

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 1 of 60

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
- [3- Balloon Ad](#)
- [4- School Board Story](#)
- [6- Semitrailer fire](#)
- [7- Groton Area earns varsity shutout, JV battles to tie at Clark](#)
- [8- 79 Fire Evening Update](#)
- [9- SD SearchLight: Anti-abortion lawmakers seek to redefine 'abortion' to exclude medical treatment](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: Three candidates pledge changes on Medicaid, ag, taxes and education while governor touts results](#)
- [14- SD SearchLight: Black Hills uranium exploration permit hearing postponed to May](#)
- [15- SD SearchLight: Trump picks fight with Pope Leo as Iran peace talks dissolve](#)
- [17- SD SearchLight: SNAP work requirements don't boost jobs, but drop participation, research finds](#)
- [19- Weather Pages](#)
- [23- Daily Devotional](#)
- [24- Subscription Form](#)
- [25- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [26- News from the Associated Press](#)

Tuesday, April 14

Senior Menu: Goulash, green peas, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.

School Lunch: Pizza burger, tater tots

Emmanuel Lutheran: Council, 6 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

Grades 6-8 ELA & Math Testing

Pork Chop Replays at Clear Lake, 2 p.m.

HS Track @ Eureka (11am field events, 1pm track events)

MS Track @ Milbank (3:45pm field events, 4pm track events)JVT Practice, 7 p.m., Arena

Wednesday, April 15

Senior Menu: Teriyaki chicken, wild rice, oriental blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

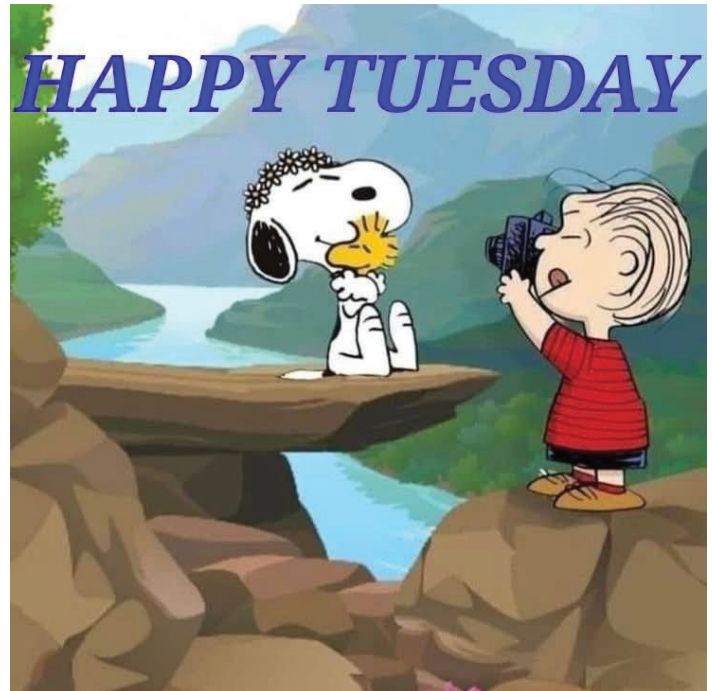
School Breakfast: Omelets

School Lunch: Mac and cheese, peas

Emmanuel Lutheran: Confirmation, 4 p.m.; Leauge, 6:30 p.m.

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Groton Ad council, 7 p.m.

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



Grades 6-8 ELA & Math Testing
Pickleball, 5:30 p.m., Elementary Gym
JVT Practice, 7:30 p.m., Arena

Thursday, April 16

Senior Menu: Swedish meatballs, mashed potatoes and gravy, carrots, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Burrito bowl, chili lime corn

Grades 6-8 ELA & Math Testing

National Guard Track and Field at Milbank, 3:30 p.m.

5th Grade Girls Basketball, 4 p.m., elementary gym

Pickleball, 6 p.m., Elementary Gym

HS Track @ Roncalli Invite @ Warner (1:30pm field events, 3:30pm track events)

JVT Practice, 7 p.m., Arena

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 2 of 60

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.

