

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, March 23

Senior Menu: Baked hot ham and cheese, tomato soup, fruit.

School Breakfast: Stuffed bagels.

School Lunch: Chicken nachos.

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

Pickleball, 5:30 a.m., Elementary Gym

Winter Sports Awards, 7 p.m. The Welcome home will be held prior to the awards ceremony.

Groton Senior Citizens, potluck at noon, Community Center

Tuesday, March 24

Senior Menu: Pork loin, roasted potatoes, glazed carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.

School Lunch: Chicken breast, try taters.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Milbank CDE State Qualifier

Indoor Track Meet at NSU, 3:30 p.m.

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

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



Wednesday, March 25

Senior Menu: Chicken broccoli bake, mashed potatoes, fruit, biscuit.

School Breakfast: Omelets.

School Lunch: Cheese quesadilla, refried beans.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Soup Supper (Sunday School hosts), 6 p.m.; Lenten Service, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Confirmation, 3:45 p.m.; Lent Supper, 6 p.m.; Lent Service at St. John's, 7 p.m.

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

Pickleball, 5:30 p.m. Elementary Gym

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

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

Thursday, March 26

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

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Lasagna bake, corn.

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

4th Grade BBB, 6 p.m., Arena

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

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

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1440

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

Iran Ultimatum

President Donald Trump issued an ultimatum Saturday, threatening strikes on Iran's power plants unless the Strait of Hormuz is fully reopened by this evening. Iranian officials said they would target critical sites in neighboring countries that host US bases in response.

The escalation comes as the Iranian military launched a pair of ballistic missiles at a joint US-UK base in the Indian Ocean (one failed, one was intercepted). The launch was the farthest ever attempted by Iran and revealed a theoretical strike distance of nearly 2,500 miles, potentially threatening European targets.

Meanwhile, new Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei issued a second public statement via state media on the war and state of the country. Khamenei has not been publicly seen or heard since he assumed power two weeks ago.

Separately, reports suggest US officials are considering occupying or blockading Kharg Island, which sits 15 miles off the Iranian coast and processes the bulk of its oil exports.

Robert Mueller Dies

Former FBI Director Robert Mueller died on Friday at age 81. After leading the agency from 2001 to 2013, Mueller later became known for his role as special counsel, appointed in 2017 to investigate claims of Russian interference in the US' 2016 presidential election.

The Mueller investigation identified contacts between the Trump campaign and Russia. By 2019, they had brought charges against six of President Donald Trump's associates, including campaign chair Paul Manafort and Trump's first national security adviser, Michael Flynn. However, Mueller did not find sufficient evidence that the campaign had conspired with Russia. The team did not reach a conclusion on obstruction of justice charges.

Prior to the report, Mueller served as the FBI's second-longest serving director, joining the agency days before the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Under his tenure, the FBI enforced the Patriot Act and documented CIA torture in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

BTS Returns

K-pop band BTS returned to the stage over the weekend for the group's first concert in nearly three-and-a-half years. The free concert at Seoul's Gwanghwamun Square drew tens of thousands of attendees and was livestreamed on Netflix.

BTS (short for "Bangtan Sonyeondan," which means "Bulletproof Boy Scouts" in Korean) debuted in 2013 and has since become South Korea's most successful band. The group is the first since the Beatles to have three albums reach No. 1 in the US within a year (2018-19). BTS also holds the record for most music video streams on YouTube within a day (108.2 million views) for the 2021 hit "Butter." The band had been on hiatus since 2022 as its members enlisted for mandatory military service in 18- to 21-month stints. Now, they've released their fifth studio album with an 82-date world tour analysts estimate could earn at least \$1.9B, approaching Taylor Swift's record-holding \$2.2B Eras Tour.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Men's Sweet Sixteen set after first two rounds of NCAA tournament; Florida becomes first No. 1 seed eliminated, losing to No. 9 Iowa.

Watch thrilling end to No. 4 Nebraska's win over No. 5 Vanderbilt.

Women's second round concludes today

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"Project Hail Mary" earns \$80.5M at the domestic box office, \$141M globally—the second-biggest debut for a non-franchise movie after "Oppenheimer".

"Saturday Night Live UK" premieres with SNL veteran Tina Fey hosting the inaugural episode.

Science & Technology

Never-before-seen photos of astronauts Neil Armstrong and David Scott following their 1966 Gemini 8 mission revealed; capsule required an emergency splashdown after a critical in-space failure.

Elon Musk announces Terafab, a collaboration between his companies Tesla, SpaceX, and xAI to build a cutting-edge semiconductor manufacturing facility for AI and robotics.

Study links same-sex courtship in male fruit flies to evolutionary changes in the expression of pheromones involved in mating.

Business & Markets

US stock markets continued downward trajectory Friday (S&P 500 -1.5%, Dow -1.0%, Nasdaq -2.0%) amid fallout from the war in Iran.

Average price of gas in the US just above \$3.94 per gallon; see state-by-state breakdown.

Peter Thiel-led Founders Fund to lead fundraising round for Halter, an AI-powered platform for cow herding; Halter's post-raise valuation would double to \$2B.

Whistleblower post accuses automated compliance startup Delve of creating false security and privacy reports; company, part of the winter 2024 Y Combinator cohort, denies allegations.

Politics & World Affairs

ICE agents will deploy to major US airports today to assist with airport security operations amid partial government shutdown, White House says.

Hawaii's Oahu island experiences worst flooding in over 20 years after days of heavy rain; more than 230 people were rescued as of Friday with damages exceeding \$1B.

Sudanese army denies attacking a hospital in el-Daein in East Darfur; the strike killed at least 64 and wounded at least 89 others on the Muslim festival of Eid.

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

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Class A Awards

Spirit of Su: Hamlin's Jackson Wadsworth
Spirit of Six: Hamlin
All-Tournament Team
West Central: Will Kuhl, Connor Mebius
Sioux Falls Christian: Brant Wassenaar, Canyon Prins
Stanley County: Paxton Deal
Groton: Karson Zak
Cheyenne-Eagle Butte: Damien Clown
St. Thomas More: Wyatt Gylten
Hamlin: Jackson Wadsworth, Boden Stevenson
Clark/Willow Lake: Chris Bevers, Sullivan Felberg



The Groton Area crowd gathered together at the bottom of the escalator as the players went down it. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

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With the 2025 NFL season officially over, all 32 teams will begin laying the foundation for 2026 and beyond. Some teams have championship aspirations, some teams are hoping to ascend out of the proverbial basement, and some teams will be somewhere between the two. For the Minnesota Vikings, the quest for that ever-elusive Lombardi Trophy begins as it always does, by looking in the rearview mirror.

Today marks the final article that will examine the 2025 roster to reveal which positions and players can be built around, and which need to be upgraded. This week, we break down the back end of the defense with the cornerback and safety groups.

The Minnesota Vikings' pass coverage was one of the best in the NFL last season, despite the patchwork of players that were cobbled together last offseason. The Vikings only gave up 2,694 yards and 15 touchdowns through the air, which were both second-best in the league. Can Brian Flores duplicate his success in 2026?

Byron Murphy was the Vikings' CB1 last year. After snagging six interceptions and making the Pro Bowl in 2024, Murphy signed a massive extension to remain in Minnesota.

Across from Murphy was Isaiah Rodgers, who signed a two-year contract last offseason. He's in line to start once again, and he'll be looking to play his best in 2026 to parlay that into a big contract in 2027.

Next up on the depth chart is newly acquired James Pierre, who is one of only two free agent signings by the Vikings so far this season (the other being Kyler Murray).

Currently, the Vikings only have two other CBs on the roster, Dwight McGlothern and Zemaiah Vaughn. Expect the team to add a little more depth before training camp, whether that's through the draft or an inexpensive free agent signing.

The last line of defense is the safety position, so it's only fitting that we break down that group last. The biggest safety-related news is the (potential) retirement of Harrison Smith, who has been the anchor of the defensive backfield since he was drafted in 2012. It's possible the 37-year-old will come back for one last season, but if I had to guess, I'd say we've seen the last of number 22 (until his eventual enshrinement into the Vikings' ring of honor).

Joshua Metellus is the only starting-caliber player left at safety, and he's usually a chess piece for Flores, constantly moving all over the field.

Theo Jackson, who started eight games in 2025, is currently penciled in as the starter next to Metellus. Has the 27-year-old shown enough to warrant the starting role?

Competing with Jackson is Jay Ward, who is entering his fourth season in the NFL. Ward started five games in 2025 but was clearly behind Jackson on the depth chart.

Rounding out the safety group is Tavierre Thomas (who the Vikings just re-signed to provide depth and play special teams) and Kahlef Hailassie, who was on the practice squad last season.

The Vikings' special teams saw a slight shakeup this offseason when punter Ryan Wright signed with the New Orleans Saints. To replace him, the Vikings signed veteran Johnny Hekker, who is entering his 15th year in the NFL. Hekker is a four-time Pro Bowl punter, so he's plenty capable of holding down the spot until the Vikings find a long-term replacement.

“What the heart wants (is exercise)”

Cardiovascular disease remains the most common cause of death in the US as well as a very common cause of chronic illness and disability. Heart attacks, heart failure, and strokes result in about 2500 deaths per day in the US, according to the American Heart Association®. While huge strides continue to be made in treatment of these events, including medications and procedural abilities, as always, prevention is the best medicine.

Many risk factors exist for cardiovascular disease; some, such as genetics or family history, are out of one’s control. However, there are many things we can do to reduce our risk, including quitting smoking and controlling high blood pressure, high cholesterol, or diabetes. One behavior that applies to us all is to get enough exercise.

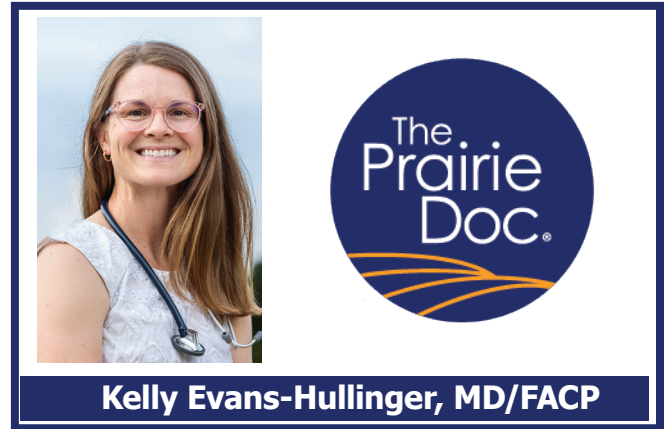
The American Heart Association® recommends getting at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise or 75 minutes of vigorous exercise per week, preferably spread over several days in the week. Moderate exercise might include brisk walking, gardening, or leisurely biking. Vigorous exercise might include walking on an incline, jogging or running, or heavy yard work. Additionally, they recommend resistance or strength training be included twice per week.

Starting from sedentary? No problem, but don’t expect to go from zero to 150 minutes in the first week. Listen to your body; you can even start with walking or chair exercise for ten minutes per day. You will find that with consistency you will be able to build on that week to week. Most importantly, find a physical activity that you enjoy enough to keep doing. For many people, exercising with a family member or friend really helps.

We know that regular exercise can cut the risk of cardiovascular disease substantially; one large study showed a reduction in mortality by over 20%, with more exercise giving even greater protection. How exercise benefits the heart goes beyond its effect on obvious markers like weight; exercise improves blood flow in the vessels around the heart in a way that reduces future bad outcomes. As I tell my patients when we discuss exercise, its benefits are far greater than its effect on weight. Your heart will thank you for the exercise no matter what the scale says.

So let’s all get moving this week! Any exercise is better than none, and there is something out there for everyone. The heart wants what it wants, and that’s exercise.

Dr. Kelly Evans Hullinger practices internal medicine at Avera Medical Group in Brookings, SD. She serves as one of the Prairie Doc Volunteer Hosts during its 24th Season providing Health Education Based on Science, Built on Trust. Follow The Prairie Doc® at www.prairiedoc.org, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Prairie Doc Programming includes On Call with the Prairie Doc®, a medical Q&A show (most Thursdays at 7pm on SDPB, YouTube and streaming on Facebook), 2 podcasts, and a Radio program (on SDPB, Sundays at 6am and 1pm).



Kelly Evans-Hullinger, MD/FACP

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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



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EARTHTALK

Are Floatovoltaics The Next Big Thing In Renewable Energy? by Shriya Surti

Dear EarthTalk: Is it true that we could meet all of our electricity needs in the U.S. with floating solar panels on reservoirs and other water bodies across the country? – P.L., via e-mail

Energy usage in the U.S. has surged in recent years, with electric power sector 96 percent of the country's utility-scale electricity. To address this, floatovoltaics—solar panel systems that float on water—have the potential to combat growing energy demands. "Floatovoltaics are one of the fastest-growing power generation technologies today and a promising low-carbon energy source," University of Texas aquatic ecosystem ecologist Rafael Almeida told Eos.

Floating solar farms operate similarly to ground-mounted farms. Devices keeping the system buoyant sit on top of the water, cooling the panels, which increases efficiency. Also, using water surfaces frees up land for other uses. Germany, Russia and China are already benefiting from floating solar farms, suggesting that the U.S. could follow suit.

However, implementing floatovoltaics has issues. As the idea is relatively new, long-term durability is uncertain. Harsh weather, declining performance and maintenance needs must be studied as systems age. Connecting from water to land adds more complexity, as scientists must ensure efficient power transmission. With time will come a better understanding of the potential to implement them nationwide.

But floatovoltaics do show great promise, though they are unlikely to meet all of the U.S. energy needs alone. Waterbody availability, environmental and logistical concerns mean that floating solar farms could be a complementary solution rather than a standalone one. More research on renewable energy, along with careful system design, will be need to ensure successful implementation. When combined with other efforts, floatovoltaics could help reduce reliance on fossil fuels and meet a large portion of U.S. energy demands. "On one hand, we can't put too many barriers to this potentially important sector to advance," Almeida added. "But on the other hand, we need to understand the trade-offs and fill our prevailing knowledge gaps with more studies."

Floatovoltaics present a revolutionary approach to addressing the U.S. energy needs. Through more research and design, these systems could become key in future renewable energy solutions. Support the adoption of renewable technologies by engaging with community leaders, advocating for local initiatives, and supporting green energy providers. By staying informed and spreading awareness about innovations like floating solar farms, you can help shape the future of renewable energy in the United States.



Proponents say floatovoltaics may be the next big thing in alternative energy.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota lawmakers test their skills behind the wheel at emergency vehicle driving course

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — After weeks spent split on property tax relief, economic development and other policy decisions, some state legislators seized an opportunity to blow off steam at a lawmakers' day taking place just north of the capital city.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol and Department of Public Safety hosted about a dozen lawmakers at the Emergency Vehicle Operation Course.

Highway Patrol troopers, police officers and sheriff's deputies, among other first responders, must be successful in the course that requires high- and low-speed vehicle maneuvering, driving in reverse and disabling other vehicles. That's according to South Dakota Highway Patrol Lt. Dave Campbell.

For most of the participants, it's a weeklong experience.

"They have a classroom section, and then a testing session where they have to perform every exercise," Campbell said.

Law enforcement training classes are the largest, Campbell said, often with more than 20 students. Instructors get certified in Washington state, where Campbell said he gets ideas for new ways to challenge students.

The cars on the course are old Highway Patrol vehicles. Some of them are outfitted with metal bumpers as protection so the cars don't get damaged beyond repair.

Madison Republican Rep. Tim Walburg is one of the lawmakers who came to test his skills on the course during the final week of the legislative session. He's a former Lake County sheriff and currently works as a paramedic. Walburg hasn't done a course like this one since the early 2000s — "a hot minute," he said.

"This has changed a little bit," Walburg added.

The course has speed sensors with lights to point drivers in one direction or the other at the last second to test reactions. Those light-up arrows only appear if a driver is going fast enough to trigger them. Walburg said when he was getting certified, he relied on an instructor to call out a direction to turn the vehicle.

The course was recently resurfaced thanks to a \$2.4 million appropriation from lawmakers in 2021, Campbell said. Legislator days like this one help build relationships between law enforcement trainers and lawmakers.

