

Groton Daily Independent

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Wednesday, April 1

Senior Menu: Swiss steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, peas and carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Oatmeal

School Lunch: Chicago pasta, mixed vegetables.

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

6th Grade Boys Basketball, 6 p.m., Arena

Chamber Meeting, noon, City Hall

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Sarah Circle, 5 p.m.; League, 6:30 p.m.

SEAS: Living Stations, 7 p.m.

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

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

Thursday, April 2

Senior Menu: Tator tot hot dish, green beans, fruit, breadstick.

School Breakfast: Maple French Toast Bake

School Lunch: Sloppy Joes, tri taters.

5th Grade Girls Basketball, 4 p.m., Elementary Gym

Girls Softball: vs. Aberdeen Central at the Aberdeen Dome, 4 p.m., double header

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

Pickleball, 6 p.m., Elementary Gym



Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.; Maundy Thursday service, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Maundy Thursday Service, 7 p.m., at St. John's

United Methodist: Maundy Thursday Service, 6 p.m., in Groton

Friday, April 3

No Senior Meal.

NO SCHOOL - Easter Break

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

Emmanuel Lutheran: Good Friday Service, 7 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Good Friday Service, 7 p.m., at St. John's

United Methodist: Good Friday Service: Noon at Britton, 5 p.m. in Conde

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
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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.

Fly Me to the Moon

NASA is set to launch Artemis II tonight at 6:24 pm ET, sending four astronauts on a roughly 10-day journey around the moon. The mission marks the first crewed flight beyond Earth's orbit since 1972.

Riding atop the Space Launch System, the world's most powerful operational rocket, Orion's capsule Integrity will reach speeds near 5 miles per second as it heads for lunar orbit—the first piloted flight of the deep-space capsule. Artemis II will travel about 250,000 miles away, the farthest distance humanity has ever ventured into space. Next year, NASA aims to have astronauts link up with SpaceX and Blue Origin moon landers in low Earth orbit to test systems for lunar surface missions. A landing near the south pole is expected by 2028, amid a growing race with China's lunar program.

"Artemis" honors the Greek moon goddess, twin sister of Apollo, connecting the current program to the original moon missions.

Birthright Battle Begins

The Supreme Court will hear arguments today on whether the federal government can deny citizenship to children born in the US to parents in the country illegally or temporarily.

The case stems from an executive order signed last year to narrow birthright citizenship, which currently recognizes nearly all children born on US soil as automatic citizens. The principle was established after the Civil War to ensure that formerly enslaved people were recognized as citizens. In 1898, the Supreme Court affirmed that it also applies to children of immigrants, ruling in favor of a man born in San Francisco to Chinese parents. Ending the policy would impact around 255,000 children born in the US annually. The US is one of about three dozen countries with unrestricted birthright citizenship; most nations grant citizenship based on parents' status.

Separately, the Supreme Court yesterday ruled 8-1 on First Amendment grounds that states cannot ban conversion therapy for LGBTQ+ children.

50 Years of Apple

Apple turns 50 years old today, a milestone for one of the world's most valuable companies, with a market capitalization of \$3.7T as of this writing. CEO Tim Cook rang the Nasdaq bell yesterday to mark the moment.

Founders Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak, and Ronald Wayne launched Apple out of Jobs' garage on April 1, 1976. Their goal was to make computers accessible not just for businesses but for everyday consumers. The Apple II became one of the most successful personal computers of the time, selling nearly 6 million units, and was followed by the Macintosh in 1978. After a yearslong departure from Apple, Jobs returned to the company in the late 1990s, overseeing the launch of the iMac, iPod, and iPhone alongside designer Jony Ive.

Nearly one-fifth of the world's population has an iPhone today.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Police say Tiger Woods had opioids in his possession, bloodshot eyes at the scene of Friday's rollover crash, told police a phone and radio distraction led to the accident; Woods pleads not guilty to DUI charges.

World Cup qualifiers decide final six teams in 2026 tournament, beginning June 11 (More, w/roster) | Eurovision adds first-ever Asia competition in Bangkok Nov. 14; South Korea and Vietnam among 10 confirmed participating nations.

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Six novels shortlisted for International Booker Prize, honoring translated fiction (More, w/list) | Vice President JD Vance to publish second memoir June 16.

John Green announces debut adult novel, first book in nearly 10 years.

Science & Technology

Most-detailed breast tissue map to date shows how tissue cells decrease with age and menopause, putting older women at higher risk for breast cancer.

Quantum computers may only need 10,000 to 20,000 qubits—not millions as widely assumed—potentially accelerating the timeline to exponentially faster machines.

Warming water in polar regions could make phytoplankton—the base of the ocean food chain—less protein-rich, more carb-heavy, and lower in overall nutrients.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close higher (S&P 500 +2.9%, Dow +2.5%, Nasdaq +3.8%).

Average US gas price hits \$4 per gallon for first time since 2022.

OpenAI closes Silicon Valley's largest-ever funding round, raising \$122B at \$852B valuation.

Whoop, wearable health devices maker, raises \$575M at \$10.1B valuation; investors include LeBron James and Rory McIlroy.

Spice giant McCormick to buy Unilever's food unit in nearly \$45B cash-and-stock deal.

Shoemaker Allbirds—once valued at \$4B—sells for \$39M.

Politics & World Affairs

Federal judge blocks construction of planned White House ballroom, requires authorization from Congress for the \$400M renovation.

President Donald Trump signs executive order creating nationwide list of verified eligible voters.

China and Pakistan propose five-point peace plan for Iran war, including ceasefire in exchange for reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

The UK's King Charles III plans visit to the US, with state visit reportedly planned for April 27 to 30, including White House banquet April 28.

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

The advertisement features a colorful illustration of a teddy bear, a baby bottle, and a stack of colorful blocks on the left, and a yellow bucket filled with cleaning supplies like a spray bottle, a brush, and gloves on the right. Below the text are three banners: a red one with a heart icon, a teal one with a broom icon, and an orange one with a torn-edge effect. The background shows a red car driving on a road towards a yellow house in a green field under a blue sky with clouds.

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THE LIVING STATIONS

GDILIVE.COM

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1 • 7 PM

SEAS CATHOLIC CHURCH



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Lady Tigers Roll to First Home Win in Program History

The Groton Area High School girls fastpitch softball team marked a milestone Tuesday night, earning a 15-4 victory over Sisseton in the program's inaugural home opener.

Coming off a tough first outing, the Lady Tigers looked like a completely different team on their home field, something head coach Amanda Bisbee credited to settling in and gaining experience.

"We got our first-game jitters out of the way," Bisbee said. "We were able to get on the field for practice this week, and everything kind of clicked today."

Groton Area jumped out early with two runs in the first inning and continued to build momentum with four runs in the second. The game broke wide open in the third inning when the Lady Tigers erupted for eight runs, before adding one more in the fourth to close out the win.

Kinsley Rowan earned the win in the circle, striking out eight batters. She finished in impressive fashion, ending the game with three straight strikes.

"Way to end the game," Bisbee said. "That's great—first home game, first win."

Offensively, Jayden Penning led the charge with a huge performance at the plate. Penning drove in seven runs and was just inches away from a grand slam, ultimately finishing with multiple extra-base hits including a triple.

"I had to send her," Bisbee said of the near grand slam. "It was the chance—we had to try it. She had some really good hits tonight."

Jerica Locke added a strong effort with a two-RBI double and a single, while Abby Fjeldheim contributed a double. Talli Wright added an RBI, and Nealy Althoff and Makenna Krause each recorded singles as Groton Area's lineup stayed aggressive throughout.

Behind the plate, Libby Cole anchored the defense.

"Libby did an awesome job back there," Bisbee said. "She was a brick wall."

The Lady Tigers also created pressure on the bases with multiple steals and showed flashes defensively, though Bisbee noted there is still room for growth.

"The biggest thing is when we bobble the ball, we can't panic," she said. "We've got to stay composed, make the play and not rush throws. That's where we'll keep improving."

Groton Area's improvement from its season opener to Tuesday's performance was evident, something Bisbee said is part of the process for a young program.

"That's just growth," she said. "We've got to keep learning and getting better."

The Lady Tigers will look to carry that momentum into Thursday when they travel to face Aberdeen Central in a doubleheader at the Aberdeen Dome, weather permitting.

"We're hoping for good roads—school on, game on," Bisbee said.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Dacotah Bank. JVT also provided the internet access for the broadcast.





Russell Olson, Heartland Energy chief executive officer for Heartland Energy, opens the meeting at the Groton Community Center. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Heartland Energy highlights programs, partnerships and development tools at Groton customer meeting

GROTON — Heartland Energy officials used a customer meeting in Groton on Tuesday to update municipal representatives on new programs, economic development tools, cybersecurity resources and legislative issues affecting South Dakota communities.

Russell Olson, Heartland Energy chief executive officer, opened the session by saying the organization is taking meetings directly to the communities it serves, with additional stops planned in Volga, Sioux Falls and New Ulm. He said the goal was to give local officials a chance to hear updates, ask questions and share ideas about how Heartland can better serve its member communities.

Olson said Heartland's financial outlook remains strong and pointed to Valentine, Neb., as an example. He said Valentine recently conducted a national search for an energy partner and ultimately selected Heartland on a 10-year contract. Olson said Heartland's ability to keep energy, capacity and related services under one roof helped set it apart from other providers.

He also highlighted a new partnership with the city of Sioux Falls at Elmwood Golf Course, where Heartland is helping support an electric golf cart facility as part of larger improvements there. Olson said the partnership gives Heartland added visibility and could serve as a model for future summer conferences or smaller gatherings held closer to customer communities.

Ann Hyland, Heartland's chief communications officer, told the group Heartland wanted to keep the format informal and conversational rather than relying on a formal presentation. She reviewed informational materials in attendees' folders and then focused on cybersecurity and the company's Power Forward program.

Hyland urged communities to take advantage of free cybersecurity help available through the South Dakota Attorney General's Office and Dakota State University. She said municipalities can receive a system assessment through Project Boundary Fence and ongoing support through Secure South Dakota. She stressed that communities still using less secure email systems should consider moving to a more secure domain structure.

Hyland also outlined Heartland's Power Forward rebates, saying the company significantly increased incentives last year for electric water heaters and heat pumps. She said rebates now reach \$20 per gallon for qualifying marathon-style water heaters with lifetime warranties, bringing a 50-gallon unit's rebate to \$1,000 and an 85-gallon unit's rebate to \$1,700. Standard electric water heaters also now qualify for rebates, along with electric heat pumps, mini-split systems, EV chargers, commercial lighting and refrigeration.

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eration upgrades.

She said Heartland's Power Forward grants, once heavily used for LED street lighting projects, have evolved to cover a wider range of local improvements. Recent projects have included baseball field lighting, pickleball court conversions and other efforts that improve efficiency or promote electrification.

During discussion, Vern Neal of Plankinton said some local plumbers still appear unaware of the rebate programs, noting that one resident recently had a standard water heater installed without knowing a better rebate option existed. Hyland responded that Heartland created a contractor database last year and mailed program materials to plumbers, HVAC businesses, electricians and contractors, but said the company still relies on local communities to help identify businesses that should be contacted.

Casey Crabtree, Heartland's director of economic development, encouraged cities to contact him whenever a business expansion, new construction project or infrastructure idea emerges. He said Heartland offers a \$5,000 economic development grant for qualifying local projects and also provides growth incentives that effectively spread a year's worth of free electricity over three years for new or expanding businesses.

Crabtree said Heartland's loan programs, supported in part through USDA-related funding, can help with small business projects and local infrastructure needs. He added that larger-scale opportunities, including data center-related projects, continue to emerge, though transmission capacity can limit what some communities can support.

Kelly Dybdahl, Heartland's director of customer relations, reinforced the importance of the state's free cybersecurity services and warned that one municipal customer similar in size to those in attendance had previously suffered a major breach and lost significant money.

Dybdahl also reviewed Heartland's workforce development program, which offers signing bonuses for certain municipal utility and administrative positions, along with tuition reimbursement for employees seeking electric utility training and certification. He said the company also continues to support a personal protective equipment program that provides up to \$400 annually for fire-resistant clothing for workers who operate on or near energized equipment.

McCord Stowater, Director of Market Operations, then explained Western Area Power Administration's renewable energy credit, or REC, program. He said Heartland communities receive federal hydropower allocations through WAPA and may now be able to retire or sell renewable energy credits associated with that power. He said many cities are too small to market the credits effectively on their own, so Heartland can help pool them together to make them more attractive to buyers. Based on a median customer receiving about 7,000 RECs annually, he said the value could amount to several thousand dollars in added revenue without direct cost to the city.

The meeting also included remarks from Mike Bockorny, chief executive officer of the Economic Development Professionals Association of South Dakota. Bockorny said the organization focuses on networking, training and legislative work, and he urged local officials to make use of their membership.

He said three issues continue to surface year after year across South Dakota communities: housing, child care and workforce. Bockorny reviewed several legislative items from the most recent session, including changes to the Housing Infrastructure Fund that allow loans to cover up to 50 percent of project costs, which he said should make the fund more usable for local housing developments.

He also discussed recent tax increment financing legislation, saying efforts to restrict TIFs were largely turned back and replaced with a compromise bill that keeps the tool available while adding more clarity and requiring a third-party review of project numbers.

Bockorny spent considerable time discussing a new Community Area Projects Sales Tax, or CAPS, program that becomes effective July 1. He said the program allows a municipality, with voter approval, to impose up to an additional 1 percent local sales tax for up to five years to pay for major infrastructure or community projects. He said the program is designed around local control, requiring a community board, public input and 60 percent voter approval before the tax can be used. He suggested the tool could help communities pay for items such as water or wastewater upgrades, community centers, childcare centers, parks, EMS facilities or other major public improvements without incurring as much long-term interest expense.

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Before the meeting concluded, Heartland officials reminded attendees about ballots for the Customer Connections Committee and said they plan to re-engage that group more actively in the coming year. Hyland also encouraged communities to watch for nomination emails for Heartland's Community Spark Award, which recognizes small businesses making a difference in their towns. She noted that Paul Kosel and the Groton Independent received the award last year for the newspaper's impact on the community.

Dustin Graham of Miller also gave a brief update on the South Dakota Municipal Electric Association, saying the group continues to search for an executive director and hopes to increase networking, wage and infrastructure resources for members. He encouraged officials to attend upcoming conferences, golf outings and other events, saying those gatherings often lead to useful contacts and practical solutions for local utilities.

Olson closed the meeting by thanking attendees for taking time to participate and said Heartland plans to continue offering similar events aimed at helping customer communities grow.

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

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Legislators plan to learn about Native American health care, emergency services, disability care

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

South Dakota lawmakers plan to learn more about emergency medical services, Native American health care and services for disabled people ahead of the next legislative session.

After the annual session ends in March, legislative leaders typically identify a few issues to delve into as “summer studies” before the next session in January. This year, lawmakers adopted legislation creating a committee and two task forces, and the legislative Executive Board decided Monday against creating any additional summer study committees.

Several lawmakers are also on the governor’s Correctional Rehabilitation Task Force, which was created last year and will continue meeting ahead of the 2027 legislative session. That group is seeking ways to reduce the number of people who return to prison after their release.

“It seems like we have plenty of work to discuss and move forward with next year,” said Rep. Brian Mulder, R-Sioux Falls.

Tribal-managed Medicaid model ‘better than our current model,’ sponsor says

One of the task forces created by the Legislature will study “the creation of Indian Medicaid managed care entities.”

Rosebud Sioux Tribe President Kathleen Wooden Knife called on lawmakers at the beginning of the legislative session to support tribal efforts to establish the model, which she said has the potential to improve outcomes and efficiencies for tribal members on and off the state’s reservations.

In such a model, tribes could contract with the state of South Dakota to direct federal Medicaid dollars into a pool of funds for health care. An entity of the tribes’ choosing could negotiate costs with off-reservation providers and coordinate care — including preventative care or incentives for healthy habits — for tribal members who seek care on or off tribal land.

“When we stand together for health care, our Sioux Nation tribes, working with the state, can bring the strongest health care resources to the table to improve health care for Native Americans,” Wooden Knife said.

Rep. Will Mortenson, R-Fort Pierre, is a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and is co-chair of the State-Tribal Relations Committee. He introduced the bill to create the task force this session, saying it was a product of the committee and tribal communities.

“It has the potential for significantly improved health outcomes, and I personally believe that it fulfills the treaty obligations for health care in Indian Country better than our current model,” Mortenson said during the session. “A lot of tribal members wind up on state Medicaid rolls, and the state’s obligation it was never intended to be.”

The state Department of Social Services will lead the task force through November 2028, with four members of the Legislature among the members appointed to the task force.

Legislature creates multi-year committee overseeing Medicaid waiver programs

Senate President Pro Tempore Chris Karr, R-Sioux Falls, introduced the bill this session that will create the Developmental Disability Service Delivery Committee. The committee is a product of a summer study last year focused on improving efficiencies between the state and community support providers.

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The committee will be tasked with reviewing South Dakota's Medicaid waiver programs, which allow elderly or disabled people to receive Medicaid-covered care in their homes instead of institutions, and how the state Department of Human Services operates the waivers.

Recommendations made during last year's summer study "will take time," Karr said during the session, adding that the extended, dedicated committee will oversee the continuity and impact of waiver changes and improve transparency about the state Department of Human Services' changes.

The committee will meet through 2029.

Task force to study how to make emergency medical services 'essential,' sustainable

South Dakota doesn't recognize emergency medical services as "essential" under state law. That didn't change this legislative session, after a legislator-led summer study on emergency medical services concluded last year that the state should add the designation. A legal designation of "essential" would put the onus on state or local units of government to guarantee availability.

Instead, lawmakers passed a bill that will create a task force to examine financially sustainable options for counties and cities to support emergency medical services if they're designated as an essential service.

Rosebud Democratic Rep. Eric Emery, who works in emergency medical services, introduced a failed bill in 2025 to designate ambulance services as essential and to collect fees from convicted drunken drivers to pay for it. He was a prime sponsor of this year's legislation.

"South Dakotans already rely on EMS as an essential service, and it's the responsibility of the Legislature to make sure that infrastructure is sustainable," Emery said during the legislative session.

School insurance costs floated as research topic

Legislative leaders plan to request a few research papers from the Legislative Research Council on additional topics. One suggestion included understanding and addressing the rise in school district insurance costs in recent years.

House Majority Leader Scott Odenbach, R-Spearfish, said he's been researching the topic on his own, but believes a paper from research staff "could make a possible bill much easier."

The study topic was suggested by the House Education Committee, said House Minority Leader Erin Healy, D-Sioux Falls. The committee heard concerns about school district insurance costs contributing to higher school budgets and higher property taxes to fund those budgets.

"It's a topic of conversation we're going to have to address sooner or later," Healy said.

The Legislature's Executive Board will finalize issue memo topics at their next meeting in April.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan who regularly reports on the intersection of politics and policy with health, education, social services and Indigenous affairs. Her work with South Dakota Searchlight earned her the title of South Dakota's Outstanding Young Journalist in 2024, and she was a 2024 finalist for the national Livingston Awards.

Summit sold its Midwest pipeline as a carbon solution. Now, it'll be used for fossil fuels.

The pivot reveals a company adapting to Trump's 'drill, baby, drill' agenda and looking to cash in on recently boosted tax incentives for enhanced oil recovery.

BY: ANIKA JANE BEAMER, INSIDE CLIMATE NEWS

For four years, battles over private property rights have gridlocked state legislatures across the Midwest and stalled plans for a pipeline to transport liquified carbon dioxide from ethanol plants in the region.

In the background of this eminent domain standoff, Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions, the company behind the pipeline, has quietly shifted its focus from carbon sequestration to fossil fuel extraction.

Summit now says its pipeline will be used to drive domestic oil and gas production in a process known as enhanced oil recovery (EOR), which injects CO₂ gas into wells. The gas mixes with oil in the rock pores to produce a thinner, easier-to-pump fluid, potentially doubling the amount of oil that can be extracted from a reservoir.

Just a few years ago, Summit's website stated that the project wouldn't be used for EOR. Instead, it advertised the pipeline as a way to cut emissions through underground sequestration. Soon after, Summit heralded it as a critical step in developing lower-carbon sustainable aviation fuel.

But as the company struggles to advance its pipeline out of a permitting quagmire and faces legal battles over property rights in Iowa, North Dakota and South Dakota, it finds itself in a starkly different energy market and political landscape.

The company's messaging now parallels President Donald Trump's "drill, baby, drill" policies, which seek to bolster American fossil fuel production while reversing progress on renewable energy and loosening restrictions on the greenhouse gas pollution damaging the climate.

Opponents of the pipeline have criticized Summit's shift, arguing that the company will say whatever it takes to get the project over the finish line.

"It's just whatever's convenient for them in the moment," said Jess Mazour, the conservation coordinator for the Iowa Chapter of the Sierra Club.

In late 2024, the organization filed a lawsuit challenging the Iowa Utilities Commission's approval of Summit's permit.

Summit did not respond to repeated email and phone requests for comment on the company's pivot.

The climate pitch

Summit Carbon Solutions is a subsidiary of the Iowa-based private equity firm Summit Agricultural Group, which owns nearly 14,000 acres of farmland in the state. Both companies are founded and chaired by Iowa's Bruce Rastetter, an agribusiness entrepreneur known for his frequent donations to state and federal Republican candidates and campaigns.

When Summit first filed a petition to construct its "Midwest Carbon Express" pipeline with the Iowa Utilities Commission, it was 2021, the first year of the climate-focused Biden administration. The company proposed transporting liquified CO₂ from ethanol plants in the state to be stored underground in North Dakota.

At the time, the company's argument for the pipeline was two-pronged: Carbon capture technology would cut greenhouse gas emissions and open new, lower-carbon fuel markets for corn and ethanol, boosting a struggling Midwest farm economy.

Using the Internet Archive, a nonprofit digital library, Inside Climate News analyzed how Summit's language on the project website evolved over time.

In 2021, the site urgently called for net-zero CO₂ emissions by 2050 and told visitors that "a dramatic increase in carbon capture and storage" would be critical to achieving net-zero and staying within 1.5 degrees Celsius of global warming, a goal set in the Paris Agreement.

Through 2023, Summit continued to emphasize carbon neutrality, estimating that the project would

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prevent the release of 12 million metric tons of CO₂ to the atmosphere every year.

For years, Summit advertised that the pipeline would have an annual emissions-reduction impact equivalent to taking 2.6 million vehicles off the road. In fact, the project arose largely out of a need to stay competitive in a changing automotive industry.

Rising U.S. demand for electric vehicles after 2018 put the squeeze on an already plateauing ethanol industry, the final destination for some 35 percent of all U.S. corn grown in 2025, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

From the beginning of the pipeline project, Summit argued that lowering ethanol's carbon index was essential to keeping the fuel competitive in places with renewable fuel standards and protecting corn demand for farmers already struggling to make a profit. For a while, Summit wanted to compete in the sustainable aviation fuel market, which produces lower-emission jet fuel from low-carbon ethanol.

In 2023, Summit Agricultural Group launched another subsidiary, Summit Next Gen, and announced plans to develop the world's largest ethanol-to-sustainable aviation fuel plant in Texas' Port Houston. The company purchased a 60-acre site for the plant in September 2024 but have announced no updates about the project since then.

Lucrative business

While Summit advertised its pipeline as a way for corn growers to tap the pocketbooks of increasingly climate-conscious consumers and transportation sectors, the approach also made sense for the company's bottom line.

The federal government has long offered generous tax credits for carbon capture and storage technology in an effort to cut greenhouse gas emissions and jump-start development of the expensive and relatively unproven infrastructure.

Congress significantly expanded the tax credit for carbon sequestration in 2018 and again in 2022, offering up to \$85 per metric ton of CO₂ captured and permanently stored. Carbon captured for use in enhanced oil recovery also qualified for tax credits—though slightly smaller ones, up to \$65 per metric ton.

For years, Summit was adamant that it would not pursue those smaller tax incentives. A "Get The Facts" page on Summit's website told visitors from late 2022 through mid-2024 that the "Summit Carbon Solutions project will not be used for enhanced oil recovery." Instead, at that time, the company emphasized the pipeline's importance in reducing carbon emissions and limiting global warming.

