on social media. Rescue teams pulled out bodies from vehicles that had been washed away.

President William Ruto said a multiagency team had been deployed to support and relocate those in imminent danger to safer areas as rain continues in the country. He said the government would pay hospital bills for those affected and directed that relief food be distributed to affected families.

A military rescue unit was deployed overnight to support emergency services as Kenya Red Cross response units struggled to reach people in need.

Kenya Red Cross Secretary-General Ahmed Idris said search and rescue teams were working tirelessly to assist those stranded.

"We are severely limited by the traffic and the situation on what used to be roads. We are doing our

best to reach those in need," he wrote on X.

Public Service Minister Geoffrey Ruku said he was coordinating national disaster preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. He urged Kenyans to be cautious and prioritize their safety.

Some residents blamed the flooding on clogged drainage systems, stating that city authorities ought to have prepared by ensuring there was functional drainage infrastructure ahead of the rainy season.

One resident, Aisha Bajaber, wrote on X: "The whole city is flooded yet again. How long will officials keep ignoring the lack of drainage?"

Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi said the government would ensure all blocked drainage systems are cleared.

"Nairobi remains a major regional hub and must be kept clean, safe and well-managed to reflect its standing in Africa," he said.

Kenya has faced heavy rains since late February, which marks the start of the long-rains season.

Previous rain seasons have seen flooding, landslides and mudslides that have left hundreds of people dead and seen thousands of others displaced.

## **Families with missing loved ones like Nancy Guthrie face ambiguous loss. It freezes grief**

By ED WHITE Associated Press

Lynette Pino watched in February as news about the disappearance of Nancy Guthrie seemed endless. But she decided she didn't want to get consumed by it.

Pino has something in common with NBC "Today" co-host Savannah Guthrie's family: Her son, Darian Nevayaktewa, remains missing, too, nearly 18 years after leaving home before a new school year to see his father in Arizona.

"I could see in their faces that they want answers," said Pino, 58, from Tesuque Pueblo in New Mexico. "What's the next step? What can we do? It's how I feel. There are no answers. I just pray for them and the other people who are missing."

"Why," she added, "would someone take an elderly lady?"

Pino and the Guthries are experiencing what experts call ambiguous loss. A loved one has disappeared, making it maddeningly mysterious and possibly permanent. Abductions, runaways, certain natural disasters and war can fit the category. So, too, can dementia when family members become strangers.

"They're frozen in their grief. They have a real sense of helplessness," said Tai Mendenhall, a medical family therapist at the University of Minnesota and director of a mental health disaster team. "There's no clear resolution from it. We know from research that ambiguous loss is the most psychologically painful kind of loss because of that."

Pauline Boss is a pioneer in the field and is credited with coming up with the term. In the 1970s, she interviewed women in California whose husbands were missing in action in the Vietnam War. Boss and Mendenhall worked with families after the 9/11 terrorist attack at New York's World Trade Center.

Guthries cope with prayer

Nancy Guthrie, 84, who lived alone, was reported missing from her Tucson-area home Feb. 1. Savannah Guthrie says her mother was "taken in the dark of night from her bed." The FBI released video more than a week later from a camera outside Nancy Guthrie's front door showing a masked stranger. Her blood was found on the porch, but the case remains unsolved.

The odd circumstances and Savannah Guthrie's celebrity as a TV personality have turned the investigation into a major news story. Guthrie has made videos, some with siblings Annie and Camron, in which she repeatedly appealed for her mother's release and lately offered a \$1 million reward for information.

"As my sister says, 'We are blowing on the embers of hope,'" Guthrie said on Feb. 24, her eyes red.

Guthrie, Annie and brother-in-law Tommaso Cioni recently placed flowers at a roadside memorial at the home. They reached down to read handwritten notes and consoled each other with deep hugs. Guthrie

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also returned Thursday for an emotional reunion with her NBC colleagues in New York.