Pope Visits Africa

Pope Leo XIV arrived in Algeria yesterday, marking the first-ever papal visit to the 99% Sunni Muslim nation. His 11-day African tour will also include Angola, Cameroon, and Equatorial Guinea, which have larger Catholic populations.

The Chicago-born pope's visit to Africa before the US or South America, where he spent two decades, underscores the continent's growing importance to the Church. Africa is Catholicism's fastest-growing region, accounting for over half of the 15.8 million people baptized into the Church in 2023; about one in five Catholics now live on the continent. During his visit, the pope is expected to address authoritarian rule, polygamy, and tensions with Islam, among other issues.

En route to Algeria, Pope Leo reiterated calls for peace after President Donald Trump criticized him as weak on crime and said he "caters to the radical left" amid disagreements over the Iran war. Trump separately drew bipartisan backlash for a now-deleted Truth Social post appearing to depict Trump as a Jesus-like figure. He said he thought the image depicted him as a doctor.

Pancreatic Cancer Drug

A new drug to treat late-stage pancreatic cancer slashes the risk of death by 60% compared with chemotherapy, oncology company Revolution Medicines said yesterday. Shares closed up 41.4% on the news.

Pancreatic cancer is one of the deadliest cancers, with a five-year survival rate of 13% for the more than 67,000 people diagnosed in the US annually. At issue are mutations in a group of genes known as RAS. Now, a daily pill called daraxonrasib has shown promise at targeting mutant RAS proteins, with patients surviving a median of 13.2 months, compared with 6.7 months on chemotherapy. Revolution Medicines plans to apply for FDA approval.

Former Sen. Ben Sasse (R-NE) is one of the roughly 500 patients who participated in the trial after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer last year and given up to four months to live. His tumor has shrunk by roughly 76% since late December.

Cartel Hippo Culling

Colombia approved a plan yesterday to cull up to 80 wild hippos descended from an original group of one male and three females imported in the 1980s by drug lord Pablo Escobar. The hippo population, now estimated at around 200, has spread beyond Escobar's former estate and been declared an invasive species threatening local ecosystems and communities.

Escobar built one of the world's most powerful cocaine empires; his estate, Hacienda Nápoles, was a sprawling compound featuring a mansion, airstrips, artificial lakes, and a private zoo. After Escobar was killed in 1993, the government seized the property and later turned it into a theme park. The hippos—left behind because they were difficult to move—multiplied into the largest hippo population outside of Africa. Hippos are also the world's 17th-deadliest animals.

Officials say prior efforts to control the hippos, including sterilization and relocation, were costly and ineffective. Animal welfare activists urge nonlethal alternatives.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 3 of 60

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Dallas Wings select UConn's Azzi Fudd with No. 1 pick in WNBA draft; UCLA has record five players drafted in first round and six overall.

Over 1,000 Hollywood stars—including Bryan Cranston and Lin-Manuel Miranda—sign an open letter opposing pending Paramount-Warner merger, claiming it will lead to fewer jobs for creatives and fewer choices for audiences.

Britney Spears voluntarily enters substance abuse treatment after March arrest on suspicion of driving under the influence; decision on charges expected ahead of May 4 court date.

Science & Technology

Meta is creating an AI clone of Mark Zuckerberg, trained on his mannerisms, tone, and public statements, so the company's nearly 79,000 employees feel more connected to their founder and CEO.

Audiovisual simulations provide one of the most realistic views yet of galaxy formation and evolution, helping scientists compare theories against observations from the James Webb Space Telescope.

Scientists map ocean surface currents in unprecedented detail using AI to analyze satellite temperature imagery, with potential applications in search-and-rescue operations, oil spill response, and climate research.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close up (S&P 500 +1.0%, Dow +0.6%, Nasdaq +1.2%).

US existing home sales fell by 3.6% month over month in March, the lowest level since June; median home price of \$408,800 is up 1.4% from a year ago.

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton (R) opens investigation into Lululemon over allegations that its activewear may contain toxic forever chemicals; Lululemon claims the allegations are false.