Summit's public-facing climate pitch was strategic, said Brian Jorde, a lawyer representing Midwest landowners in legal challenges to Summit's permit applications. "They leaned into sequestration," he said. "But they only designed that business model because that was the most lucrative at the time."

In fact, after the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act beefed-up tax incentives for carbon capture, Summit signed deals to add 25 ethanol facilities to its proposed pipeline, bringing the total metric tons of CO₂ to be transported each year to 16 million. All that CO₂ under contract meant that Summit stood to recover as much as \$1.5 billion in potential tax credits each year.

Abandoning decarbonization

Early in Trump's second term, however, the carbon conversation took a turn.

In a barrage of attacks on existing environmental and climate policy, Trump gutted incentives for renewable energy projects, invested in carbon-intensive energy sources like coal and oil, opened swaths of public land to mining and drilling, and reversed a key federal finding that linked greenhouse gas emissions to human health.

While simultaneously halting government action on what he's called "the climate hoax" and kneecapping development of affordable renewables like solar and wind, Trump says he wants to usher in an era of American "energy dominance."

Trump's sweeping One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 also increased tax incentives for CO₂ emissions captured and used in enhanced oil recovery. Now, whether a project captures carbon for permanent stor-

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age or to drive fossil fuel production, it receives the same credits.

In a complete departure from plans made just a few years ago, Summit has been quick to adapt to the new political realities. Early this year, the company scrubbed the phrases "climate change" and "global warming" from its website.

Instead, a new page announces Summit's plans to become "the critical CO2 supply artery for America's most prolific oil and gas basins," the Powder River Basin in Montana and Wyoming, the Bakken Formation spanning parts of North Dakota and Montana and the Permian Basin of Texas and New Mexico.

These regions will depend on CO2 to sustain oil and gas production in the future, Summit wrote, and the pipeline will support "America's long-term goal of energy dominance."

For several years, Kathy Stockdale has driven over an hour from her home in Iowa Falls to the state Capitol every week to demand that lawmakers ban the use of eminent domain for carbon pipelines statewide. She bakes cookies for the lawmakers; they're more likely to interact with the anti-pipeline advocates that way, she says.

In mid-January, Stockdale spoke with Rastetter, Summit's CEO, who was visiting the Capitol with Jake Ketzner, a lobbyist for the company. Rastetter told Stockdale, who recorded the conversation, that Summit planned to use the carbon pipeline for both direct storage and enhanced oil recovery.

"Where are you planning on using it for enhanced oil recovery?" Stockdale asked during the conversation.

Both Rastetter and Ketzner responded, "Wyoming."

Summit did not respond to questions from Inside Climate News about that conversation.

The company's embrace of enhanced oil recovery is likely an economic decision made in response to Trump's modification of federal tax credits, said Matt Fry, director of the Center for Energy Regulation and Policy Analysis at the University of Wyoming and former policy and technical director at the Great Plains Institute, where he supported carbon capture, utilization and storage projects in the region.

Though Summit emphasized permanent carbon storage in the project's early years, EOR was never off the table for its executives, Fry said.

"If you've ever listened to them talk at conferences, or read some of their old interviews, they never said that they were opposed to it. They always said that it was an option and the market would kind of dictate things," he said.

The tax credits that offer equal incentives for enhanced oil recovery and permanent storage projects have altered the market, said Fry. "I think the new 'energy dominance' policy, if you will, probably plays a little bit into [Summit's] new motivation," he said.

Fry doesn't see Summit backing away from enhanced oil recovery now. Oil and gas are critical to making a dizzying array of everyday and specialty products, not just fuel for the transportation sector. He doesn't see the drilling industry going away.

And if fossil fuel production is to continue, demand for CO2-enhanced oil recovery will likely grow as well, Fry said. As old basins produce less and less oil with traditional extraction technology, "I think we're going to have to deploy EOR, from a production perspective," he said. "I think that the market's going to drive it."

Jorde, the lawyer representing landowners, thinks that Summit in fact planned to pursue EOR from the outset of the pipeline, but that admitting so "wouldn't have been the best path to getting the project approved."

'Permission to explore all options'

While Summit changed their story online, a series of permitting roadblocks on the ground may have also propelled the pivot.

South Dakota banned the use of eminent domain for siting carbon pipelines in 2025, creating a hurdle in the Summit pipeline's planned route to North Dakota. Further complicating the terrain, this month a North Dakota judge revoked a permit from Summit that would have allowed it to store CO2 underground in the state.

Those decisions, in turn, are imperiling Summit's permit in Iowa which binds the pipeline to its original

route. Summit petitioned the Iowa Utilities Commission in September 2025 to amend the terms of its permit and remove mentions of a specific route or destination.

Summit is now considering destinations in Nebraska, Wyoming, Colorado and Kansas, Bret Dublinske, an attorney for the company, said in an Iowa district court hearing in September. "We're asking for permission to explore all options," he said.

Jorde does not believe the permit can be altered so substantially. "This obvious pivot ... should completely invalidate that application," Jorde said. "The Iowa Utilities Commission should just take that action without any motion, simply nullify the permit and then force them to start over and tell us who they really are once and for all."

In a cease-and-desist letter that Summit Carbon Solutions sent to the Sierra Club's Mazour in late 2024 over comments she'd made to members of the press, the company stated that \$1 billion had already been invested in the project. Summit did not respond to multiple requests for an updated version of that figure.

Mazour isn't sure the solution is as simple as Summit being forthright about plans for the pipeline.

"I don't even know if they know what they're going to do," said Mazour. "I think they're just trying to put all the cards out on the table and figure out which one might work and then go with that one."

Anika Jane Beamer covers the environment and climate change in Iowa, with a particular focus on water, soil and CAFOs. A lifelong Midwesterner, she writes about changing ecosystems from one of the most transformed landscapes on the continent. She holds a master's degree in science writing from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as well as a bachelor's degree in biology and Spanish from Grinnell College. She is a former Outrider Fellow at Inside Climate News and was named a Taylor-Blakeslee Graduate Fellow by the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing.

Trump signs order seeking to curb vote-by-mail in bid to control state election laws

BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN

President Donald Trump signed a sweeping executive order on Tuesday that attempts to restrict mail-in voting, a White House priority certain to face significant legal challenges.

The order directs the U.S. Department of Homeland Security along with the Social Security Administration to compile a list of voting-age American citizens in each state and share it with state election officials. The order also requires the U.S. Postal Service to only send and receive ballots that include tracking barcodes.

Trump's order represents a major escalation in his effort to assert presidential control over elections, which under the U.S. Constitution are administered by the states. Trump last year attempted to unilaterally impose a proof of citizenship requirement to vote in federal elections in an executive order that was blocked in federal court.

The move also reflects a long-held focus by Trump and his allies on noncitizen voters. Studies have shown noncitizen voting is extremely rare.

"I think this will help a lot with elections," Trump said.

National database of adult citizens

Homeland Security operates the SAVE system, a powerful computer program that can verify citizenship. DHS has previously invited states to run their voter rolls through SAVE, which flags voters as potential noncitizens. Some election officials criticize the system, saying it wrongly identifies U.S. citizens as possibly ineligible.

The U.S. Department of Justice as recently as last week denied any efforts to create a national voter registration list. While the executive order does not explicitly mandate the creation of a voter list, it essentially marks an effort by the White House to create a national database of adult U.S. citizens.

The order requires Homeland Security to enable states to routinely supplement or suggest changes to

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each state's citizenship list. Federal officials would also be required to allow individuals to access their own records and update or correct them ahead of elections.

Under the executive order, the postmaster general must propose rules to require all outbound ballot mail to be sent in an envelope that includes a barcode for tracking. The order also requires that states must inform the U.S. Postal Service at least 90 days before federal elections whether they intend to allow ballots to be sent through the mail.

"Instead of focusing on lowering the cost of energy, groceries, and health care, Donald Trump is desperately attempting to take over and rig our elections and avoid accountability in November," U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla, a California Democrat, said in a statement shortly after Trump announced the order. "This executive order is a blatant, unconstitutional abuse of power."

SAVE America Act

Trump has pushed Congress to pass the SAVE America Act, which would require individuals to produce documents, such as a passport or birth certificate, proving their citizenship in order to register to vote. The U.S. Senate is debating the bill, but it appears unlikely to have enough support to overcome a filibuster.

Trump has repeatedly asked Republicans to add three provisions to the bill, including restrictions on mail-in voting, with exceptions for members of the military, people who are ill and those on vacation.

The president has also previously promised to advance voting restrictions, with or without Congress. Earlier this month, Trump voted by mail in Florida.

The executive order directs the Justice Department and other federal agencies to withhold federal funds from non-compliant states and localities "where such withholding is authorized by law."

Tuesday's order is certain to face legal challenges. The Constitution gives Congress — not the president by executive order — the power to override state election regulations.

Marc Elias, a prominent voting rights litigator, promised to fight the executive order.

"If Trump signs an unconstitutional Executive Order to take over voting, we will sue," Elias wrote on social media. "I don't bluff and I usually win."

Republican National Committee Chairman Joe Grunters praised the order, saying Trump was restoring voter confidence. "Protecting America's ballot box isn't optional — it's the foundation of our republic," Grunters said.

DOJ lawsuits against states

The Justice Department has sued 29 states and the District of Columbia for copies of their voter rolls that contain sensitive personal information on voters, such as driver's licenses and partial Social Security numbers. About a dozen states have voluntarily provided the data, but most are fighting the demands in court.

Three federal judges have so far ruled against the Justice Department. The administration is appealing and in court documents has argued that swift court decisions are necessary to ensure the security and fairness of the midterms.

The Trump administration has said the data is necessary to verify only citizens are registered to vote. Last week, a Justice Department lawyer confirmed in court that voter data would be shared with Homeland Security.

"Some may freak out about this, but honestly, this is hilarious," David Becker, executive director of the nonpartisan Center for Election Innovation & Research and a former U.S. Department of Justice Voting Section attorney, wrote on social media about the Trump order.

"It's clearly unconstitutional, will be blocked immediately, and the only thing it will accomplish is to make liberal lawyers wealthier. He might as well sign an EO banning gravity."

Jennifer Shutt contributed to this report.

Jonathan Shorman covers democracy for States Newsroom. Based in Kansas City, his coverage area includes elections and voting rights, fights over state and federal power, civil liberties and more. An alumnus of the University of Kansas, he previously covered politics for The Kansas City Star.

As gas spikes to an average \$4 a gallon, Hegseth says Iran ground war still an option

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — The White House defended skyrocketing gas prices Tuesday as a “short-term disruption” during the ongoing war in Iran, as Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth said the administration will not “foreclose any option” in the conflict, including boots on the ground.

Briefing publicly for the first time since March 19, Hegseth said it will be “the president’s determination alone” when the war objectives are complete and the “upcoming days will be decisive.” Hegseth also said the administration’s negotiations with Iran are “ongoing, they’re active, and, I think, gaining strength.”

Five weeks in, the war continues to rock economies across the globe and at home, where the national average for gasoline hit \$4 a gallon for the first time in four years, according to data from AAA.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt released a statement saying that “When Operation Epic Fury is complete, gas prices will plummet back to the multi-year lows American drivers enjoyed before these short-term disruptions.”

President Donald Trump, she said, “remains committed to fully unleashing American energy dominance, lowering costs, and putting more money back in the pockets of hardworking American families.”

Shortly after the White House issued its statement, Iran’s parliament speaker, Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, posted a link on X to a CNN article about soaring U.S. gas prices, writing “Sad, but this is what happens when your leaders put others ahead of hard-working and ordinary Americans.”

Blockade drives up global prices

Iran’s blockade on U.S. and allied ships at the Strait of Hormuz, a major passage for petroleum and liquid natural gas, has wreaked havoc on global energy markets. As of Tuesday at 12:45 p.m. Eastern, Brent crude oil, the international standard, was trading just over \$119 a barrel.

Between 2,000 and 3,000 cargo vessels and oil tankers, along with roughly 20,000 crew, remain stuck in the Persian Gulf, according to the United Nations and open source data, including MarineTraffic.

Trump claimed during a Cabinet meeting Thursday that Iran has agreed to allow eight to 10 Pakistani oil tankers through. On Sunday, the president said 20.

According to the Joint Maritime Information Center, only four large tankers transmitting location data had crossed the Hormuz Strait on Friday and Saturday.

US troops

Hegseth said the White House will not rule out any options, including ground operations, but declined to provide detail at the Pentagon briefing.

“You can’t fight and win a war if you tell your adversary what you are willing to do, or what you are not willing to do — to include boots on the ground. Our adversary right now thinks there are 15 different ways we could come at them with boots on the ground. And guess what? There are. So if we needed to, we could execute those options on behalf of the president of the United States and this department, or maybe we don’t have to use them at all. Maybe negotiations work,” Hegseth said.

Trump told reporters Sunday on Air Force One that negotiations with Iran are happening “directly and indirectly” and are “very good.”

“We’re doing extremely well,” the president said. “But you never know with Iran because we negotiate with them, and then we always have to blow ‘em up.”

Trump has repeatedly threatened to bomb Iran’s energy infrastructure, and has set a self-imposed deadline of April 6 to do so if Iran doesn’t meet his demands.

On Monday night, the president posted on his social media platform, Truth Social, a video of a U.S. strike on an ammunition depot in Iran’s central province of Isfahan.

Spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry Esmail Baqaei denied any talks with the United States, according to Iranian state media Tasmin New Agency.

Up to 3,500 U.S. Marines and sailors arrived in the region Saturday, according to U.S. Central Command. The U.S. now reportedly has roughly 50,000 troops in the region — that’s 10,000 up from the usually

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40,000 or so peacetime members of the armed forces stationed there.

Ghalibaf said Sunday an American ground offensive would result in "severe punishment," according to state media.

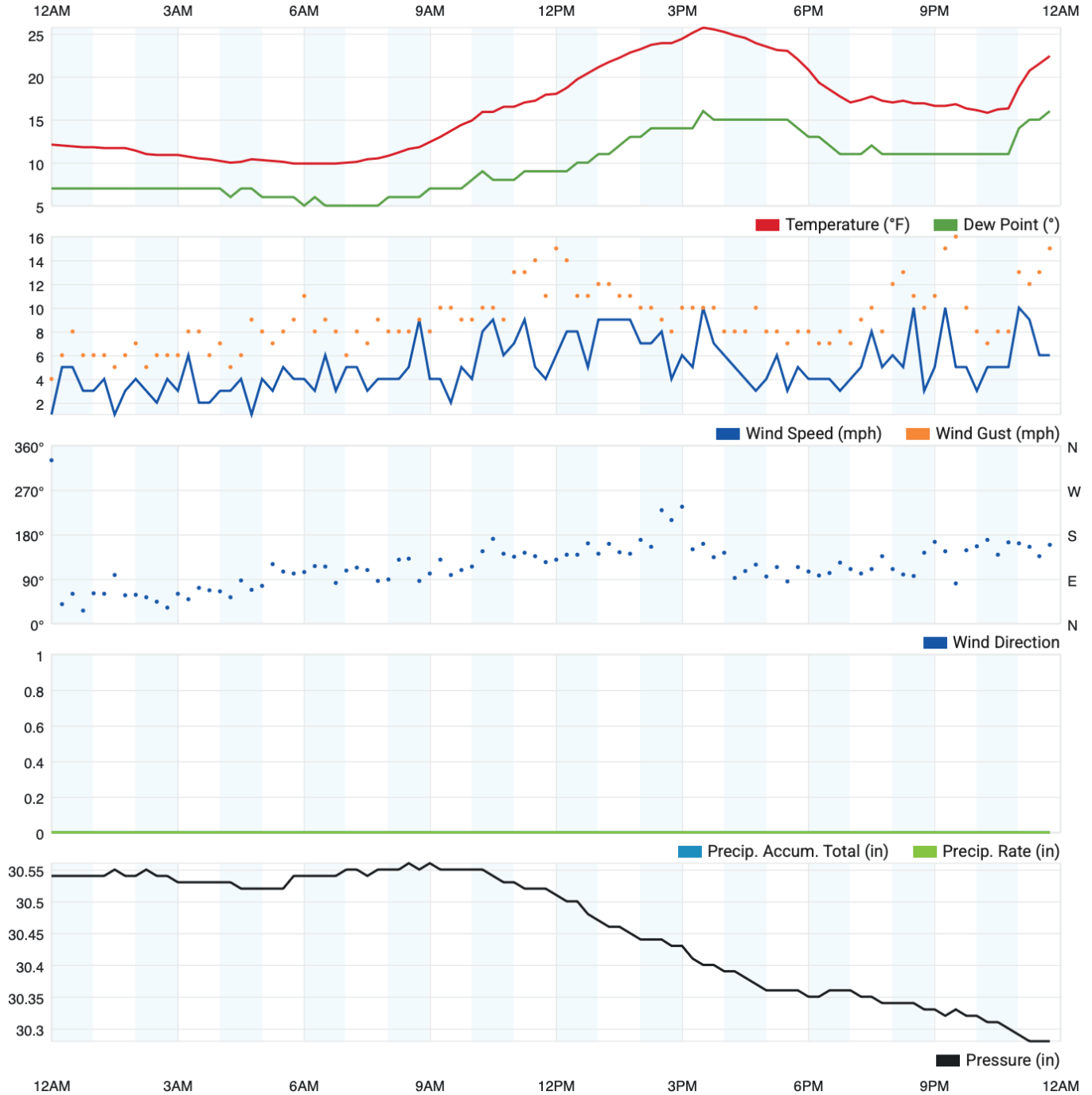
More than 300,000 American troops were in the region during the U.S. ground invasion of Iraq, according to historical data archived by the Council on Foreign Relations.

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

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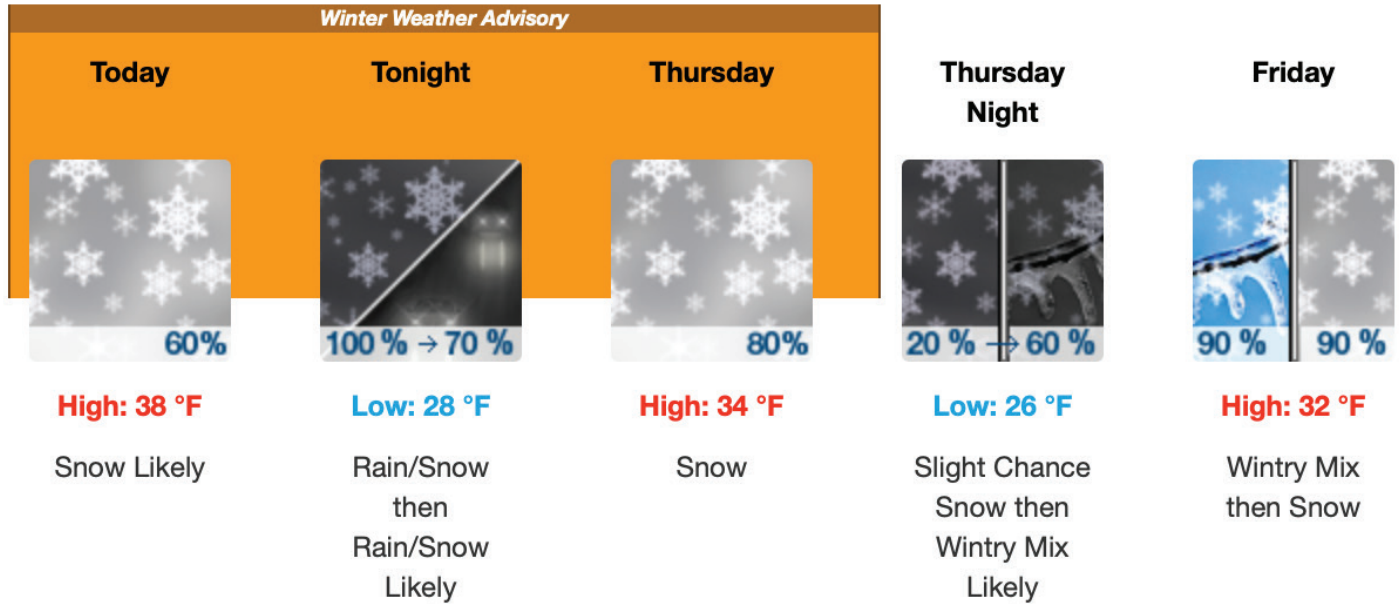
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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Wintry Weather Possible Wednesday & Thursday March 31, 2026 3:44 PM

Precipitation will mainly be snow with a rain/snow mix possible during the afternoon/evening hours

Key Messages

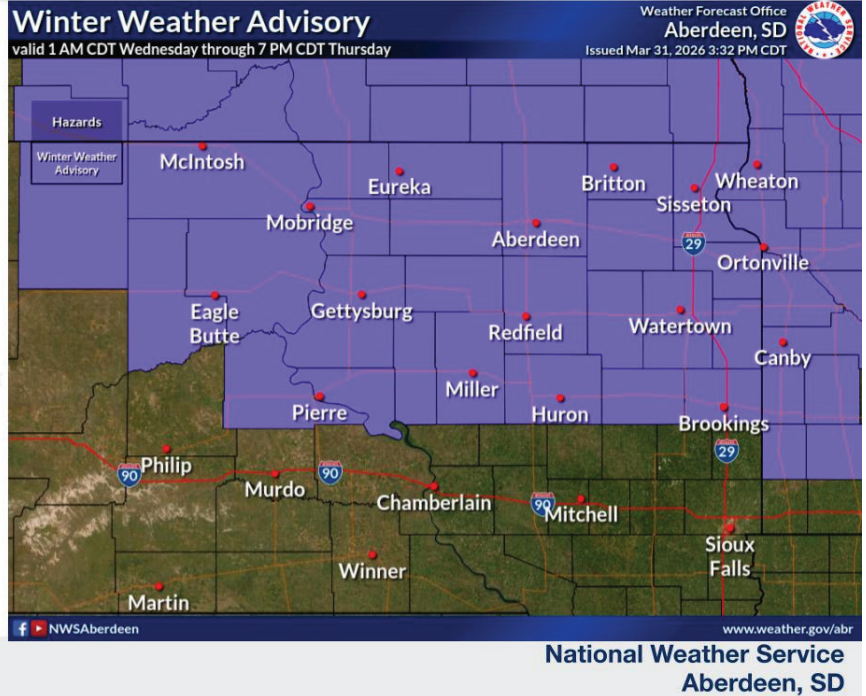
- 1st round of accumulating snow possible Wednesday into Thursday
 - 65-80% chance of 4"+ of snow across north central and northeastern SD into west central MN
 - Light freezing rain possible in east-central SD
- East winds 15-30 mph across central SD Wednesday
 - Patchy blowing snow with some drifting and slight visibility reductions but whiteout conditions not expected
- 2nd round of accumulating snow and rain/snow mix possible Friday into Saturday

NEW What Has Changed

- Winter Weather Advisory has been issued
- Snow totals increased

Next Scheduled Update

- Wednesday Morning



National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

A Winter Weather Advisory has been issued for north central and northeast SD into west central MN starting at 1 AM Wednesday morning. There is a 65-80% chance of more than 4 inches of snow across this area, with some freezing rain possible across east central SD. Winds will gust out of the east between 15 and 30 mph which will result in some drifting snow but whiteout conditions are not expected at this time.