She has referred to her Christian faith during the ordeal, asking people earlier on Instagram to "raise your prayers with us" and acknowledging recently that Nancy Guthrie might already be in heaven dancing "with our daddy." It's something that can help people cope with ambiguous loss, experts say.

"When people turn toward their faith, that is where they find solace," Mendenhall said. "Oftentimes the power of faith comes from the communities that inhabit it. Sometimes the best treatment for ambiguous loss is a community group, people who have had this shared experience."

Son's trip turns into mystery

Pino said she regularly turns to prayer as she copes with the plight of her missing son, who was 19 when he vanished in June 2008. Neveyaktewa's disappearance is among many unsolved cases of violent crime in Native American communities. The FBI last year said it was sending extra agents, analysts and other personnel to 10 states to try to make a difference.

"He wanted to go see his dad on the Hopi reservation in Arizona," Pino said of her son. "I just remember that day hugging him, telling him he only needed a half-semester to graduate from high school. He wasn't there long, maybe a week, before he disappeared. Someone took him somewhere — I don't know. Hard to say."

Savannah Guthrie said her family is donating \$500,000 to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, citing "millions of families that have suffered" with similar uncertainty.

Pino said she prayed and lit candles for Neveyaktewa during a trip to Arizona last summer around the anniversary of his disappearance.

"Do not give up hope," Pino said she would tell the Guthries. "Don't let law enforcement put it aside."

## Today in History: March 8, first U.S. combat troops arrive in Vietnam

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, March 8, the 67th day of 2026. There are 298 days left in the year. Daylight saving time returns at 2 a.m. local time.

Today in history:

On March 8, 1965, the United States landed its first combat troops in South Vietnam as 3,500 Marines arrived to defend the U.S. air base at Da Nang.

Also on this date:

In 1817, a constitution was adopted formally creating the New York Stock & Exchange Board, forerunner of the New York Stock Exchange. The constitution laid out rules for transactions and brokers initially gathered twice daily in a rented room on Wall Street to trade 30 stocks and bonds.

In 1917, protests against food rationing broke out in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg), triggering eight days of rioting that resulted in the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the end of the Russian monarchy.

In 1948, the Supreme Court, in *McCollum v. Board of Education*, struck down religious education classes during school hours in Champaign, Illinois, public schools, saying the program violated separation of church and state.

In 1971, in the first of three fights between Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier, Frazier defeated Ali by unanimous decision in what was billed as "The Fight of the Century" at Madison Square Garden in New York.

In 1983, in a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals convention in Orlando, Florida, President Ronald Reagan referred to the Soviet Union as an "evil empire."

In 1988, 17 soldiers were killed when two Army helicopters from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, collided during a night training mission.

In 2008, President George W. Bush vetoed a bill that would have banned the CIA from using simulated drowning, or waterboarding, and other coercive interrogation methods to gain information from suspected terrorists.

In 2014, Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370, a Boeing 777 with 239 people on board, vanished during a flight

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from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, setting off a massive and ultimately unsuccessful search. The aircraft's disappearance remains one of air travel's major unsolved mysteries.

In 2023, the U.S. Justice Department found that police in Louisville, Kentucky, had engaged in a pattern of violating constitutional rights and discrimination against the Black community following an investigation prompted by the fatal police shooting of an African American woman, Breonna Taylor.

Today's birthdays: Author John McPhee is 95. Songwriter Carole Bayer Sager is 82. Actor-musician Micky Dolenz (The Monkees) is 81. Baseball Hall of Famer Jim Rice is 73. Singer Gary Numan is 68. TV journalist Lester Holt is 67. Actor Aidan Quinn is 67. Actor Camryn Manheim is 65. Actor Freddie Prinze Jr. is 50. Songwriter-producer Benny Blanco is 38. Actor Montana Jordan is 23. Actor Kit Connor is 22. Actor Samara Lee is 18.