Slate Auto raises \$650M in funding to advance production of its mid-\$20K electric pickup truck, which has over 160,000 reservations ahead of year-end launch.

Politics & World Affairs

Rep. Eric Swalwell (D, CA-14) says he will resign after House Ethics Committee announces probe into sexual misconduct allegations; Swalwell exited the California governor's race late Sunday.

Rep. Tony Gonzales (R, TX-23) to retire, comes after admitting to an affair with an aide who had later died by suicide.

Federal judge dismisses President Donald Trump's \$10B defamation lawsuit against The Wall Street Journal over reporting on Trump's ties to Jeffrey Epstein.

Super Typhoon Sinlaku is forecast to impact the US' Northern Mariana Islands today, as of this writing; storm is the strongest of 2026 to date, reaching Category 5 status over the weekend.



Mylar & Latex Balloons
Perfect for Every Occasion!

- Birthdays
- Graduations
- Baby Showers
- Anniversaries
- School Events

Huge Selection • Bright Colors • Custom Styles
Stop in or order online today!

Contact **Tina** at **605-397-7285** or **Paul** at **605-397-7460**.
Delivery available in Groton.

Groton school board approves retirement of long-serving industrial tech teacher, discusses facilities master plan

By Elizabeth Varin

The Groton Area School Board reviewed progress on its long-range facilities planning efforts and took action on several personnel matters during its meeting Monday night.

Among the almost dozen hiring and resignation decisions, the board approved the retirement of district's industrial technology teacher Don Donley, who concludes a remarkable 55-year career—believed to be the longest tenure in Career and Technical Education in South Dakota.

Donley's retirement request came in characteristically understated fashion, with a brief letter to the board that read, "To the Groton School Board: I'm done."

The moment drew some lighthearted reaction from board members, including Marty Weismantel who noted he "regrettably" moved to accept Donley's retirement.

Board members reminisced about their experiences with the teacher who has been a mainstay at the high school.

"I don't know if everyone is going to understand the effect it's going to have, with him not being around, just all the little things that he does, the check ins he does with everybody on staff," said Superintendent Joe Schwan. "He has a way that he treats people that changes their day from average or bad to good."

In addition to honoring Donley, board members heard an update on the district's ongoing facilities master planning process and made several personnel changes.

The board received an update from officials at Co-Op Architecture about a phased master plan update.

The first phase would include building an addition east of the middle/high school office that includes classrooms and special education rooms, and demolition of a portion on the southern side of the high school.

Phase 2 would include restructuring the southern parking lot, the addition of a commons area/cafeteria east of the old gym and a wing on the southern portion of the building for agriculture/FACS classrooms.

Phase 3 includes renovations of the old gym, CTE shop space, tech and science classrooms, a science lab and music/choir room renovations. A re-roofing item is also included in phase 3.

Cost estimates include:

- \$9,664,000 to \$10,570,000 for phase 1 construction
- \$5,088,000 to \$5,565,000 for phase 2 construction
- \$2,266,700 to \$2,505,300 for shop, science and office remodel
- \$2,340,000 to \$2,620,800 for locker rooms, kitchen and band remodel
- \$1,263,200 to \$1,736,900 for auxiliary gym and stage remodel

Total estimates presented to the board range from \$24,498,457 on the low end to \$27,441,255 on the high end.

An open house/community forum will take place later this month to review the proposed school master plan.

Staffing changes approved

The board also approved the resignation of half a dozen district employees.

Middle school/high school special education teacher Chantel Duerre resigned effective at the end of the school year. Paraprofessional Jaimie Mitchell resigned effective May 8.

Ag teacher and FFA adviser Lindsey VanderWal resigned effective at the end of the current school year.

Maintenance director Ryan Scepaniak resigned effective April 10.

The final two teachers resigned from extracurricular involvement but not their main district position. Assistant Business Manager Kristi Peterson submitted her resignation as yearbook advisor effective at the end of the school year. And social science teacher and head football coach Shaun Wanner submitted his resignation as head football coach.