"A lot of them hadn't seen what their blessing went towards," Campbell said. "And then they come out and they see it, they have fun, and they're like, 'What else do you guys need? What's a future need that you guys might have?'"

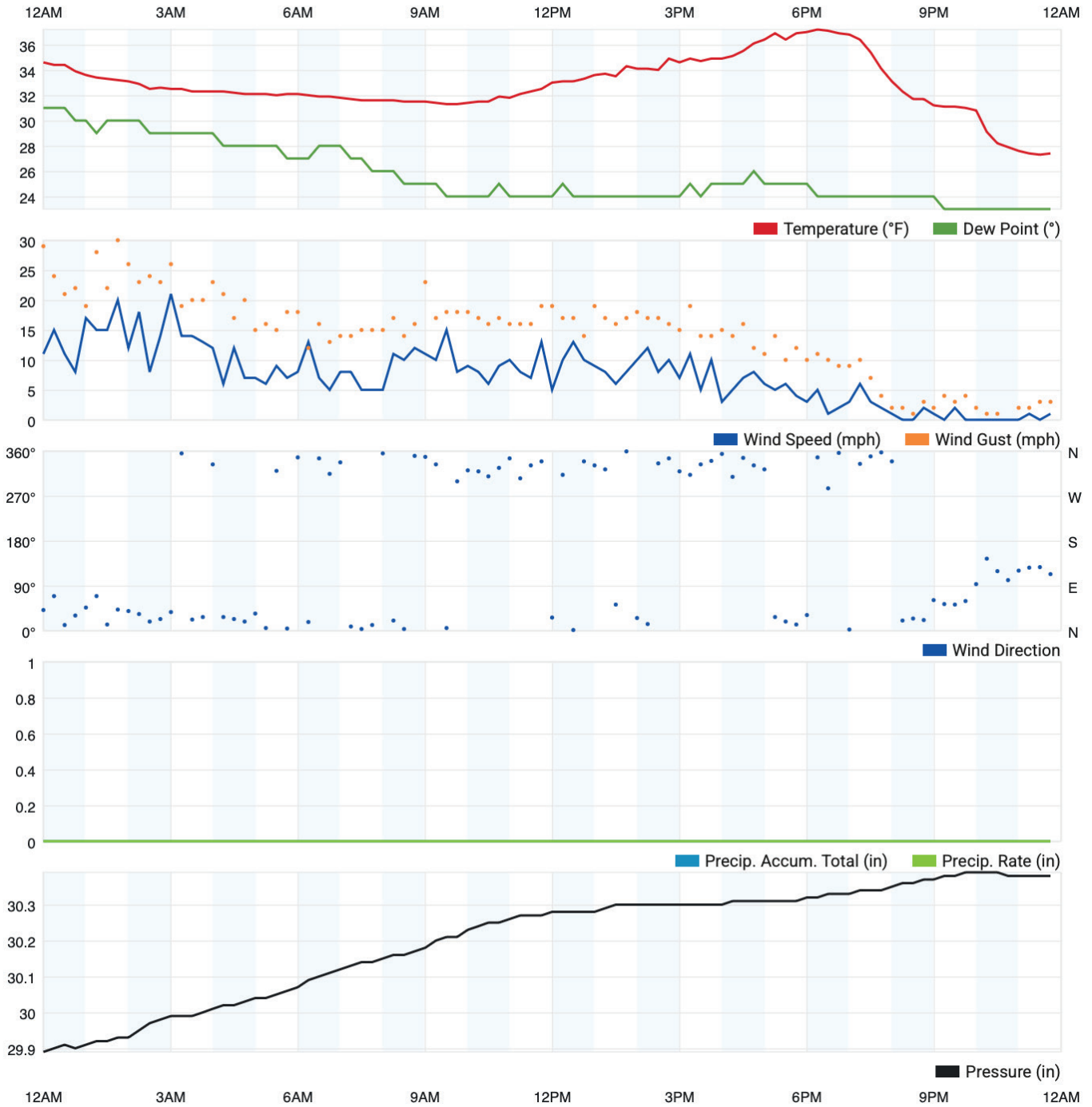
Meghan O'Brien is the audio reporter for South Dakota Searchlight where she covers the state government and its impact on South Dakotans. She's previously reported in Nebraska with a focus on health care and rural communities across the state.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

March 22, 2026



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Today



High: 52 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Breezy

Tonight



Low: 30 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Tuesday



High: 57 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Tuesday Night



Low: 35 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Wednesday



High: 65 °F

Partly Sunny

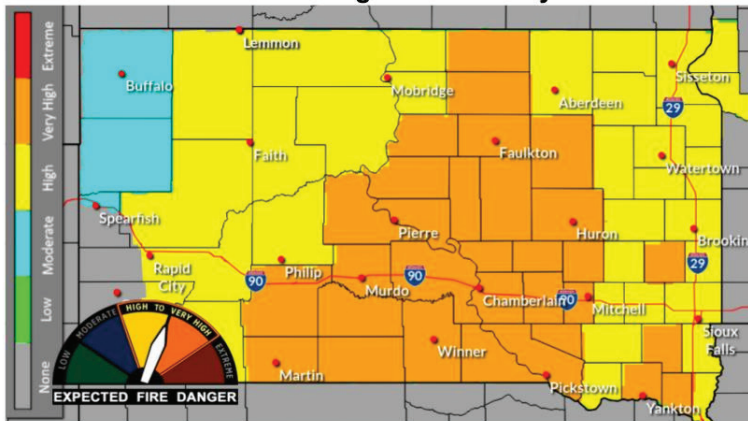


Elevated Fire Weather Concerns Today

March 23, 2026
3:16 AM

Grassland Fire Danger Index **High to Very High**

Grassland Fire Danger Index Today



Elevated Fire Danger Today

- Strong southerly winds, with **gusts of 25 to 35 mph**, combining with afternoon relative humidity between **25 to 40%** will create elevated fire weather concerns as grasses remain dry.
 - Lowest RH over south central SD
- **Any fires that ignite may spread quickly!**



	Mon						Tue
	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am
Aberdeen	18↑	29↑	35↑	35↑	28↑	22↑	20↑
Britton	16↑	28↑	33↑	33↑	28↑	23↑	20↑
Chamberlain	15↑	24↑	32↑	33↑	30↑	25↑	22↑
Clark	18↑	28↑	33↑	33↑	31↑	28↑	26↑
Eagle Butte	23↑	29↑	31↑	28↑	20↑	16↑	16↑
Eureka	21↑	29↑	32↑	30↑	20↑	17↑	17↑
Gettysburg	23↑	30↑	35↑	33↑	24↑	21↑	20↑
McIntosh	22↑	25↑	26↑	23↑	16↑	18↑	20↑
Milbank	10↑	20↑	24↑	26↑	24↑	21↑	20↑
Miller	21↑	31↑	36↑	36↑	31↑	28↑	26↑
Mobridge	21↑	25↑	28↑	25↑	18↑	15↑	16↑
Murdo	23↑	31↑	36↑	36↑	28↑	22↑	20↑
Pierre	16↑	23↑	30↑	30↑	24↑	18↑	14↑
Redfield	21↑	31↑	37↑	37↑	31↑	26↑	23↑
Sisseton	13↑	23↑	29↑	29↑	25↑	22↑	20↑
Watertown	10↑	21↑	28↑	30↑	28↑	26↑	24↑
Webster	16↑	24↑	30↑	31↑	29↑	26↑	23↑
Wheaton	12↑	22↑	26↑	28↑	23↑	20↑	17↑

Increasing winds out of the south, with gusts of 25 to 35 mph, combining with afternoon relative humidity values between 25 and 40% will create elevated fire weather concerns as grasses remain dry today. Any fires that ignite may spread quickly! Due to this, the Grassland Fire Danger Index is High to Very High across the region.

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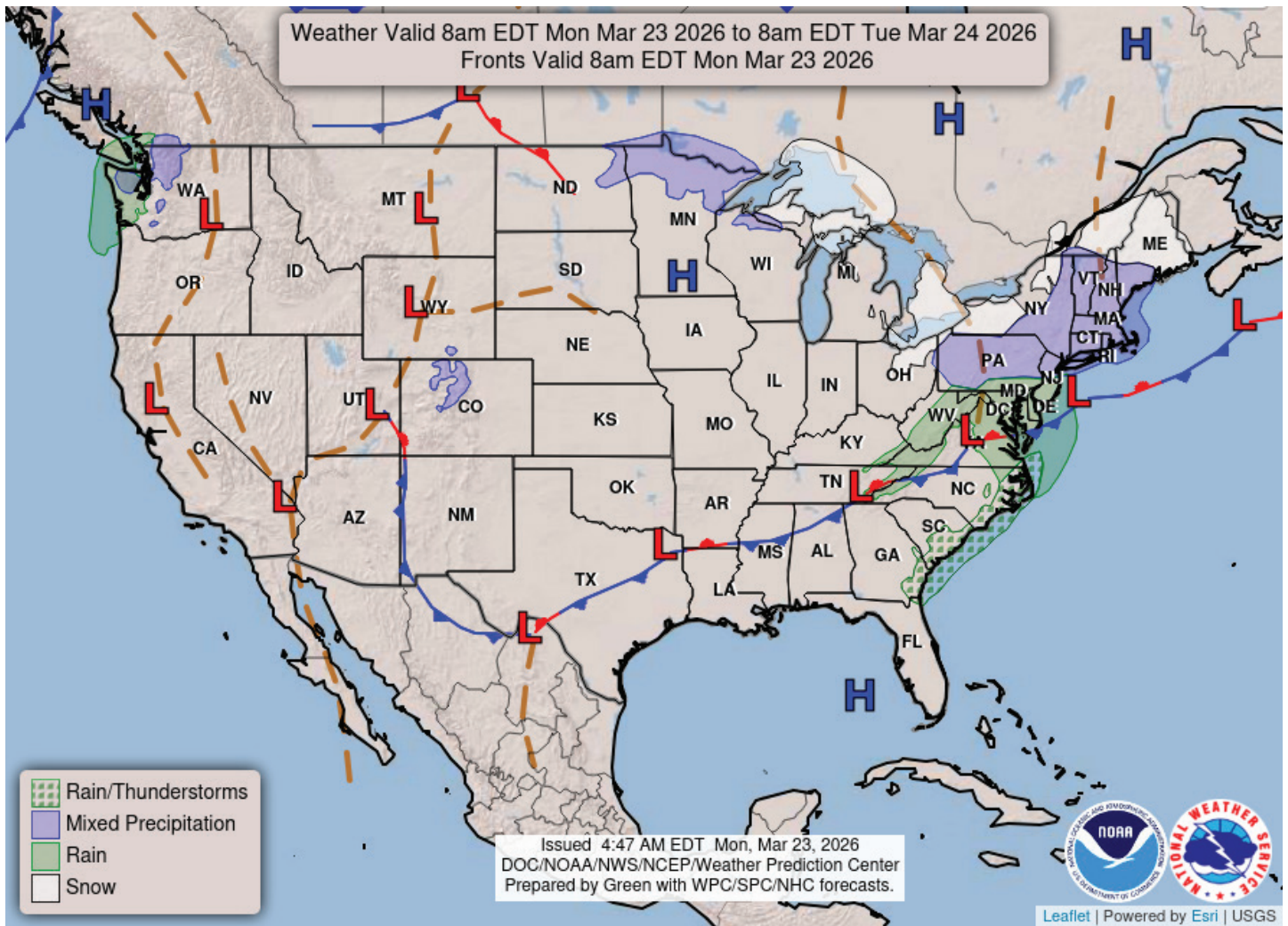
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 37 °F at 5:41 PM
Low Temp: 27 °F at 11:19 PM
Wind: 31 mph at 2:20 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 81 in 1963
Record Low: -21 in 1899
Average High: 46
Average Low: 23
Average Precip in Mar.: 0.61
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.29
Average Precip to date: 1.78
Precip Year to Date: 1.62
Sunset Tonight: 7.48 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:27 am



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Today in Weather History

March 23-25th, 1987: Strong winds and heavy snow produced blizzard conditions across South Dakota from March 23rd through the 25th. Snow amounts ranged from 6 to 19 inches. Snow totals included 19" at Winner (in Tripp County), 15" at Murdo (in Jones County), and 12" at Woonsocket (in Sanborn County) and Platte (in Charles Mix County). The wind piled the snow into drifts up to 10 feet deep. The heavy, wet snow broke power lines in several counties in the south-central and east-central parts of the state, knocking out power for up to a few days.

March 23rd, 2011: A low-pressure system brought a variety of precipitation to central and eastern South Dakota and west central Minnesota on March 22nd and 23rd. Some areas experienced rain, hail, sleet, snow, and, in some cases, thundersnow.

1913 — A vicious tornado hit the city of Omaha, NE. The tornado struck during the late afternoon on Easter Sunday, and in just twelve minutes cut a swath of total destruction five miles long and two blocks wide across the city killing 94 persons and causing 3.5 million dollars property damage. (David Ludlum)

1916 — Pocatello, ID, received a record 14.6 inches of snow in 24 hours. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — A blizzard raged across western Kansas, and the panhandle of Texas and Oklahoma. Pampa TX received 21 inches of snow, and winds gusted to 78 mph at Dodge City KS Altus OK. Governor Hayden declared forty-six counties in western Kansas a disaster area. In southwest Kansas, the storm was described as the worst in thirty years. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thunderstorms developing along a strong cold front spawned tornadoes near Roberts ID and Bridger MT. Strong and gusty winds prevailed in the western U.S. Wind gusts in the southwest part of Reno NV reached 89 mph. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Charlotte and Wilmington, NC, reported rainfall records for the date as showers and thunderstorms prevailed in the southeastern U.S. Freezing rain glazed parts of North Carolina and southern Virginia. Gale force winds produced a heavy surf along the coast of North Carolina. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — An upper level storm system produced heavy snow in the Lower Missouri Valley. Snowfall totals ranged up to nine inches at Kansas City MO, with eight inches reported at Falls City NE, Columbia MO and Saint Louis MO. Thunderstorms produced heavy snow in the Kansas City area during the evening rush hour. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2007 — A trailer is thrown through a bowling alley as a tornado moves through Clovis, NM. About 100 homes and businesses are destroyed, at least three schools are damaged and telephone poles are snapped. Thirteen tornadoes struck a dozen communities along the New Mexico/Texas border. Two people were critically injured.

2011 — A series of tornados are spawned from severe thunderstorms in Pennsylvania. In Hempfield Township dozens of homes and a high school auditorium where students are rehearsing a play are severely damaged.

Turning Inadequacy Into Victory

To live joyfully and confidently, shift your gaze from your limitations to Jesus' sufficiency.

Philippians 2:12-13: Philippians 2:12-13

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

From time to time, a sense of insufficiency will surface in all of us, but through the Holy Spirit, we have the power to combat it. Here are three steps to take:

Acknowledge your weakness. Suppose a neighbor tells you about his sister's life-threatening illness. He's scared, wondering what comes after death. You sense God urging you to share your hope in Christ, but inadequacy nearly drowns out the prompting. Feeling unsure is a normal reaction, and following God's directive requires acknowledging our fear. For example, we can pray, "Lord, I don't feel capable. Help me witness to my neighbor."

Pray for strength. Say, "Father, I know this is what You want me to do, so I'm trusting You to be true to Your Word. You said You'd make me adequate in Christ Jesus." The Lord assumes responsibility for enabling you to know what to say, how to say it, and to deliver His message in the appropriate spirit (Matthew 10:20).

Step out in faith. Do something that propels you into the God-given opportunity, allowing Him to prove His power and your ability when relying on Him.

Let God turn inadequacy into victory. He delights in proving Himself in His children's lives. When you look beyond your limitations to Jesus' total sufficiency, you'll find joy and confidence.

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:

03.22.26

7 8 17 18 55 2

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 38 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.20.26

11 20 51 55 63 4

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$60,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 17 Hrs 23 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.21.26

3 11 13 27 52 9

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$19,470,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 38 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.21.26

3 14 18 25 33

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$31,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 16 Hrs 53 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.21.26

9 29 34 48 58 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

03.21.26

12 28 36 41 59 2

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$133,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 25 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Pilot and copilot killed in collision between jet and fire truck at New York's LaGuardia Airport

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ and JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Two people were killed and several others badly hurt when an Air Canada regional jet struck a fire truck on a runway while landing at New York's LaGuardia Airport late Sunday night, officials said.