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Precipitation Timing & Type

March 31, 2026
3:44 PM

Precipitation will mainly be snow with a rain/snow mix possible during the afternoon/evening hours

Key Messages

- **Precipitation will start tonight and continue into Thursday**
 - Starts as snow
 - As temperatures warm through the day, the snow may transition to rain/snow mix or freezing rain.
- **Wintry mix/ Freezing rain** possible in south central and east-central SD Wednesday afternoon into the evening
 - East central SD most likely to see a light glaze to a tenth or two of ice from freezing rain

	4/1 Wed								4/2 Thu								
	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	12am	3am	6am	9am	12pm	3pm	6pm	9pm	
McIntosh			30%	80%	75%	85%	55%	85%	85%	85%	80%	80%	55%	55%	25%	45%	45%
Eureka			75%	80%	80%	80%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	70%	70%	30%	30%		
Mobridge			80%	80%	80%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	55%	55%		30%	30%	
Britton				50%	50%	70%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	80%	80%	60%	60%		
Wheaton					30%	55%	75%	75%	80%	80%	85%	85%	85%	70%	70%	30%	
Sisseton					35%	35%	65%	80%	80%	85%	85%	85%	85%	65%	65%		
Eagle Butte			55%	55%	80%	85%	80%	80%	80%	85%	85%	85%	40%	40%	50%	50%	
Gettysburg			35%	70%	60%	85%	85%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	60%	60%	30%	30%	
Webster			30%	45%	50%	75%	85%	85%	90%	90%	90%	85%	85%	55%	55%		
Aberdeen			60%	65%	65%	70%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	80%	80%	40%	40%		
Pierre			50%	40%	60%	85%	80%	85%	85%	85%	80%	80%	45%	45%	45%	45%	
Miller			40%	40%	45%	75%	85%	90%	90%	90%	85%	85%	75%	75%			
Murdo			35%	55%	45%	70%	75%	85%	85%	85%	80%	80%	40%	40%	60%	60%	
Chamberlain			20%	35%	30%	45%	65%	80%	90%	90%	90%	80%	80%	50%	60%	30%	30%
Clark				50%	40%	45%	85%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	30%	80%	40%	40%	
Milbank					30%	25%	70%	85%	85%	85%	85%	85%	35%	85%	60%	60%	
Redfield				65%	45%	50%	85%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	30%	80%	30%	30%	
Watertown				35%	40%	40%	80%	90%	90%	90%	90%	90%	35%	85%	50%	50%	

- Rain + - Wintry Mix + - Snow +



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD



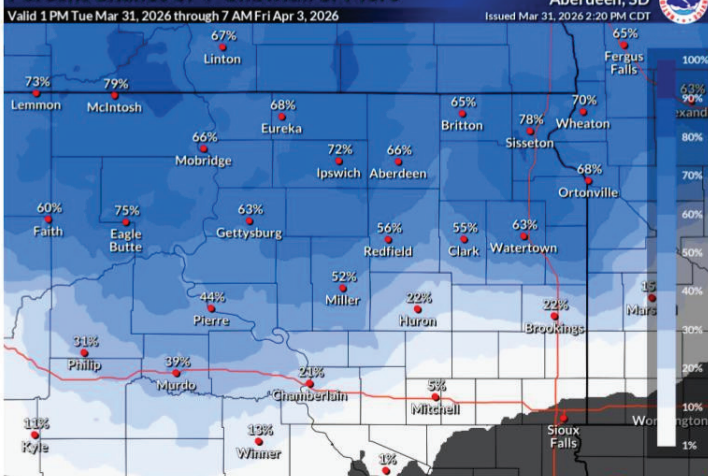
Snowfall Probabilities Wed into Thu

March 31, 2026
3:44 PM

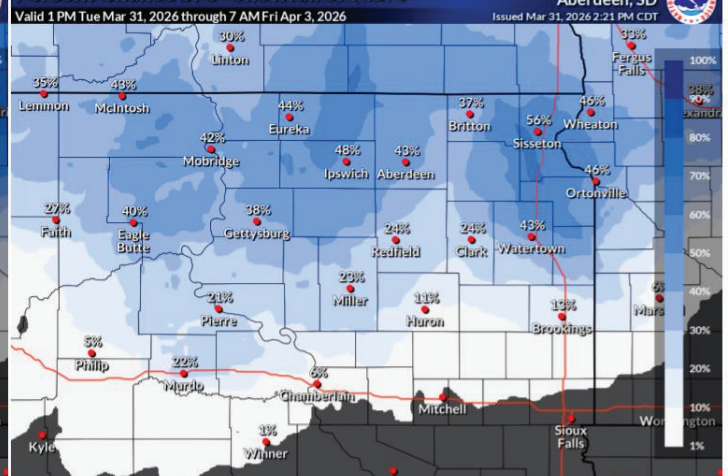
Accumulating snow most likely across central/north-central SD and northeast SD/west-central MN

- Snow starts late tonight across central SD and then spreads to northeastern SD early Wednesday. Patchy blowing snow possible over central SD late tonight into Wednesday
- Snow mixes with rain Wednesday afternoon/night with light freezing rain possible across east-central SD (Watertown area) early Thursday
- There is still uncertainty in these snowfall expectations due to either melting and/or how much rain gets mixed into the situation

Percent Chance of 4" Snowfall or More



Percent Chance of 6" Snowfall or More



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

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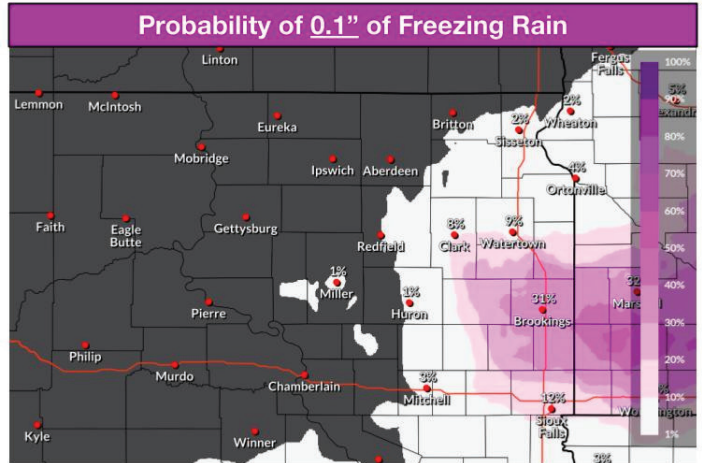
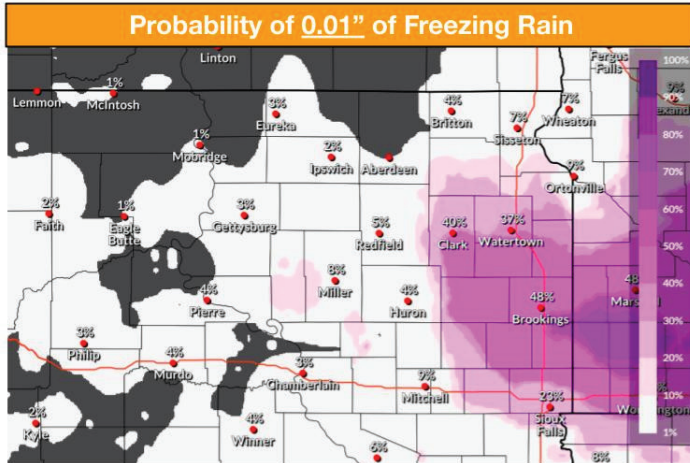
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Probability of Freezing Rain Amounts

March 31, 2026
3:44 PM

Change from snow to potential freezing rain or rain/snow mix



- Due to a dependence upon on how quickly temperatures at the surface will cool down, there is some uncertainty as to how much freezing rain or rain/snow mix will occur.
 - Despite this uncertainty, east central South Dakota has the best chances for freezing rain accumulation, with a 30-50% chance for 0.01", and 20-30% chance for 0.1" or more in places.
- Freezing rain and melty/slushy snow may make roads slippery and travel difficult! Use caution if you are traveling!



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

There is still some uncertainty as to how much freezing rain will occur due to dependence on surface temperatures. However, east central SD has the best chance for freezing rain accumulations with a 30-50% chance for a hundredth of an inch or more and a 20-30% chance for a tenth of an inch or more. Freezing rain and melting snow may make roads slippery. Use caution when driving.

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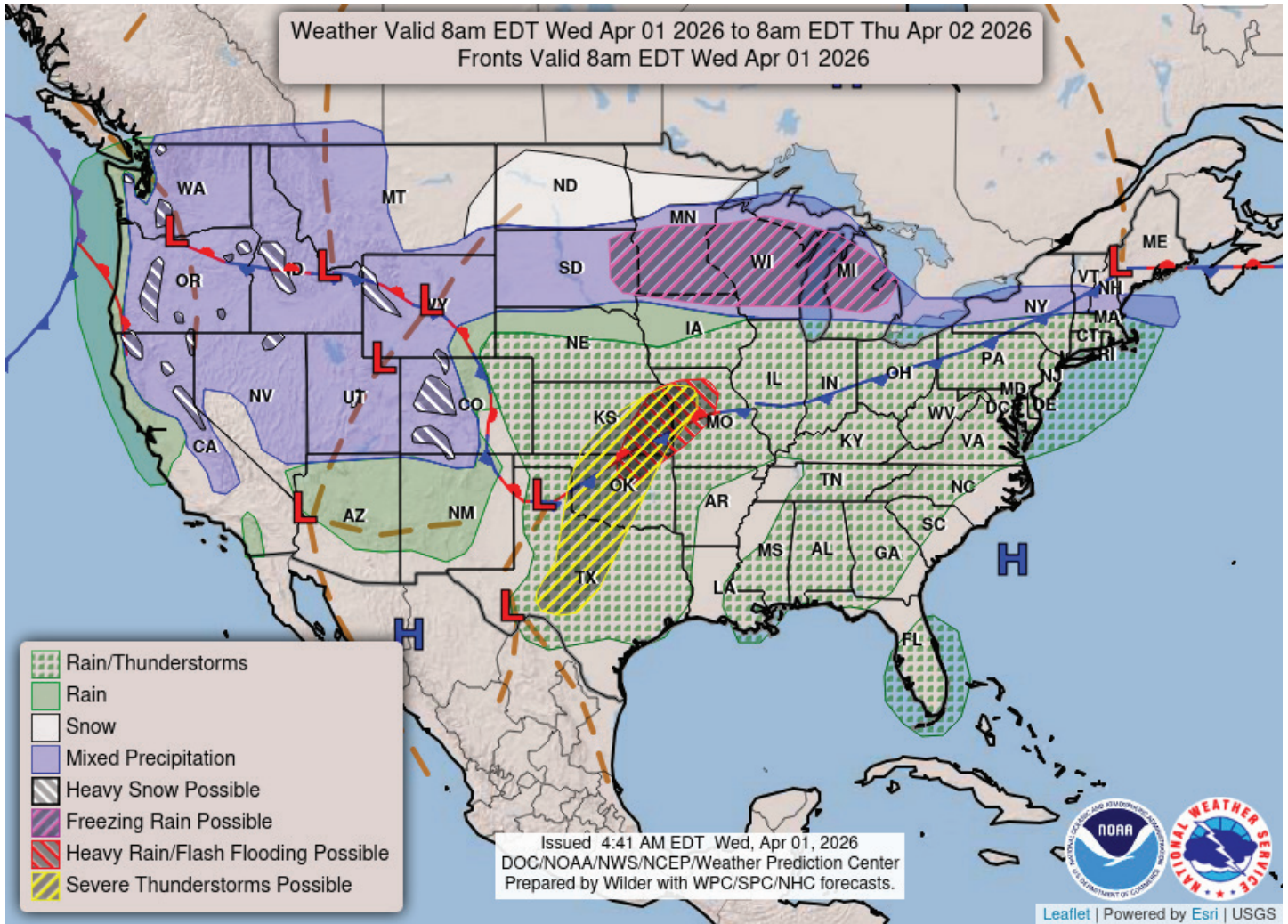
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 40 °F at 4:06 PM
Low Temp: 30 °F at 5:06 AM
Wind: 26 mph at 9:42 AM
Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 80 in 1928
Record Low: -0 in 1899
Average High: 51
Average Low: 26
Average Precip in April.: 0.04
Precip to date in April.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 2.10
Precip Year to Date: 1.62
Sunset Tonight: 7.59 pm
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:10 am



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Today in Weather History

April 1st, 1960: Heavy snow of 4 to 10 inches fell in the eastern half of South Dakota. Some highways were closed mainly due to the difficulty plowing the heavy, wet snow. The snowfall in the Aberdeen area, which received 7.5 inches, set the record for April 1st and caused short-term power and phone failures. Snow with a high water content aggravated floods that were currently in progress on the James, Vermillion, and Big Sioux Rivers.

April 1-13th, 2011: Snowmelt flooding in March continued across much of central and northeast South Dakota as the rest of the snowpack melted into early April. Many roads, along with many acres of crop and pastureland, remained flooded. Roads, culverts, and bridges were damaged across the region. Several roads were washed out, and many were closed. Many homes were threatened, and some were surrounded by water. Rising lake levels in northeast South Dakota also threatened and flooded many homes. Many people had to use four-wheelers to get to their homes. The total damage estimates, including March, were from 4.5 to 5 million dollars for the area. The flooding diminished across much of the region into May.

The snowmelt flooding damaged many roads and highways throughout Hamlin County, including U.S. Highway 81. Many roads were closed throughout the county. In the late evening of April 13th on U.S. Highway 81, a car with four people inside went through a flooded area at a high rate of speed and ended up in the flooded ditch. They all got out with no injuries. The snowmelt runoff caused Lake Kampeska to rise to nearly 44 inches overfull. The lake flooded several roads and also threatened many homes. Sandbagging was done to hold off the rising lake. Waves and ice chunks eventually caused some damage to homes. Also, many boat lifts were damaged. Mud Creek near Rauville also went slightly above the flood stage of 9 feet to 9.64 feet for a couple of days in early April.

1912 — A tornado with incredible velocity ripped into downtown Houston, TX, breaking the water table and giving the city its first natural waterspout. (The Weather Channel)

1923 — Residents in the eastern U.S. awoke on "April Fool's Day" to bitterly cold temperatures. The mercury plunged to -34 degrees at Bergland MI and to 16 degrees in Georgia. (David Ludlum)

1987 — Forty-five cities across the southeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. Lows of 37 degrees at Apalachicola FL, 34 degrees at Jacksonville FL, 30 degrees at Macon GA, and 22 degrees at Knoxville TN, were records for April. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 — A tornado touched down briefly during a snow squall on the south shore of White Fish Bay (six miles northwest of Bay Mills WI). A mobile home was unroofed and insulation was sucked from its walls. (The Weather Channel)

1988 — A powerful spring storm produced 34 inches of snow at Rye CO, 22 inches at Timpas OK, 19 inches at Sharon Springs KS, and up to 35 inches in New Mexico. Severe thunderstorms associated with the same storm spawned a tornado which caused 2.5 million dollars damage at East Mountain TX. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Up to six inches of snow blanketed the Adirondacks of eastern New York State and the Saint Lawrence Valley of Vermont. Up to a foot of snow blanketed the Colorado Rockies. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1990 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather in Texas, from southern Arkansas and northern Louisiana to southern Georgia, and from northern South Carolina to the Upper Ohio Valley during the day and evening. Thunderstorms spawned a tornado at Evergreen AL, and there were more than eighty reports of large hail and damaging winds. Thunderstorms produced baseball size hail north of Bastrop LA, and produced damaging winds which injured one person west of Meridian MS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



Daily Devotion

Praying God's Promises

God is faithful and unchanging, so we can trust in His promises, act boldly, and rest confidently.

Isaiah 40:7-8: 7 The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass.

8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

Jesus told us that we would endure hardship in this life. But God gave His children amazing tools to keep trials from overwhelming us. For instance, He sent His Spirit to indwell believers, to guide and empower them. In addition, He gave us the privilege of prayer so we could not only stay connected with our Father but also bring Him our requests.

Today let's focus on His marvelous gift of Scripture. The Word of God Almighty is truth that never changes. The Bible contains thousands of promises—countless assurances we can rely on with complete confidence. God wants us to learn them so we won't miss out on blessings He desires to give us.

For example, Psalm 32:8 offers this encouragement, which relates to difficult decisions: "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you." We can pray God's words back to Him, saying we believe He'll teach us and reveal His path while remaining by our side as our caregiver through the entire situation.

When hardships arise, we need a sure foundation on which to stand. Remember that God is faithful and unchanging. We can trust in His promises, which enable us to rest confidently and act boldly.

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:
03.31.26

9 18 23 34 38 3

TOP PRIZE:
\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 38 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

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03.31.26

18 35 45 60 65 17

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$90,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 2 Days 17 Hrs 23 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.30.26

1 21 44 47 48 4

All Star Bonus: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,700,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 38 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.28.26

4 8 13 31 35

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$37,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 53 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.30.26

7 29 42 67 68 8

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
03.30.26

7 11 31 41 57 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$194,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 22 Mins 45 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Amsterdam celebrates 25 years since the world's first same-sex weddings

By ALEKSANDAR FURTULA, MIKE CORDER and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

AMSTERDAM (AP) — The Dutch capital marked the 25th anniversary of the world's first gay marriages with three same-sex couples tying the knot at City Hall early Wednesday.

The celebration, conducted by Mayor Femke Halsema just after midnight, came a quarter of a century after one of her predecessors, Job Cohen, married four couples in a landmark ceremony for LGBTQ+ rights that paved the way for similar legislation in nearly 40 countries around the world.

Same-sex weddings are commonplace now in the Netherlands. Since 2001, more than 36,000 same-sex couples have married, according to the country's official statistics office.

Prime Minister Rob Jetten, the country's first openly gay leader, is planning to soon marry his partner Nicolás Keenan, an Argentine field hockey star who won a bronze medal with his country's team at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

"As a prime minister, I'm very proud that we celebrate 25 years of universal marriage here in the Netherlands," Jetten told The Associated Press at the overnight ceremony.

"Also for me personally, I can still remember when I was 14 years old watching TV, seeing the first couples getting married here in Amsterdam. That was also very inspiring and emancipating for me, personally, as it has been for so many others," he said.

The U.S. Supreme Court recognized same-sex marriage nationwide in 2015, after many states had already done so. One study last year estimated that there are more than 800,000 same-sex married couples in the U.S.

Amy Quinn and her wife, Heather Jensen, were among the first to be married in New Jersey when it became recognized there in 2013.

Quinn said it was important because they were considering having a child and their lawyer told them it would help if they were married because that would mean both women could have their names on the birth certificate, sign school records and have hospital visitation rights.

"It's shocking to me in terms of really how recently we got it," said Quinn, the deputy mayor of Asbury Park, New Jersey.

The U.S.-based LGBTQ+ advocacy group Human Rights Campaign has identified legislation in at least nine U.S. states for current or recent sessions seeking to undo legal recognition of same-sex marriages. Most would call on the U.S. Supreme Court to undo its 2015 decision recognizing the unions. The measures have not advanced, and even if they did, they couldn't force the court to change course.

"I don't think it's a time for people to be afraid," said Kelley Robinson, president of the U.S.-based LGBTQ+ advocacy group Human Rights Campaign. "It's a time to be aware, to protect our families, to protect our kids and to protect our lives."

Large parts of the world — particularly in Asia and Africa — have not legalized same-sex marriage and some countries are becoming more repressive.

Senegal's president signed a law Monday that toughens punishment for homosexuality in the latest African country to impose harsh penalties against the LGBTQ+ community.

Conservatives in the U.S. have also challenged laws banning "conversion therapy" for LGBTQ+ children. The Supreme Court on Tuesday sided with the objectors, saying that a ban in Colorado raises free-speech concerns and should be weighed by a lower court.

Philip Tijsma, spokesperson for the main Dutch LGBTQ+ advocacy group COC, said that while the silver anniversary was a moment to reflect and celebrate, the Netherlands has slipped behind other nations in its support for the LGBTQ+ community.

"We have become a little bit lazy," he said, adding that other European nations now have stronger trans-

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gender legislation. He said that in the Netherlands LGBTQ people are still bullied in schools and harassed on the street for holding hands.

There's been a strong backlash in the U.S. in recent years against rights of transgender people especially. Most states have banned transgender women and girls from at least some women's and girls' sports competitions and barred some gender-affirming health care for children and youth. Restrictions on puberty-blocking drugs, hormone therapy and gender-affirming surgeries have also expanded elsewhere.

U.S. President Donald Trump and his administration have pushed for restrictions on transgender people. Despite challenges, the mood at Amsterdam's ceremony was giddy.

Gert Kasteel and Dolf Pasker were among those taking part. They married that landmark day of April 1, 2001.

"We're very happy!" Kasteel said.

"It's unbelievable, 25 years," Pasker said. "It's so beautiful that there's so much attention for it."

Russian military plane crash in Crimea kills 29 people

MOSCOW (AP) — A Russian military plane crash in annexed Crimea has killed six crew and 23 passengers, Russian news agencies reported in the early hours of Wednesday, citing the Defense Ministry.

The An-26 military transport plane was carrying out a scheduled flight over the Crimean Peninsula, which Russia illegally annexed from Ukraine in 2014, the reports said. The military lost contact with the plane around 6 p.m. on Tuesday.

The Soviet-designed military transport turboprop aircraft crashed into a cliff, sources at the scene told state news agencies Tass and RIA Novosti.

Russia's Investigative Committee said a total of seven crew members and 23 passengers were on board. It wasn't immediately clear from official statements if one crew member has survived.

The Investigative Committee said it has launched a criminal probe in connection with flight regulations and a search is underway in a mountainous forested area in the Bakhchisarai district.

The Interfax news agency cited the Defense Ministry as saying a suspected technical malfunction may have caused the crash and that there was no "damaging interference" with the aircraft.

Accidents involving Russian military planes have been frequent since the Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine.

In December, an An-22 military transport plane crashed in Russia's Ivanovo region, killing seven crew. In October, a MiG-31 fighter jet crashed in the Lipetsk region, while a Tu-22M3 bomber crashed in the Siberian region of Irkutsk in April 2025.

In October 2022, a Su-34 bomber crashed into a residential area of Yeysk, a Russian city on the Azov sea, sparking a massive fire and killing 15 people.

AP Exclusive: Pakistan, Afghan Taliban resume talks in China as Beijing seeks ceasefire

By MUNIR AHMED and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan and Afghanistan's Taliban governments have resumed talks in China, which is mediating between the two sides to broker a durable ceasefire after more than a month of fighting, two Pakistani officials said Wednesday.

A third person who is in a position to know about China's mediation efforts said the talks were aimed at ending the current fighting.

Representatives from both countries are meeting in Urumqi, in northern China, the officials told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media. China has not commented.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs neither confirmed nor denied the latest development.

However, the officials said talks, seen as a potential relief for millions of people in Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan, began in Urumqi, the sources said.

Pakistan accuses Afghanistan of providing a safe haven for militants who carry out attacks inside Pakistan, especially for the Pakistani Taliban. The group is separate but closely allied with the Afghan Taliban, which took over Afghanistan in 2021 in the wake of the chaotic withdrawal of U.S.-led troops. Kabul denies the charge.

Tensions have been high since last month, when Kabul said a Pakistani airstrike hit a drug treatment hospital in the Afghan capital, killing more than 400 people. The U.N. humanitarian affairs office has said the death toll remains under verification. Pakistan has denied targeting civilians, saying it struck an ammunition depot.

Last month, Pakistan's Information Minister Attaullah Tarar told the AP that Pakistan had "only targeted terrorist infrastructure" in Kabul not any hospital, saying "We have just gone after the Afghan Taliban regime, their military setups, their terrorist infrastructure, and all the setups which are supporting or promoting terrorists."

Although the two sides agreed to a temporary ceasefire during the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr, fighting later resumed at a lower intensity compared with the heavy clashes seen in February and March, when Pakistan's air force repeatedly targeted Pakistani Taliban positions and Afghan military sites.

The conflict has been deadly in recent years. In February, Pakistan declared it was in "open war" with Afghanistan. The violence has alarmed the international community, particularly because militant groups such as al-Qaida and the Islamic State group remain present in the region and have sought to regroup.

According to the sources, the latest round of talks began after both sides accepted China's offer to mediate.

Tensions between the two countries have persisted for months. The latest fighting also undermined a Qatari-mediated ceasefire reached in October, which had halted earlier clashes that killed dozens of civilians, security personnel and militants. The two sides dispute casualty figures.

Previous peace talks held in Istanbul in November failed to produce a lasting agreement.

Iran hits tanker off coast of Qatar, Kuwait airport and Israel kills 5 in Beirut attack

By JON GAMBRELL, and DAVID RISING Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — Iran hit a tanker off the coast of Qatar and Kuwait International Airport early Wednesday as Tehran remained unrelenting in its attacks on its Gulf Arab neighbors, while acknowledging for the first time that Washington had been in direct contact about a possible ceasefire.

Israel sounded warnings of incoming fire from both Yemen and Iran, while launching its own attacks in Lebanon that killed at least five people.