Don Donley



Shaun Wanner

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 5 of 60

Wanner, like Donley, has racked up decades as head football coach, steering the Tigers' football team for 25 years, with a total of 39 years as a head coach under his belt.

The board approved Wanner's head coaching resignation pending being able to find a suitable replacement. That caveat has been typical for the Groton school board when accepting the resignation of coaches who are also district employees.

The board also made some hires Monday night.

Madisyn Neiber, who recently served as business manager at the Britton-Hecla School District, was hired as business manager beginning July 1. It comes as current Business Manager Becky Hubsch announced her resignation at a meeting in March.

Maria Martens was hired as opportunity coordinator. Martens, who is pursuing her Master's Degree at Northern State University in counseling specializing in school counseling, was hired as opportunity coordinator for the 2026-2027 school year.

The board also voted to hire Rylen Ekern as a student OST worker.



Becky Hubsch

School year extended due to snow days

The school board voted to extend the 2025-2026 school year to make up for four snow days earlier this year.

The end of the school year was originally scheduled for May 14, with a staff development day scheduled for May 15. However, the board voted to push the last day for student to May 20 with the staff development day rescheduled to May 21.

- Language arts teachers told the board about curriculum changes coming for next year at the middle school and high school. Mary Johnson told the board why she thinks the HMH curriculum would be the best option for the middle school, including clearer introductions for the students and a better selection of stories for the middle school level. Sarah Hanten presented her pick for the high school curriculum, Savvas, citing it as more appropriate and challenging for the older students with good online features.

- The board went into executive session toward the end of the meeting to discuss teacher, staff and administrative contracts for the 2026-2027 school year.

- Superintendent Schwan presented a wrap up of the state legislative session, including bills signed into law and potential impacts on the district. Some of those discussed include Senate Bill 245 (bill to create a homeowner property tax reduction fund), House Bill 1187 (bill to add coaches of a school activity to the list of mandatory reporters of child abuse or neglect), Senate Bill 46 (changes to government open meeting requirements) and more.

- Elementary Principal Brett Schwan expressed concerns about the size of next year's kindergarten and junior kindergarten classes, saying it's the "smallest class we've ever had." After last week's kindergarten roundup, there are 25 kindergarteners and 10 junior kindergarteners for next year, with two students undecided which they will go into. That is compared to:

- o 45 kindergarten students and nine junior kindergarten students in 2025-2026
- o 31 kindergarten students and 13 junior kindergarten students in 2024-2025
- o 53 kindergarten students and 19 junior kindergarten students in 2023-2024
- o 40 kindergarten students and 20 junior kindergarten students in 2022-2023

- Middle school/high school Principal Shelby Edwards discussed a new grading scale that the principal advisory group has been working on. The first reading is set to go before the school board at the next board meeting.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 6 of 60

Semitrailer fire by Elizabeth Varin

Groton Fire & Rescue responded to a reported vehicle fire at 8:48 p.m. Monday along Highway 37 near the northwest edge of the cemetery.

According to Fire Chief Cody Bonn, the call came from a passerby who reported smelling smoke in the area. Upon arrival, firefighters located a semi-trailer with something smoldering in the back. Crews quickly addressed the situation, and no injuries were reported.

Groton Police also responded to assist at the scene.



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 7 of 60

Groton Area earns varsity shutout, JV battles to tie at Clark

CLARK — Strong pitching carried Groton Area to a narrow victory in the varsity game, while the junior varsity squad settled for a draw as the Tigers split results Monday against Clark Area.

In the varsity matchup, Groton Area edged Clark Area 1-0 behind a combined shutout from Jarrett Erdmann and Alex Abeln. Erdmann did the bulk of the work, allowing just two hits over 6 2/3 innings while striking out six and walking four. Abeln came on in relief to record the final out, striking out Konrad Frankfurth to secure the save.

The Tigers' lone run came in the sixth inning when Nick Groeblichhoff delivered an RBI single. Groeblichhoff finished 1-for-2 at the plate with the game's only run driven in, while Abeln led Groton Area with two hits in three at-bats.