The pilot and copilot were killed in the collision, which crushed the nose of the aircraft, while 41 passengers and crew members were taken to area hospitals, some with serious injuries. Most have since been released from treatment, authorities said.

Two Port Authority employees who were traveling in the fire truck suffered injuries that were not believed to be life-threatening, said Kathryn Garcia, executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which operates the airport.

The pilot and copilot were both based out of Canada, Garcia said during a news conference early Monday.

The airport will remain closed until at least 2 p.m. Monday to facilitate the investigation, which is being led by the National Transportation Safety Board.

The fire truck was traveling across the runway to respond to a separate incident aboard a United airlines flight, whose pilot had reported "an issue with odor," said Garcia, who deferred additional questions about the sequence of events leading up to the crash to the NTSB.

There were 72 passengers and four crew members aboard the aircraft, a Jazz Aviation flight operating on behalf of Air Canada, according to a statement from the airline. The flight originated at Montréal-Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport, the major airport serving Montreal.

Photos and videos from the scene showed severe damage to the front of the aircraft, with cables and debris hanging from a mangled cockpit. Nearby, a damaged emergency vehicle lay on its side.

Stairways used to evacuate passengers from aircraft were pushed up to the emergency exits on the jet, a Bombardier CRJ. The impact left the jet with its crumpled nose tilted upward.

In the moments before the crash, an air traffic controller could be heard on a radio transmission giving clearance to a vehicle to cross part of the tarmac, then trying to stop it.

"Stop, Truck 1. Stop," the transmission says. The controller can then be heard frantically diverting incoming aircraft from landing.

Jazz Aviation issued a statement confirming the accident and noting the passenger and crew list was preliminary and subject to confirmation.

Early Monday, some passengers who had arrived at LaGuardia hours before their flights hoping to beat security lines during the ongoing government funding lapse straggled out of the airport, rebooked for Tuesday. Others were hastening to other airports, as far as Long Island MacArthur in suburban Ronkonkoma, to try to catch their flights.

Iran threatens to start hitting Gulf power plants and mine waters as Israel launches new attacks

By JON GAMBRELL and DAVID RISING Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran warned Monday it will strike electrical plants across the Middle East if U.S. President Donald Trump follows through on his threat to bomb power stations in the Islamic Republic, and threatened to mine the "entire Persian Gulf" if invaded.

Tehran's threat puts at risk both electrical supplies and water in the Gulf Arab states, particularly as the desert nations commingle their power stations with desalination plants crucial for supplying drinking water.

Following the threat, Iran's semi-official Fars news agency published a list of such facilities, including the

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United Arab Emirates' nuclear power plant. Over the weekend, Iran launched missiles targeting Dimona in Israel, near a facility key to its long-suspected atomic weapons program. The Israeli facility wasn't damaged in the barrage.

Israel launched new attacks Monday on the Iranian capital, saying it had "begun a wide-scale wave of strikes" on infrastructure targets in Tehran without immediately elaborating.

Tehran says it will mine Persian Gulf if invaded

As concerns grow in Tehran about the potential arrival of U.S. Marines in the region, Iran's Defense Council warned against the idea of an invasion.

"Any attempt by the enemy to target Iran's coasts or islands will, naturally and in accordance with established military practice, lead to the mining of all access routes ... in the Persian Gulf and along the coasts," it said in a statement.

The U.S. has been trying to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow mouth of the Persian Gulf, to energy shipments. Iran has shut the strait, through which a fifth of the world's oil is shipped along with other important commodities, in response to U.S. and Israeli strikes. A trickle of ships has been getting through the strait and Iran insists it remains open — just not to the U.S., Israel or their allies.

The Marines could come ashore to seize either islands or territory in Iran to support that mission. Israel also has suggested its ground forces could take part in the war.

Trump and Tehran exchange threats

Tehran's signal is part of a back and forth series of threats that escalated this weekend with Trump saying in a social media post that if Tehran didn't open the strategic waterway to all ships, the United States would "obliterate" Iran's power plants. He gave Tehran a 48-hour deadline that expires late Monday, Washington time, further raising the stakes of the ongoing war with Iran that has already disrupted global energy supplies, sending natural gas and gasoline prices soaring.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said Monday that if the U.S. did that, Iran would respond by hitting power plants in all areas that supply electricity to American bases, "as well as the economic, industrial and energy infrastructures in which Americans have shares."

"Do not doubt that we will do this," the Guard said in a statement read on Iranian state television.

The Fars news agency, which is close to the Revolutionary Guard, published a list of such sites in what appeared to be a veiled threat, including desalination plants as well as the UAE's Barakah nuclear power plant, which has four reactors out in the western deserts of the country near its border with Saudi Arabia. The judiciary's Mizan news agency also published the list.

Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf said Iran would consider vital infrastructure across the region to be legitimate targets, including energy and desalination facilities critical for drinking water in Gulf nations.

Oil prices up more than 50% since start of the war

Oil prices remained stubbornly high in early trading, with the price of Brent crude, the international standard, at around \$112 a barrel, up nearly 55% since Israel and the U.S. started the war on Feb. 28 by attacking Iran.

"No country will be immune to the effects of this crisis if it continues to go in this direction," said Fatih Birol, the head of the Paris-based International Energy Agency.

He told Australia's National Press Club in Canberra on Monday that the crisis in the Middle East has had a worse impact on energy markets than the two oil shocks of the 1970s and the Russia-Ukraine war combined.

Jorge Moreira da Silva, a senior United Nations official, said the world has already seen a ripple effect, including "exponential price hikes in oil, fuel and gas," having a far reaching impact on millions, primarily in Asian and African developing countries.

"There is no military solution," he said.

The war has also caused wild fluctuations in global stock markets as traders grow increasingly concerned about a world energy crisis and other issues.

US commander warns Iranians civilians

United States Central Command chief Adm. Brad Cooper claimed in an interview that Iran was launching

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missiles and drones from populated areas, and suggested those areas would be targeted.

"You need to stay inside for right now," Cooper told Iranian civilians in the interview with the Farsi-language satellite network Iran International which aired early Monday.

"There will be a clear signal at some point, as the president has indicated, for you to be able to come out."

In his first one-on-one interview since the war started, Adm. Cooper said the campaign against Iran is "ahead or on plan" and that the U.S. and Israel were targeting infrastructure and manufacturing facilities to destroy Iran's capabilities to rebuild its military.

"It's not just about the threat today," he said. "We're eliminating the threat of the future, both in terms of the drones, the missiles as well as the navy."

He suggested Iran could bring a quick end to the war if it stopped firing back, but did not say whether that would prompt Israel and the U.S. to relent before all infrastructure targets have been destroyed.

Iran's death toll in the war has surpassed 1,500, its health ministry has said. In Israel, 15 people have been killed by Iranian strikes. More than a dozen civilians in the occupied West Bank and Gulf Arab states have been killed in strikes.

In Lebanon, authorities say Israeli strikes targeting Iran-linked militia Hezbollah have killed more than 1,000 people and displaced more than 1 million. Meanwhile, Hezbollah has fired hundreds of rockets into Israel.

Global shares decline as hopes dim for resolution in Iran after Trump's latest comments

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Global shares dipped Monday across the board, as oil prices continued to climb after U.S. President Donald Trump's latest comments dashed hopes for an early end to the war in Iran.

France's CAC 40 lost 1.5% in early trading to 7,548.83, while Germany's DAX dove 2.0% to 21,944.26. Britain's FTSE 100 fell 1.7% to 9,754.80. U.S. shares were set to drift lower with Dow futures down 0.5% at 45,659.00. S&P 500 futures fell 0.7% to 6,515.25.

In Asia, Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 dropped 3.5% to finish at 51,515.49. In Taiwan, the Taiex shed 2.5% to 32,722.50. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 fell 0.7% to 8,365.90. South Korea's Kospi dove 6.5% to 5,405.75. Hong Kong's Hang Seng slipped 3.5% to 24,382.47, while the Shanghai Composite declined 3.6% to 3,813.28.

Trump over the weekend warned the U.S. will "obliterate" Iran's power plants if it doesn't fully open the Strait of Hormuz within 48 hours, prompting Tehran to say it would respond to any such strike with attacks on U.S. and Israeli energy and infrastructure assets in the region.

"Trump's ultimatum and Iran's retaliatory warnings point to a widening conflict that keeps energy disruption and market volatility elevated with no clear off-ramp in sight," said Ng Jing Wen, analyst at Mizuho Bank in Singapore.

Higher oil prices, which also shook stock markets on Friday, dashed hopes for a possible upcoming cut to interest rates by the Federal Reserve, analysts said. Before the war, traders were betting that the Fed would cut rates at least twice this year. Central banks in Europe, Japan and the United Kingdom also recently held their interest rates steady.

But analysts observed that the markets were starting to react less to each of Trump's remarks, perhaps deciding the narrative for markets was being set elsewhere, not Washington, such as what Iran might do but how global economic growth could be affected by soaring energy prices. Some Asian nations, like Japan, are vulnerable to higher energy prices.

In energy trading, benchmark U.S. crude added \$1.62 to \$99.85 a barrel. Brent crude, the international standard, gained \$1.42 to \$113.61 a barrel. The price of Brent crude has zigzagged lately from about \$70 per barrel before the war began to as high as \$119.50.

In currency trading, the U.S. dollar rose to 159.53 Japanese yen from 159.22 yen. The euro cost \$1.1526, down from \$1.1571.

UK police investigate apparent antisemitic attack after a Jewish charity's ambulances set on fire

By KRUTIKA PATHI Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Four ambulances belonging to a Jewish charity in London were set on fire early Monday morning in London, in what British police are investigating as an antisemitic hate crime.

No one was injured in the overnight attack, which shattered windows in nearby homes.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer condemned the “deeply shocking antisemitic arson attack.

“My thoughts are with the Jewish community who are waking up this morning to this horrific news,” he said.

Officers were called to Golders Green, a London neighborhood with a large Jewish population, after receiving reports of a fire, the Metropolitan Police force said.

Four ambulances belonging to Hatzola Northwest, a volunteer organization that provides emergency medical response, were damaged, according to the London Fire Brigade.

Multiple gas cylinders on the vehicles exploded, causing windows to break in an adjacent apartment block. Nearby homes were evacuated as a precautionary measure.

The cause of the fire is being investigated, authorities said. Police said they are looking for three suspects but no arrests have been made yet.

“We know this incident will cause a great deal of community concern and officers remain on scene to carry out urgent enquiries,” Police Superintendent Sarah Jackson said.

Mark Reisner, who lives in the neighborhood, heard loud explosions and arrived at the scene “just as the third ambulance was blowing up,” he told Sky News.

“A very loud explosion, you sort of felt it go through your guts,” he said, adding, “it’s just left us all reeling with confusion and shock.”

Peter Zinkin, who represents Golders Green on the local council, said he felt “shock and horror as you would expect, but the second response is a deep and overwhelming sadness that this has happened.”

Shomrim, a nonprofit organization which operates a neighborhood watch in the area, condemned the attack. “This was not only a criminal act of arson, but a targeted and deeply concerning incident affecting a vital emergency service serving the local Jewish community,” it said in a post on X.

The number of antisemitic incidents reported across the U.K. has soared since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in late 2023, according to the Community Security Trust, which works to protect the Jewish community. The group recorded 3,700 incidents in 2025, up from 1,662 in 2022.

In October 2025, an attacker drove his car into people gathered outside a Manchester synagogue to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur and stabbed one person to death. Another person died during the attack after being inadvertently shot by police.

Last week two men in London were charged with carrying out “hostile” surveillance last year of the U.K.’s Jewish community on behalf of Iran.

International Energy Agency head says global economy faces ‘major, major threat’ from Iran war

By CHARLOTTE GRAHAM-MCLAY Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP) — The head of the International Energy Agency said Monday that the global economy faces a “major, major threat” because of the Iran war.

“No country will be immune to the effects of this crisis if it continues to go in this direction,” Fatih Birol said at Australia’s National Press Club in Canberra on Monday.

The crisis in the Middle East, he said, has had a worse impact on oil than the two oil shocks of the 1970s combined, and a worse effect on gas than the Russia-Ukraine war.

Israel launched a new wave of attacks early Monday against Tehran. U.S. President Donald Trump also

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warned the United States will “obliterate” Iran’s power plants if Tehran doesn’t fully open the Strait of Hormuz within 48 hours. That prompted Iran to say it would respond to any such strike with attacks on U.S. and Israeli energy and infrastructure assets.

Trump is facing increasing pressure at home to secure the strait as oil prices soar.

One major fear is that the war could knock out oil and gas production in the Middle East for a long time, which would mean high prices could last a while and cause inflation to rip higher around the world. The U.S. stock market has a history of bouncing back relatively quickly from past conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere, as long as oil prices don’t stay too high for too long.

Iran on Monday renewed strikes on its Gulf neighbors and threatened to start hitting their power plants.

“The situation is very severe,” Birol said in Australia.

The oil crises of 1973 and 1979, he said, lost together 10 million barrels per day, causing “major economic problems around the world, the recessions. And today, only as of today, we lost 11 million barrels per day — so more than two major oil shocks put together.”

After Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, he said, the gas markets, especially in Europe, “lost about 75 billion cubic meters, 75BCM. And as of now, as a result of this crisis, we lost about 140BCM, almost twice (as much).”

Birol said 40 energy assets in nine countries across the region were “severely or very severely damaged.”

“Some of the vital arteries of the global economy, such as petrochemical, such as fertilizers, such as sulfur, such as helium — their trade is all interrupted, which would have serious consequences for the global economy,” he said.

He said the International Energy Agency, “in order to comfort the markets,” earlier released 400 million barrels of oil, “which is historic. We have never released so much oil to the markets. ... The single most important solution to this problem is opening up the Hormuz Strait as things stand now.”

The official added that he was consulting with governments in Europe, Asia, North America and the Middle East about the prospect of releasing further stockpiled oil.

“We will see, we will look at the markets,” he said. “If it is necessary, of course, we will do it, but we will look at the conditions, we will analyze, assess the market and discuss with our member countries.”

Supreme Court hears arguments Monday over late-arriving ballots, a Trump target

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is hearing arguments Monday in a case from Mississippi over whether states can count late-arriving mail ballots, a target of President Donald Trump.

The outcome of the case could affect voters in 14 states and the District of Columbia, which have grace periods for ballots cast by mail, provided they are postmarked by Election Day. An additional 15 states that have more forgiving deadlines for ballots from military and overseas voters also could be impacted.

A ruling is expected by late June, early enough to govern the counting of ballots in the 2026 midterm congressional elections.

Forcing states to change their practices just a few months before the election risks “confusion and disenfranchisement,” especially in places that have had relaxed deadlines for years, state and big-city election officials told the court in a written filing.

California, Texas, New York and Illinois are among the states with post-Election Day deadlines. Rural Alaska, with its vast distances and often unpredictable weather, also counts late-arriving ballots.

Lawyers for the Republican and Libertarian parties, as well as Trump’s administration, are asking the justices to affirm an appellate ruling that struck down a Mississippi law allowing ballots to be counted if they arrive within five business days of the election and are postmarked by Election Day.

The court challenge is part of Trump’s broader attack on most mail balloting, which he has said breeds fraud despite strong evidence to the contrary and years of experience in numerous states.

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Last year, the Republican president signed an executive order on elections that aims to require votes to be “cast and received” by Election Day. The order has been blocked in pending court challenges.

At the same time, four Republican-dominated states — Ohio, Kansas, North Dakota and Utah — eliminated grace periods last year, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures and Voting Rights Lab.

The issue at the Supreme Court is whether federal law sets a single Election Day that requires ballots to be both cast by voters and received by state officials.

In striking down Mississippi’s grace period, Judge Andrew Oldham of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals wrote that the state law allowing the late-arriving ballots to be counted violated federal law.

Oldham and the other two judges who joined the unanimous ruling, James Ho and Stuart Kyle Duncan, all were appointed by Trump during his first term.