An airstrike on Tehran appeared to have hit the former U.S. Embassy compound, which has been controlled by Iran's Revolutionary Guard since the 1979 hostage crisis. Witnesses said buildings outside the massive compound had their windows blown out and that it appears the strike happened inside the walled facility.

With no sign of the war abating and more than 3,000 lives already lost, U.S. President Donald Trump suggested it could be over within two weeks even as he moved to bring thousands more troops to the region.

No signs of Iran relinquishing grip on Strait of Hormuz shipping

Trump has been under growing pressure to end the war as Iran's grip on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz and its attacks on regional energy infrastructure have sent gas prices skyrocketing to their highest level since 2022 and caused broad stock market fluctuations.

Iran throttled ship traffic through the strait, which leads from the Persian Gulf to the open ocean, after it was attacked by the U.S. and Israel on Feb. 28. In peacetime, a fifth of the world's oil transits the strait and the spot price of Brent crude, the international standard, is up more than 40% since the start of the war, trading at more than \$104 a barrel.

The U.S. has presented Iran with a 15-point plan aimed at bringing about a ceasefire, which includes a demand for the strait to be reopened. Iran's own five-point response includes it retaining sovereignty over the waterway, and Trump on Tuesday suggested that the war could be brought to an end even with Iran still controlling the strait.

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The U.S. "will not have anything to do with" what happens in the Strait of Hormuz, instead telling reporters that the responsibility for keeping the vital waterway open would belong with countries that rely on it. "That's not for us. That'll be for France. That'll be for whoever's using the strait," Trump said.

It was not clear why Trump brought up France, since Europe receives very little oil shipped through the strait, with most going to Asian countries. The president plans a prime-time address on Wednesday.

Push for diplomatic solution showing little signs of progress

Trump, who has vacillated between insisting there is progress in diplomatic talks with Iran and threatening to widen the war, added that the U.S. is "finishing the job" in Iran and predicted it will be "maybe two weeks, maybe a couple of days longer to do the job."

Trump has warned that if a ceasefire is not reached "shortly," and if the strait is not reopened, the U.S. would broaden its offensive, including by attacking the Kharg Island oil export hub and possibly desalination plants.

Thousands of Marines and paratroopers have been ordered to the region in possible preparation for an assault in Kharg, though to reach the island by ship would mean transiting the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf, which Iran has threatened to mine.

In an interview with pan-Arab broadcaster Al Jazeera, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi acknowledged receiving direct messages from U.S. Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff. He insisted, however, that there were no direct negotiations and said Iran has no faith that talks with the U.S. could yield any results, saying "the trust level is at zero."

He warned against any attempt to launch a ground offensive, saying "we are waiting for them."

"We know very well how to defend ourselves," Araghchi said.

Iran hits tanker off Qatar's coast and attacks other Gulf states

Qatar was attacked with three cruise missiles early in the day, the Defense Ministry said. The country's defenses intercepted two but the third slammed into an oil tanker off the coast, the Defense Ministry said. The 21-member crew of the tanker, contracted by state-owned QatarEnergy, were evacuated and no casualties were reported.

A fully-loaded Kuwaiti oil tanker came under attack off Dubai the day before, one of more than 20 ships attacked by Iran during the war.

In the United Arab Emirates, a person was killed when a drone was intercepted and debris hit him while he was working on a farm in Fujairah, one of the country's seven emirates.

Bahrain sounded two alerts for incoming missiles, and said an Iranian attack had caused a fire at a business facility.

In Kuwait, the state-run KUNA news agency said a drone had hit a fuel tank at Kuwait International Airport, sparking a "large fire" that crews were working to control.

Two drones were also intercepted in Saudi Arabia, which has come under repeated Iranian attack, and air raid sirens sounded in Israel though there were no immediate reports of damage or casualties.

Israel hits Iranian fentanyl plant and kills 5 in strikes on Beirut

In Iran, Israel said it had hit a plant producing fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid, to allegedly be used in a chemical weapons program. Iran acknowledged the strike on Tofigh Daru factory, but insisted it only supplied "hospital drugs" used for medical purposes.

The strike happened Tuesday, both the Israelis and the Iranians said.

Hospitals extensively use fentanyl to treat severe pain. But a small amount of the drug can be fatal.

Both Israel and the United States have alleged in recent years that Iran was experimenting with fentanyl in munitions.

In Beirut, at least five people were killed in an Israeli strike on a Beirut neighborhood. Lebanon's Health Ministry said another 21 people were wounded.

Israel invaded southern Lebanon after the Iran-linked Hezbollah militant group began launching missiles into northern Israel days after the outbreak of the wider war. Many Lebanese fear another prolonged military occupation.

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More than 1,200 people have been killed in Lebanon and more than 1 million displaced, according to authorities. Ten Israeli soldiers have also died there.

In Iran, authorities say more than 1,900 people have been killed, while 19 have been reported dead in Israel.

Since the Iran war began, 13 U.S. service members have been killed and 348 wounded, six seriously, according to U.S. Central Command.

More than two dozen people have died in Gulf states and the occupied West Bank.

Oil falls below \$100 a barrel and Asian stocks jump on renewed hopes of Iran war ending

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Oil fell below \$100 per barrel and Asian shares were sharply higher Wednesday after U.S. stocks soared to their best day in almost a year on renewed hopes that the Iran war could soon end.

South Korea's Kospi recovered its losses from earlier this week, surging 8.4% to 5,478.70, while Tokyo's Nikkei 225 rose 5.2% to 53,739.68. A survey by Japan's central bank released Wednesday showed business sentiment for major Japanese manufacturers improved despite Iran war worries.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng was up 2.3% to 25,346.42, while the Shanghai Composite index was trading 1.5% higher at 3,948.55.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was up 2.2% to 8,671.80.

Taiwan's Taiex climbed 4.6%, and India's Sensex rose 2.4%.

U.S. futures were 0.7% higher.

The renewed optimism over a possible de-escalation of the Iran war, which is in its fifth week, came after U.S. President Donald Trump said on Tuesday the United States will be done attacking Iran probably in two to three weeks, and that the U.S. "will not have anything to do with" what happens next in the Strait of Hormuz.

The White House said Trump will deliver a public address Wednesday evening on the Iran war.

Trump's remarks came after he told U.S. allies to "go get your own oil" and blamed them for refusing to be more involved in its war effort. Significant maritime traffic disruption at the Strait of Hormuz, where roughly a fifth of the world's oil typically passes through, has sent energy prices surging and is fueling global inflation.

Oil prices were down sharply. Brent crude, the international standard, was down 4.4% at \$99.44 Wednesday. Benchmark U.S. crude dropped 3.8% to \$97.55.

As the Iran war rattles global energy markets, on Tuesday, U.S. gas prices surged past an average of \$4 a gallon, the first time since 2022.

"De-escalation hopes have given markets a lift, but we think the effects of the war would, in many cases, persist even if the war did end soon," wrote Thomas Mathews, head of markets, Asia Pacific at Capital Economics in a research note Wednesday.

"It's worth thinking through how markets might fare if the war were to end 'very soon,'" he wrote. "Do markets have further to recover if sentiment continues to improve? The answer is almost certainly yes."

Wall Street advanced on Tuesday. The S&P 500 jumped 2.9% for its largest gain since May to 6,528.52. The Dow Jones Industrial Average surged 2.5% to 46,341.51, and the Nasdaq composite leaped 3.8% to 21,590.63.

Shares of U.S. semiconductor company Marvell Technology spiked 12.8%, after Nvidia said it was investing \$2 billion in the company. Nvidia jumped 5.6%.

Centessa Pharmaceuticals leaped 44%, following U.S. drugmaker Eli Lilly's announcement that it was acquiring the company that's developing a new class of medicines that could treat excessive daytime sleepiness.

McCormick, the spice and flavorings company, fell 6.1% after confirmation that it was combining with

Unilever's food business.

In other dealings, gold prices rose 1.6% to \$4,751.80 per ounce. The U.S. dollar was trading at 158.36 Japanese yen, down from 158.72 yen. The euro was at \$1.1584, up from \$1.1553.

NASA is shooting for the moon. A guide to the Artemis II mission

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — It's humanity's first flight to the moon since 1972.

In a throwback to Apollo, NASA's Artemis II mission will send four astronauts on a lunar fly-around. They'll hurtle several thousand miles beyond the moon, hang a U-turn and then come straight back. No circling around the moon, no stopping for a moonwalk — just a quick out-and-back lasting less than 10 days.

NASA promises more boot prints in the gray lunar dust, but not before a couple practice missions. The upcoming test flight by Artemis astronauts Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Jeremy Hansen is the first step in settling the moon this time around.

Here's a snapshot of the Artemis II mission.

The Artemis astronauts are a diverse and international crew

The moon is about to welcome its first woman, first person of color and first non-American.

Koch already holds the record for the longest single spaceflight by a woman. During her 328-day mission at the International Space Station spanning 2019 and 2020, she took part in the first all-female spacewalk.

Glover, a Navy test pilot, was the first Black astronaut to live and work aboard the space station in 2020 and 2021. He also was one of the first astronauts to launch with SpaceX.

The Canadian Space Agency's Hansen, a former fighter pilot, is the lone space rookie. Their commander is Wiseman, a retired Navy captain who lived aboard the space station in 2014 and later headed NASA's astronaut corps. They range in age from 47 to 50.

The Space Launch System is more powerful than the Saturn V rocket

NASA's new Space Launch System rocket stands 322 feet (98 meters), shorter than the Apollo program's Saturn V rocket but more powerful at liftoff thanks to a pair of strap-on boosters. Atop the rocket is the Orion capsule carrying the astronauts.

Made of salvaged space shuttle engines and other parts, the SLS uses the same fuel — liquid hydrogen — as the shuttles did. Hydrogen leaks repeatedly grounded the shuttles as well as the first SLS rocket test without astronauts aboard in 2022. More than three years later, Artemis II suffered the same hydrogen leaks during a February fueling practice run, missing the first launch window. A repeat of helium-flow issues bumped the mission into April.

How Artemis II will fly around the moon

After liftoff, the astronauts will spend the first 25 hours circling Earth in a high, lopsided orbit. They'll use the separated upper stage as a target, steering their Orion capsule around it as docking practice for future moonshots. Instead of fancy range finders, they'll rely on their eyes to judge the gap, venturing no closer than 33 feet (10 meters) to the stage.

"Sometimes simple stuff is the best," Wiseman said.

If all goes as planned, Orion's main engine will hurl the crew to the moon some 244,000 miles (393,000 kilometers) away. This free-return trajectory made famous in Apollo 13 relies on the moon and Earth's gravity, minimizing the need for fuel.

On flight day six, Orion will reach its farthest point from Earth as it sails 5,000 miles (8,000 kilometers) beyond the moon. That will surpass Apollo 13's distance record, making Artemis astronauts the most remote travelers. After emerging from behind the moon, the crew will head straight home with a splashdown on flight day 10 — nine days, one hour and 46 minutes after liftoff.

What to expect during the Artemis flyby

The Artemis II crew may behold never-before-seen regions of the lunar far side — with the moon appearing the size of a basketball at arm's length during the closest part of the roughly six-hour flyby. They've been poring over maps and satellite images of the lunar far side and anticipate a photo frenzy. Their lunar

mentor is NASA geologist Kelsey Young, who will monitor the flyby from Mission Control in Houston.

"The moon is like such a unifying thing," she said. "What we're doing with this mission is going to bring that a little closer to everybody around the world."

Besides professional cameras, they'll carry the latest smartphones. NASA's new administrator Jared Isaacman added smartphones to the mission for "inspiring" picture-taking.

While NASA and private companies have focused over the years on reaching the moon's near side — the side that constantly faces Earth — only China has planted landers on the far side. That makes the astronauts' observations of the lunar far side all the more valuable for NASA.

Artemis astronauts will splash back down to Earth

Like Apollo, the Artemis mission ends with a splashdown homecoming into the Pacific.

All eyes will be on Orion's heat shield as the capsule plunges through the atmosphere. It's the part of the spacecraft that took the biggest beating during 2022's test flight, with charred chunks gouged out. The heat shield is being retooled for future capsules but remains the original design for Artemis II.

NASA is limiting the heat exposure during reentry by shortening the capsule's atmospheric descent. Navy recovery ships will be stationed off the coast of San Diego as Orion parachutes into the ocean.

California woman returns home after the Trump administration deported her to Mexico

By SOPHIE AUSTIN Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A California woman who had been living in the U.S. for 27 years before the Trump administration deported her to Mexico in February reunited with her daughter this week after a judge ordered her return.

Mexican citizen Maria de Jesús Estrada Juárez was among the hundreds of thousands of people shielded from deportation under an Obama-era program allowing people brought to the U.S. as children to stay in the country if they generally stay out of trouble.

But that changed Feb. 18 when she showed up for an immigration hearing and was arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and deported the next day.

"I didn't get to say goodbye," the 42-year-old mother said at a news conference Tuesday in Sacramento. "It all happened so fast. This has been one of the most painful experiences of my life."

Estrada Juárez held hands with her daughter and began to choke up as she recounted those experiences.

"It's hard to describe what it feels like to lose your mother so suddenly, especially when you believed she was safe," said Damaris Bello, Estrada Juárez's 22-year-old daughter. "It was like grieving someone who was still alive."

The federal government has arrested several other recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, also known as DACA, during President Donald Trump's second term. The events come amid the Trump administration's reshaping of immigration policy more broadly.

Immigration advocates say Estrada Juárez's removal highlights the need to offer more permanent protections for DACA recipients, often referred to as "Dreamers."

The case is a rare example of a judge ordering a person's return to the United States after being deported, said Talia Inlender, deputy director of the Center for Immigration Law and Policy at the UCLA School of Law.

"But, perhaps unsurprisingly, it feels like this is happening with more frequency under the current administration which is prioritizing speed and quotas, rather than fairness and process, in facilitating removals," Inlender said in a statement.

The federal administration said Estrada Juárez was deported because of a 1998 removal order when Estrada Juárez was a teenager, shortly after she arrived in the U.S. She was sent to Mexico at the time but returned to the U.S. weeks later and has had DACA status since 2013. Federal officials reinstated the 1998 order in February after arresting her.

Estrada Juárez spent the next few weeks after being deported with relatives, stressed about being separated from her daughter.

"You can't enjoy life when the most important part of your life is not there," she said.

U.S. District Judge Dena Coggins, who was appointed by then-President Joe Biden, issued a temporary restraining order on March 23, giving the federal government seven days to facilitate Estrada Juárez's return to the U.S. Her deportation was a "flagrant violation" of her DACA protections and infringed upon her due process rights, Coggins wrote.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has defended the deportation.

"ICE follows all court orders," a department spokesperson said in a statement. "This is yet another ruling from a Biden-appointed activist judge."

But Estrada Juárez wasn't aware of the 1998 order, which her lawyer argues wasn't final.

"DACA gives you a vested right to not be deported once it's granted," said Stacy Tolchin, an immigration attorney based in Pasadena, California. "I really don't understand what they're doing."

Bello, who was reunited with her mother Monday night, said she is recovering from the events and hopes other families don't have to endure the same thing.

"Having her back home means everything to me," she said. "It means we can begin to heal, to rebuild and to move forward together as a family."

A messy California governor's race raises Democratic fears of potential loss

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Democrats have run California for years, but in a nationally critical election the party is being confronted by the limits of its own power: the race for governor is out of control.

Barely a month before the start of mail-in voting, Democratic leaders are openly dreading the possible loss of a statewide election for the first time in two decades. As candidates jockey in a crowded field, the contest has degenerated into finger-pointing over debate eligibility, identity politics and 2025 ballot counting, issues distant from voters struggling with the soaring cost of gas and groceries.

"Squabbles about debates or other inside baseball politics are likely under the radar for most voters and seem almost absurd, given what's facing us," Kim Nalder, director of the Project for an Informed Electorate at California State University, Sacramento, said in an email.

Candidates agree that a large number of voters remain undecided on the question of who should take charge of the nation's most populous state that, by itself, represents the world's fourth-largest economy. There are more than 50 candidates on the ballot — including eight established Democrats and two leading Republicans.

Dominant Democrats contend with uncertainty

For the first time in a generation the governor's contest is being defined by uncertainty, not inevitability — former Gov. Jerry Brown and outgoing Gov. Gavin Newsom coasted through their elections. How do Democrats reassert their political clout and regain control of the race in a state where the party holds every statewide office, dominates the legislature and outnumbers registered Republicans by nearly 2-to-1?

"I have no idea and anybody who tells you they do, they don't know either," said veteran Democratic consultant Dan Newman, who is not involved in the race.

For Democrats, the party's dicey chances in the June 2 primary stem from the state's unpredictable "top two" primary system that puts all candidates on one ballot, with only the top two vote-getters advancing to November, regardless of party. The fear is the party's 24 listed candidates will undercut each other and divide the Democratic vote into small fractions, clearing the way for the two leading Republicans — Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco and conservative commentator Steve Hilton, both supporters of President Donald Trump — to advance.

While affordability is a top issue around the country, the race for governor has detoured into messy personal attacks and squabbles that have given the campaign a chaotic aura. A major televised debate was canceled after an uproar over the selection criteria that resulted in six white candidates qualifying for the stage while Black, Latino and Asian candidates were snubbed.

The University of Southern California, where the debate was to be held, said the dispute “created a significant distraction from the issues that matter to voters.” The school’s decision to cancel the event followed accusations of discrimination by candidates of color who were not invited.

The scratched debate came shortly after state Democratic Chair Rusty Hicks pleaded with lagging candidates to drop out of the race. Meanwhile, Rep. Eric Swalwell, one of the leading Democrats, accused Trump of trying to influence the contest after reporting that administration officials ordered FBI agents to gather documents about a decade-old investigation into the congressman’s ties to a suspected Chinese spy. The probe did not result in criminal charges.

Earlier this week, Bianco, after seizing more than half a million 2025 election ballots, said he paused a probe into election fraud allegations, citing mounting legal challenges from the state and a voting rights group.

A ripple effect down the ticket?

Elsewhere in the country, Democrats have been heartened by victories in a string of races — even on Trump’s home turf — that they see as promising signs ahead of this year’s midterm elections, when control of Congress will be in play. Democratic officials in California fear a vacancy at the top of the ticket in November could depress turnout in critical U.S. House races.

Such a scenario could “imperil Democrats’ chances to retake the House,” Hicks, the state Democratic chair, has warned.

The contest to succeed Newsom is playing out with Trump the ubiquitous foil for Democratic candidates — California is regarded as the home of the so-called Trump resistance. Simultaneously the state is beset with a long-running homeless crisis, commonplace seven-figure home prices and projected future budget shortfalls, while residents contend with some of the nation’s highest gas prices, taxes and utility bills.

Polling in early February by the nonpartisan Public Policy Institute of California found the field had broken into two distinct groups, with Bianco, Hilton and three Democrats — Swalwell, former Rep. Katie Porter and billionaire climate activist Tom Steyer — in close competition, with other candidates trailing.

The volatile race has recalled the surprise outcome in 1998 — the last wide-open race for governor — when underdog Democrat Gray Davis surged past two leading Democrats in the primary who relentlessly attacked each other, with Davis going on to win in November.

The rules have changed in the attention economy, where candidates must compete with digital platforms and content creators to connect with distracted voters.

“Normally people would be paying attention,” Newman said. “The whole campaign has been in slow motion.”

Vance and Rubio’s differing postures on Iran war highlight their challenges ahead of 2028 election

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and STEVE PEOPLES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As President Donald Trump assembled his Cabinet last week, he asked Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Vice President JD Vance to give an update on the Iran war.

Rubio, known for his hawkish views, gave an impassioned defense of the war, calling it “a favor” to the United States and the world.

Vance, who has long pushed for restraint in U.S. military intervention overseas, was more sedate. He said that the U.S. now has “options” it didn’t have a year ago and that it is important Iran does not get a nuclear weapon — before redirecting his remarks toward wishing the troops a happy Easter.

The exchange was a distillation of their diverging postures toward the war that their boss has launched in Iran. And it comes as some would-be Republican presidential candidates begin quietly courting officials in key states like New Hampshire in the early stages of the GOP’s next nomination fight.

With Vance and Rubio seen as the party’s strongest potential candidates in a 2028 primary, the two have to balance their roles in the Trump administration with their future political plans.

“It’s very obvious from the way that Rubio talks about Iran and the way that Vance talks about Iran that

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they are of different casts of mind," said Curt Mills, the executive director of "The American Conservative" magazine and a vocal critic of the war. The Cabinet meeting episode was telling, he said, because it seemed as though Vance, discussing Easter, was "literally trying to talk about anything else other than the war."

Vance's office declined to comment. The State Department declined to comment but pointed to Rubio's remarks last year during a Fox News Channel interview where he said he hopes Vance intends to run for president and wouldn't rule out anything for himself.

It's too soon to forecast how Republican voters might feel about the war next spring, when the 2028 contest is expected to begin in earnest, but the risks for both Vance and Rubio are acute. Rubio's full-throated support for the war could come back to haunt him depending on how the conflict develops. Vance, meanwhile, would risk accusations of disloyalty if he were to stray too far from Trump, but struggles to square an appearance of support for the war with his past comments.

Vance's restrained comments stand in contrast to Rubio's full defense

Vance, who served in the Iraq war, has said that Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon, but he's long been skeptical of foreign military interventions.

Trump seemed to allude that Vance may have held onto that position in private discussions about Iran, telling reporters that Vance was "philosophically a little bit different than me" at the outset of the conflict.

"I think he was maybe less enthusiastic about going, but he was quite enthusiastic," Trump said.

Though Vance has been careful in how he speaks about the war, what he's not saying has been conspicuous. On a March 13 trip to North Carolina, he was twice asked by reporters if he had concerns about the conflict. Each time, he said it was important that Trump could have conversations with advisers "without his team then running their mouths to the American media."

A few days later at the White House, when Vance was again asked if he had concerns, he accused the reporter of "trying to drive a wedge between members of the administration, between me and the president."

For Rubio, long before he became the country's chief diplomat, he voiced support for muscular foreign policy and American intervention abroad.

Days into the war, he told reporters that it was "a wise decision" for Trump to launch the operation, that there "absolutely was an imminent threat" from Iran and that the operation "needed to happen."

Fractures are emerging in the GOP

The apparent split between Rubio and Vance on the Iran war is emblematic of the divide starting to cleave within the Republican Party. A recent survey from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research found some divisions within the GOP on Iran, with about half of Republicans saying the U.S. military action has been "about right." Relatively few Republicans, about 2 in 10, say military action has not gone far enough, while about one-quarter say it's gone too far.

While some conservatives have described the war as a betrayal, many other Republicans have cheered on the president's actions.

Alice Swanson, a 62-year-old who attended Vance's event in North Carolina, said she wants Vance and Rubio to run together in 2028 but favors the vice president.

"I think he fully believes and supports exactly what his convictions are," Swanson said.

Swanson acknowledged, nonetheless, that Vance has been an outspoken opponent of interventionist policy but has been quieter on the subject since the war. "I can see both sides," Swanson said after expressing full support for Trump's decisions.

Tracy Brill, a 62-year-old from Rocky Mount, spoke highly of Rubio, but declared, "I love JD Vance."

She made it clear she sides with the president, calling the course he's taken "spot on." But she defended the vice president if he seems at odds with his past statements, noting politicians do it frequently. "They've all changed their positions at one point or another," she said.

However, Joe Ropar, attending the Conservative Political Action Conference last week, said Rubio's unequivocal support for the Iran war helped crystallize his preference for the secretary of state for 2028.

"I'm not looking at JD Vance for president, and it's for stuff like that," said Ropar, a 72-year-old retired military contractor from McKinney, Texas. "I don't 100% trust him."

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Benjamin Williams, of Austin, Texas, said at CPAC that both Trump and Vance are “tied to this war.” The 25-year-old marketing specialist for Young Americans for Liberty is looking elsewhere for a candidate.

The political risks might not be known until the field fills out

Whether the war becomes a political problem for Vance and Rubio depends on who ultimately enters the GOP’s next presidential primary.