Groton Area's defense backed the pitching effort with a clean game in the field, committing no errors and turning a double play. Karsten Fliehs handled a team-high six chances defensively.

Clark Area pitcher Watson Grantham was impressive in the loss, striking out 13 over seven innings while allowing just one run on four hits.

In the JV contest, Groton Area and Clark Area played to a 2-2 tie.

The Tigers struck first in the opening inning when Case Reints singled to bring in a run, part of a two-run frame fueled by early base hits. Clark Area answered in the third inning, tying the game at 2-2 on a double down the left-field line by Behrett Ahrens.

Isaiah Scepaniak started on the mound for Groton Area JV, allowing one hit and one run (unearned) over two innings while striking out three. At the plate, Braden Fliehs, Scepaniak, Zach Fliehs and Reints each recorded a hit, with Fliehs and Reints driving in runs.

Ahrens led Clark Area JV offensively, going 2-for-2 with an RBI.

Groton Area returns to action Friday, with both the varsity and JV teams scheduled to travel to face WIN.

79 Fire Evening Update

April 13, 2026

Note: This will be the final update issued by the Interagency Incident Management Team.

Type 3 Interagency Incident Management Team
Fire Location: 3 miles north of Buffalo Gap, SD
Size: 5,408 acres

Incident Commander:
Jay Wickham
John Haskvitz (t)
Cause: Human Caused
Containment: 90%

Current Situation: Containment tonight has reached 90%. State, federal, and local resources spent today mopping up around the fire perimeter and around values at risk. Firefighters today strengthening and securing the fire perimeter. The Incident Management Team will turn the fire back to the local fire department tonight at 7 pm.

Resources will be out periodically tomorrow to patrol and monitor the fire to ensure nothing poses a threat to escape the fire line.

Weather: A Red Flag Warning remains in effect for the area through tonight at 9 pm. MDT. Warm, dry, windy conditions are forecast to continue throughout the evening.

Public Closures: Road closures have been lifted in the area. However, the public is asked to avoid the area due to ongoing active fire suppression activity including personnel and equipment.

Residential Impact: There are no evacuations in place.

The Temporary Flight Restriction is no longer in place.

Fire Information

Facebook: 79 Fire 2026 <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61570720881084> Phone: 605-923-8868

Email: steve.long@state.sd.us Inciweb:<https://inciweb.wildfire.gov/incident-information/sdsds-79-fire>

SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

Anti-abortion lawmakers seek to redefine 'abortion' to exclude medical treatment

Critics say the goal is to fortify abortion bans against legal, political risks

BY: SOFIA RESNICK

Some anti-abortion state lawmakers are pushing to revise the definition of "abortion" so abortion bans don't apply to cases in which the death of an "unborn child" is the result of medical care provided to the pregnant woman.

In the four years since the U.S. Supreme Court allowed states to ban abortion, stories continue to emerge of women with doomed pregnancies who developed life-threatening infections, had to travel to another state, or even died because doctors were afraid to provide what was once considered standard pregnancy-loss care.

Thirteen states have abortion bans, and all of them include a medical exception that allows abortions to protect the life of the pregnant woman. Some, but not all, of the bans also have exceptions to protect the health of the woman.

But patients and providers have argued in lawsuits challenging the bans that such exceptions are too ill defined to give doctors and hospitals the confidence to provide timely care. As a result, they say, providers end up denying care until the woman's condition deteriorates to a point where the exceptions definitely apply, jeopardizing her health and future fertility.

Last year, states including Texas, Kentucky and Tennessee enacted laws designed to provide additional clarity. Confusion persists in those states and others, however, and research has linked abortion restrictions to higher rates of maternal death and injury.

The latest measures, crafted and promoted by national anti-abortion groups, would redefine "abortion" as the intentional ending of the life of the "unborn child." Supporters say they would clear the way for doctors to manage miscarriages, ectopic pregnancies and other pregnancy-related emergencies.