AAPI adults mostly think Trump has done more harm than good on immigration, new poll finds

By TERRY TANG and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Most Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders believe President Donald Trump has done more harm than good on the issue of immigration and border security in his second term so far, according to a new AAPI Data/AP-NORC poll.

About 6 in 10 AAPI adults say Trump has hurt immigration and border security “a lot” or “a little,” according to the survey from AAPI Data and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, compared with about 4 in 10 U.S. adults in a January AP-NORC survey. About two-thirds of AAPI adults — who are generally more likely to be Democrats than U.S. adults overall — also say Trump has “gone too far” when it comes to deporting immigrants living in the U.S. illegally, compared with about half of Americans in general.

Trump’s administration has instituted sweeping immigration measures since he took office, but the past two months have been especially tumultuous. This past January, Trump suspended processing immigrant visas for citizens of 75 countries. Arrests at the U.S.-Mexico border have fallen dramatically, but the number of Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrests and detentions have soared. In December 2024, daily detentions averaged just under 40,000. Last month, they numbered about 70,000.

The survey was conducted on the heels of the January fatal shootings by ICE agents of two U.S. citizens and their detainment of a Hmong American man — clad only in his underwear — in freezing temperatures.

These immigration crackdowns hit close to home for Jeff Ugai, who lives in Hawaii. On his island, Kauai, nearly four dozen people were arrested in November in immigration raids.

“It seems like the current administration’s efforts have been more almost about cruelty than they have about actually establishing an immigration system that makes sense to this country,” said Ugai, 39, who is a Democrat.

Most AAPI adults believe Trump has crossed a line with deportations

AAPI adults, one of the fastest-growing demographics in the U.S., broadly don’t support Trump’s tough tactics on immigration, the poll found. A separate AAPI Data/AP-NORC survey last fall found that unhappiness about Trump’s immigration approach had risen from earlier in the year.

“We’re also seeing opposition to policies that may not involve violence or violations of due process, but still involve things like banning immigrants from entire countries where there is a history of visa overstays or deporting immigrants who are married to U.S. citizens,” said Karthick Ramakrishnan, founder and executive director of AAPI Data.

In this poll, around 4 in 10 AAPI adults say deporting immigrants living in the U.S. illegally should be a low priority for the U.S. government, an increase from about one-third just after Trump took office. About one-third of AAPI adults now say these deportations should be a moderate priority, and only about 2 in 10 say they should be a high priority.

Fran Peace, 75, of Oroville, California, still sees deporting immigrants here illegally as a high priority. But the Japanese American retiree disagrees with stopping people based on “stereotypes” like their looks or

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if they have an accent. She also is open to a citizenship path for those who've lived here for years and haven't committed a crime.

"I don't think you should just have to go back automatically, but the laws don't say that," Peace said. "If you're illegal you go back. But I think there should be some concession made for the people that have been here a long time."

Most AAPI adults are unhappy with immigration enforcement tactics

Most AAPI adults, 73%, have a "somewhat" or "very" unfavorable opinion of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, known as ICE.

AAPI Republicans have a much less negative view of the agency than AAPI adults overall, with only about one-third saying they view ICE negatively. But only about one-quarter of Republicans overall had an unfavorable opinion of ICE in a February AP-NORC survey.

There's also widespread opposition to several hardline immigration policies, with about 6 in 10 saying they oppose large-scale immigration enforcement operations in neighborhoods with high populations of immigrants, and about 7 in 10 against allowing immigration enforcement agents to cover their faces when arresting people.

Prohibiting face coverings would be like body cameras, "helping keep people accountable," Ugai said.

AAPI adults divided over whether illegal immigration threatens US workers, welfare

The AAPI adult population is split on whether immigrants here illegally have a large impact on social welfare resources and crime. About 4 in 10 AAPI adults think immigrants in the U.S. illegally pose a "major risk" of burdening welfare and safety net programs. A similar share see this as "a minor risk." Only about one-quarter see "not a risk at all."

On the question of whether immigrants here illegally will commit crimes, about one-third of AAPI adults see this as a "major risk," while about half think it's a "minor risk." Only 15% say it's "not a risk at all."

Peace credits Trump with driving down crime like drug trafficking because before his second term, the U.S. "practically had open borders."

But Daniel Kim, 65, of Las Cruces, New Mexico, thinks that immigrants pose little risk in terms of crime.

A Democrat and Korean American, he previously volunteered at a church to assist refugees with food and donations. He stopped going to his own evangelical church over church leaders' insistence on remaining apolitical.

"The church leadership just could not make the connection or could not find it in their hearts to think (about) the issues involved with the treatment of foreigners in our country," Kim said.

The poll of 1,197 U.S. adults who are Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders was conducted Feb. 2-9, 2026, using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based Amplify AAPI Panel, designed to be representative of the Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 4.6 percentage points.

This poll is part of an ongoing project exploring the views of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, which are usually not highlighted in other surveys because of small sample sizes and lack of linguistic representation.

Rubio to testify in trial of former roommate accused of secretly lobbying for Venezuela

By JOSHUA GOODMAN Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — The federal trial of a former Miami congressman accused of secretly lobbying for Venezuela's government during the first Trump administration begins Monday with Secretary of State Marco Rubio set to testify over his interactions with his old friend.

Prosecutors allege David Rivera was a hired gun for former President Nicolás Maduro, leveraging Republican connections from his time in Congress to push the White House to abandon its hard line on Venezuela's socialist government.

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Rivera, who at one time had been Rubio's roommate in Florida, allegedly persuaded then Foreign Minister Delcy Rodríguez — now Venezuela's acting president — to award him a \$50 million lobbying contract to be paid by state oil company PDVSA. As part of the alleged foreign influence campaign, prosecutors say Rivera was aided by Texas Republican Rep. Pete Sessions and a convicted Cali cartel associate as he sought meetings with the White House and Exxon Mobil on Maduro's behalf.

The trial offers a rare glimpse into the often unseemly role Miami — long a haven for exiles, corruption and anti-communist crusaders — plays in shaping U.S. policy in Latin America. As such, it is perhaps fitting that Rubio, Miami's most prominent politician, is set to take the stand Tuesday about his meetings with Rivera while the former congressman was allegedly helping Maduro mount a charm offensive in Washington.

Also likely to face scrutiny is Rodríguez, who relied on Rivera to set up meetings in New York, Caracas, Washington and Dallas in a bid to build U.S. support for normalizing relations with Venezuela — an effort that failed at the time but now appears within reach, albeit on unequal terms, following Maduro's ouster and the ascent of his more pragmatic aide.

Indictment details alleged covert lobbying and money-laundering scheme

An 11-count indictment, unsealed in 2022, charges Rivera and an associate with money laundering and failing to register as a foreign agent.

Prosecutors allege that to hide their work, Rivera set up an encrypted chat group called MIA — for Miami — with his main conduit to the Maduro government: Venezuelan media tycoon Raúl Gorrín, who was subsequently charged in the U.S. with bribing top Venezuelan officials.

Members of the group used playful code words to discuss their activities: Maduro was the "bus driver," Sessions "Sombrero," and millions of dollars "melons," according to prosecutors.

Rivera, 60, denies wrongdoing. His attorneys counter that his one-man firm, Interamerican Consulting, was hired by an American subsidiary of Venezuela's state-owned oil company — not PDVSA itself — and therefore did not need to register as a foreign agent.

His consulting work, they say, was focused on positioning Venezuelan-owned Citgo in the U.S. energy industry and was wholly distinct from his peacemaking efforts, which involved working with Maduro's opponents to usher in leadership less hostile to the U.S.

But plaintiffs in a parallel civil case accuse Rivera of doing little of the promised work and using the contract as cover for illegal lobbying. Of the roughly \$20 million he received, \$3.75 million went to a South Florida company that maintained Gorrín's luxury yacht.

'No turkey' without Rubio

Rubio's expected testimony is highly unusual — not since Labor Secretary Raymond Donovan testified at a mafia trial in 1983 has a sitting member of the president's Cabinet taken the stand in a criminal trial.

While Rubio isn't charged and there's no indication in the indictment that he acted improperly as a senator at the time, prosecutors say Rivera viewed him as a key ally in his outreach to the White House. For Rubio, prosecutors said in a pre-trial hearing last week, contact with Gorrín offered a backchannel to Caracas at a time U.S. authorities had detected a possible death threat against him from Venezuelan socialist party boss Diosdado Cabello.

Rivera and Rubio met at the senator's Washington home on July 9, 2017, according to the indictment. Rivera, the indictment says, told Rubio that he was working with Gorrín, who had persuaded Maduro to accept a deal in which he would hold free and fair elections.

"Remember, U.S. should facilitate, not just support, a negotiated solution," Rivera texted Rubio two days later as the senator was set to meet Trump, the indictment says. "No vengeance, reconciliation."

Following a second meeting between Rubio, Rivera, Gorrín and others, Rivera remarked in the chat that the bus driver — Maduro — would have to pay him for setting up the meeting with Rubio. Without the senator's support, Rivera said, there would be "no turkey," he wrote.

The outreach quickly unraveled, however. Later that month, Trump sanctioned Maduro and labeled him a "dictator," launching a "maximum pressure" campaign to unseat the president. Rubio took to the Venezuelan airwaves to press the White House's agenda.

"For Nicolás Maduro, who I am sure is watching, the current path you are on will not end well for you,"

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Rubio said July 31, 2017, in a rare 10-minute address to the Venezuelan people that aired on Gorrín's network.

The State Department declined to comment.

Outreach to Exxon for Rodríguez

After the contract was signed, Rivera and Gorrín arranged a meeting in New York City between Rodríguez, then foreign minister and a PDVSA board member, and Sessions, whose Dallas-area district included Exxon's headquarters.

Later, Sessions tried to broker a meeting for Rodríguez with Darren Woods, who had succeeded Trump's then Secretary of State Rex Tillerson as CEO of Exxon. Rodríguez was looking to resolve a long-running investment dispute and lure Exxon back to Venezuela in order to revive the OPEC nation's collapsing oil industry. The meeting never happened as Exxon rebuffed the outreach.

Almost a year after helping Rivera make inroads with Exxon, Sessions secretly traveled to Caracas for a meeting with Maduro arranged by Gorrín and Rivera, the indictment says. As part of the effort, Sessions also agreed to deliver a letter from the Venezuelan president to Trump.

The defense team also wanted Maduro and White House chief of staff Susie Wiles to testify. Maduro, through a lawyer, said he would invoke his constitutional right to remain silent if compelled, while prosecutors successfully quashed an attempt to subpoena Wiles, who was a registered lobbyist for Gorrín's Globovision network at the same time the media magnate was working with Rivera.

Before being elected to Congress in 2010, Rivera was a high-ranking Florida legislator. During that time he shared a Tallahassee home with Rubio, who eventually became Florida House speaker.

Rivera has previously faced controversy, including allegations he secretly funded a Democratic spoiler candidate in a 2012 congressional race. Last year, federal prosecutors dropped the case after an appeals court threw out a sizable fine imposed by a lower court. Rivera was also investigated — but never charged — for campaign finance violations and a \$1 million contract with a gambling company while serving in the Florida legislature.

Rivera has denied any wrongdoing and said both investigations were politically motivated.

Historic Hawaii floods leave 2,000 people without power

By JESSICA HILL Associated Press

More than 2,000 people remained without power Sunday afternoon after Hawaii suffered its worst flooding in more than 20 years when heavy rains fell across the islands.

Heavy rains fell on soil already saturated by downpours from a winter storm a week ago. Raging waters lifted homes and cars, causing an expected \$1 billion in damages. The storm prompted evacuation orders for 5,500 people north of Honolulu — though they were later lifted — and more than 200 people were rescued from the rising waters. No deaths have been reported as of yet, Molly Pierce, spokesperson for Oahu's Department of Emergency Management, said Sunday afternoon.

By Sunday afternoon, Hawaiian Electric restored power to about 1,200 people in Waialua on the North Shore of Oahu, according to the company. Customers' power was proactively turned off Friday because of the flooding.

Crews continue to assess the damage and make repairs, and Hawaiian Electric expects to return power to 2,000 more people later Sunday. In Maui County, about 100 people were without power Sunday afternoon, and all major outages were addressed on Hawaii Island, according to the company.

The worst of the storms appear to be over, Hawaii meteorologist Matthew Foster told The Associated Press.

By Sunday afternoon, the weather shifted from widespread showers to scattered rain from Oahu, Maui County to Hawaii Island, Foster said. Less than 5 inches (13 cm) of rain is expected for Hawaii Island, with between 1 to 2 inches (3-5 cm) in other areas.

Winds will pick up out of the northeast sides of the islands, which have more vegetation and can handle

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more rain, Foster said. It will take a couple days for the moisture to push past the islands, and drier and more typical March weather can be expected by Wednesday.

Additional flooding could still occur, but more on an isolated scale rather than widespread, Foster said.

A boil water notice remained in place Sunday for North Shore areas from Mokuleia to Turtle Bay, and residents were encouraged to report damages to the city.

Gov. Josh Green said the cost of the storm could top \$1 billion, including damage to airports, schools, roads, homes and a Maui hospital in Kula.

Officials were concerned that the 120-year-old Wahiawa dam could fail, though that worry has primarily passed since water levels have dropped, Pierce said. The dam continues to be monitored.

Winter storm systems known as "Kona lows," which feature southerly or southwesterly winds that bring in moisture-laden air, have been responsible for the deluges in the past two weeks. The intensity and frequency of heavy rains in Hawaii have increased amid human-caused global warming, experts say.

Enhanced role for immigration officers at US airports as shutdown frustrates travels and screeners

By SEUNG MIN KIM and LISA MASCARO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's decision to order federal immigration agents to U.S. airports to help with security during a budget impasse is drawing concerns that their presence may escalate tensions among air travelers frustrated over hourslong waits and screeners angry about missed paychecks.

Trump made clear on Sunday that he was going ahead with the plan to have immigration enforcement officers assist the Transportation Security Administration starting Monday by guarding exit lanes or checking passenger IDs unless Democrats agreed to fund the Department of Homeland Security.

Democrats have been demanding major changes to federal immigration operations, while the president issued a new threat Sunday night that he would reject all deals with Democrats unless they agreed to a separate elections bill.

Hundreds of thousands of homeland security workers, including from the TSA, U.S. Secret Service and Coast Guard, have worked without pay since Congress failed to renew DHS funding last month.

"Bad idea," said Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, about the new airport security plan, which Trump said would start Monday.

"What we need to do is, we need to get the DHS issues resolved, we need to get the TSA agents paid," she told reporters at the Capitol, where the Senate held a rare weekend session. "Do you really want to have even additional tensions on top of what we are already facing?"

Senators advanced the nomination of Sen. Markwayne Mullin, R-Okla., to be Trump's next homeland security secretary by a largely party-line vote, 54-37, with two Democrats joining most Republicans. A vote on the confirmation could come as early as Monday. Mullin has tried to make the case that he would be a steady hand after the tumultuous tenure of Kristi Noem, Trump's first DHS secretary.

Border czar heads up airport security effort

White House border czar Tom Homan, named by Trump to lead the new airport security effort, has also been meeting with a bipartisan group of senators over the partial shutdown. While he characterized those sessions as "good conversations," he said they were "not at a point yet where we're in total agreement."

Meanwhile, Homan said in Sunday news show interviews that the increased role of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at airports — its specific duties and numbers — was subject to discussions with the leadership of TSA and ICE. DHS spokeswoman Lauren Bis said "hundreds" of ICE officers would be deployed, but she would not disclose the airports where they would go, citing security reasons.

"It's a work in progress," Homan said. The priority, he said, was "the large airports where there's a long wait, like three hours."

Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens issued a statement Sunday night saying officers from ICE and Homeland Security Investigations would be deployed to the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport starting Monday morning.

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At the airport on Sunday, some travelers waited in line for nearly six hours at the main security checkpoint, where only two TSA agents were on hand midafternoon to check IDs. Many missed their flights and scrambled to book later flights or add themselves to standby lists that were already dozens of names long.

Dickens said all federal personnel would report to TSA and be assigned tasks such as line management and crowd control. "Federal officials have indicated that this deployment is not intended to conduct immigration enforcement activities," his statement said.