While Vance and Rubio are currently considered the overwhelming front-runners, former New Hampshire Gov. Chris Sununu expects a half dozen high-profile Republicans to enter the contest.

Sununu and former RNC Committeewoman Juliana Bergeron told The Associated Press that multiple Republican presidential prospects have reached out to them in recent weeks to discuss the political landscape in the state that traditionally hosts the opening presidential primary; they declined to name them.

Republican strategist Jim Merrill, a top New Hampshire adviser for Rubio’s 2016 presidential bid, predicted that Iran would become a flashpoint in 2028 — just as the Iraq war was for Democrats in 2004 and 2008.

“If for some reason things don’t go as anticipated, there will be contrasts drawn,” he said.

Still, Sununu is doubtful that Iran would become a meaningful dividing line in a prospective Vance-Rubio matchup given their status as prominent members of the Trump administration. Both will likely take credit if the conflict ends well, and both would look bad if it does not, he predicted.

“They’re tied together with the success or failure of Iran. It doesn’t really separate one versus the other, at least I don’t think that’s how the electorate will see it,” Sununu said.

From TMZ to Trump, pressure grows to bring Congress back during partial shutdown

By JOEY CAPPELLETTI and STEPHEN GROVES Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — TMZ built its brand tracking celebrities. Now it’s turning its attention to Congress, chasing down paparazzi-style shots of lawmakers on break from Washington during a record-long partial government shutdown.

Videos and photos posted by the tabloid website showing lawmakers in airports, Las Vegas and even Disney World have racked up millions of views and fueled a growing backlash. With travel disruptions persisting and some federal workers going without pay, pressure is mounting on Congress to cut short its regularly scheduled recess.

Beyond TMZ, President Donald Trump also wants lawmakers to come back, even hinting he might invoke rarely used powers to call Congress into session.

Still, it’s not clear what a return would accomplish, with the 45-day partial government shutdown at a deeper impasse than ever. The Senate reached a bipartisan funding deal last week, but House Speaker Mike Johnson rejected it, and House Republicans passed their own version before heading for the exits.

“I’m not sure that we’d come,” Democratic Sen. Chris Coons said Monday when asked about members being called back. “And I’m not sure that there would be any difference from what’s happened so far.”

On recess — and on camera

As lawmakers headed out of Washington last week, the celebrity-gossip outlet TMZ put out a call.

“TMZ is on the hunt for photos of politicians on vacay as TSA officers suffer!” the outlet said in a social media post.

The focus from TMZ — an outlet known more for capturing unflattering footage of celebrities than digging into the nuances of federal policy — was the latest example of how politics is being fueled by viral images and populist sentiment.

Videos quickly followed, showing senators moving through airports — often attempting to shield themselves from cameras — with provocative headlines layered on top. The clips racked up millions of views.

The outlet didn’t stop there. Photos of lawmakers on vacation soon followed, including viral images of Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham at Disney World with captions such as: “Lindsey Graham lives it up at Disney World during the partial government shutdown!”

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Graham said that he had been in Florida for a meeting with Trump administration officials and had made a stop at Disney World with a friend. He also blamed Democrats for the shutdown.

Another widely shared post showed Democratic Rep. Robert Garcia in Las Vegas.

"Actually I don't mind what TMZ is doing here," Garcia posted in response, adding that he was visiting his father. "Like I said a few days ago, Speaker Mike Johnson should have never sent us all home."

The effort grew out of frustration, said TMZ executive producer Harvey Levin, after the outlet interviewed a TSA worker struggling due to missed paychecks during the shutdown.

"It outraged us so much we wanted to use our platforms to show how Congress — Dems AND Republicans — have betrayed us," Levin said in a statement.

He added that lawmakers shouldn't expect the coverage to end anytime soon.

"Several months ago we decided to amp up our presence and our voice," Levin said. "We now have a producer and a photog circulating in the Capitol, showing the intersection between politics and pop culture."

Pressure mounts on Congress to return

The backlash playing out online is fueling other pressure as well. Trump has called on Congress to return. He spoke with Senate Majority Leader John Thune on Sunday and Monday, and White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said he has urged leadership to cancel recess "repeatedly."

"He'll host a big Easter dinner here at the White House if Congress will come back," she added.

So far, Republican leadership has not blinked, raising questions about how much pressure Trump will ultimately apply — and whether he would be willing to concede ground to Democrats to end the shutdown.

Unions are adding to that pressure.

"To leave Washington while tens of thousands of workers are going without pay shows a clear lack of respect for the essential employees tasked with keeping our nation safe," said Hydrick Thomas, president of the American Federation of Government Employees TSA Council 100.

Although vacation snapshots have stirred outrage, recess is also an opportunity for lawmakers to reconnect with constituents back home. Some hold town hall events. Others go on trips abroad, such as joining a delegation to Taiwan.

Why the funding impasse won't be easy to solve

Even if lawmakers return to Washington, there isn't an easy way out of the funding impasse.

Senators already labored for weeks to try to find agreement on Democrats' demand that any funding for the Department of Homeland Security come with restrictions on how federal immigration agents conduct enforcement. In vote after failed vote, Democrats showed they wouldn't budge.

As the partial government shutdown extended to the longest in U.S. history, the Senate settled on a last-ditch effort to fund most of DHS while leaving out money for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Border Patrol.

But that deal was rejected by Johnson in the House, who instead pushed through a bill to extend DHS funding on a party-line vote. The collapse of the bipartisan agreement has soured the mood for negotiations and left lawmakers pointing fingers.

"There's no point in calling us back because that was the result of a conscious choice by the Republican majority," said Coons, a Delaware Democrat.

Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, told Fox News on Tuesday that the House can come back "on a moment's notice," but "the Senate has to do their job and help us on this heavy lift."

But Thune, a South Dakota Republican, has been clear that he sees no way to get a DHS funding bill through the Senate with its 60-vote threshold for advancing legislation, known as the filibuster.

Still, Thune is coming under renewed pressure to find a way past the funding impasse — with calls from Trump and some conservatives to get rid of the filibuster.

That's unlikely to work either because of a handful of Republican senators who have made it clear they won't vote to change the Senate's rules. Still, Trump told reporters Sunday night that, "They should terminate the filibuster and they should vote."

Sen. Mike Lee, a Utah Republican, agreed. He said on social media that he thinks one of the only options for the Senate is to "nuke the filibuster and pass everything."

"Inaction is unacceptable," he added.

Supreme Court hears high-profile fight over Trump's bid to limit birthright citizenship

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court is taking up one of the term's most consequential cases, President Donald Trump's executive order on birthright citizenship declaring that children born to parents who are in the United States illegally or temporarily are not American citizens. Trump plans to be in attendance.

In arguments Wednesday, the justices will hear Trump's appeal of a lower-court ruling from New Hampshire that struck down the citizenship restrictions, one of several courts that have blocked them. They have not taken effect anywhere in the country.

A definitive ruling is expected by early summer.

Trump will be the first sitting president to attend oral arguments at the nation's highest court.

The case frames another test of his assertions of executive power that defy long-standing precedent for a court that has largely ruled in the president's favor, but with some notable exceptions that Trump has responded to with starkly personal criticisms of the justices.

The birthright citizenship order, which Trump signed the first day of his second term, is part of his Republican administration's broad immigration crackdown.

Birthright citizenship is the first Trump immigration-related policy to reach the court for a final ruling. The justices previously struck down global tariffs Trump had imposed under an emergency powers law that had never been used that way.

Trump reacted furiously to the late February tariffs' decision, saying he was ashamed of the justices who ruled against him and calling them unpatriotic.

He issued a preemptive broadside against the court on Sunday on his Truth Social. "Birthright Citizenship is not about rich people from China, and the rest of the World, who want their children, and hundreds of thousands more, FOR PAY, to ridiculously become citizens of the United States of America. It is about the BABIES OF SLAVES!," the president wrote. "Dumb Judges and Justices will not a great Country make!"

Trump's order would upend the longstanding view that the Constitution's 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, and federal law since 1940 confer citizenship on everyone born on American soil, with narrow exceptions for the children of foreign diplomats and those born to a foreign occupying force.

The 14th Amendment was intended to ensure that Black people, including former slaves, had citizenship, though the Citizenship Clause is written more broadly. "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside," it reads.

In a series of decisions, lower courts have struck down the executive order as illegal, or likely so, under the Constitution and federal law. The decisions have invoked the high court's 1898 ruling in Wong Kim Ark, which held that the U.S.-born child of Chinese nationals was a citizen.

The administration argues that the common view of citizenship is wrong, asserting that children of non-citizens are not "subject to the jurisdiction" of the United States and therefore not entitled to citizenship.

The court should use the case to set straight "long-enduring misconceptions about the Constitution's meaning," Solicitor General D. John Sauer wrote.

No court has accepted that argument, and lawyers for pregnant women whose children would be affected by the order said the Supreme Court should not be the first to do so.

"We have the president of the United States trying to radically reinterpret the definition of American citizenship," said Cecillia Wang, the American Civil Liberties Union legal director who is facing off against Sauer at the Supreme Court.

More than one-quarter of a million babies born in the U.S. each year would be affected by the executive order, according to research by the Migration Policy Institute and Pennsylvania State University's Popula-

tion Research Institute.

While Trump has largely focused on illegal immigration in his rhetoric and actions, the birthright restrictions also would apply to people who are legally in the United States, including students and applicants for green cards, or permanent resident status.

A US journalist was kidnapped in Baghdad and a search is underway

By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA and ABBY SEWELL Associated Press

BAGHDAD (AP) — An American journalist was kidnapped Tuesday in Baghdad and Iraqi security forces are pursuing her captors, Iraqi officials said. The journalist was identified as freelancer Shelly Kittleson by one of the outlets she worked for.

A U.S. official blamed the Iran-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah.

The Iraqi interior ministry confirmed a foreign journalist had been kidnapped but didn't give more details. Two Iraqi security officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the case, said the kidnapped journalist is a woman and a U.S. citizen.

They said that two cars were involved in the kidnapping, one of which crashed while being pursued near the town of Al-Haswa in Babil province southwest of Baghdad. The journalist was then transferred to a second car that fled the scene.

The interior ministry said security forces had launched an operation to track down the kidnapers, and intercepted a vehicle belonging to the kidnapers that overturned as they tried to flee. One suspect was arrested and one of the vehicles used in the kidnapping was seized, but others remain on the loose, the statement said.

The two Iraqi security officials said the journalist was abducted in central Baghdad's Saadoun Street, and that an alert was sent to all checkpoints, leading to the pursuit of the kidnapers as they headed toward Babil province.

Al-Monitor, a regional news site covering the Middle East, said it was "deeply alarmed" and identified the journalist as Kittleson, a freelancer who contributed to the publication.

"We call for her safe and immediate release," the statement said. "We stand by her vital reporting from the region and call for her swift return to continue her important work."

Kittleson has been a longtime freelancer in the region, reporting extensively from Syria and Iraq.

The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad declined to comment. The U.S. State Department issued a statement, saying the Trump administration "has no higher priority than the safety and security of Americans" and that it is "tracking these reports."

Dylan Johnson, U.S. assistant secretary of state for public affairs, said on X that the "State Department previously fulfilled our duty to warn this individual of threats against them."

"An individual with ties to the Iranian-aligned militia group Kataib Hezbollah believed to be involved in the kidnapping has been taken into custody by Iraqi authorities," Johnson added.

A second U.S. official, who spoke on condition of anonymity due to privacy concerns, said the abducted journalist had been warned multiple times, including as late as Monday night, that she was in danger and should leave Iraq immediately.

Iraqi officials have not publicly said anything about the kidnapers' affiliation.

Iran-backed militias in Iraq have launched regular attacks on U.S. facilities in the country since the beginning of the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran. Since the war began on Feb. 28, the U.S. Embassy has warned of kidnapping risks and urged citizens in Iraq to leave.

Iraqi militias have also kidnapped foreigners in the past.

Elizabeth Tsurkov, a Princeton graduate student with Israeli and Russian citizenship, disappeared in Baghdad in 2023. After she was freed and handed over to U.S. authorities in September 2025, she said that she had been held by Kataib Hezbollah.

The group never officially claimed responsibility for kidnapping her.

Trump lashes out at allies, says securing the Strait of Hormuz is 'not for us'

By JON GAMBRELL, MIKE CORDER and DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — President Donald Trump lashed out Tuesday at allies who have been unwilling to do more to support the U.S. war effort against Iran, telling them to “go get your own oil” and saying it was not America’s job to secure the Strait of Hormuz.

The president said the military could end its offensive in two to three weeks and that the U.S. “will not have anything to do with” what happens next in the strait that has been closed by the Islamic Republic. Instead, he told reporters, the responsibility for keeping the vital waterway open will rest with countries that rely on it.

There’s “no reason for us to do this,” Trump said after signing an executive order that seeks to restrict mail-in voting. “That’s not for us. That’ll be for France. That’ll be for whoever’s using the strait.”

The White House said Trump would deliver a prime-time address Wednesday evening to update the public on the war.

In other developments, the closure of the strait sent average U.S. gas prices past \$4 a gallon, and U.S. strikes hit the central city of Isfahan, sending a massive fireball into the sky. Tehran attacked a fully loaded Kuwaiti oil tanker in the Persian Gulf.

The attacks showed the intensity of the war more than a month after the U.S. and Israel launched it. The conflict has left more than 3,000 dead and caused major disruptions to the world’s supply of oil and natural gas, roiling global markets and pushing up the cost of many basic goods.

Trump, whose comments have vacillated between talk that diplomatic progress is being made with Iran and threats to widen the war, had earlier shared footage of the attack on Isfahan.

Fuel prices rise, rattling global markets

Iran’s stranglehold on the strait, the waterway leading out of the Persian Gulf through which a fifth of the world’s oil is transported during peacetime, has driven up global oil prices, as have Tehran’s attacks on regional energy infrastructure.

Spot prices of Brent crude, the international standard, hovered around \$107 a barrel Tuesday, up more than 45% since the war started Feb. 28.

In a social media post, Trump directed blame at U.S. allies such as the United Kingdom and France that have refused to enter a war with no clear endgame that they were not consulted on.

“You’ll have to start learning how to fight for yourself, the U.S.A. won’t be there to help you anymore, just like you weren’t there for us. Iran has been, essentially, decimated. The hard part is done. Go get your own oil!” Trump wrote.

He singled out France for not letting planes fly over French territory while taking military supplies to Israel.

France has allowed the U.S. Air Force to use the Istres base in southern France because it had guarantees that planes landing there would not be involved in carrying out strikes.

Allies have refused to get involved

Spain, which has emerged as Europe’s loudest critic of the war, said Monday that it had closed its airspace for U.S. planes involved in the conflict.

Italy recently refused to allow U.S. military assets to use the Sigonella air base in Sicily for an operation linked to the offensive, an official with knowledge of the matter said, confirming a local press report. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly.

Italian Defense Minister Guido Crosetto wrote on X that Italy is still allowing the U.S. to use its bases, adding that there has been no cooling of relations between the two countries.

Journalist kidnapped in Iraq

An American journalist was kidnapped Tuesday in Baghdad, and Iraqi security forces are pursuing her captors, Iraqi officials said. The journalist was identified as freelancer Shelly Kittleson by Al-Monitor, one

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of the news outlets she worked for.

A U.S. official blamed the Iranian-backed Iraqi militia Kataib Hezbollah.

Two cars were involved in the kidnapping, one of which crashed, and a person inside was apprehended. The journalist was then transferred to a second car that fled the scene, according to two Iraqi security officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the case.

Dylan Johnson, U.S. assistant secretary of state for public affairs, said on X that the State Department had "fulfilled our duty to warn this individual of threats against them."

In a statement, Al-Monitor said it stands by her "vital reporting." Kittleson has been a longtime freelancer in the region, reporting extensively from Syria and Iraq.

Another aircraft carrier deploys to Middle East

The aircraft carrier USS George H. W. Bush deployed Tuesday from Norfolk, Virginia, and is slated to head to the Middle East, two U.S. officials said. They spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military plans.

It would be the third carrier sent out to support the Iran war, along with the USS Gerald R. Ford, which is now undergoing repairs, and the USS Abraham Lincoln, which arrived in the region in January.

Trump warned this week that if a ceasefire is not reached "shortly," and if the strait is not reopened, the U.S. would broaden its offensive, including by attacking the Kharg Island oil export hub and possibly desalination plants.

Speaking at the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth would not say if U.S. ground forces would enter the war. "We don't want to have to do more militarily than we have to," he said.

A ground invasion could alienate Iranians who despise the ruling theocracy and who rose up in mass protests that were crushed earlier this year. Some could see it as an attack on Iran itself and rally around the flag.

Since the Iran war began, 13 U.S. service members have been killed and 348 wounded, six seriously, according to a formal count provided Tuesday by Capt. Tim Hawkins, spokesman for U.S. Central Command.

Iran hits oil tanker as Israel strikes Iran and Lebanon

The Israeli military said early Wednesday that it had killed a senior Hezbollah commander and another senior leader in two separate strikes in the Beirut area.

Military officials said they launched strikes targeting what they described as Hezbollah infrastructure in the Lebanese capital. Defense Minister Israel Katz said Israel plans to control the area south of the Litani River — some 20 miles (about 30 kilometers) north of the border.

Israel invaded southern Lebanon after Hezbollah began launching missiles into northern Israel days after the outbreak of the wider war. Many Lebanese fear another prolonged military occupation.

Elsewhere, the United Arab Emirates has barred Iranians from entering or transiting the country as the war rages, three major airlines said. The long-haul carriers Emirates and Etihad, as well as the lower-cost airline FlyDubai, made the announcements Wednesday on their websites.

In Iran, authorities say more than 1,900 people have been killed, while 19 have been reported dead in Israel.

Two dozen people have died in Gulf states and the occupied West Bank. In Lebanon, officials said more than 1,200 people have been killed, and more than 1 million displaced.

Ten Israeli soldiers have died in Lebanon, including four announced Tuesday.

Tiger Woods says he'll seek treatment after pleading not guilty to DUI

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Tiger Woods said Tuesday he is stepping away to seek treatment, four days after his vehicle crashed in Florida and he was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence. He will miss the Masters for the second straight year.

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"This is necessary in order for me to prioritize my well-being and work toward lasting recovery," Woods said in social media posts.

Woods pleaded not guilty in his driving under the influence case in Florida on Tuesday, hours after a sheriff's report said deputies found two pain pills in his pocket and he showed signs of impairment after his SUV clipped a trailer and rolled over on its side.

The online court docket for Martin County showed Woods entered a written plea of not guilty and planned to waive his April 23 arraignment hearing.

It's the second time Woods has taken a leave following a car crash. In 2009, after his SUV plowed into a fire hydrant and tree outside his home near Orlando, he took a leave of absence to work on being a better person. That lasted four months and he returned at the Masters.

Woods showed signs of impairment

Woods' eyes were bloodshot and glassy, his pupils dilated and he had opioid pills — identified as hydrocodone — on him when interviewed at the scene of the crash, according to the arrest report released by the Martin County Sheriff's Office.

Woods' movements were slow and lethargic, he was sweating as he talked to deputies in the back seat of an air-conditioned car and he told them he had taken prescription medication earlier in the morning, according to the report.

Woods told deputies he had been looking at his phone and fiddling with the radio moments before he hit the trailer, the report said.

Woods has not played an official event since the 2024 British Open. He was recovering from a seventh back surgery in October and was trying to return at the Masters, where he is a five-time champion.

"I'm committed to take the time needed to return in a healthier, stronger and more focused place, both personally and professionally," Woods said in his statement.

Woods will not be in Augusta, Georgia, where he was to appear with Masters chairman Fred Ridley to celebrate the opening of a refurbished municipal course that involved Woods, or for the prestigious Masters Club dinner for champions.

"Augusta National Golf Club and the Masters Tournament fully support Tiger Woods as he focuses on his well-being. Although Tiger will not be joining us in person next week, his presence will be felt here in Augusta," Ridley said in a statement.

He is taking a break from the PGA Tour board

That means a break from more than just golf. He serves a key role on the PGA Tour board by leading its Future Competition Committee reshaping the schedule. A tour spokesman said Woods did not take part in Tuesday's meeting, and the work would continue in his absence.

"Over the last year, I have come to deeply appreciate Tiger not only for his impact on the game, but for his friendship and the perspective he has shared with me as I joined the golf industry," said PGA Tour CEO Brian Rolapp, who started last summer. "My thoughts are with him and his family as he takes this step, for which he has my full respect and support."

Woods' defense attorney, Douglas Duncan, didn't respond to an email and phone call after the plea was entered Tuesday.

Woods was traveling at high speeds on a beachside, residential road on Jupiter Island with a 30 mph (nearly 50 kph) when the accident occurred. The truck had \$5,000 in damage, according to the report.

The truck driver and another person helped Woods out of his vehicle through the passenger window. Neither Woods nor the truck driver were injured.

The failed sobriety test

During a field sobriety test, deputies noticed Woods limping and that he had a compression sock over his right knee. Woods explained he had undergone seven back surgeries and over 20 surgeries on his right leg, and that his ankle seizes up while walking.

Woods, who was hiccupping during questioning, continuously moved his head during one of the sobriety tests and deputies had to tell him several times to keep his head straight, the report said.

"Based on my observations of Woods, how he performed the exercises and based on my training, knowledge, and experience, I believed that Woods normal faculties were impaired, and he was unable to safely operate the motor vehicle," the deputy wrote after the tests.

Woods, 50, is the most influential figure in golf and has become as recognizable as any athlete in the world. The first person of Black heritage to win the Masters in 1997, he has captivated golf fans with records likely never to be broken.

But his injuries have kept him from accomplishing more, including those suffered in the 2021 car crash in Los Angeles that damaged his right leg so badly he said doctors considered amputation.

At this latest crash, Woods agreed to a Breathalyzer test that showed no signs of alcohol, but he refused a urine test, authorities said. He was arrested and released on bail eight hours later.

Woods, who has been involved in four crashes over the years, is charged with driving under the influence with property damage and refusal to submit to a lawful test.

Under a change to Florida law last year, refusing a law enforcement officer's request to take a breath, blood or urine test became a misdemeanor, even for a first offense.

Trump signs order directing creation of a national voter list, a move already facing lawsuit threats

By SEUNG MIN KIM, ALI SWENSON, MATT BROWN and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press
WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump on Tuesday signed an executive order to create a nationwide list of verified eligible voters and to restrict mail-in voting, a move that swiftly drew legal threats from state Democratic officials ahead of this year's midterm elections.

The order, which voting law experts say violates the Constitution by attempting to seize states' power to run elections, is the latest in a torrent of efforts from Trump to interfere with the way Americans vote based on his false allegations of fraud. The president has repeatedly lied about the outcome of the 2020 presidential campaign and the integrity of state-run elections, asserting again Tuesday that he won "three times" and citing accusations of voter fraud that numerous audits, investigations and courts have debunked.

The order signed Tuesday calls on the Department of Homeland Security, working in conjunction with the Social Security Administration, to make the list of eligible voters in each state. It also seeks to bar the U.S. Postal Service from sending absentee ballots to those not on each state's approved list.

Trump is also calling for ballots to have secure envelopes with unique barcodes for tracking, according to the executive order, which was first reported by the Daily Caller. Federal funding could be withheld from states and localities that don't comply.

"The cheating on mail-in voting is legendary. It's horrible what's going on," Trump said, repeating his false allegations about mail ballots as he signed the order. "I think this will help a lot with elections."

Democratic states quickly threaten lawsuits, non-compliance

Within minutes of Trump signing the order, top elections officials in Oregon and Arizona, two states that rely heavily on mail ballots, pledged to sue, arguing that the president was illegally encroaching on the right of states to run elections.

Arizona Secretary of State Adrian Fontes said the state's vote-by-mail system was designed by Republicans and is now used by 80% of voters. Arizona doesn't need the federal government to tell it who can vote, and federal data isn't always reliable, he said.

"It is just wrongheaded for a president of the United States to pretend like he can pick his own voters," Fontes told The Associated Press. "That's just not how America works."

Maine Secretary of State Shenna Bellows told the AP that the order was "laughably unconstitutional" and said her state would not comply. More than a quarter of Maine voters cast mail-in ballots in the 2024 election.