"No one wants a physician to hesitate or pause and further endanger the life of the mother," said Ingrid Duran, director of state legislation for the National Right to Life Committee, which has advocated for all



South Dakota Gov. Larry Rhoden prepares to sign three anti-abortion bills into law on March 20, 2026, at the Alpha Center in Sioux Falls. Also pictured, from left, are state Sen. Tamara Grove, R-Lower Brule, Alpha Center founder Leslee Unruh, House Speaker Jon Hansen, R-Dell Rapids, Rep. Les Heinemann, R-Flandreau, Rep. Jon Hughes, R-Sioux Falls, and Dale Bartscher of South Dakota Right to Life. (Photo by Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 10 of 60

of the measures, in a written statement. "This is why providing clearer language in defining terms can be beneficial."

But reproductive rights advocates and many OB-GYNs say the real purpose of the bills is to fortify abortion bans that are broadly unpopular, even in states with full bans, and under legal challenge in multiple states. They argue the new measures are still too vague because they hang on the intentions of individual physicians, and many of the same procedures and medicines used in abortions are used to treat miscarriages.

They also say the language in the bills could grant embryos legal rights, thereby making some fertility treatments illegal.

"If you're trying to define what is and is not an abortion, and you're creating really specific, narrow guidelines, it could really unintentionally classify some pregnancy-related procedures as abortion care, and therefore within the law not medically necessary," said Elias Schmidt, state legislative counsel for the Center for Reproductive Rights, an advocacy group.

South Dakota is first

In March, South Dakota became the first state to enact such a law. Its measure states that the state's abortion ban only applies to "the intentional termination of the life of a human being in the uterus," and not to medical treatment that results in "the accidental or unintentional death of the unborn child," treatment to resolve a miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy, "the removal from the uterus of a deceased unborn child," or a medical procedure that aims to save the fetus.

To the concern of fertility-treatment advocates, the law also defines "human being" as "an individual living member of the species of Homo sapiens, including the unborn human being during the entire embryonic and fetal ages from fertilization to full gestation."

A similar bill introduced in Missouri defines abortion as "the act of using or prescribing any instrument, device, medicine, drug, or any other means or substance with the intent to destroy the life of an embryo or fetus in his or her mother's womb." It explicitly exempts miscarriage management and treatment for ectopic pregnancies from the definition.

And a bill in Utah, where abortion is still legal up to 18 weeks' gestation, would regulate how an abortion procedure is recorded in a patient's chart, distinguishing between an elective abortion and a medically indicated abortion. It defines the latter as an abortion "to remove a deceased fetus," resolve an ectopic pregnancy, or to avert the death or "serious physical risk of substantial impairment of a major bodily function of a woman."

Wisconsin's legislature recently voted not to advance a similar bill this past legislative session.

Blame for the confusion

Anti-abortion groups blame doctors and abortion-rights advocates for creating the confusion around the medical exceptions in abortion bans, insisting it is clear what is a medically indicated abortion and what is purely elective.

"The fact that we're in a place now that states actually have to define (abortion) is a result of my field, particularly (the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists) not clarifying it," said Dr. Susan Bane, vice chair of the board of the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, which is made up of about 7,500 physicians and other medical professionals who oppose abortion.

The organization has launched a medical education and messaging campaign arguing that abortion bans do not prevent necessary health care.

According to Bane, the main difference between an induced abortion and medically indicated termination is that in the first case, "you want a dead baby at the end of whatever you do."

The author of the South Dakota law, Republican state Rep. Leslie Heinemann, said he sponsored the measure to quell some of the criticism that the medical exceptions in his state's ban were ill defined. He admitted he underestimated how difficult it would be to codify in law when care for a miscarriage is necessary.

"Even the medical community had trouble with helping define some of the issues," he said.

The version of the bill that became law names only a few conditions and leaves the rest up to the discretion of physicians, who must exercise "appropriate and reasonable medical judgment that performance of an abortion is necessary to preserve the life of the pregnant female" to avoid felony charges.

Heinemann insisted his measure would not restrict fertility treatments or birth control. But reproductive health and legal experts say that by defining the beginning of human life as "the entire embryonic and fetal ages from fertilization to full gestation," it could have that effect.