Homan said immigration officers, as an example, could cover exits currently monitored by TSA agents, freeing them to work screening lines. Another option, he said, was having ICE agents check identification before people enter screenings areas.

"We're going to be a force multiplier," Homan said, while also acknowledging there were limits.

"I don't see an ICE agent looking at an X-ray machine, because we're not trained in that," he said. He pledged to have "a plan by the end of today, where we're sending -- what airports we're starting with and where we're sending them."

But Everett Kelley, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, which represents more than 50,000 TSA employees, condemned Trump's plan, saying in a statement that ICE agents are not trained or certified in aviation security.

"Our members at TSA have been showing up every day, without a paycheck, because they believe in the mission of keeping the flying public safe," Kelley said Sunday. "They deserve to be paid, not replaced by untrained, armed agents who have shown how dangerous they can be."

Budget talks stall as airport worries worsen

Democrats have said they are willing to fund TSA and most other parts of DHS as they press for changes to immigration operations after the deaths of two U.S. citizens at the hands of federal agents in Minneapolis during an immigration enforcement operation. ICE officers are largely being paid during the partial shutdown, thanks to an influx of cash from Trump's big tax breaks bill last year.

"There are lots of ideas swirling right now," said Senate Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D. "The good news in all that is people realizing this has to get fixed, it has to get solved."

Yet Trump threw another obstacle in the talks when he declared on Sunday night that he did not think Republicans should reach "any deal" with Democrats unless Congress passes a broad elections bill that includes stricter voter registration rules and is the president's top legislative priority.

"Put it all together, and also, let Leader Thune clearly identify those few 'Republicans' that are Voting against AMERICA," Trump wrote on his social media site. "They will never be elected again! In other words, lump everything together as one, and VOTE!!!"

As budget talks stayed behind closed doors Sunday, senators said they had few details of which airports or how many immigration officers were being dispatched. Some welcomed the effort.

"I don't think it can hurt," said Sen. Mike Rounds, R-S.D. "They can help relieve some of the pressure."

For Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy, one concern is the uncertainty that passengers are facing over possible wait times at any airport on any given day.

"Do I have to come an hour and a half early? Do I have to come four hours early? They don't know until the day of or the afternoon of their flight," he said. "So if we can alleviate that, again, the president wants to take away that leverage point for Democrats and make travel easier for the American people."

Homan appeared on CNN's "State of the Union" and "Fox News Sunday," while Duffy was interviewed on ABC's "This Week." _____

Associated Press writers Collin Binkley in West Palm Beach, Fla., Anthony Izaguirre in Lindenhurst, N.Y., Yuki Iwamura in New York, Nicholas Riccardi in Denver, Kate Brumback in Atlanta, Margery Beck in Omaha, Neb. and Rebecca Santana in Washington contributed to this report.

Dylan Darling hits driving layup at buzzer, St. John's beats Kansas 67-65 in March Madness thriller

By GREG BEACHAM AP Sports Writer

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Dylan Darling hadn't made a shot all day when he got the ball at midcourt for St. John's with 3.9 seconds left in a tied March Madness thriller.

Darling could have passed. He could have wilted. He could have missed yet again.

Instead, the Red Storm's tenacious point guard ran the play he had called for himself moments earlier — attacking the basket, banking in a perfectly weighted shot and sending himself headlong into St. John's lore.

He also sent the Johnnies back to the Sweet 16 after 27 long years away.

Darling hit a driving layup for his only bucket of the game, and St. John's advanced to the second week-end of the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 1999 with a 67-65 victory over Kansas in on Sunday.

"I probably don't deserve this," said Darling, who had missed his first four shots badly enough that an exasperated Rick Pitino implored him to stop aiming the ball. "I was pretty bad all night long. But my teammates held it down tonight. Everybody stepped up. Just happy to keep this thing rolling."

St. John's advanced to face No. 1 overall seed Duke in the East Region semifinals in Washington.

Darling's toughness and resilience have immediately impressed his teammates in his first year in Queens after previous stops at Washington State and Idaho State. He even earned the nickname "Big Bells" from Pitino in January because he thought Darling's — let's call it toughness — is as big as church bells.

That's how he coolly won it for St. John's after the Jayhawks (24-11) erased a 58-45 deficit with 7 1/2 minutes to play, making a furious 20-7 run capped by Darryn Peterson's two free throws to tie it with 13.1 seconds left.

The Jayhawks had four fouls to give, and they used all four to wind the clock down to 3.9 seconds.

"Bells come up to me and says, run 'Power,' which is a high, back-screen pick-and-roll," Pitino said. "So I walk away, and I said, 'Wait a second. He hasn't scored a bucket, and he wants to run a play for himself?' But he's Bells. And not only did he do it, he went with his right hand. I'm real proud of him, because to want the ball when you haven't made a shot is unbelievable."

Indeed, the left-handed shooter scored with his off hand before his teammates tackled him in front of the St. John's band. The celebration continued in the locker room, where the Johnnies periodically shouted, "Dylan, I love you!" while he spoke to reporters with a sheepish grin.

"I was fully confident in him making a play, a great decision, and he obviously made the best decision possible," said Big East player of the year Zuby Ejiofor, who had 18 points and nine rebounds. "We know who Dylan is. He's a really confident player, a high-level competitor, and he was able to make a big-time bucket."

Bryce Hopkins also scored 18 points for the fifth-seeded Red Storm (30-6), who have roared back to college basketball prominence in just three seasons under Pitino.

The 73-year-old Pitino and 63-year-old Bill Self coached against each other for only the second time in the Hall of Famers' decades-long careers, meeting for the first time in March Madness. They're two of the three active coaches with multiple national titles — and now Pitino still has a chance to claim his third.

With Kansas transfer Ejiofor leading the way, St. John's has won 21 of its last 22 games since early January, capped by the Johnnies' second and third NCAA Tournament victories in the past quarter-century this weekend.

St. John's won the Big East regular-season and tournament titles during its surge, and the Red Storm haven't eased up a bit.

Jayhawks heartbreak

Peterson scored 21 points and Melvin Council Jr. had 15 points and nine rebounds for the fourth-seeded Jayhawks, who still haven't returned to the Sweet 16 since they claimed Self's second national title in 2022.

After Kansas ended Arizona's unbeaten season in a landmark victory on Feb. 9, the Jayhawks subsequently lost six of their final 11 games.

"The tournament, one of the things that makes it so great is that it can be great, but it can also be cruel,"

Self said. "We obviously put ourselves in a position to play from behind the whole game, and then really competed and played great down the stretch. Just didn't finish what we had started down the stretch."

Up next

"I'm hoping we can get Duke at the buzzer next, to make up for that Christian Laettner shot." — Pitino, whose Kentucky Wildcats lost one of the most memorable games in Elite Eight history in 1992 on Laettner's game-winning jumper.

Iran threatens to 'completely' close Strait of Hormuz and hit power plants after Trump ultimatum

By ALON BERNSTEIN, SAM METZ and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

ARAD, Israel (AP) — The United States and Iran threatened to target critical infrastructure Sunday as the war in the Middle East, now in its fourth week, puts lives and livelihoods at risk throughout the region.

Iran said the Strait of Hormuz, crucial to oil and other exports, would be "completely closed" immediately if the U.S. follows up on President Donald Trump's threat to attack its power plants. Trump late Saturday set a 48-hour deadline to open the strait.

Israeli leaders visited one of two southern communities near a secretive nuclear research site struck by Iranian missiles late Saturday, with scores of people wounded. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it was a "miracle" no one was killed.

Netanyahu claimed Israel and the U.S. were well on their way to achieving their war goals. The aims have ranged from weakening Iran's nuclear program, missile program and support for armed proxies to enabling the Iranian people to overthrow the theocracy.

There has been no sign of an uprising, nor of an end to the fighting that has shaken the global economy, sent oil prices surging and endangered some of the world's busiest air corridors. The war, which the U.S. and Israel launched Feb. 28, has killed over 2,000 people.

The Iranian-backed Hezbollah claimed responsibility for an airstrike that killed a man in northern Israel, while Lebanese President Joseph Aoun called Israel's new targeting of bridges in the south "a prelude to a ground invasion."

"More weeks of fighting against Iran and Hezbollah are expected for us," said Israeli military spokesperson Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin.

Meanwhile, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates said early Monday their air defenses were dealing with missile and drone attacks as air raid sirens sounded in Bahrain.

Energy and desalination plants are threatened

Iran has effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz that connects the Persian Gulf to the rest of the world, while claiming safe passage for vessels from countries other than its enemies. Roughly one-fifth of global oil supply passes through it, but attacks on ships have stopped nearly all tanker traffic.

Trump said if Iran didn't open the strait, the U.S. would destroy its "various POWER PLANTS, STARTING WITH THE BIGGEST ONE FIRST!"

The U.S. has argued that Iran's Revolutionary Guard controls much of the country's infrastructure and uses it to power the war effort. Under international law, power plants that benefit civilians can be targeted only if the military advantage outweighs the suffering it causes them, legal scholars say.

Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf responded on X that if Iran's power plants and infrastructure are targeted, then vital infrastructure across the region — including energy and desalination facilities critical for drinking water in Gulf nations — would be considered legitimate targets and "irreversibly destroyed."

Qalibaf later added that "entities that finance the US military budget are legitimate targets."

Attacks on power plants would be "inherently indiscriminate and clearly disproportionate" and a war crime, Iran's U.N. ambassador wrote to the Security Council, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

Strikes in Israel and Iran bring new nuclear concerns

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Iran said its strikes in the Negev Desert late Saturday were in retaliation for the latest attack on Iran's main nuclear enrichment site in Natanz, according to state-run media.

Tehran praised its attack as a show of strength, even as Israel's military asserts that Iranian missile launches have decreased since the war began.

Southern Israel's main hospital received at least 175 wounded from Arad and Dimona, deputy director Roy Kessous told The Associated Press.

Israel is widely believed to possess nuclear weapons, though it doesn't confirm or deny their existence.

Israel denied responsibility for hitting Natanz on Saturday. The Pentagon declined to comment on the strike.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has said the bulk of Iran's estimated 972 pounds (441 kilograms) of enriched uranium — the issue at the heart of tensions — is elsewhere, beneath the rubble at its Isfahan facility.

Fighting intensifies in southern Lebanon

An Israeli civilian was killed in his car in the northern town of Misgav Am in what Israel's military originally said appeared to be a rocket attack. It later was looking into the possibility that the death was caused by Israeli soldiers' fire.

Israeli authorities identified him as 61-year-old farmer Ofer "Poshko" Moskovitz. Two days ago, he told a radio station that living near the Lebanese border was like "Russian roulette."

Hezbollah launched strikes on Israel soon after the war began, calling it retaliation for the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Israel then targeted Hezbollah with airstrikes and expanded its ground presence in southern Lebanon.

Israel on Sunday expanded its target list to include bridges over the Litani River that Defense Minister Israel Katz said Hezbollah is using to move fighters and weapons to the south. Israel later struck the Qasmiyeh bridge near Tyre, giving an hour's warning. Destroying bridges further isolates residents from the rest of Lebanon.

Katz also ordered the military to accelerate destruction of Lebanese homes near the border.

Lebanese authorities say Israel's strikes have killed more than 1,000 people and displaced more than 1 million. Meanwhile, Hezbollah has fired hundreds of rockets into Israel.

Iran's death toll in the war has surpassed 1,500, its health ministry has said. In Israel, 15 people have been killed by Iranian strikes. More than a dozen civilians in the occupied West Bank and Gulf Arab states have been killed in strikes. A Qatari military helicopter crash on Saturday, blamed on a technical malfunction, killed all seven aboard, Qatari authorities said.

Trump's changing course on Strait of Hormuz strategy raises questions about US war preparation

By COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — At war with Iran, President Donald Trump is cycling through an increasingly desperate list of options as he searches for a solution to the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz. He has jumped from calls to secure the waterway through diplomatic means to lifting sanctions and now escalating to a direct threat against civilian infrastructure in the Islamic Republic.

Trump and his allies insist they were always prepared for Iran to block the strait, yet the Republican president's erratic strategy has fueled criticism that he is grasping for answers after going to war without a clear exit plan. On Saturday came his latest attempt, via an ultimatum to Iran: Open the strait within 48 hours or the United States will "obliterate" the country's power plants.

Trump's aides defended the threat as a hard-edged tactic to press Iran into submission. Opponents framed it as the failure of a president who miscalculated what it would take to get out of a geopolitical mire.

"Trump has no plan to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, so he is threatening to attack Iran's civil power plants," said Sen. Ed Markey, D-Mass, adding: "This would be a war crime."

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"He's lost control of the war and he is panicking," said Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., responding to Trump's post.

Over the course of about a week, Trump has repeatedly shifted his approach on the crucial waterway for global oil and gas transport. There is growing urgency for Trump as soaring oil prices rattle global markets and pinch American consumers months before pivotal midterm elections.

Trump and diplomacy

Trump tried his hand at a diplomatic solution last weekend when he called for a new international coalition to send warships to the strait.

Allies turned him down. Trump then said the U.S. could manage on its own. On Friday he suggested other countries would have to take over as the U.S. eyes an exit. Hours later he indicated the waterway would somehow "open itself."

"You can't all of a sudden walk away after you've kind of created the event and expect other people to pick it up," Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C. told ABC's "This Week."

Trump's Treasury Department on Friday made its latest attempt to get a handle on soaring gas prices, by lifting sanctions on some Iranian oil for the first time in decades. That relieved some of the pressure that Washington traditionally has used as leverage against Tehran.

The goal was to send millions more barrels of oil into the global market. It is not clear, however, how much of a dent that would make in lowering pump prices or how the administration could prevent Iran from cashing in on the renewed sales.

The administration earlier temporarily lifted sanctions on some Russian oil.

An ultimatum to Iran

Trump's ultimatum, conveyed while he spent the weekend in Florida, carries a threat of remarkable aggression. His previous messaging mostly focused on U.S. success in hitting Iran's air force, navy and missile production. This time, the threatened target is the energy infrastructure that powers hospitals, homes and more.

His social media post — 51 words, much of it in capital letters — did not have the appearance of a message that underwent the careful legal scrutiny needed to justify an attack on civilian infrastructure, said Geoffrey Corn, a law professor at Texas Tech University and a retired lieutenant colonel in the Army who served as a military lawyer.

"It certainly has a feeling of ready, fire, aim," Corn said of Trump's moving strategy.

"He overestimated his ability to control the events once he unleashed this torrent of violence."

That type of widespread attack would probably be a war crime, Corn said. For military leaders, it could force a choice between obeying an order to carry out a war crime or refusing and facing criminal sanction for willful disobedience, he said.

Laws governing warfare do not explicitly forbid attacks on power plants, but the tactic is allowed only if an analysis finds that the military advantages outweigh the civilian harm, legal scholars say. It is seen as a high bar to clear because the rules of war are, at their core, designed to separate civilian and military targets.

Iran's U.N. ambassador, in a letter to the Security Council, warned that the deliberate targeting of power plants would be inherently indiscriminate and a war crime, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

The White House has already faced intense backlash after the U.S. was blamed for a missile strike on an Iranian elementary school that killed more than 165 people.

Trump aides justify latest attempt to rein in the crisis

Trump provided scant detail on which plants might be targeted and how. He gave Iran until Monday to reopen the strait or else the U.S. will strike "various POWER PLANTS, STARTING WITH THE BIGGEST ONE FIRST!"

Trump's team came to his defense Sunday, offering justification for striking Iran's energy grid.

Mike Waltz, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said Iran's Revolutionary Guard controls much of the country's infrastructure and is using it to power the war effort. He said potential targets include "gas-fired thermal power plants and other types of plants."

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Speaking on Fox News, Waltz said he wanted to get ahead of "hand-wringing" from the global community, calling the Revolutionary Guard a terrorist organization. "The president is not messing around," he said.

NATO's secretary-general, Mark Rutte, who has allied himself closely to Trump, tried to calm tensions. He said he understood Trump's anger and stressed that more than 20 countries are "coming together to implement his vision" of making the strait navigable as soon as possible.

Israel's ambassador to Washington, Yechiel Leiter, cautioned against an all-out attack like the one Trump threatened. "We want to leave everything in the country intact, so that the people who come after this regime are going to be able to rebuild and reconstitute," he told CNN's "State of the Union."