Nevada Secretary of State Francisco Aguilar said Trump's order would cripple local election officials charged with implementing it and silence voters counting on casting a mail ballot.

"It doesn't benefit anybody in this country except himself," Aguilar said.

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Legal experts noted other potential flaws with the order. David Becker, a former Justice Department lawyer who leads the Center for Election Innovation and Research, said the Postal Service is run by a board of governors, and the president has no power to tell it what mail it can and cannot deliver.

A spokesperson for USPS said Tuesday the agency will review the order. Trump has sought to bring the independent agency under more presidential control, proposing to fold it under the Commerce Department — whose secretary, Howard Lutnick, was on hand for Tuesday's signing.

Trump has long tried to interfere with state-run elections

Trump's March 2025 election executive order sought sweeping changes to how elections are run, including adding a documentary proof-of-citizenship requirement to the federal voter registration form and requiring mailed ballots to be received at election offices by Election Day. Much of it has been blocked through legal challenges brought by voting rights groups and Democratic state attorneys general who allege it's an unconstitutional power grab that would disenfranchise large groups of voters.

He also told a conservative podcaster in February that he wants to "take over" elections from Democratic-run areas.

U.S. elections are unique because they are not centralized. Rather than being run by the federal government, they're conducted by election officials and volunteers in thousands of jurisdictions across the country, from tiny townships to sprawling urban counties with more voters than some states have people. The Constitution's Elections Clause gives Congress the power to "make or alter" election regulations, at least for federal office, but it doesn't mention presidential authority over election administration.

"This is Donald Trump turning the Department of Homeland Security into the department of controlling the homeland," said Maya Wiley, president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

The Trump administration has launched a widespread campaign it says is meant to target allegations of voter fraud that for years have been the subject of false claims from Trump and his allies. The Justice Department for months has been demanding detailed voter registration lists from states in what it has described as an effort to ensure the security of elections, and has sued when state officials have refused to hand them over.

The FBI in January seized ballots from the election office of a Georgia county that has been central to right-wing conspiracy theories over Trump's 2020 election loss. And Attorney General Pam Bondi recently named a "special attorney" with the power to investigate and prosecute cases across the country "relating to the integrity of federal elections," according to a copy of the order.

Voting rights groups raise concerns about current verification system

The Department of Homeland Security's SAVE system for verifying citizenship and immigration status has come under scrutiny for producing flawed results from unreliable data sets, as well as over privacy concerns. One example is that states can conduct bulk searches of the system with Social Security numbers, but few states collect full Social Security numbers as part of voter registration, according to the Brennan Center for Justice.

The Trump administration undertook an overhaul of the system last year, but it still faces legal challenges alleging that reliance on the system can lead to errors in identifying citizenship status and affect eligible voters.

At least one Republican elections official on Tuesday defended the SAVE system while downplaying the potential of widespread voter fraud.

Robert Sinners, a spokesperson for Georgia Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger, said their recommendations to the Trump administration have strengthened voter verification and stressed that "the small number flagged as potential non-citizens cannot vote by mail or in person until they provide proof of citizenship."

"The executive order will be decided in court, but in Georgia, we already verify citizenship and will continue to do so regardless of the outcome," Sinners added.

The president is a vocal critic of mail-in voting, alleging that the practice is rife with fraud as he pushes lawmakers to pass a far-reaching elections bill that would clamp down on it. A 2025 report by the Brookings Institution found that mail voting fraud occurred in only 0.000043% of total mail ballots cast, or about

four cases per 10 million.

Trump himself has also used mail ballots, most recently last week in local Florida elections. The White House has said that Trump is opposed to universal mail-in voting, rather than individual voters who may need the alternative voting method for reasons such as travel or military deployment.

Suspension lifted for helicopter pilots who hovered near Kid Rock's home

BY TRAVIS LOLLER Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The Army pilots who hovered two helicopters near Kid Rock's Tennessee home during a training run while he clapped and saluted have had their suspension lifted, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Tuesday.

"No punishment. No Investigation. Carry on, patriots," Hegseth said in a social media post.

Earlier, a U.S. Army spokesperson said the crews of the two AH-64 Apache helicopters from the 101st Combat Aviation Brigade at Fort Campbell were suspended from flying, pending an investigation into their actions. The suspension was a discretionary — but not unusual — step when an investigation is underway, Maj. Montrell Russell said in statement.

The Army would review whether the flight complied with FAA regulations and aviation safety protocol, Russell said in the statement, which he emailed fewer than three hours before Hegseth's social media post. The Army takes "allegations of unauthorized or unsafe flight operations very seriously and is committed to enforcing standards and holding personnel accountable," the statement said.

Asked about Hegseth's announcement, Deputy Pentagon Press Secretary Joel Valdez said he had nothing to add to the secretary's social media post. An Army spokesperson didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Kid Rock, who is an outspoken supporter of President Donald Trump, told WKRN-TV on Monday that it's not uncommon for helicopters from nearby Fort Campbell to fly near his home. He said he is a big supporter of the military and he's performed for troops overseas in Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries.

"I think they know this is a pretty friendly spot," he said. He noted that last Thanksgiving he was at Fort Campbell, a sprawling Army base on the Tennessee-Kentucky border, with Vice President JD Vance. "I've talked to some of these pilots. I've told them, 'You guys see me waving when you come by the house?' I'm like, 'You guys are always welcome to cruise by my house, any time,'" he said.

Kid Rock posted two short videos on social media Saturday. Each shows a helicopter hovering alongside his swimming pool while the entertainer claps, salutes and raises his fist in the air. One post included a caption by Kid Rock disparaging Democratic California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a frequent Trump critic.

Speaking at the Oval Office on Tuesday, Trump suggested maybe the crews shouldn't have done it before adding, "I like Kid Rock, maybe they were trying to defend him, I don't know."

In the videos, Kid Rock stands next to a replica of the Statue of Liberty and a sign by the pool that reads, "The Southern White House." His home on a hill overlooking Nashville was built to resemble the White House.

The helicopters were on a training mission when they stopped by Kid Rock's house, said Maj. Jonathon Bless, public affairs officer for the 101st Airborne Division. The helicopters also flew over a "No Kings" protest against Trump in downtown Nashville, but Bless said their presence had nothing to do with the protest.

Kid Rock said he thought it was "really cool" that they stopped to hover at his house.

"If it makes their day a little brighter for their service to our country, protecting us, I think that's a great thing," he said.

Asked about possible repercussions for the crews, he said, "I think they're going to be all right. My buddy's the commander in chief."

Judge orders White House ballroom construction to halt in a ruling that leaves Trump seething

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday ordered the Trump administration to suspend construction of a \$400 million ballroom it demolished the East Wing of the White House to make space for, barring work from proceeding without congressional approval.

U.S. District Judge Richard Leon in Washington granted a preservationist group's request for a preliminary injunction that temporarily halts President Donald Trump's White House ballroom project. He concluded that the National Trust for Historic Preservation is likely to succeed on the merits of its claims because "no statute comes close to giving the President the authority he claims to have."

"The President of the United States is the steward of the White House for future generations of First Families. He is not, however, the owner!" wrote Leon, who was nominated to the bench by Republican President George W. Bush.

The White House quickly filed a notice to appeal while Trump fumed at the ruling. "We built many things at the White House over the years. They don't get congressional approval," he told reporters in the Oval Office a short time later.

The ruling was the first major rebuke of Trump's sweeping efforts to overhaul the White House. But it wasn't immediately clear what it would mean for a sprawling project in which crews have long since torn down the East Wing, radically transforming the look and feel of the historic grounds.

The judge's decision came two days before the National Capital Planning Commission, the agency that signs off on construction on federal property in the Washington region, is expected to approve the addition. Stephen Staudigl, a spokesperson for the commission, said the judge's ruling does not affect the schedule for Thursday.

Carol Quillen, president and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which filed the lawsuit prompting Leon's ruling, said, "We are pleased with Judge Leon's ruling today to order a halt to any further ballroom construction until the Administration complies with the law and obtains express authorization to go forward."

"This is a win for the American people on a project that forever impacts one of the most beloved and iconic places in our nation," Quillen said in a statement. The group had sued in hopes of obtaining an order pausing the ballroom project until it undergoes multiple independent reviews and receives congressional approval.

The judge acknowledged the complication of stopping work in progress

Leon suspended enforcement of his order for 14 days, acknowledging that the case "raises novel and weighty issues, that halting an ongoing construction project may raise logistical issues." He also recognized that the administration would appeal his decision.

The judge ruled that any construction work that's necessary to ensure the safety and security of the White House is exempt from the scope of the injunction. Leon said he reviewed material that the government privately submitted to him before concluding that halting construction wouldn't jeopardize national security.

Trump noted that the ruling will allow work on underground bunkers and other security measures around the White House grounds to continue — even though those will be paid for by taxpayers, not the private donors and by Trump himself whom the president has promised will cover the cost of the ballroom.

The Republican president brought handwritten notes into the Oval Office that referenced that part of the ruling, saying, "It talks about we're allowed to continue building."

He then offered an exhaustive list of what's being done to enhance security while the ballroom is built.

"The roof is droneproof. We have secure air-handling systems. You know, bad things happen in the air if you have bad people," the president said. "We have bio-defense all over. We have secure telecommunications and communications all over. We have bomb shelters that we're building. We have a hospital and very major medical facilities that we're building."

He added, "Think of that for the safety of the president," and said the ruling means "on that, we're OK."

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Trump launched the project quickly, catching the public off-guard

The White House announced the ballroom project over the summer. By late October, Trump had demolished the East Wing for a 90,000-square-foot (8,400-square-meter) ballroom he said would fit 999 people.

Trump proceeded with the project before seeking input from the National Capital Planning Commission and another oversight entity, the Commission of Fine Arts. Trump has stocked both commissions with allies. The trust sued in December.

On Feb. 26, Leon rejected the preservationist group's initial bid to temporarily halt the ballroom's construction. He said the privately funded group had based its challenge on a "ragtag group" of legal theories and would have a better chance of success if it amended the lawsuit, which it did.

The administration has said above-ground construction on the ballroom would begin in April.

"We are two weeks away," plaintiffs' attorney Thaddeus Heuer said during a March 17 hearing. "The imminence is now imminent."

During the hearing, Leon sounded skeptical of what he referred to as the government's "shifting theories and shifting dynamics" for its arguments in the case.

"I don't think it's a new theory," Justice Department attorney Jacob Roth told the judge.

Leon expressed frustration at Roth's attempts to equate the massive ballroom project with relatively modest construction work at the White House under previous administrations.

"This is an iconic symbol of this nation," the judge said.

The administration argued that other presidents didn't need congressional approval for previous White House renovation projects, large and small.

"Many of those projects were highly controversial in their time yet have since become accepted — even beloved — parts of the White House," government attorneys wrote.

The project is another attempt by Trump to remake Washington

Leon in his ruling rejected the administration's claim that Congress gave the president virtually unilateral authority to construct anything on federal land in Washington, regardless of the funding source.

"This clearly is not how Congress and former Presidents have managed the White House for centuries, and this Court will not be the first to hold that Congress has ceded its powers in such a significant fashion!" the judge wrote.

Since returning to the White House, Trump has frequently boasted about leaving a lasting mark on the building and the presidency.

His extensive White House makeover efforts have already included building a patio space alongside the Rose Garden, erecting towering flagpoles on the North and South Lawns, renovating the bathroom attached to the Lincoln Bedroom and the Palm Room, and adding gold flourishes to the Oval Office and the outside colonnade.

The president also wants to build a ceremonial arch near the Lincoln Memorial, overhaul several Washington-area golf courses and is leading a push to revamp the Kennedy Center that is forcing the nation's capital's premier center for the performing arts to close for two years this summer.

Gas prices eclipse \$4 a gallon in the US, the highest since 2022

By WYATTE GRANTHAM-PHILIPS Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. gas prices jumped past an average of \$4 a gallon for the first time since 2022 on Tuesday, as the Iran war continues to push fuel prices higher worldwide.

According to AAA, the national average for a gallon of regular gasoline is now \$4.02 — over a dollar more expensive than it was before the war began on Feb. 28. That's the largest monthly jump the motor club has seen on record. And the last time U.S. drivers were collectively paying this much at the pump was nearly four years ago, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The price is a national average, meaning drivers in some states have been paying well over \$4 a gallon for a while now. Prices vary between states due to factors ranging from nearby supply to differing tax rates.

Since the U.S. and Israel launched the war against Iran a month ago, the cost of crude oil — the main

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ingredient in gasoline — has spiked and swung rapidly. That's because the conflict has caused deep supply chain disruptions and cuts from major oil producers across the Middle East. Both Brent crude, the international standard, and benchmark U.S. crude are now going for more than \$100 per barrel, up from roughly \$70 before the war.

Motorists around the world are coping with higher gas prices. In Paris, for example, gas is at 2.34 euros per liter (\$2.68), which is about \$10.27 a gallon.

Expensive gas could drag the economy and drive up other prices

Higher gas prices arrive as many households continue to face wider cost of living strains. And as drivers pay more to cover necessities like gas, or even utility bills impacted by soaring fuel costs, many may be forced to cut their budgets in other places. That threatens broader consequences for the economy overall.

Before launching the war, President Donald Trump bragged about keeping gas prices low. Consumer prices and the cost of living already have become flashpoints in this midterm election year. A recent AP-NORC poll found that 45% of U.S. adults are "extremely" or "very" concerned about being able to afford gas in the next few months, up from 30% shortly after Trump won the 2024 presidential election.

Beyond visits to the pump, analysts say high fuel costs will trickle into groceries, which have to be restocked frequently and could also see price hikes as businesses' transportation and packaging costs pile up. Other cargo has also been impacted. The U.S. Postal Service is seeking a temporary 8% added charge on some of its popular products including Priority Mail.

U.S. diesel, used for many freight and delivery trucks, is now going for an average of \$5.45 a gallon, up from about \$3.76 a gallon before the war began per AAA.

"It's going to mean more expensive bills for truckers, tractors and trains that move the U.S. economy with diesel fuel. It's going to mean consumers are likely greeted by rising grocery prices — and broadly speaking, a rise in U.S. inflation," said Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at fuel-tracking service GasBuddy.

It's possible those prices could jump even higher. To Trump's frustration, most tanker movement in the key Strait of Hormuz — where roughly one-fifth of the world's oil once sailed through — remains at a halt. That's led to cuts from producers in the region who have no way of getting their crude to market. Meanwhile, Iran, Israel and the U.S. have all struck oil and gas facilities, worsening supply concerns.

Drivers feel the pinch

"I think it's outrageous," Kelly Gravlin said of gas prices while filling up her Toyota 4Runner at a Costco in Commerce Township, northwest of Detroit. She paid about \$3.95 per gallon for regular unleaded Tuesday, with a final cost of \$70.73.

"We're in a war that we shouldn't be in that's, therefore, hiking up our prices," said Gravlin. "From a president who ran on getting gas prices low."

Alisa Howell, of Charlotte, North Carolina, normally fills up her tank entirely when she goes to the gas station. But now, she says just gets enough fuel to do what she needs to do each day.

Howell hopes gas prices will go down as Trump once promised, but stressed that the "foolishness with the government" continues to impact peoples' livelihoods. She blamed the administration for making the decision to attack Iran, adding that she doesn't believe it was worth going to war.

"It's just unfair to all of us. It doesn't matter if you're Democrat or Republican. It's everybody," Howell said.

Many drivers are on the hunt for cheaper prices where they can find them. Danielle Ervin, of Novi, Michigan, stopped at a local Speedway station Tuesday morning because it offers an 11 cent per gallon discount.

Still, overall, Ervin said what she pays now is "terrible." She noted she's had to cut other parts of her budget.

"I had to cut back on some of my streaming services at home, so the kids are a little upset about that. I had to change which grocery stores I buy my fruits and veggies at," Ervin said. "And then, I'm not buying stuff for myself — sneakers and clothes and all that other stuff — because I have to maintain for the household."

The road ahead

Despite some efforts from governments worldwide to boost supply, including tapping into emergency oil

stockpiles, steep prices remain. Analysts like De Haan reiterate that all eyes are on the Strait of Hormuz — noting that if the waterway remains blocked for long enough, U.S. gasoline could climb toward \$4.50 a gallon on average, or even approach the previous \$5 record.

A lot of factors contribute to what consumers pay at the pump. While expensive oil is the leading driver behind today's surge, U.S. gas prices typically tick up a bit at this time of year. More drivers are hitting the road for spring break and trying to fuel up while they can, so there's higher demand. Warming weather brings a shift to summer blend fuel, which is more expensive to produce than winter blend.

And again, some states always have higher prices than others. On Tuesday, per AAA, California had the highest average at nearly \$5.89 for a gallon of regular gas. Meanwhile, Oklahoma had the lowest at around \$3.27 a gallon.

Geopolitical conflicts have contributed to soaring gas prices before. The U.S. average climbed to its highest level of just over \$5 a gallon in June 2022, nearly four months after the Ukraine war began and world leaders imposed sanctions against Russia, a leading oil producer.

Prices at the pump later fell from that record. Before Tuesday, per AAA data, the national average had stayed below the \$4 mark since mid-August of 2022.

Other parts of the world that rely more heavily on fuel imports from the Middle East, notably Asia, have seen starker energy shocks amid the Iran war. America's position as a net oil exporter gives it some more supply to fall back on — but that doesn't mean it's immune to price hikes. The U.S. still imports crude and refined products like gasoline. And overall, oil is a globally-traded commodity.

Judge says Penn must turn over information about Jewish employees in US discrimination probe

By MARK SCOLFORO and COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) — A federal judge on Tuesday ordered the University of Pennsylvania to hand over records about Jewish employees on campus to a federal agency as part of an investigation into antisemitic discrimination but said it did not have to reveal any employee's affiliation with a specific group.

U.S. District Judge Gerald Pappert said employees can refuse to take part in the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission investigation but the agency "needs the opportunity to talk to them directly to learn if they have evidence of discrimination."

He mostly upheld an administrative subpoena but said Penn does not have to disclose any worker's affiliation with a Jewish-related organization nor must it provide information about three Jewish-affiliated groups. He set a deadline of May 1 to comply.

A university spokesperson said in an emailed response that the school is committed to confronting antisemitism and all forms of discrimination and has "taken multiple steps to prevent and address these despicable events." Penn plans to appeal.

"While we acknowledge the important role of the EEOC to investigate discrimination, we also have an obligation to protect the rights of our employees. We continue to believe that requiring Penn to create lists of Jewish faculty and staff, and to provide personal contact information, raises serious privacy and First Amendment concerns. The University does not maintain employee lists by religion," the university's statement read.

It is not unusual for federal investigators looking into employment discrimination to request identities of employees of a particular religion, to facilitate outreach to people who may have been victims, according to a former federal official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the investigation.

Pappert wrote that the university and others who joined the litigation "significantly raised the dispute's temperature by impliedly and even expressly comparing the EEOC's efforts to protect Jewish employees from antisemitism to the Holocaust and the Nazis' compilation of 'lists of Jews.'" The judge called that "unfortunate and inappropriate."

Pappert wrote that Penn and the others who opposed the subpoena were primarily concerned about

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linking employees to Jewish groups, saying "the EEOC no longer seeks any employee's specific affiliation with a particular Jewish-related organization on campus."

The judge exempted information about three Jewish organizations from the subpoena -- MEOR, Penn Hillel and Chabad Lubavitch House. Executive directors with all three groups had declared in court filings they were legally and financially separate from the university.

"The privacy of persons making use of Chabad at Penn's services and facilities is vital to Chabad at Penn's operations," Rabbi Menachem Schmidt said in a January declaration. "Chabad at Penn is accordingly concerned about the impact that non-consensual disclosure of personal information could have on its mission and activities."

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission investigation was prompted in part by a series of incidents, including that someone had shouted antisemitic obscenities and destroyed property at a Jewish student life center, a Nazi swastika was painted on an academic building and "hateful graffiti" was left outside a fraternity.

The investigation has also focused on actions related to protests over the war in Gaza, and Penn's response to that and other incidents.

The EEOC claimed in a November filing that Penn's "workplace is replete with antisemitism," and it told the judge that investigators think "identification of those who have witnessed and/or been subjected to the environment is essential for determining whether the work environment was both objectively and subjectively hostile."

Moon rocket and weather are on NASA's side for the first astronaut launch in decades

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — After weeks of fuel leaks and other issues, NASA faced a trouble-free countdown Tuesday on the eve of astronauts' first trip to the moon in more than half a century.

Officials reported the moon rocket was doing well on the pad, and the weather looked promising. Forecasters put the odds of favorable conditions at 80%.

"Everybody's pretty excited and understands the significance of this launch," said senior test director Jeff Spaulding.

The four astronauts assigned to the Artemis II mission will become the first lunar visitors since Apollo 17 in 1972. They'll zip around the moon without landing or even orbiting, and come straight back.

It's the closest NASA has come to launching Artemis II. Hydrogen fuel leaks bumped the flight from February to March, then clogged helium lines pushed it to April. The space agency has only a handful of days every month to send the three Americans and one Canadian to the moon.

Confident that all of these problems are fixed, the launch team plans to begin fueling the 32-story Space Launch System rocket on Wednesday morning for an evening send-off.

The Dow surges more than 1,100 points as Wall Street soars to its best day since last spring

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — U.S. stocks surged to their best day since last spring, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average soared 1,125 points on Tuesday as doubt swung back to hope on Wall Street about a possible end to the war with Iran.

The S&P 500 leaped 2.9% for its largest gain since May. Just a day before, worries about the war had sent the main measure of Wall Street's health more than 9% below its all-time high set early this year.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rallied 2.5%, while the Nasdaq composite jumped 3.8%.

The rebound came as financial markets seized on a couple tenuous signals for hope about a possible end to the war. It's the latest manic swing following weeks of frenetic back and forth amid uncertainty

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about the war. The moves also came as Wall Street marked the end of the year's first quarter, a milestone that can cause a flurry of trading as fund managers close their books.

Analysts said optimism entered markets overnight following a report from The Wall Street Journal saying President Donald Trump told aides he's willing to end the U.S. military campaign against Iran even if the Strait of Hormuz remains largely closed. The strait is a narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf to the open ocean, and a fifth of the world's oil sails through it on a typical day.

Oil prices then took a sudden and sharp turn lower in midday trading following a news report from the Middle East quoting Iran's president Masoud Pezeshkian as saying it has "the necessary will to end the war" as long as certain requirements are met, including "guarantees to prevent a recurrence of aggression."

The worry on Wall Street has been that the war may last a long time and keep oil and natural gas from the Persian Gulf out of global markets, which could create a brutal blast of inflation.

Following Tuesday's possible signals of hope, the price for a barrel of Brent crude oil, the international standard, eased 3.2% to settle at \$103.97. Benchmark U.S. crude erased a gain from the morning and fell 1.5% to settle at \$101.38.

Oil prices could quickly revert to spiking, to be sure, and stocks could get back to falling if tankers carrying crude can't get through the strait easily. Iran attacked a fully loaded Kuwaiti oil tanker in the Persian Gulf in the latest fighting in the region.

And oil prices have already shot high enough that inflation in Europe accelerated to 2.5% in March, up from February's 1.9%.

In the United States, the average price for a gallon of gasoline topped \$4 per gallon for the first time since 2022. That's squeezing budgets for U.S. households and preventing spending on other things. Worries about that and pressured profit margins for companies meant the S&P 500 closed Tuesday with its worst loss for a quarter since the summer of 2022.

The 4.6% loss would have been even worse if not for Tuesday's easing for oil prices, which helped stocks of companies that have big fuel bills. United Airlines soared 8.1%, and Norwegian Cruise Line Holding steamed 5.9% higher to trim their losses for the year so far.

Tech stocks were the strongest forces lifting the market in a widespread rally where four out of every five stocks within the S&P 500 rose. Marvell Technology shot up 12.8% after Nvidia invested \$2 billion in the company and announced a partnership with it. Nvidia rose 5.6% and was the single strongest force lifting the S&P 500.

Centessa Pharmaceuticals soared 44% after Eli Lilly said it was buying the company working on treatments for excessive daytime sleepiness and other neurological conditions. Lilly, which is paying up to \$7.8 billion if certain conditions are met, rose 3.7%

They helped offset a 6.1% drop for McCormick. The spice company is buying most of Unilever's food business, including such brands as Hellmann's, for cash and stock valuing it at \$44.8 billion.