"Embedding personhood language into state laws does really bring up concern around contraceptive access and IVF access," said Kimya Forouzan, principal state policy adviser for the Guttmacher Institute, a think tank that supports abortion rights.

"As personhood provisions grow in the state code, it brings up the question: At what point are we granting the legal rights of a person and placing those rights above the individual themselves?"

Dr. Amy Kelley, an OB-GYN in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, who was the chair of the South Dakota chapter of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists from 2023 to 2025, said lawmakers ignored her and other doctors' concerns that the amended abortion ban is still too vague.

"The whole point of medicine is to prevent people from becoming on the brink of death, right? So are they expecting us to wait until that?" Kelley said. "It's still not very clear, and the definition for miscarriage and ectopic is also not the one we wanted. It's just not helpful."

Kelley said that since her state enacted an abortion ban, she often waits longer to terminate a pregnancy for medical reasons, and will sometimes send patients out of state for care. She noted that the new law doesn't explain what level of risk to the pregnant woman justifies terminating a pregnancy.

"They want to say elective abortions are not allowed. But what do they consider elective?" she said. "Let's say they have a heart condition and their risk of dying in pregnancy is 40%. Is that an elective abortion because their risk is not 100%?"

Stateline reporter Sofia Resnick can be reached at sresnick@stateline.org

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

Sofia Resnick covers reproductive rights for Stateline. She has been a journalist for 20 years, covering reproductive health policy and politics for more than a decade, specializing in stories about how the religious right has manipulated science to change policy and tracking the long tail of the fall of Roe v. Wade.

Three candidates pledge changes on Medicaid, ag, taxes and education while governor touts results

Republicans meet for second televised debate ahead of June 2 primary election

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR AND SETH TUPPER

SIOUX FALLS — Three men who want to be governor of South Dakota vowed to do things differently than the current administration on topics including Medicaid, agriculture, taxes and education, while the governor said his results justify keeping him in the job.

The four candidates for the Republican nomination met in their second televised debate Monday evening, aired by South Dakota Public Broadcasting in partnership with South Dakota News Watch. Early voting is scheduled to begin Friday for the June 2 primary election.

Gov. Larry Rhoden, of rural Union Center, was elevated from lieutenant governor in January 2025 when then-Gov. Kristi Noem resigned to take a job in President Trump's administration. Since then, Rhoden said, his successes have included working with the Legislature to pass property tax reduction plans and resolve a standoff over prison construction with the approval of a project in Sioux Falls.

"You're going to hear a lot of talk tonight about plans," Rhoden said. "We've delivered results."

When a moderator asked the candidates what they would do to reduce maternal and infant mortality

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 12 of 60

rates, U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson of Mitchell pledged to create a state surgeon general position. He said the state needs "somebody who can think in an innovative way about how to better deliver care." He also pledged to move the management of government-funded health care for low-income people, known as Medicaid, from the state Department of Social Services to the state Department of Health so it could be treated like a "health care program" instead of a "welfare program."

Aberdeen businessman Toby Doeden reiterated his pledge to "phase out" property taxes, saying he would do it through a combination of spending cuts, growing the economy, and eliminating waste, fraud and abuse of government programs.

State House Speaker Jon Hansen, of Dell Rapids, pledged to create "education grants" with public funding so parents could send their children to the school of their choice, whether public, private or homeschooling. He also pledged to undo the merger of the former state Department of Environment and Natural Resources with the former Department of Agriculture, which created the combined Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Hansen said agriculture "deserves its own department."



Clockwise from top left, the candidates for the Republican nomination for governor of South Dakota participate in a debate on April 13, 2026, at South Dakota Public Broadcasting in Sioux Falls: businessman Toby Doeden, Gov. Larry Rhoden, state House Speaker Jon Hansen and U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson.

(Photos by Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

Economic development

Doeden promised he would be "the most pro-business governor this state has ever seen," but said major projects must have local support.

"I will never use taxpayer money to subsidize multi-billion-dollar, out-of-state development projects," Doeden said.

Hansen also rejected using taxpayer dollars to incentivize and recruit large corporations to the state.