Trump's threat could prove counterproductive: If it's carried out, Iranian leaders said they would completely close the strait and retaliate against U.S. and Israeli infrastructure.

Socialist Grégoire becomes Paris mayor as the far right wins Nice in key municipal elections

By SYLVIE CORBET and THOMAS ADAMSON Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — Socialist candidate Emmanuel Grégoire won the Paris race Sunday, succeeding fellow party member Anne Hidalgo as the French capital's mayor, as results of the final round of municipal elections showed clear gains for the traditional left and right, and one major win for the far right in the French Riviera city of Nice.

French voters returned to the polls Sunday in about 1,500 communes. The vote is seen as a test of the balance of power on France's local political map before the 2027 presidential race begins to take shape.

Definitive results were still pending Sunday evening in largest cities.

About 93% of 35,000 villages, towns and cities selected their mayors in the first round last week, with mostly one or two candidates, not associated with any party, competing.

Left-wing leadership for 25 years in Paris

Grégoire, who led a list uniting the traditional left, the Greens and the Communists, claimed victory after estimates based on partial results placed him well ahead of conservative rival Rachida Dati, who acknowledged defeat.

Grégoire said "tonight is the victory of a certain vision of Paris: a vibrant Paris, a progressive Paris," before heading on a bicycle through the streets of Paris to the City Hall, where he was greeted by Hidalgo. The French capital has had a left-wing leadership for 25 years.

Grégoire said Parisians made a clear choice in favor of the left as Dati, the right-wing candidate, was backed by the far right. "This message is clear: Paris is not, and never will be, a far-right city," he said. "Starting tomorrow, our country enters its next democratic challenge: the 2027 presidential election."

Hidalgo, elected in 2014 and reelected in 2020, chose not to seek a third term after leading the city through the 2015 extremist attacks and the 2024 Paris Olympics. Mayors and municipal councilors are elected for six years.

Resounding far right victory in Nice

Nice, France's fifth largest city on the French Riviera, becomes the most resounding win of the far right Sunday with the victory of Eric Ciotti, a former conservative who allied with the National Rally of Marine Le Pen.

However, Le Pen's party lost in several cities it had identified as top priorities.

That includes the Mediterranean city of Marseille, France's second largest city, where incumbent left-wing Mayor Benoît Payan won over National Rally candidate Franck Allisio.

Far-right politicians have lost to mainstream rivals in the southern cities of Nîmes and the port of Toulon, a major naval base on the Mediterranean, which were two key targets for the National Rally.

Still, National Rally president Jordan Bardella praised victories in smaller towns and election of many municipal councilors across France, calling it "the greatest breakthrough in their history in this municipal election," Bardella said.

"The successes of this evening are not an end, but a beginning," he said.

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Key races ahead of next year's presidential election

Other large-city contests have also been watched closely.

In the northern port city of Le Havre, incumbent Mayor Édouard Philippe won a clear victory that strengthens his political standing as a potential presidential contender. Philippe, a center-right politician, was President Emmanuel Macron's prime minister for three years.

Macron's centrist movement, which lacks local grassroots support, achieved one major result in the southwestern city of Bordeaux, where its candidate Thomas Cazenave, a former minister, won over the Green party outgoing mayor. Macron's party kept a low profile in many of the most closely watched races.

Some linked Sunday's vote to a darker international backdrop and to the presidential race looming next year. "We have war in Ukraine, war in Gaza, war in the Middle East," said Elena Van Langenhoven, 81. "And France, will it see a major shift next year, in the presidential elections? It's horrendous."

Family appeals to Arizona community for clues in ongoing disappearance of Nancy Guthrie

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Savannah Guthrie is renewing pleas to neighbors, friends and residents of Tucson, Arizona, to jog their memories in the hopes of sparking new leads in the disappearance of her mother Nancy.

The "Today Show" co-host posted a new family statement on her Instagram account Sunday morning, hours after the show's Instagram account shared it.

After expressing gratitude to the community, the family said in its statement that it believes someone in Tucson or in southern Arizona may "hold the key to finding the resolution in this case."

"Someone knows something. It's possible a member of this community has information that they do not even realize is significant."

The family urged people to go back over their memories between Jan. 31 — when Nancy Guthrie was last seen — and Feb. 1 as well as the evening of Jan. 11.

"Please consult camera footage, journal notes, text messages, observations, or conversations that in retrospect may hold significance. No detail is too small," the statement said.

The family also acknowledged in the statement that their matriarch may no longer be alive.

"We cannot grieve; we can only ache and wonder."

Nancy Guthrie was reported missing on Feb. 1. Authorities believe the 84-year-old was kidnapped, abducted or otherwise taken against her will. The FBI released surveillance videos of a masked man who was outside Guthrie's front door on the night she vanished.

The Guthrie family has offered a \$1 million reward for information leading to the recovery of their mother.

Savannah Guthrie visited the NBC "Today Show" studio in New York City for the first time since her mother's disappearance on March 5. The show said she plans to return to the air at some point but "remains focused right now supporting her family and working to help bring Nancy home."

Tucson is a little over 100 miles (160 kilometers) south of Phoenix and 70 miles (115 kilometers) north of the Arizona-Mexico border. The Catalina Foothills, the neighborhood where Nancy Guthrie lives, is known as an affluent area with popular hiking trails.

Savannah Guthrie has been a co-anchor of the venerable NBC morning show since 2012. One of her former colleagues, Hoda Kotb, has returned to "Today" to fill in while Guthrie has concentrated on finding her mother.

Man City dominates Arsenal to win English League Cup and make statement in Premier League title race

By JAMES ROBSON AP Soccer Writer

The first major domestic trophy of the season is Manchester City's. And after a dominant 2-0 win against Arsenal in the English League Cup final on Sunday, it may not be the last.

Manchester-born Nico O'Reilly sealed victory with both goals in the second half at Wembley Stadium.

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The win could also have delivered a psychological blow in the race for the Premier League title as Pep Guardiola aims to chase down Arsenal's nine-point lead at the top of the standings.

"(It's an) unbelievable feeling to win a final and to beat this team. We know how good they are," O'Reilly told Sky Sports. "We need to build on it now, it'll give us momentum."

This was serial trophy-winner Guardiola flexing his muscles. It was his 16th major trophy as City manager and a record fifth League Cup. He has won 34 career titles as a manager including his time at Barcelona and Bayern Munich.

And, once again, he was stamping out Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta's own ambitions, having twice beaten his former assistant to the league title in recent years.

"I'm really pleased because I know the opponent we played. Mikel created a team that is almost unbeatable," Guardiola said. "Every time you win a title it looks more difficult than in the past. It is really difficult for many reasons."

Arsenal remains favorite to be crowned league champion this season for the first time since 2004, given its big lead. But with second-place City having a game in hand and the teams still to play each other in Manchester at the Etihad Stadium, the picture could look very different in the coming weeks.

City's win also ended Arsenal's bid this season for an unprecedented quadruple of major trophies by an English team - including the Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup.

"I'm very sad. It is a very hard one to take, especially for our players and our supporters because we know how much it means to them and how much we want that," Arteta said. "We will manage that energy in the right way and we have to go through that pain and disappointment. It's normal and it's part of football."

The 21-year-old O'Reilly, who came through City's academy, was the unlikely hero with both goals from left back.

He took advantage of Arsenal goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga's fumble to head City in front on the hour. And he headed in a second four minutes later to effectively kill off the match.

"My whole family came down today (to watch) ... I know they'll be buzzing and I can't wait to see them," O'Reilly said.

Arteta said he had no regrets about selecting Kepa — who had played in previous rounds — rather than first-choice David Raya.

Premier League crisis deepens for Tottenham

Tottenham's Premier League survival fight was plunged deeper into crisis with a 3-0 loss to Nottingham Forest, one of three league games played on Sunday.

The relegation six-pointer left Spurs one place and one point above the drop zone and raised further questions about the future of coach Igor Tudor.

"The season is tough, especially in this moment. Another very bad (result) for us," said Tottenham captain Cristian Romero. "The situation is tough, but most important thing is play (every game) like a final now."

Fellow relegation-fighting Forest climbed above Spurs to 16th in the standings. The only positive on another miserable day for Tottenham was defeat for West Ham at Aston Villa to keep it in the bottom three.

Tottenham - one of English soccer's most iconic teams and a founding member of the Premier League - is still without a win in the top flight in 2026. Its last win was Dec. 28 and it has lost six of its last seven games.

Igor Jesus' header just before halftime gave Forest the lead at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium and Morgan Gibbs-White added a second just after the hour mark.

Taiwo Awoniyi completed Forest's first league win under coach Vitor Pereira in the 87th to leave home fans fearing the end of its ever-present stay in England's top division since the inception of the Premier League in 1992.

Tudor was hired last month to try to turn Spurs' season around, but has lost five of his seven games in charge in all competitions and seen his team eliminated from the Champions League.

Tottenham remains one point above 18th-place West Ham, which lost 2-0 to Villa.

Villa boosted its chances of Champions League qualification and took advantage of all of its immediate rivals dropping points.

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Villa is fourth, one point behind Manchester United and five points above fifth-place Liverpool. Brian Brobbey struck in the 90th minute to give Sunderland bragging rights in the Tyne-Wear derby against Newcastle.

Brobbey's close-range effort sealed a 2-1 comeback win at St. James' Park and saw Sunderland complete a league double over its fiercest rival.

Earlier, the game had been halted due to a report of discriminatory abuse from the crowd towards Sunderland's Lutsharel Geertruida.

Before kickoff, there had been tense scenes between fans outside the stadium. Northumberland police said one arrest was made.

People 'bathe' in nature to get respite from chaotic news cycle

By ALLEN G. BREED AP National Writer

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — For two hours, Claire Jefferies wanted to get away from the war in Iran and the rising gas prices and just commune with nature. And, so, she treated herself to a little forest bathing.

"When I'm here, it's almost like a protective bubble around me," the human resources director said amid oaks and flowering magnolias at the J.C. Raulston Arboretum in Raleigh, North Carolina. "It provides a shield."

The Sunday morning session was led by certified forest therapy guide Shawn Ramsey. Jangling a tiny brass bell, she called her dozen or so charges to gather for meditation, breathing exercises and to commune with nature.

"I invite you to really spend the next 10 minutes just exploring this area," she said, her own eyes closed. "Really focusing on your breath, on your footsteps. All the natural sounds around you. Maybe the man-made sounds, too. Thinking about the forest's natural rhythm and how are part of that here in this urban, forested environment."

Based on the Japanese wellness practice of Shinrin-yoku, the activity has been known to reduce stress, improve mood, lower blood pressure and boost the immune system.

Although the arboretum is in a busy section of a growing city, Ramsey said the benefits of tuning out and getting in touch with nature are the same. She led the group of about a dozen through the various gardens, having them crush conifer twigs between their fingers and smell them, or just touch trees.

"You know, in this day and age, there's a lot of stress and anxiety and chaos," she said. "And people are searching for ways to kind of cope with that."

Transportation safety researcher Alan Mintz came with a friend. He had to be reminded to leave the talk of news at the entrance.

"I think it's important for people to take the opportunity to exist in natural spaces, both to unwind and relax, so that it can be easier to interact with other people," he said as he stood in the dappled light filtering through the trees. "And to take a moment to appreciate beautiful things. That way, hopefully, they can carry that forward and have more of an appreciation for other people and other cultures that they might be less experienced with."

Jefferies had to remind a friend to stop talking about news as they walked beneath the gently waving canopy.

"That focus back into spending time in nature and the healing power of that, and just remembering that we're part of something bigger, that we're all connected," said the mother of a 9-year-old son. "And that what we do in our actions that we take really matter to the rest of the world. And so there's no better place to see that than here, where you can see all of the interconnectedness and the ways that this plant life naturally supports one another. Doesn't take more than they need."

Italy's justice referendum becomes a high stakes test for conservative Premier Giorgia Meloni

By GIADA ZAMPANO and PAOLO SANTALUCIA Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Italy's conservative premier, Giorgia Meloni, faces a pivotal political test in a two-day referendum on judicial reform that started on Sunday, a vote that has transformed into a broader judgment on her leadership at home and abroad.

Originally presented as a technical overhaul of the justice system, the reform has sharpened political divisions and unified the center-left opposition, turning the referendum into a symbolic showdown on Meloni's strength one year ahead of national elections.

Recent polls show the race remains too close to call, with the "No" camp gaining late momentum in a polarized climate where turnout may prove decisive. After 12 hours of voting on the first day, according to Italy's Interior Ministry, turnout topped 38% of eligible voters. That is the highest turnout ever registered at the same time for any two-day referendum.

Lorenzo Pregliasco, political analyst and polling expert at YouTrend, said a rejection of the reform would carry significant political weight.

"A possible 'No' victory would send a political signal, weakening Meloni's aura of invincibility, while pushing the center-left opposition to say that there is already an alternative in the country," he told The Associated Press.

Meloni raises the stakes

Meloni initially avoided tying her image too closely to the referendum, wary of the danger that a defeat could weaken her domestically and abroad.

She currently presides over Italy's most stable government in years, after gaining credibility among her European allies as a charismatic leader. A referendum win would further strengthen her tenure at home, alongside her international standing.

That's why, as the vote neared and polls tightened, the Italian premier shifted strategy and fully embraced the "Yes" campaign.

Meloni has sharpened her rhetoric, accusing parts of the judiciary of hindering government work on migration and security, and warning that failure to pass the reform would strengthen unaccountable judicial "factions" and endanger citizens' safety.

"If the reform doesn't pass this time, we will probably not have another chance," she said at a campaign event last week. "We will find ourselves with even more powerful factions, even more negligent judges, even more surreal sentences, immigrants, rapists, pedophiles, drug dealers being freed and putting your security at risk."

Her stark warnings have drawn fierce criticism from magistrates and the center-left, who argue that the reforms would erode judicial independence and undermine constitutional guarantees.

"Obviously (I'm voting) no, because I think this government has organized a referendum that serves no purpose other than its own, if it were to go ahead," said Giovanna Antongini, an 89-year-old, as she headed to a polling station in central Rome.

The 'Trump risk'

Analysts say the referendum carries international implications as well.

Meloni's long standing alignment with U.S. President Donald Trump, once politically advantageous, has become increasingly problematic as his foreign policy — particularly the U.S. and Israeli war with Iran — faces growing disapproval among Italians.

"Meloni is facing what I would call the 'Trump risk' — which is appearing too subservient to the U.S. president, who is an extremely unpopular political leader in Italy and the rest of Europe and generates a lot of distrust, even among center-right voters," Pregliasco said.

A defeat in the referendum would not force Meloni to resign — her mandate runs through 2027 and she repeatedly pledged to complete it — but could diminish her credibility within the European Union, where she is viewed as a stabilizing actor in an often politically volatile environment.

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A long running clash

The referendum centers on long-debated reforms aimed at reshaping the structure of Italy's judiciary.

"This vote is very important," said Francesca Serlupi Ferretti Crescenzi, 67, casting her ballot in Rome. "It is intended to improve the judicial system, which is long overdue for reform. I am convinced that it must and can be improved."

A key measure includes separating the career paths of judges and prosecutors, preventing them from switching roles — something that is currently allowed but rarely practiced.

Another major change concerns the High Judicial Council, which oversees magistrates' appointments and disciplinary matters. The reform proposes splitting it into three separate chambers and altering how members are chosen, replacing internal elections with selections by lottery from eligible judges and prosecutors.

The clash between Italy's right-wing leaders and magistrates has punctuated Italian politics, exploding during the governments of late conservative leader Silvio Berlusconi, who was one of the staunchest supporters of the judicial reform.

Supporters argue the changes will modernize an infamously slow court system and enhance accountability. But critics, including prominent magistrates, say the reform misses the real priorities while threatening the judiciary's independence.

Nicola Gratteri, Naples' chief prosecutor and a long time anti-Mafia magistrate, offered one of the most pointed rebukes.

"I don't think this government has implemented the reforms needed to make trials work more effectively," he told the AP. "Instead, it has made it virtually impossible to combat crimes against the public administration and to tackle white-collar abuse and corruption."

As Italians head to the polls, the referendum stands as one of the defining moments of Meloni's premiership — a choice that could reshape not only the justice system but also the trajectory of her government, regardless of the outcome.