All told, the S&P 500 jumped 184.80 points to 6,528.52. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 1,125.37 to 46,341.51, and the Nasdaq composite rallied 795.99 to 21,590.63.

They benefited from easing pressure from the bond market, where Treasury yields sank again. The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.31% from 4.35% late Monday and from 4.44% at the end of last week. That's a significant move for the bond market.

Lower yields should pull downward on rates for mortgages and other loans for U.S. households and businesses, which have been screaming higher since the war began. The yield on the 10-year Treasury was at just 3.97% in late February, before worries about high oil prices pushed traders to erase bets for cuts to interest rates by the Federal Reserve this year.

Yields remained lower following a couple reports Tuesday on the U.S. economy that came in better than economists expected. One said confidence among U.S. consumers unexpectedly improved. The other said U.S. employers were advertising more job openings at the end of February than expected, though fewer than the month before.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose in Europe following a tougher finish in Asia. South Korea's Kospi fell 4.3%, and Japan's Nikkei 225 lost 1.6% for two of the bigger moves.

Citing First Amendment, federal judge blocks Trump order to end funding for NPR and PBS

By MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Citing the First Amendment, a federal judge on Tuesday agreed to permanently block the Trump administration from implementing a presidential directive to end federal funding for National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service, two media entities that the White House has said are counterproductive to American priorities.

The operational impact of U.S. District Judge Randolph Moss' decision was not immediately clear — both because it will likely be appealed and because too much damage to the public-broadcasting system has already been done, both by the president and Congress.

Moss ruled that President Donald Trump's executive order to cease funding for NPR and PBS is unlawful and unenforceable. The judge said the First Amendment right to free speech "does not tolerate viewpoint discrimination and retaliation of this type."

"It is difficult to conceive of clearer evidence that a government action is targeted at viewpoints that the President does not like and seeks to squelch," wrote Moss, who was nominated to the bench by President Barack Obama, a Democrat.

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said Moss' decision is "a ridiculous ruling by an activist judge attempting to undermine the law."

"NPR and PBS have no right to receive taxpayer funds, and Congress already voted to defund them. The Trump Administration looks forward to ultimate victory on the issue," Jackson said in a statement.

PBS, with programming ranging from "Sesame Street" and "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" to Ken Burns' documentaries, has been operating for more than half a century. NPR has news programming from "All Things Considered" and cultural shows like the "Tiny Desk" concerts. For decades, the fates of both systems have been part of a philosophical debate over whether government should help fund their operations.

Punishment for 'past speech' cited in decision

The judge noted that Trump's executive order simply directs that all federal agencies "cut off any and all funding" to NPR, which is based in Washington, and PBS, based in Arlington, Virginia.

"The Federal Defendants fail to cite a single case in which a court has ever upheld a statute or executive action that bars a particular person or entity from participating in any federally funded activity based on that person or entity's past speech," the judge wrote.

Last year, Trump, a Republican, said at a news conference he would "love to" defund NPR and PBS because he believes they're biased in favor of Democrats.

"The message is clear: NPR and PBS need not apply for any federal benefit because the President disapproves of their 'left wing' coverage of the news," Moss wrote.

NPR accused the Corporation for Public Broadcasting of violating its First Amendment free speech rights when it moved to cut off its access to grant money appropriated by Congress. NPR also claims Trump wants to punish it for the content of its journalism.

"Public media exists to serve the public interest — that of Americans — not that of any political agenda or elected official," said Katherine Maher, NPR's president and CEO. She called the decision a decisive affirmation of the rights of a free and independent press.

PBS chief Paula Kerger said she was thrilled with the decision. The executive order, she said, is "textbook" unconstitutional viewpoint discrimination and retaliation. "At PBS, we will continue to do what we've always done: serve our mission to educate and inspire all Americans as the nation's most trusted media institution."

Last August, CPB announced it would take steps toward closing itself down after being defunded by Congress.

A victory, though incremental, for press freedom

Plaintiffs' attorney Theodore Boutros said Tuesday's ruling is "a victory for the First Amendment and for freedom of the press."

"As the Court expressly recognized, the First Amendment draws a line, which the government may not cross, at efforts to use government power — including the power of the purse — 'to punish or suppress disfavored expression' by others," Boutros said in a statement. "The Executive Order crossed that line."

The judge agreed with government attorneys that some of the news outlets' legal claims are moot, partly because the CPB no longer exists.

"But that does not end the matter because the Executive Order sweeps beyond the CPB," Moss added. "It also directs that all federal agencies refrain from funding NPR and PBS — regardless of the nature of the program or the merits of their applications or requests for funding."

NPR and three public radio stations sued administration officials last May. While Trump was named as a defendant, the case did not include Congress — and the legislative body has played a large role in the public-broadcasting saga in the past year.

Trump's executive order immediately cut millions of dollars in funding from the Education Department to PBS for its children's programming, forcing the system to lay off one-third of the PBS Kids staff. The Trump order didn't impact Congress' vote to eliminate the overall federal appropriations for PBS and NPR, which forced the closure of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the entity that funneled that money to the TV and radio networks.

One Cuban family navigates daily life under a US oil embargo and a deepening economic crisis

By ANDREA RODRÍGUEZ Associated Press

HAVANA (AP) — Yuneisy Riviaux grew up in a working-class Havana neighborhood and has endured a life of hardship, but she never imagined a day would come when she and her little girls would go without lunch.

The 42-year-old unemployed mother of two lives in Havana with several other families in a house where the second floor collapsed years ago.

"Things have been going very, very badly for me," Riviaux said as she played with her 2-year-old daughter, Seinet. "Some days I manage to get food."

"But other times I can't — like right now, when I have to bite my lip and swallow my tears because I don't have lunch for the girls."

The deepening economic crisis that has gripped Cuba for the past six years — intensified by the energy embargo enacted under U.S. President Donald Trump — continues to disproportionately affect the island's most vulnerable. Persistent blackouts, cuts to the state-run food ration system, and severe shortages of water and medicine have transformed daily life into an ordeal for people like Riviaux, her husband Cristóbal Estrada and their two daughters.

A few hours earlier, the 61-year-old Estrada had made breakfast for 7-year-old Edianet: a piece of bread, distributed to all Cubans through the ration book system, with a tiny pat of butter — a luxury a tourist gave the family while wandering through the neighborhood.

After dropping Edianet off at school, Estrada set out for Cotorro, about 12 miles (20 kilometers) away, to get food and money relatives there had offered. During the last nationwide blackout on March 21, all the food his family had in their refrigerator spoiled.

"He has to see if he can find a ride, a bus or whatever it takes to get there," Riviaux said.

Public transportation in Cuba has been semi-paralyzed because of gasoline shortages since the United States imposed an oil embargo on the island following the January attack on Venezuela — a key oil supplier that stopped making shipments to the island, which produces barely 40% of the crude oil it needs.

That led to islandwide blackouts that have roiled Cubans, who have grappled with years of crisis; the lack of gasoline and basic resources has crippled hospitals and led to soaring prices and food shortages.

For years, Mexico also sent oil to Cuba as the island struggled with a decades-long energy crisis, but it halted the shipments under the threat of U.S. tariffs, and now only sends humanitarian aid.

On Tuesday, a Russian tanker docked at the Cuban port of Matanzas with 730,000 barrels of oil after

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the Trump administration let it proceed despite the U.S. energy blockade — marking the first time in three months that an oil delivery reached the island. But that will provide only enough diesel for about nine or 10 days of the island's needs, experts say.

Life has only gotten worse

Riviaux and Estrada used to have a small stall outside their house where they sold powdered drinks and simple packaged foods.

But in February, Estrada fell ill and was hospitalized with a collapsed lung. The cost of his treatment was devastating; the couple was forced to spend their savings on medicine bought on the black market because state-subsidized pharmacies had none.

"We had to sacrifice that business to buy the medicine and save his life," Riviaux said.

Now Riviaux sells sweet pastries her sister bakes whenever they can get a bag of flour — which isn't provided by the meager monthly rations, which include rice, beans, sugar, cooking oil, coffee and a daily bread roll.

Cuba's once-lauded universal health care system has so deteriorated that it struggles to provide basic care. Hospitals face a critical backlog, with some 96,000 surgeries pending, including 11,000 for children, according to local authorities and the United Nations.

Nearly 5 million people with chronic illnesses lack access to essential medications, while life-saving treatments like radiation treatments for cancer and dialysis for kidney disease have been interrupted for 16,000 and 2,800 patients, respectively.

The United Nations launched a \$94 million emergency plan this week to support what it called a "life-threatening" crisis for Cubans. According to Francisco Pichón, resident coordinator of the U.N. in Cuba, the appeal comes after a long history of Cuba leading Latin America in maternal health and vaccination rates — successes now at grave risk.

The dreaded moment — no food for lunch

By midday, her husband still hadn't returned, so Riviaux had no choice but to give her 2-year-old a piece of bread and the last of the family's milk — a donation from Mexico. Riviaux herself went without. Her 7-year-old still gets a free lunch at school, where classes continue despite the national crisis.

Riviaux speaks with nostalgia about the time before the COVID-19 pandemic, when, she said, "Cuba had everything."

"I know the pandemic hit the whole world, but it hit us much harder," she said.

The ration book each family received before the pandemic contained rice, beans, a liter of milk daily for children, sugar, oil, chicken and ground meat, among some 30 food items and hygiene products. It was only enough to last about 20 days, so families supplemented with purchases in privately run stores using a currency pegged to the U.S. dollar.

Stricter U.S. sanctions, which began under the first Trump administration, along with a collapse in tourism triggered by the pandemic and Cuba's failed economic policies, led to a deep recession.

Cuba's gross domestic product has plummeted by 15% over the last six years, triggering a historic exodus. The island lost more than 1 million inhabitants — roughly 10% of its population — in 2024 alone.

Emboldened by the U.S. capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, Trump has gradually escalated his rhetoric on Cuba, first suggesting he would pursue "a friendly takeover" of the country and more recently telling conservative allies from Latin America that he would "take care" of Cuba once the war with Iran winds down.

Riviaux admitted that while she tries to stay out of politics, the harshness of Trump's rhetoric has left her deeply unsettled.

"We heard the news that Trump wanted to take over. What will happen if the U.S. gets involved?" she asked as her husband arrived late in the afternoon.

He brought plantains, chicken and enough cash to secure a kilo (about 2 pounds) of rice from a neighbor's stall — a small relief in an uncertain week.

Supreme Court rules against Colorado ban on 'conversion therapy' for LGBTQ+ kids

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled against a law banning "conversion therapy" for LGBTQ+ kids in Colorado, one of about two dozen states that ban the discredited practice.

An 8-1 high court majority sided with a Christian counselor who argues the law banning talk therapy violates the First Amendment. The justices agreed that the law raises free speech concerns and sent it back to a lower court to decide if it meets a legal standard that few laws pass.

Justice Neil Gorsuch, writing for the court, said the law "censors speech based on viewpoint." The First Amendment, he wrote, "stands as a shield against any effort to enforce orthodoxy in thought or speech in this country."

Gorsuch's opinion drew support from liberal Justices Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor.

A state could similarly not ban talk therapy designed to affirm a minor's sexual orientation or gender identity, Kagan wrote. "Once again, because the State has suppressed one side of a debate, while aiding the other, the constitutional issue is straightforward," she wrote.

In a solo dissent, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson wrote that states should be free to regulate health care, even if that means incidental restrictions on speech. The decision, Jackson wrote, "opens a dangerous can of worms" that "threatens to impair states' ability to regulate the provision of medical care in any respect."

The decision is the latest in a line of recent cases in which the justices have backed claims of religious discrimination while taking a skeptical view of LGBTQ+ rights.

Counselor Kaley Chiles, with support from President Donald Trump's Republican administration, said the law wrongly bars her from offering voluntary, faith-based therapy for kids.

Chiles contends her approach is different from "conversion therapy" practices from decades ago, like shock therapy. Her attorneys argued that the ban makes it hard for parents to find therapists willing to discuss gender identity with kids unless the counseling affirms transition.

"I look forward to being able to help them when they choose the goal of growing comfortable with their bodies," Chiles said in a statement. "Counselors walking alongside these young people shouldn't be limited to promoting state-approved goals like gender transition, which often leads to harmful drugs and surgeries."

Colorado disagreed, saying its law does allow wide-ranging conversations about gender identity and sexual orientation and exempts religious ministries. The state says the measure simply bars using therapy to try to "convert" LGBTQ+ people to heterosexuality or traditional gender expectations, a practice that has been scientifically discredited and linked to serious harm.

The law doesn't violate the First Amendment, Colorado argued, because therapy is different from other types of speech since it's a form of health care that the state has a responsibility to regulate.

Advocates for LGBTQ+ people condemned the ruling, as well as "conversion therapy."

"This is a dangerous practice that has been condemned by every major medical association in the country. Today's decision does not change the science, and it does not change the fact that conversion therapists who harm patients will still face legal consequences," Polly Crozier, director of family policy at GLAD Law, said in a statement.

The 2019 law carries the possibility of fines and license suspension, but no one has been sanctioned under it. The ruling is expected to eventually make similar laws in other states unenforceable.

Chiles was represented by the Alliance Defending Freedom, a conservative legal organization that has appeared frequently at the court in recent years. The group also represented a Christian website designer who successfully challenged Colorado anti-discrimination law because she didn't want to work with same-sex couples.

Twenty-three states have laws barring health care providers from offering "conversion therapy" for minors, and another four have some restrictions, according to the Movement Advancement Project, an advocacy group that tracks policies that impact LGBTQ+ people.

The high court agreed to hear the case after the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver upheld

the law. Another Atlanta-based appeals court, the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, had struck down similar bans in Florida.

European ministers in Ukraine for Bucha atrocities anniversary as drones hammer Russian oil ports

By LORNE COOK Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — European foreign ministers visited Ukraine on Tuesday to mark the fourth anniversary of atrocities committed in a town near Kyiv by Russia's invading forces.

With U.S.-led efforts to end the war on hold and Washington's attention gripped by the conflict in the Middle East, European governments are keen to keep a spotlight on the continent's biggest land war in decades, now in its fifth year.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that he would hold a video call on Wednesday about ways to end Russia's invasion, with American negotiators as well as NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte joining in. Washington's representatives will include Steve Witkoff, Jared Kushner, and U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, he said. The talks have yielded no breakthroughs on key issues so far.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's long-range drones hammered Russian oil facilities in the Baltic Sea Monday night for the fifth time in just over a week, as Kyiv tries to prevent Moscow from profiting off its oil exports amid an energy crisis, prompted by the Iran war, and a temporary U.S. waiver on Russian oil sanctions. The export income finances Moscow's war effort, Ukraine says.

Fourth anniversary of Bucha atrocities

A group of 12 European foreign ministers, as well as numerous lower-ranking officials, arrived by train in Kyiv where they were welcomed by Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha, who noted the "grim anniversary" of the atrocities in Bucha.

Russian troops quickly occupied the town after launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. They stayed for about a month.

When Ukrainian troops retook Bucha, they found more than 400 bodies left by Russia's "cleansing" operation. The Russians hunted people on lists prepared by their intelligence services and went door to door to identify potential threats.

"Such a strong European presence (in Ukraine) on this day demonstrates that justice for this and other Russian atrocities is inevitable," Sybiha said in a post on X. "Comprehensive accountability for Russian crimes is vital to restore justice in Europe."

At the Church of St. Andrew in Bucha, after viewing dozens of graphic photographs and a video display of the massacres with his European Union counterparts, Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski was grim.

"Anybody who claims that (Russian President) Vladimir Putin is not a war criminal should come and see for themselves," Sikorski told The Associated Press.

Authorities say that many of the victims were gunned down in the street. Some had their hands tied behind their backs, and others showed signs of torture or rape.

The United Nations has documented more than 70 summary executions.

EU seeks to hold Russia accountable

Part of Tuesday's meeting between EU officials and their Ukrainian counterparts was to focus on reassuring Kyiv of continued European efforts to hold Russia to account for its invasion.

On the way to Kyiv, EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas underlined the importance of ensuring that those who gave the orders to kill in places like Bucha are held to account, as much as those who carried out the atrocities.

"One of the things that is really necessary is accountability. Otherwise, you have revenge and retaliation," Kallas said. "If you don't see people doing this to your family held accountable, you will want revenge."

The Iran war is currently a top priority for the United States and risks diverting resources that Ukraine needs, such as air defense systems.

"We can't let it (the war in Ukraine) slip off the table," Kallas said. "We are the ones who have to keep

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this up, because nobody else does.”

The EU has faced its own challenges in helping Ukraine. The 27-nation bloc failed to approve new sanctions on Russia last month, after objections from Hungary. Budapest, which has quarreled with its EU partners over support for Ukraine and Russian oil deliveries, has also blocked a 90 billion-euro (\$103 billion) loan as Kyiv runs low on cash. Ukraine’s application for EU membership, meanwhile, is expected to take years.

Ukraine steps up long-range drone attacks

Russia, meanwhile, could reap a windfall from a surge in oil prices and the U.S. temporary waiver on Russian oil sanctions designed to ease supply shortages. Russia is one of the world’s main oil exporters, and Asian nations are increasingly competing for Russian crude oil as an energy crisis mounts.

In response, Ukraine has intensified its long-range drone attacks on Russian oil facilities, which have rattled Moscow.

Ukraine’s Defense Ministry said that its forces carried out a series of strikes over the past week targeting Russia’s oil export infrastructure on the Baltic Sea, hitting key facilities in the northwest Leningrad region used to ship crude and petroleum products.

Ukrainian drones struck oil loading infrastructure and storage tanks at the Transneft terminal in Primorsk on March 22–23, starting a fire, the ministry said. Repeated strikes on the Novatek Ust-Luga port complex have damaged storage facilities and loading docks and ignited large fires.

In recent weeks, Ukraine has also struck Russia’s oil ports in the Gulf of Finland in the Baltic Sea with more than 2,500 drones, Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo told a news conference in Helsinki.

“It is likely that Ukraine’s operations will continue,” he said.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters Tuesday that “intensive work is being carried out” to strengthen air defenses at the oil port of Ust-Luga and other critical infrastructure facilities.

Here’s a look at birthright citizenship, and how the world sees it, as Supreme Court case looms

By TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

The Supreme Court is once again hearing arguments on whether President Donald Trump can deny citizenship to children born to parents who are in the United States illegally or temporarily.

The Wednesday case stems from an executive order Trump signed on the first day of his second term ending what’s known as birthright citizenship, which guarantees citizenship to nearly everyone born on U.S. soil.

While the concept has been part of U.S. law for well over a century, it is relatively rare around the world.

What is birthright citizenship?

Birthright citizenship is based on the legal principle of jus soli, or “right of soil.”

In the U.S., the right was enshrined in the Constitution after the Civil War, in part to ensure that former slaves would be citizens.

“All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States,” the 14th Amendment states.

In the late 1800s, birthright citizenship was legally expanded to the children of immigrants.

Wong Kim Ark, who was born in the U.S. to Chinese parents, sued after traveling overseas and being denied reentry into the U.S. The Supreme Court eventually ruled that the amendment gives citizenship to everyone born in the U.S., no matter their parents’ legal status.

Today there are only a handful of birthright exceptions, such as for children born in the U.S. to foreign diplomats.

How is birthright citizenship seen around the world?

Only about three dozen countries, nearly all of them in the Americas, guarantee citizenship to children born on their territory.

Most countries follow the principle of jus sanguinis, or “right of blood,” with a child’s citizenship based

on the citizenship of their parents, no matter where they are born.

None of the 27 member states of the European Union, for example, grant automatic, unconditional citizenship to children born on their territories to foreign citizens. The situation is similar across much of Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

Some countries take a mixed approach

Some countries use a combination of principles, such as parenthood, residency and ethnicity, to decide a child's citizenship.

Australia, for example, allowed birthright citizenship until 1986. But starting that August, children born there could only become citizens if at least one parent was an Australian citizen or a permanent resident.

Things shifted the other way in Germany, which changed its citizenship laws in 2024.

Until then, citizenship by birth required that at least one parent was German. Starting in 2024, though, children born in Germany to non-German parents are automatically granted German citizenship if one parent has been legally living in the country for more than five years with unlimited residency status.

Citizenship laws were liberalized because "studies have shown that the education prospects of children and teenagers with a migration background are better, the sooner they were granted German citizenship," the government wrote at the time.

What is the Trump administration's argument?

Supporters of birthright restrictions in the U.S. focus on a handful of words in the constitutional amendment: "subject to the jurisdiction thereof."

That phrase, they argue, means the U.S. can deny citizenship to children born to women who are in the country illegally.

A series of judges have ruled against the administration and the order has been repeatedly put on hold by lower courts.

Wednesday's case originated in New Hampshire, where a U.S. district judge ruled the order "likely violates" both the Constitution and federal law.

Iran remains a stubborn foe after absorbing massive US-Israeli attacks

By ISABEL DEBRE and KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Since the United States and Israel launched their war against Iran on Feb. 28, the Trump administration claims to have all but "obliterated" the Islamic Republic's military capabilities. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth declared last week that "never in recorded history has a nation's military been so quickly and so effectively neutralized."

But after more than a month of punishing U.S.-Israeli airstrikes, a degraded Iranian military nonetheless remains a stubborn foe. Its steady stream of strikes against Israel and Gulf Arab neighbors are causing regional chaos and an outsized economic and political shock.

Its missiles continue to penetrate Israeli airspace and kill civilians. Its cheap drones slip through its neighbors' air defenses, shattering Gulf Arab nations' carefully curated images of invincibility and wounding U.S. troops. Its threats to attack oil and gas tankers strangle the Strait of Hormuz, sending energy prices soaring.

U.S. President Donald Trump has sought negotiations and threatened extreme destruction in hopes of securing Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium and compelling it to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. To maintain its leverage, Iran just needs to withstand the conflict long enough to pressure Washington to seek an off-ramp, experts say.

"Their strategy is to try to cause sustained pain and to drive up the costs of the war for the U.S.," said Kelly Grieco, an expert in U.S. military strategy and operations who is a senior fellow at the Washington-based Stimson Center think tank.

Iran is firing fewer ballistic missiles than at start of the war

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Since the first day of the U.S.-Israeli bombing campaign, officials from both countries have repeatedly pointed to a steep drop-off in Iran's firing of ballistic missiles as proof that their efforts to destroy launchers and weapons stockpiles were working.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dan Caine told reporters on March 4 that Iran's "ballistic missile shots fired are down 86% from the first day of fighting and their one-way attack drone shots are down 73%." At a press briefing two weeks later, Hegseth said the volume of Iran's ballistic missile attacks had dropped "90% since the start of the conflict."

On Tuesday, Hegseth told reporters at the Pentagon that in the past 24 hours Iran had fired its "lowest number" of missiles and drones, though neither he nor Caine gave any updated percentages. Trump said Tuesday on Truth Social that "Iran has been, essentially, decimated."

Claims of a slowdown in Iranian strikes are backed up by independent data from Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED), a U.S.-based group that tracks conflicts around the world.

On March 1, the second day of the war, Iran fired off almost 100 strikes. The next day, its strike count dropped to 53 and it hovered at that rate for the next few days. In the three and a half weeks since March 6, ACLED data shows Iran hasn't fired more than 50 strikes on any given day. A "strike," in ACLED's methodology, can include multiple individual strikes in the same location on the same day.

Iran has maintained an average of 30 strikes each day for the last three weeks, and at various points it has picked up its tempo of attacks.

"That makes me question whether it's a capacity issue or a strategy issue," Grieco said of the initial decline in Iran's strike rate. In other words, Iran may not be running out of firepower as much as deliberately rationing its missiles and drones.

Iran fires more drones that are harder to intercept

The ACLED data shows that some 40% of Iran's salvos across the region are breaking through air defenses, signaling strain on American and Israeli supplies of interceptors. Iran has been deploying fewer missiles but more low-flying drones that are harder to intercept.