Trump touted bigger tax refunds this year, but Americans will likely spend them on gas

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. economy was supposed to start the year with a bang, fueled by an unusually large jump in tax refunds from President Donald Trump's tax cut legislation. Yet spiking gas prices are on track to eat up those refunds, leaving most Americans with little extra to spend.

"Next spring is projected to be the largest tax refund season of all time," Trump said in a prime-time speech in December that was intended to address voters' concerns about the economy and stubbornly high prices.

But that was before the Iran war, which began Feb. 28. Oil and gas prices have soared since then, with the nationwide average price of gas reaching \$3.94 Sunday, up more than a dollar from just a month earlier.

Gas prices are likely to remain elevated for some time, even if the war ends soon, because shipping and production have been disrupted and will take time to recover. Economists now expect slower growth this spring and for the year as a whole, as dollars that are spent on gas are less likely to be used for restaurant meals, new clothes, or entertainment.

Lower and middle-income households are likely to be hit particularly hard, because they receive lower refunds, while spending a greater proportion of their earnings on gas.

"The energy shock is to going to hit those who have the least cushion," said Alex Jacquez, chief of policy at the left-leaning Groundwork Collaborative and a former economist in the Biden White House. "And it doesn't look like those tax refunds are going to be here to save them."

Neale Mahoney, director of the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, calculates that gas prices could peak in May at \$4.36 a gallon, based on oil price forecasts by Goldman Sachs, followed by slow declines for the rest of the year. The notion that gas prices decline much more slowly than they rise is so ingrained among economists that they refer to it as the "rocket and feathers" phenomenon.

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In that scenario, the average household would pay \$740 more in gas this year, nearly equal to the \$748 increase in refunds that the Tax Foundation has estimated the average household will receive.

Through March 6, refunds have risen by much less than that, according to IRS data: They have averaged \$3,676, up \$352 from \$3,324 in 2025. Still, average refunds could rise as more complex returns are filed.

Other estimates show similar impacts. Economists at Oxford Economics, a consulting firm, estimate that if gas prices average \$3.70 a gallon all year, it will cost consumers about \$70 billion — more than the \$60 billion in increased tax refunds.

The gas price spike comes with many consumers already in a precarious position, particularly compared to 2022, when gas prices also soared because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. At that time, many households still had fattened bank accounts from pandemic-era stimulus payments and companies were hiring rapidly and sharply lifting pay to attract workers.

Now, hiring is nearly at a standstill and Americans' saving rate has steadily fallen in the past few years as many households borrow more to sustain their spending.

"When you start looking across the perspective from a consumer side, you're seeing people who have maxed out their credit cards, are using 'buy now, pay later' to purchase their groceries," said Julie Margetta Morgan, president of The Century Foundation, a think tank. "They're making it work for now, but that can fall apart quite quickly."

The impact will likely worsen the "K-shaped" narrative around the U.S. economy, analysts said, in which higher income households have fared better than lower-income households. The bottom 10% of earners spend nearly 4% of their incomes on gasoline, Pantheon Macroeconomics estimates, while the top 10% spend just 1.5%.

For now, most analysts still expect the U.S. economy to expand this year, even if more slowly, given the gas price shock. Higher gas prices will likely worsen inflation in the short run, but over time weaker spending will also slow growth.

American consumers and businesses have repeatedly shaken off shocks since the pandemic — soaring inflation, rising interest rates, tariffs — and continued to spend, defying concerns that the economy would tip into recession. Many economists note that the proportion of their incomes that Americans spend on gas and other energy has fallen significantly compared with a decade ago.

Data from the Bank of America Institute, released Friday, showed that spending on gas on the bank's credit and debit cards shot 14.4% higher in the week ended March 14 compared with a year ago. Before the war, such spending was running 5% below the previous year, a benefit to consumers.

Spending on discretionary items — restaurant meals, electronics, and travel — is still growing, the institute said, evidence of consumer resilience. But there is little sign it is accelerating, as many economists had hoped.

"The longer these gasoline prices persist, the more that will gradually sap consumer discretionary spending," said David Tinsley, senior economist at the institute.

Other analysts expect growth will slow because of the war. Bernard Yaros and Michael Pearce, economists at Oxford Economics, forecast that the U.S. economy will grow just 1.9% this year, down from an earlier estimate of 2.5%.

"We had anticipated a lift in spending from a bumper tax refund season," they wrote, "but the rise in gasoline prices, if sustained, would more than offset that boost."

California sheriff running for governor seizes more than a half million ballots from 2025 election

RIVERSIDE, Calif. (AP) — A California sheriff running for governor has seized more than half a million ballots cast in a November special election from county election officials, saying he's investigating a ballot count discrepancy.

County elections officials have disputed the claims by Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco, a Republican. California Attorney General Rob Bonta, a Democrat, called Bianco's move unprecedented and says it

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is designed to sow distrust in elections.

Bianco held a news conference Friday saying his office had launched the investigation after receiving a complaint from a local citizens group about the ballot count from a November 2025 special election on redistricting.

In the special election, voters approved a measure to redraw congressional district lines to favor Democrats in the upcoming midterm election. The measure passed in the county by a margin of more than 80,000 votes.

Bianco seized ballots in Riverside County, the inland California county of 2.5 million people where he has twice been elected sheriff. He called the effort "a fact-finding mission."

"This investigation is simple: Physically count the ballots and compare that result with the total votes reported," he said Friday.

Bianco is one of two prominent Republicans running for governor in a crowded June primary that includes more than half a dozen Democrats. California runs a top-two primary system that puts all candidates on the same ballot, regardless of party, and sends the two candidates who get the most voters onto the November general election.

Leading California Democrats are worried that their party has so many candidates, they risk splitting the vote and sending Bianco and Steve Hilton, another top Republican, onto the general election. That would be a stunning outcome in the heavily Democratic state.

Bianco said the investigation had "absolutely nothing to do" with his campaign for governor.

"I have a duty to investigate alleged crime in Riverside County," he said.

The effort came as President Donald Trump has repeatedly disputed the results of the 2020 election, citing unsubstantiated instances of fraud. His administration recently seized ballots and other documents from an election office in Georgia. Some Republicans have mirrored Trump's rhetoric on voting in their states.

Bonta has repeatedly sent letters to Bianco's office over the last two months saying his staff is not qualified to conduct a recount. In one of the letters, Bonta wrote that the ballot seizure was "unacceptable" and "sets a dangerous precedent and will only sow distrust in our elections."

The letters said Bianco seized nearly 1,000 boxes of ballots and elections materials from the county's elections office with a warrant in February. At issue, Bianco said, is a discrepancy a citizen group reported between the handwritten ballot intake logs and the number of votes reported to the state.

Bianco said the alleged discrepancy amounted to about 45,800 votes — a difference elections officials have refuted at county meetings, saying the machine count and the final count submitted to the state differed by about 100 votes. They argue the handwritten rolls, which were not relied on to check the count, were being kept by temporary elections workers who had worked long days and may have made mistakes.

Bianco said Friday that the count had started and stopped, but would now resume under the supervision of a special master appointed by a judge.

Tom Kean Jr.'s political roots date to 1776. Is that enough to protect the Republican's House seat?

By MIKE CATALINI Associated Press

LEBANON, N.J. (AP) — Tom Kean Jr.'s political pedigree dates to 1776, when one of his ancestors became New Jersey's first leader after the United States declared independence. His great grandfather was a senator, his grandfather was a congressman and his father was a governor.

But the family lineage may not be enough to protect Kean in this year's midterm elections. The Republican congressman is among his party's most endangered members as Democrats try to capitalize on President Donald Trump's unpopularity and regain control of the U.S. House.

If Kean and other Republicans in competitive races cannot retain their seats, it will be an early sign that a blue wave is washing across the country.

Kean represents New Jersey's 7th Congressional District, a scenic mix of bedroom communities and farming towns perpetually on the shifting front lines of American politics. Two previous incumbents were

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ousted during midterm elections over the past decade: Kean defeated Democrat Tom Malinowski in 2022, after Malinowski beat Republican Leonard Lance in 2018.

"I don't think that Congressman Kean is taking anything for granted," Lance said. "He recognizes that this is a highly competitive district."

The district has become slightly more Republican since being redrawn nearly five years ago. Kean is counting on voters rewarding him for tax cuts that Trump signed into law last year.

Kean, however, risks being saddled with other parts of Trump's agenda that have been unpopular in the area. The Republican administration wants to turn a local warehouse into an immigration detention facility, which Democrats and a GOP-controlled town council sued to stop on Friday. Also, Trump has tried to cancel a new rail tunnel that would make it easier to commute into New York City.

Kean is keeping a low profile, sticking to virtual events instead of town halls that can turn into shouting matches with angry constituents. But there is little chance of Kean avoiding Trump's shadow in a district including the president's golf club in Bedminster, and the congressman seems to know that. Kean has pinned a message on a social media account thanking the president for his endorsement.

'Career politician' or a guy 'voters trust'?

Ever since Democrat Bill Clinton was president more than three decades ago, the party that controls the White House loses control of the House in the midterm elections. That political circle of life leaves lawmakers such as Kean trying to hold on when there is no White House race to generate more enthusiasm at the ballot box.

This year, Kean is one of 44 lawmakers whom Democrats hope to oust, more than enough to give them a majority. The Democratic field in Kean's district remains unsettled, with a half-dozen candidates competing in the June 2 primary. Democrats are already attacking him over Trump's tariffs, the rail tunnel and the proposed immigration detention facility.

Kean said he is working on a "workable solution" for the facility.

"Career politician Tom Kean Jr. has come to represent everything that people hate about a broken and corrupt Washington," said Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee spokesperson Eli Cousin.

Republicans said they can defy history and save Kean's seat.

"Voters trust Kean Jr. because they know his record, and they're fired up to send him back to Washington," said National Republican Campaign Committee spokesperson Maureen O'Toole.

Kean's spokesperson did not respond to requests for an interview.

Tax cuts central to Kean's pitch

Kean is hinging his reelection on a potent, perennial issue in New Jersey politics — property taxes, which are among the highest in the country. Trump's signature domestic legislation, a package of spending and tax cuts, expanded the state and local tax deduction, known as SALT.

Some Republicans did not want to make the change, complaining that it would help subsidize high-cost blue states. But it was a high priority for lawmakers in competitive seats.

"Congressman Kean has proven himself an independent leader who delivers for his district," said campaign consultant Harrison Neely. "He was a cornerstone of the coalition that fully restored the SALT deduction for middle-class families, providing meaningful tax relief."

Deductions were capped at \$10,000 under legislation signed by Trump in his first term, but the new law raised the limit to \$40,000. It eventually will drop to \$10,000 in 2030.

Kean's supporters say the tax change, however temporary, will help address affordability concerns.

"Having the ability to write off your property taxes is a huge benefit for homeowners," said Douglas Thomson, who leads the New Jersey Realtors.

Not 'blasting out tweets'

Another challenge for Kean has been controversy over the Gateway Tunnel, which will add new rail tracks under the Hudson River to alleviate congestion.

Trump tried to block federal funding, which would have been a setback for commuters in towns such as the ones that Kean represents. A judge ordered the administration to restore money for the project last

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month after Democratic leaders in New Jersey and New York went to court.

Greg Lavee, business manager for International Union of Operating Engineers Local 825, said Kean had been helpful behind the scenes.

"I don't see him blasting out tweets," he said, unlike "somebody who's just craving attention."

Kean's family lineage is well known in the district. His father, Tom Kean, was a moderate Republican governor who later led the 9/11 Commission.

Mark Oliver, a retired architect, said he thought the elder Kean would be considered a Democrat by today's standards. Now the party has shifted.

But he also acknowledged the district's significant Republican presence, saying "you see the Trump signs up on the farms.."

He plans to support the eventual Democratic candidate because "rich people have so much power and so much influence that it's got to be counterbalanced."

Democrats criticize Kean for not doing in-person town hall meetings.

In 2018, during the midterms of Trump's first term, Lance's events attracted critics of the president who occasionally drowned out the soft-spoken congressman. Asked if he would do them again, Lance said he would.

"Each of us has to determine for himself how best to reach constituents," he said.

Cuba begins to restore power after nationwide grid collapse

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Cuba began restoring its energy system on Sunday, a day after a nationwide collapse of the entire grid left millions of people in the dark for the third time this month.

Some 72,000 customers in the capital, among them five hospitals, had electricity again early Sunday, according to a report from the state-run Electric Union and the Ministry of Energy and Mines, but it's only a fraction of Havana's total population of approximately 2 million.

In Havana and provinces such as western Matanzas and eastern Holguin, local power microsystems were set up to supply the most vital centers. Residents in some areas of the capital told The Associated Press that power returned during the early morning hours.

Cuba is currently facing an unprecedented energy crisis. Its aging grid has drastically eroded in recent years, but the government has also blamed the outages on a U.S. energy blockade, after President Donald Trump in January warned of tariffs on any country that sells or provides oil to Cuba. His administration is demanding that Cuba release political prisoners and move toward political and economic liberalization in return for a lifting of sanctions. Trump also has raised the possibility of a "friendly takeover of Cuba."

Another reason Cuba has been struggling with dwindling oil is the removal by the U.S. of Venezuela's former President Nicolás Maduro, which halted critical petroleum shipments from the nation that had been a steadfast ally to Havana.

President Miguel Díaz-Canel has said the island has not received oil from foreign suppliers for three months. Cuba produces barely 40% of the fuel it needs to power its economy.

Daily blackouts have a significant impact on the population, whose lives are disrupted by reduced work hours, lack of electricity for cooking and damage to household appliances, among many other consequences.

"With the blackout and low voltage, my refrigerator broke — that was today. The day before yesterday, the voltage also dropped around 10 at night," Suleydi Crespo, a 33-year-old woman with two small children, told AP on Saturday. "If there's no electricity tomorrow, we won't be able to get water."

Residents also expressed exhaustion from the constant outages, whether nationwide or partial.

The Cuban Electric Union, which reports to the Ministry of Energy and Mines, reported that the total disconnection of the national energy system was caused by an unexpected shutdown of a generation unit at the Nuevitas thermoelectric plant in Camaguey province, without providing details on the specific cause of the failure.

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The last nationwide blackout occurred on Monday. It took several days to restore power.

Saturday's outage was the second in the past week and the third in March.

"We have to get used to continuing our usual routine. What else can we do? We have to try to survive. Get used to events, with or without electricity," said Dagnay Alarcón, a 35-year-old vendor.

Authorities and Díaz-Canel himself have acknowledged the seriousness of the current energy situation. The Vice Minister of Energy and Mines Argelio Abad Vigo explained this week that the country has gone three months without receiving supplies of diesel, fuel oil, gasoline, aviation fuel or liquefied petroleum gas — all vital for the economy and power generation.

Fuel sales for vehicles are rationed, airlines have suspended flights or reduced frequencies many workplaces have reduced hours.

Trump has for months suggested Cuba's government is on the verge of collapse. After a previous time Cuba's electric grid collapsed, Trump told reporters he believed he'd soon have "the honor of taking Cuba."

María Regla Cardoso, a housewife in Havana, said she isn't interested in politics and that Cubans have to keep living.

"I leave everything in God's hands. Whatever form the situation takes, we just have to face it."

Syrian authorities' new limits on alcohol sales in Damascus spark backlash

By OMAR SANADIKI Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — Crowds of Syrians rallied Sunday to protest authorities' efforts to limit the sale and consumption of alcohol in Damascus, reflecting rising anxiety in the cosmopolitan capital that Syria's new Islamist government may threaten long-held secular freedoms.

Hundreds of residents from a range of religious sects poured into a grassy square in Bab Touma, a Christian neighborhood in Damascus, chanting "Syrians are united!" and brandishing signs that urged the government to safeguard personal liberties and religious minorities.

"This is not about whether we want to drink alcohol, this is about personal freedom," said Isa Qazah, a 45-year-old sculptor from the area who joined the protest along the medieval stone lanes near Damascus' Old City. "We have come here to defend an idea."

Heavily armed security forces surrounded the protesters. The demonstration passed without incident.

The controversy erupted last week, when the governor of Damascus issued a decree banning "the provision of alcoholic beverages of all kinds in restaurants and nightclubs" across the capital. Within three months, it says, restaurants must have tossed out their wine lists and bar and club owners must have traded their licenses for cafe permits.

The decision, which authorities said was made "at the request of the local community," came as the interim government of former Islamist rebel and now President Ahmed al-Sharaa faces growing pressure from hard-liners to impose more conservative religious values. Al-Sharaa has not publicly weighed in on the alcohol debate.

More than a year after his movement ousted former President Bashar Assad, Syria is still reeling from 14 years of civil war and five decades of dictatorship as it struggles to define its future.

A member of the Alawite religious minority, Assad espoused a secular ideology to retain the support of fellow minorities in the Sunni-majority nation. Under his family dynasty, Syrians had little in the way of civic or political freedoms. But they could drink alcohol, party at nightclubs and dress how they pleased.

After being named the interim president, al-Sharaa vowed to unite the country and respect pluralism. He has so far tread lightly when it comes to imposing social restrictions. Yet Syria's many religious and ethnic groups remain on edge.

Sectarian attacks by pro-government Sunni fighters have killed hundreds of Alawites and Druze over the past year.

Concerns over fresh violence

Protesters on Sunday said they feared the latest alcohol restrictions could further fuel those tensions,

as the decree allows alcohol to be sold in three predominantly Christian neighborhoods.

Still, establishments in Bab Touma, al-Qassaa and Bab Sharqi can't serve booze on site, and shops in those three areas can sell alcohol only in sealed take-away bottles. Vendors also must keep at least 75 meters (246 feet) away from mosques and schools, and 20 meters (65 feet) away from police stations and government offices.

Some said that in singling out Christians, authorities are framing them as responsible for what the decree describes as "violations of public morals." Although Islamic law prohibits the consumption of alcohol, Damascus is full of secular Muslims.

"How our neighborhoods are violating public etiquette? The division this creates is unfair and irresponsible," said Fawaz Bahauddin Khawja, a Christian lawyer at the rally. "This is the real face of Damascus. The only flag we raise is the Syrian flag."

As criticism flared ahead of the protest, Damascus authorities issued a statement late Saturday apologizing to the city's Christian population "for any misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the decision." It also clarified that hotels will be spared the booze restrictions.

"This decision does not interfere with citizens' personal freedoms," the statement read. "The regulation of alcohol sales exists in all countries, with differences in how it's applied and enforced."

Democrats sharpen criticism of Vance as they look past Trump to the 2028 presidential campaign

By JULIE CARR SMYTH and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

FAIRFIELD, Ohio (AP) — Although President Donald Trump is the top Democratic nemesis, some of the party's most ambitious leaders are increasingly looking past him and at Vice President JD Vance.

In the latest example, Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear traveled to Vance's home county in Ohio, where on Saturday night he said the vice president had abandoned the communities that he wrote about in the memoir that made him famous.

Beshear said "Hillbilly Elegy," which detailed Vance's hardscrabble upbringing, had "trafficked in tired stereotypes."

"His book 'Hillbilly Elegy' was really hillbilly hate," the governor said at a Democratic fundraiser in Butler County. "It is poverty tourism, because he ain't from Appalachia."

The broadside was not only a sign of Beshear's own potential presidential aspirations, but a reflection of Vance's status as the Republican heir apparent to the coalition that twice elected Trump to the White House.

"With every day that passes, we get closer to a day when Donald Trump is no longer president. And we need to prepare for that day," said Lis Smith, a Democratic strategist. "Right now, JD Vance is a clear front-runner for the 2028 nomination. And so we should begin defining him — not in 2027, not in 2028 — but today."

Vance spokesperson Taylor Van Kirk brushed off Beshear's criticism as coming from a flawed messenger. "Every time Andy Beshear attacks the vice president to try to get himself publicity, he ends up humiliating himself in the process, but maybe that's something he's into?" she said.

An early foil for Democratic contenders

U.S. Rep. Ro Khanna of California was among the first Democrats to begin focusing on Vance last year. Khanna stopped at the City Club of Cleveland and Yale University, where he and Vance studied law, and gave speeches that attempted to cast Vance as more extreme than Trump.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, another potential presidential contender in 2028, singled out Vance in November while making the argument that the Trump administration did not care about working people.

"At least with Donald Trump, he's transparent about that," Shapiro said. "JD Vance is a total phony."

Some Democrats have coalesced around California Gov. Gavin Newsom as a strong candidate because of his aggressive strategy in going after Republicans.

He coined the nickname "JD 'Just Dance' Vance" on social media, and he has mocked the vice president's appearance, saying Vance "grew a beard and lost his spine."

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Smith, the strategist who led Pete Buttigieg's 2020 presidential campaign and still works with the former Biden administration transportation secretary, said every line of criticism of Vance is an audition.

"There's definitely value in taking on Vance to show Democrats, hey, this could be me on the debate stage against him," said Smith.

Vance often invokes his working-class roots

The vice president was born and raised in Butler County's Middletown, and he rose to prominence with the publication of "Hillbilly Elegy" in 2016. The book earned Vance a reputation as someone who could help explain Trump's appeal in middle America, especially among the working class, rural white voters who helped Trump win the presidency.

Vance carried that reputation to the U.S. Senate, winning election in 2022, and later to the vice presidency. That same background is likely to be central to any future presidential run — and it is precisely what Democrats are now working to undercut.

At Saturday's Democratic fundraiser, the mere mention of Vance's name drew a chorus of boos from the audience.

"I don't think he's got the magic that everybody looks at with Trump," said Theresa Vacheresse, a retired physician and business owner who attended the event. "I think when Trump is gone, the Democrats might have a chance. My god, I hope so."

The focus on Vance is not unusual for a vice president widely seen as a potential future nominee, particularly one as young as 41. Republicans went after Kamala Harris early in her tenure under President Joe Biden to undermine her political future.

Jamal Simmons, Harris' communications director in 2022 and 2023, said vice presidents can be vulnerable.

"The party is built to defend the president more than it is the vice president," he said. "The vice president's kind of out there on their own, to defend themselves, and find friends where they can."

Republicans, including Vance, frequently tied Harris to some of the Democratic administration's most politically difficult issues, such as immigration and border security.

"Being vice president is a very mixed blessing," said David Axelrod, who was a top adviser to Democratic President Barack Obama. "You often don't have the assets of the president, but you inherit all of the president's record. The good, the bad, and the ugly."

Beshear has had success in Trump country

Beshear is the rare Democrat to lead a red state, and he is positioning himself as someone who can reach voters who have tuned out his party.

He said Democrats can "actually go and win back those voters that JD Vance is so condescending to" if they stay focused on Americans' basic needs such as affordable health care and public safety.

"We've gotta start talking to people and not at them," he said. "That's how I won counties in eastern Kentucky that normally vote for Republicans by large margins — including Breathitt County. That's the county JD Vance pretends to be from. Donald Trump won it by 59 points. I won it by 22 points the year earlier."

The audience appeared delighted with Beshear's message.

"I think he's first-rate," said Mark Kaplan, who lives in Butler County. "What he's got is compassion, empathy, charisma and intellect, but he's also down-to-earth."

Women farmworkers who built their own fight against sexual assault cope with Chavez allegations

By ALEXANDRA OLSON, DORANY PINEDA and CLAIRE SAVAGE Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Almost two decades ago, legendary labor rights activist Dolores Huerta joined Mónica Ramírez at a Chicago event to promote the Bandana Project, a campaign Ramírez had launched to raise awareness about sexual violence against women farmworkers.

Huerta spoke there about the need to educate women farmworkers about their rights and empower them to speak out about sexual exploitation that is both widespread and underreported among agricul-

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tural field workers. Little did anyone know at the time that Huerta herself had been sexually abused at the hands of icon César Chavez, who in 1962 co-founded the organization now known the United Farm Workers with Huerta.

The allegations against Chavez by Huerta and other women and girls show that the culture of fear and intimidation that enables sexual abuse in agricultural fields had also for many years existed within top ranks of the male-dominated labor movement that fought for farmworker rights.

At the same time, advocates like Ramírez say the decision by Huerta and other women to speak out — first revealing their allegations to the New York Times — is a powerful sign that things have changed since Chavez's time. In the three decades since Chavez died in 1993, the network of grassroots organizations led by women farmworkers has grown, pushing for federal and state investigations into sexual abuse on farms and laws mandating sexual harassment training, as well as securing commitments from growers and produce buyers to adopt policies for women, among other gains.

To Ramírez, Chavez's alleged abuse feels like a betrayal because she and other advocates admired him and credited him with inspiring the movement that galvanized their own organizing efforts. But his shattered legacy does not erase the gains women farmworkers and advocates have made on their own.

"It feels a little bit bewildering because so many of us have grown up looking up to César Chavez," said Ramírez, founder and president of the advocacy group Justice for Migrant Women whose own parents were migrant farmworkers in Ohio. "But we have to remind each other that this is a long-standing movement that is made of many, many people, including women leaders."

Some 25% of the country's more than 1 million hired farm workers are women, according to government figures, although estimates on the population of agricultural workers vary. The prevalence of sexual harassment and abuse is difficult to quantify because it often goes unreported, but in field surveys conducted by groups Human Rights Watch, the Southern Poverty Law Center and the University of California-Santa Cruz, some 80% or more of women crop workers have reported some form of sexual harassment.

A watershed moment in building awareness came in 1999 when the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the federal agency that enforces anti-discrimination laws in the workplace, won a \$1.85 million settlement against a major U.S. lettuce grower on behalf a California worker who was subjected to sexual advances by her managers and fired when she complained.

Since then, the EEOC has secured millions more in compensation from farmworkers who have reported sexual harassment or abuse.

It's hard to say how much sexual violence against women farmworkers has eased as a result of government enforcement and growing outreach and educational efforts. Fear, isolation in the fields, language barriers, and immigration status continue to make farmworkers particularly vulnerable to exploitation. More than 40% of agricultural workers had no work authorization between 2020 and 2022, according to government estimates, and many are in the country on H2-A visas that are tied to their employment, increasing their fear of dismissal and deportation if they speak out.

Darlene Tenes, executive director of Farmworker Caravan, an advocacy group in California, said that during meetings, majorities of women still report being victims of sexual abuse, and that the Trump administration's immigration crackdown has forced them to cancel education conferences and try to visit communities directly to quietly provide resources.

Still, in regions where the most robust legal protections and protective programs have been put into place, women farmworkers say things have started to improve.

Nely Rodriguez said sexual abuse was "bread and butter" when she worked the fields decades ago, but she didn't fully understand her rights until she joined the Florida-based Coalition of Immokalee Workers, which runs the Fair Food Program, a partnership with major produce buyers including Walmart and McDonald's that pledge to source food from growers who have entered into a legally binding agreement to abide by a code of conduct. That includes sexual harassment training and a system for investigating complaints and holding perpetrators accountable.

For many women advocates, the biggest difference has been breaking the taboo in farm worker com-

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munities about even speaking about sexual abuse.

In her statement saying that Chavez raped her in the 1960s, Huerta, now 96 years old, said she kept her secret for so long because she feared that "exposing the truth would hurt the farmworker movement" but today, she understands that she is a "survivor — of violence, of sexual abuse, of domineering men who saw me, and other women, as property, or things to control."

Patricia Campos-Medina, executive director of the Worker Institute at Cornell University, said the allegations against Chavez are a reminder that the labor movement "is not immune" to abuses of power and for her, it was especially painful that Huerta "had to keep that secret for that long so that she could keep her respectability within the movement."

"You cannot expect the victim to be the one that holds the person accountable, because it takes a lot of personal courage," Campos-Medina said. "I can imagine when she was trying to co-create this union with him, how much it would have cost her to speak up."

When Ramírez first started her legal advocacy work in Florida in 2003, she said both men and women in the movement dismissed allegations of sexual abuse as "gossip" or insisted that with limited resources, they need to focus on bigger issues that affected the majority of workers.

But by the time the #MeToo movement erupted globally in 2017, farmworker women had been speaking out for years, albeit with much less notice. Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, a national organization that Ramírez co-led at the time, wrote an open letter of solidarity with Hollywood women that went viral and further thrust the plight of farmworker women into the national spotlight.

The "Dear Sisters" letter, as it is known, and the longstanding efforts by women-led farmworker groups, were a key driver behind the TIME'S UP Legal Defense Fund, which provides legal aid to low-income women who are victims of sexual harassment and abuse, said Jennifer Mondino, the director of the fund, run by the National Women's Law Center.

Ramírez said she believes the #MeToo movement helped give victims, including Huerta, the language to be able to speak about abuse.

"Do I think it's still a widespread problem? Yes. Do I think that there are many survivors who do not feel like they can come forward? Yes," she said. "But farmworker women have exerted their power and shown their leadership on this issue, and I don't want that to get lost."

Bryson DeChambeau wins again by beating Jon Rahm in a LIV playoff in South Africa

MIDRAND, South Africa (AP) — Bryson DeChambeau won for the second straight week by saving par on the final hole for a 6-under 65 and blistering a 3-wood from a wet lie in the rough on the par-5 18th in a playoff to set up birdie and defeat Jon Rahm at LIV Golf South Africa on Sunday.

DeChambeau's final start before the Masters brought out some of his best work in winning his fifth overall LIV title. He won last week in Singapore.

The large gallery began singing the national anthem as DeChambeau was just off the 18th green, needing to get up-and-down to force a playoff with Rahm (63), and to give his Crushers the team title over the South African-based Southern Guard.

He did that to finish at 26-under 258 and join Rahm in the playoff.

Returning to the par-5 18th, DeChambeau pulled his drive into the mud and muck left of the fairway on the rain-soaked course. He was given free relief and eventually allowed to place the golf ball. Keeping his feet stable, he ripped 3-wood onto the green to 12 feet.

Rahm from the fairway went into a bunker, blasted out to just beyond 12 feet and misread his birdie putt. That gave DeChambeau two putts for the win, and he left the eagle putt inches short.

DeChambeau is the third player with at least five LIV wins, joining Joaquin Niemann (seven) and Brooks Koepka (five), who is now back on the PGA Tour.

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Today in History: March 23

'Titanic' wins record-tying 11 Academy Awards

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Monday, March 23, the 82nd day of 2026. There are 283 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On March 23, 1998, "Titanic" tied an Academy Awards record by winning 11 Oscars, including best picture, best director for James Cameron and best original song for "My Heart Will Go On."

Also on this date:

In 1775, Patrick Henry delivered an address to the Virginia Provincial Convention in which it is said he declared, "Give me liberty, or give me death!"

In 1806, explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark began their return to St. Louis, Missouri, after completing the first U.S. overland expedition to the Pacific coast. The explorers had begun their journey from St. Louis in May 1804 and trekked thousands of miles to and from the coast.

In 1919, Benito Mussolini founded his Fascist political movement in Milan, Italy.

In 1933, the German Reichstag adopted the Enabling Act, which effectively granted Adolf Hitler dictatorial powers.

In 1942, the first Japanese Americans incarcerated by the U.S. Army during World War II arrived at the internment camp at Manzanar, California.

In 1965, America's first two-person space mission took place as Gemini 3 blasted off with astronauts Virgil I. "Gus" Grissom and John W. Young aboard for a nearly 5-hour flight orbiting Earth.

In 1993, scientists announced they'd identified the gene that causes Huntington's disease.

In 2010, President Barack Obama signed the Affordable Care Act, a \$938 billion health care overhaul aimed at making health insurance more accessible and affordable in the U.S.

In 2021, a cargo ship the size of a skyscraper ran aground and became wedged in the Suez Canal; hundreds of ships would be prevented from passing through the canal until the vessel was freed six days later.

Today's Birthdays: Singer Chaka Khan is 73. Basketball Hall of Fame coach Geno Auriemma is 72. Fashion designer Kenneth Cole is 72. Actor Amanda Plummer is 69. Actor Hope Davis is 62. Musician Damon Albarn is 58. Basketball Hall of Famer Jason Kidd is 53. Actor Randall Park is 52. Actor Michelle Monaghan is 50. Actor Keri Russell is 50. Country singer Brett Young is 45. Actor Vanessa Morgan is 34. Actor Victoria Pedretti is 31.