"We are vaporizing billions of dollars in long-range anti-missile defenses, which are scarce national resources," said Tom Karako, the director of the Missile Defense Project at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The danger, Karako said, is that the U.S. and Israel could run out of interceptors before they are able to take out the rest of Iran's missile stockpiles and mobile launchers — an objective that has proven "mad-deningly difficult."

Over a month into the war, Trump administration officials continue to refer to the first 72 hours as their point of comparison for claims about Iran's crippled capacity.

"A good percentage of Iranian missiles, at least half of the arsenal, is stored in very hardened facilities that are not easily reachable with air power," said Farzin Nadimi, an expert on the Iranian missile program at The Washington Institute. "It looks like the Americans and the Israelis have been underestimating some level of complexity."

Experts say Iran focuses its attacks to cause economic harm

Contrary to Hegseth's characterization of the Iranians as "flailing recklessly" by striking civilian and energy infrastructure across the Arabian Peninsula, analysts say Tehran appears to have fine-tuned its timing and targets to maximize damage.

"They have been able to strike targets more efficiently and therefore use fewer missiles to achieve the same result," Nadimi said.

Iran has increasingly concentrated its firepower on sensitive sites like oil pipelines and water desalination plants across the Persian Gulf in a bid to impose a settlement on the U.S., hitting nearby states like the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait hardest. Last week, Iran fired ballistic missiles and drones at a Saudi air base, wounded more than two dozen U.S. troops and damaging aircraft.

"In this asymmetrical war, the most important thing for Iran is attack the world economy in hopes of coercing the U.S. to stop," said Assaf Orion, a retired Israeli brigadier general and senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies. That has become more important to Iran than attacking Israel,

which views this war as existential and won't be dissuaded, he added.

How long Iran can sustain its current level of retaliation remains unclear, as U.S. and Israeli intelligence on Iran's missile and drone inventory is limited.

Military experts from both countries offer varying estimates on the remaining arsenal, but agree that Iran most likely still has thousands of cheap, locally manufactured drones that it can deploy to menace U.S. allies even if much of its midrange ballistic missile capacity has been destroyed.

"Iran built itself to be able to ride a war like this out," said Karako. "It has been preparing for this."

US consumer confidence inches up despite soaring gas prices brought on by war in Iran

By MATT OTT AP Business Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. consumer confidence inched higher in March despite soaring energy prices brought on by the war in Iran.

The Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index rose modestly to 91.8 in March from 91 in February.

The board said that while rising costs due to tariffs and spiking oil prices induced by the conflict in the Middle East did not affect the topline confidence reading, there was increasing pessimism in other measures of the survey, including expectations of higher inflation.

Respondents' comments about oil, gas and the war spiked and consumers' 12-month inflation expectations surged to levels last seen in August 2025 when anxiety over tariffs peaked.

U.S. gas prices jumped past an average of \$4 a gallon for the first time since 2022 on Tuesday as the war caused fuel prices to soar worldwide.

According to motor club AAA, the national average for a gallon of regular gasoline is now \$4.02 — up more than a dollar before the war began. The last time U.S. drivers were collectively paying this much at the pump was nearly four years ago, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

"This is the key concern as the war in Iran enters the second month — will the oil price shock turn into a demand destruction shock?" wrote Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union.

Long said that Navy Federal's credit card data from March showed that consumers were still making purchases across categories even as gas prices rose. But she said that could change in the second quarter "as the worst of the inflation shock hits consumers."

A measure of Americans' short-term expectations for their income, business conditions and the job market fell 1.7 points to 70.9, remaining well below 80, a marker that can signal a recession ahead. It's the 14th consecutive month that reading has come in under 80.

The index for consumers' assessments of their current economic situation rose by 4.6 points to 123.3.

Government data from earlier in March showed that an inflation gauge closely monitored by the Federal Reserve moved 2.8% higher in January in the latest sign that prices were persistently elevated even before the Iran war caused spikes in oil and gas costs.

Excluding the volatile food and energy categories — which the Fed pays closer attention to — core prices rose 3.1%, up from 3% in the prior month and the highest in nearly two years.

Consumer prices and prices at the wholesale level also remain elevated.

Those higher prices and the prospect of even higher inflation due to the Iran war makes it unlikely that the Federal Reserve will cut interest rates any time soon.

The Fed cut its benchmark interest rate three times to close 2025 in an attempt to support a flagging labor market. However, because lower rates can exacerbate inflation, which remains above the Fed's 2% target, the Fed has left its overnight lending rate alone at its past two meetings.

While consumers' views of current employment conditions improved slightly, perceptions of the labor market six months from now edged downward.

The Labor Department reported earlier in March that U.S. employers unexpectedly cut 92,000 jobs in

February, a sign that the labor market remains under strain. Economists had expected 60,000 new jobs in February. The unemployment rate rose to 4.4%.

Another report Tuesday showed that U.S. job openings fell slightly in February to 6.9 million from 7.2 million in January.

The surprisingly weak employment picture in February adds to the economic uncertainty sparked by the war with Iran, which has caused oil prices to surge and saddled business and consumers with unforeseen costs.

The country's labor market has been stuck in a "low hire, low fire" state, economists say, as businesses stand pat due to uncertainty over President Donald Trump's tariffs and the lingering effects of elevated interest rates.

U.S. economic growth slowed to 1.4% in the final three months of last year, following two surprisingly strong quarters. Growth in the fourth quarter was dragged down by the six-week shutdown of the federal government and a pullback in consumer spending.

According to the Tuesday's survey results, consumers' plans to buy cars continued to rise in March, with used cars remaining the clear preference.

Homebuying expectations fell in March as the spring buying season kicks off in the midst of a yearslong housing market slump.

Expectations that stock prices will be higher a year from now plunged, the board said.

Seizing Kharg Island would risk US troops' lives and may not end Iran war, experts say

By BEN FINLEY and SAM METZ Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is threatening to deploy ground troops to seize critical oil infrastructure on Iran's Kharg Island, a military gambit that experts say would risk American lives and could still fail to end the war.

If Trump wants to hobble Iran's oil industry for leverage in negotiations, a better option might be setting up a blockade at sea against ships that have filled up at Kharg Island's oil terminals, the experts said.

The island — located on the other side of the Persian Gulf from U.S. bases in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia — is the beating heart of Iran's oil industry, through which 90% of its exports pass. It is important because Iran's coastline is mostly too shallow for tanker ships to dock.

"Putting people on the ground might be the most psychologically compelling way of striking a blow at Iran," said Michael Eisenstadt, a former U.S. military analyst who now directs the Military and Security Studies Program at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

"On the other hand, you're putting your own troops at jeopardy," said Eisenstadt, a retired Army reserve officer who served in Iraq. "It's not far from the mainland. So they can potentially rain a lot of destruction on the island, if they're willing to inflict damage on their own infrastructure."

Seizing Kharg Island could escalate the conflict, said Danny Citrinowicz, an Iran expert at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies.

He said Iran and its proxies — including Yemen's Houthi rebels — could intensify their retaliation, including by laying mines in the Strait of Hormuz or striking targets with drones across the Arabian Peninsula, from the Persian Gulf to the Red Sea.

Commodities researchers and investment banks warn major retaliation could have lasting implications for energy prices and the global economy.

"It will be hard to take. It will be hard to hold," Citrinowicz said of Kharg Island. "And it might damage the economy, but not in a way that will force the Iranians to capitulate."

Trump says 'maybe we take Kharg Island'

Trump is under growing pressure to end the monthlong conflict with Iran, which has attacked U.S. bases and allies in the region.

Iran also has largely closed the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow chokepoint through which 20% of the world's

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oil normally flows, causing fuel prices to soar and other economic tumult.

Trump said in a social media post Monday that "great progress is being made" in talks with Iran to end military operations. But he said that if a deal is not reached "shortly" and the strait is not immediately reopened, the U.S. would obliterate power plants, oil wells, Kharg Island and possibly even desalination plants.

Trump has raised the idea of American forces seizing Kharg Island.

"Maybe we take Kharg Island, maybe we don't. We have a lot of options," Trump told the Financial Times. "It would also mean we had to be there (on Kharg Island) for a while."

Asked about Iranian defenses there, he said: "I don't think they have any defense. We could take it very easily."

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Friday that ground troops would not be needed to achieve the Trump administration's goals. He did not repeat that assertion Monday after being asked about plans for U.S. ground troops, saying "the president has several options at his disposal" but diplomacy is Trump's preference.

"Now, they are making threats about controlling the Hormuz Strait in perpetuity, creating a tolling system and the like," Rubio told ABC's "Good Morning America." "That's not going to be allowed to happen. And the president has a number of options available to him, if he so chooses, to prevent that from happening."

US has hit targets on the island crucial to Iran

The U.S. has already struck various targets on the island, including air defenses, a radar site, the airport and a hovercraft base, according to satellite analysis by the Institute for the Study of War and American Enterprise Institute's Critical Threats Project.

Petras Katinas, an energy researcher at the Royal United Services Institute, said disrupting Kharg Island would not completely halt oil exports as Iran has other small ports. But it would reduce the oil revenue flowing to Iran's government, "forcing flows through a much smaller, costlier and less efficient export system," he said.

However, Tehran has too much at stake to surrender over a single asset, no matter how economically significant, said Citrinowicz, the Iran expert at Israel's Institute for National Security Studies.

While occupying Kharg might offer Washington some leverage in any negotiations, he said the notion that control of the island could be traded for Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium was far-fetched.

"It's in no way a decisive blow," Citrinowicz said.

US troops face risk from Iran's mainland if they tried to seize Kharg Island

A U.S. Navy ship carrying about 2,500 Marines recently arrived in the Middle East, while at least 1,000 troops from the 82nd Airborne Division are expected soon. Another 2,500 Marines are being deployed from California. The Trump administration has not said what all those troops will be doing, but the 82nd Airborne is trained to parachute into hostile or contested territory to secure key territory and airfields.

One of the reasons American troops would be vulnerable on Kharg Island is its close proximity — about 33 kilometers (21 miles) — to the Iranian mainland, from which missiles, drones and artillery could be fired. Despite continued U.S. and Israeli strikes, the Islamic Republic is still attacking targets across the region, including a Saudi air base hundreds of miles away where more than two dozen American troops were injured last week.

Even with American ships and planes providing support, there would still be a relatively short window of time to shoot down every drone or missile launched from the mainland at the island, Eisenstadt said.

"The coast tends to be mountainous, so the drones can come in through mountain passes where it's hard for our radar to pick up," he said. "And we don't have the warning time."

Eisenstadt says a sea blockade against ships carrying Iranian oil would be a safer strategy and achieve the same goal of controlling most of Iran's oil industry.

"Throw up a quarantine that seeks to seize Iranian oil shipments that are exiting the Gulf," agreed Clayton Seigle, an energy security expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. It could be done at a distance "outside the range of the lion's share of Iran's weapon systems."

Seigle argued against destroying Kharg Island's oil infrastructure, which Trump also suggested.

"We were supposed to be coming to the rescue of the people that had been rising up and protesting for a better future," Seigle said. "So to cripple Iran's revenue-generating potential for many years to come would definitely not work in that direction."

JD Vance has a new book about his religious faith, 'Communion,' coming out later this spring

By HILLEL ITALIE AP National Writer

Vice President JD Vance has a new book coming out that will explore his religious faith and his conversion to Catholicism as an adult.

"Communion: Finding My Way Back to Faith" comes out June 16, the HarperCollins Publishers imprint Harper told The Associated Press on Tuesday. HarperCollins also released "Hillbilly Elogy," the million-selling memoir from 2016 that helped make Vance a national figure.

"The story of how I regained my faith, of course, only happened because I had lost it to begin with," Vance, 41, said in a statement.

"The interesting question that hangs over this book, and over my mind, is why I ever strayed from the path. Why the Christian faith of my youth failed to properly take root," he wrote.

The announcement Tuesday is likely to ramp up speculation that Vance will seek the presidency in 2028 — a possibility the Republican vice president has said he's not focused on right now, indicating he'd wait until after the 2026 midterm elections to decide on a campaign.

Presidential hopefuls often, though not always, release books before launching a campaign, giving them a moment in the spotlight before new audiences and a chance to crystallize their message embarking on a campaign. Already, potential 2028 candidates on the Democratic side have published books or are planning to roll them out this year, including Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, California Gov. Gavin Newsom and former Vice President Kamala Harris.

Vance wrote the 304-page "Communion" himself, according to his publisher, working on it off and on since 2019, and it will include material on his time in politics. Vice presidents from Walter Mondale to Mike Pence have published books, but Vance would be the first in recent memory to do so while in office.

In 2022, HarperCollins told the AP that Vance had set aside a planned religious memoir. Some of "Communion" is drawn from that project.

Vance has said he evolved from Christianity to atheism to Catholicism. He converted in 2019 and credits his new faith with giving him a sense of purpose he didn't get through his education at Yale University or working in the financial industry.

"Hillbilly Elogy," Vance's memoir about his rural roots, was widely read upon its publication and only grew in popularity after Republican Donald Trump's stunning presidential victory in 2016, when Democrats sought out the book as a way of understanding Trump's appeal. Ron Howard adapted "Hillbilly Elogy" into a 2020 movie starring Glenn Close and Amy Adams.

Vance initially was a critic of Trump but became a close ally. He was elected to the Senate as a Republican from Ohio in 2022 and was chosen two years later by Trump as his running mate, becoming the youngest vice president since Richard Nixon served under President Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s.

The news about Vance's book followed Monday's announcement by his wife, Usha Vance, that she has started a podcast called "Storytime with the Second Lady" to promote reading among children.

The Vances have three young children, and Usha Vance is pregnant with their fourth, a boy due in late July.

A college instructor turns to typewriters to curb AI-written work and teach life lessons

By JOCELYN GECKER AP Education Writer

The scene is right out of the 1950s with students pecking away at manual typewriters, the machines

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dinging at the end of each line.

Once each semester, Grit Matthias Phelps, a German language instructor at Cornell University, introduces her students to the raw feeling of typing without online assistance. No screens, online dictionaries, spellcheckers or delete keys.

The exercise started in spring 2023 as Phelps grew frustrated with the reality that students were using generative AI and online translation platforms to churn out grammatically perfect assignments.

"What's the point of me reading it if it's already correct anyway, and you didn't write it yourself? Could you produce it without your computer?" said Phelps.

She wanted students to understand what writing, thinking and classrooms were like before everything turned digital. So, she found a few dozen old manual typewriters in thrift shops and online marketplaces, and created what her syllabus calls an "analog" assignment.

It might be premature to say that typewriters are making a comeback beyond Cornell's campus. But the revival is part of a national trend toward old-school testing methods like in-class pen-and-paper exams and oral tests to prevent AI use for assignments on laptops.

Typewriters bring 'old days' taste of doing one thing at a time

Students arrived for class on a recent analog day to find typewriters at the desks, some with German and some with QWERTY keyboards.

"I was so confused. I had no idea what was happening. I'd seen typewriters in movies, but they don't tell you how a typewriter works," said Catherine Mong, 19, a freshman in Phelps' Intro to German class. "I didn't know there was a whole science to using a typewriter."

Like a rotary phone, the manual typewriter appears simple but is not intuitive to the smartphone generation. Phelps demonstrated how to feed the paper manually, striking the keys with force but not so hard the letters would smudge. She explained that the dinging bell signifies the end of a line and the need to manually return the carriage to start the next line. ("Oh," said one student, "that's why it's called 'return.'")

"Everything slows down. It's like back in the old days when you really did one thing at a time. And there was joy in doing it," said Phelps, who brings in her two children, aged 7 and 9, to serve as "tech support" and ensure no one has their phones out.

Students welcomed having fewer distractions

The assignment carries lessons beyond simply how to use a typewriter, which is the whole point.

"It dawned on me that the difference with typing on a typewriter is not just how you interact with the typewriter, but how you interact with the world around you," said computer science major Ratchaphon Lertdamrongwong, a sophomore, whose class had to write a critique of a German movie they'd watched.

In the absence of screens, there are no notifications to distract you as you write. Without every answer readily available at his fingertips, he asked his classmates for help, which Phelps heartily encouraged.

"While writing the essay, I had to talk a lot more, socialize a lot more, which I guess was normal back then," Lertdamrongwong said, referring to the typewriter era. "But it's drastically different from how we interact within the classroom in modern times. People are always on a laptop, always on the phone."

Without a delete key and the ability to correct every mistake, he paused to think more intentionally about his writing.

"This might sound bad, but I was forced to actually think about the problem on my own instead of delegating to AI or Google search," he said.

Manual machines were a workout for pinky fingers

Most students found their pinkies weren't strong enough to touch-type, so they typed more slowly, pecking at the keyboard with their index fingers.

Mong, the freshman, faced the added challenge of a recently broken wrist, requiring her to use just one hand. The self-described perfectionist was initially frustrated with how messy her page looked with odd spacing between certain letters and misspellings. (Phelps told students to backspace and type 'X's over errors.)

"This thing I handed in had pencil marks all over it and definitely did not look clean or finished. But it's part of the process of learning that you're going to make mistakes," said Mong, who found the assignment

of typing a poem "fun and challenging."

She embraced the odd spacing and played with the visual boundaries of the page to indent and fragment lines in the style of poet E.E. Cummings. It took several sheets of paper and many mistakes, all of which Mong saved.

"I'm probably going to hang them on my wall," Mong said. "I'm kind of fascinated by typewriters. I told all my friends, I did a German test on a typewriter!"

Trump's go-to moves to influence the markets are increasingly falling flat as the Iran war drags on

By JOSH BOAK and FATIMA HUSSEIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the Iran war intensifies, President Donald Trump has prioritized efforts to calm the financial markets — trying to keep oil prices from exploding upward, stocks from cratering and interest rates from surging.

When the markets have flashed danger, Trump has been quick with a social media post or a remark to claim the war he launched last month could soon end. He's publicly declared that the markets are doing better than he expected, even with the S&P 500 stock index declining over the past five weeks and the global oil benchmark up roughly 60%.

"I thought oil prices were going to go up higher than they are now," Trump said at a Friday investor summit. "And I thought that we would see a bigger drop in stock. It hasn't been that bad."

With the Iran war, the White House has largely refrained from messaging more aggressively to voters about the economic consequences — choosing instead to try to contain any damage in the financial markets, which have swung wildly on the prospects of ceasefire or escalation in what has become a high-stakes guessing game about Trump's next moves.

The Republican president showed the extremes of his messaging Monday before the U.S. stock market opened, writing in a social media post that great progress had been achieved on peace talks with Iran while also threatening civilian infrastructure such as desalination plants if a deal wasn't reached "shortly."

The White House sees the stock, energy and bond markets as a way to indirectly reach voters. Trump has staked his economic agenda on cheap prices at the pump, robust gains in 401(k) accounts and cheaper mortgage rates.

But that messaging appears to be wearing thin as the president's various pronouncements have done little to change the reality that a large chunk of the world's energy supplies is stranded by the conflict. Just 38% of U.S. adults approve of how he's handling the economy and only 35% support him on Iran, according to a March survey by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The president has tried to dictate to markets instead of talking directly to Americans

Gene Sperling, a top economic adviser in the Democratic Clinton, Obama and Biden administrations, said voters can make a direct connection between prices at the pump and Trump's choice to attack Iran. He said "simplistic jawboning" to the markets is insufficient for a public that is stuck paying the price as gasoline soars past \$4 a gallon nationwide.

"Most advisers would say the president has to speak directly to the American people and fully acknowledge the economic pain that his policy has so directly caused in a short amount of time and make the case for why the national security concerns justify it," Sperling said. "Instead, you have a strategy of not recognizing or even dismissing people's economic pain."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt on Monday called the oil price increases a "short-term fluctuation."

Trump's strategy of giving mixed messages has started to work against him, said Jeffrey Sonnenfeld, a professor at the Yale University School of Management and co-author of the new book "Trump's Ten Commandments: Strategic Lessons from the Trump Leadership Toolbox."

"The uncertainty is now soaring," Sonnenfeld said. "As the messaging to calm markets with false reassurances is having diminishing credibility in financial markets, so, too, has Trump diminished public confidence."

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Trump's desire for flexibility on the war limits his ability to offer clarity
Trump has embraced having flexibility in how he chooses to conduct the war, even though this has muddled his stated objectives.

During a Cabinet meeting Thursday, he said Iran was "begging" for a deal even as he threatened further military action — all the while maintaining that any economic damage to the U.S. would reverse itself.

On Friday after the markets closed, he extended his deadline for Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for the flow of oil, saying he would hold off on bombing Iran's energy plants in the meantime.

Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said Monday on Fox News Channel's "Fox & Friends" that Iran was letting some tankers through the Strait of Hormuz and that the "market is well supplied" because countries are releasing their strategic petroleum reserves and sanctions have been removed for Russian and Iranian oil already on tankers.

"We are seeing more and more ships go through on a daily basis as individual countries cut deals with the Iranian regime for the time being," Bessent said. "But over time, the U.S. is going to retake control of the straits, and there will be freedom of navigation, whether it is through U.S. escorts or a multinational escort."

Graham Steele, a Biden-era Treasury official, said Trump's messaging techniques "can work temporarily, but they have diminishing returns, over time," if they're detached from actual policies and results.

"We saw a lot of the volatile market reactions initially, when he kept announcing these things and then walking them back," Steele said. "The market reaction now is just a steady trend upward in prices," he noted, adding that markets are "not responding to it in the same way anymore."

Confidence in the economy and Trump is fading without clear results

The University of Michigan's Index of Consumer Sentiment on Friday fell to a reading of 53.3 in March, its lowest level since December. Joanne Hsu, director of the surveys of consumers, pointed to the financial market volatility "in the wake of the Iran conflict" as reducing confidence in the economy for households with middle and higher incomes.

Hsu noted that the survey indicated that people do not expect the higher energy costs and stock market declines to persist, but that could change if the war "becomes protracted or if higher energy prices pass through to overall inflation."

Gus Faucher, the chief economist at PNC Financial Services, stressed that low levels of consumer sentiment do not automatically signal a recession. But he said consumers would have to see lower gas prices, a steady stock market and decreased mortgage rates to feel better about the economy, which likely means a definitive resolution to the conflict rather than a series of pronouncements by Trump.

"The proof is in the pudding," Faucher said. "People need to see some substantive improvements before they feel better about conditions."

Today in History: April 1, US forces invade Okinawa during World War II

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Wednesday, April 1, the 91st day of 2026. There are 274 days left in the year. This is April Fool's Day.

Today in history:

On April 1, 1945, American forces launched the amphibious invasion of Okinawa during World War II. (U.S. forces succeeded in capturing the Japanese island on June 22 after a battle in which more than 240,000 died, including as many as 150,000 Okinawan civilians.)

Also on this date:

In 1924, Adolf Hitler was sentenced to five years in prison for his role in the Beer Hall Putsch in Munich. (Hitler would serve just nine months of the sentence, during which time he completed the first volume of "Mein Kampf.")

In 1946, a magnitude 8.6 earthquake centered near Alaska's Aleutian Islands triggered a tsunami that

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pounded the Hawaiian Islands with waves up to 55 feet (17 meters) tall, killing 159.

In 1970, President Richard M. Nixon signed a measure banning cigarette advertising on radio and television beginning in January 1971.

In 1976, Apple Computer was founded by Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne.

In 1984, singer Marvin Gaye was shot and killed by his father after Gaye intervened in an argument between his parents at their home.

In 2001, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalize same-sex marriage.

In 2003, American troops raided a hospital in Nasiriyah (nah-sih-REE'-uh), Iraq, and rescued Army Pfc. Jessica Lynch, who had been held prisoner since her unit was ambushed by Iraqi forces on March 23.

In 2025, Democratic Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey, in a symbolic protest against President Donald Trump's second-term agenda, wrapped up the longest individual speech on the Senate floor. He began his marathon address to the chamber on the evening of March 31 and concluded 25 hours and 5 minutes later on the night of April 1.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Ali MacGraw is 87. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito is 76. Actor Annette O'Toole is 74. Filmmaker Barry Sonnenfeld is 73. Singer Susan Boyle is 65. Hockey Hall of Famer Scott Stevens is 62. Political commentator Rachel Maddow is 53. Actor David Oyelowo is 50. Comedian-actor Taran Killam is 44. Actor Asa Butterfield is 29.