"I'm not going to take the tax money of our South Dakota entrepreneurs and give it away to big companies," Hansen said.

Johnson said South Dakota should focus on helping homegrown entrepreneurs succeed and that the state is not as business friendly as it should be.

He criticized Rhoden for signing three bills into law during the recently concluded legislative session that allow for new or higher sales taxes: an increase in the statewide sales tax from 4.2% to 4.5% that will go toward property tax reduction for homeowners, a new and optional 0.5% county sales tax that will also go toward homeowner property tax reduction, and a new and optional 1% city sales tax (on top of existing city sales taxes up to 2%) that could be imposed temporarily to pay for special projects.

"For a state where affordability is our biggest problem and higher costs are the biggest barriers to those small business startups, those higher taxes are not going to help you," Johnson said.

He called the sales tax increases the largest in state history.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 13 of 60

Rhoden called Johnson's criticism "D.C. B.S." and described the new property tax reduction laws as the "largest tax cut in state history." Rhoden also said "we've had the three largest economic development projects right here in South Dakota" but did not identify the projects.

Agriculture

Johnson said high input costs are hitting farmers and ranchers hard, and sales tax increases could make things worse.

"If we think that tools and grain bins and fencing are expensive now, just wait until those additional sales taxes hit," Johnson said.

Rhoden, a rancher, called that criticism "baloney" and said his own focus on foreign trade missions has grown international markets for South Dakota agricultural commodities and products.

Hansen focused on property rights, saying he "stood on the frontlines" against failed efforts by Iowa-based Summit Carbon Solutions to run a pipeline through farm and ranch land via the legal power of eminent domain. He also shared his plan to separate agriculture into its own state department.

Doeden said farmers and ranchers tell him South Dakota remains overregulated and unaffordable. He is "committed to phasing out property taxes," he said, not only for homeowners but also for farmers and ranchers.

Education

Johnson said he supports most of the literacy reforms recently used successfully in Mississippi, and said South Dakota also needs bolder action, including investing more into improving education outcomes.

"If you are promoting third-graders into fourth grade who can't read, you're not doing them any favors," Johnson said.

Rhoden said more spending alone would not solve the problem. He said his administration is reforming education standards and moving reading education back to a phonics focus.

"We're getting away from Common Core," Rhoden said, in reference to an education initiative supported by the Obama presidential administration, adding that the state is "moving to common sense."

Hansen pledged to create publicly funded education grants.

"Parents ought to have the freedom and the financial freedom to choose the best education option for their kid," Hansen said.

Doeden said South Dakota's education budget has grown, but too much money has gone to "the bureaucrats" and "the administrators" instead of classrooms and teachers.

"Our teachers need to get paid more money," Doeden said, noting the state's rank of 47th in average teacher pay.

In closing

Rhoden said he was the only candidate who has served as governor and worn a military uniform — he was in the National Guard — and said he is focused on keeping South Dakota "strong, safe and free."

Doeden said voters do not need "another 20-year politician as our governor."

"I'm going to win this race, and I'm going to Pierre to fight for you," Doeden said. "The people of South Dakota."

Hansen said he has been "in the trenches" on property tax reduction, ending abortion, and protecting private property rights. He asked voters to back a candidate "rooted in biblical truth and conservative values."

"I'm sick of people who are obsessed with big money and power, and tip over to the special interests and the big money lobbyists," he said. "I'm done with all that."

Johnson focused his closing statement on future generations.

"I want my kids, I want your kids here," Johnson said. "I want them to choose South Dakota because South Dakota is the best place for them to build their futures. They deserve a South Dakota that doesn't

settle. They deserve a South Dakota whose leaders aspire to more than steadiness.”

The winner of the June 2 Republican primary — who needs at least 35% support to avoid a top-two runoff — will advance to the Nov. 3 general election. The only other certified candidate for governor so far is a Democrat, Dan Ahlers.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Seth is editor-in-chief of South Dakota Searchlight. He was previously a supervising senior producer for South Dakota Public Broadcasting and a newspaper journalist in Rapid City and Mitchell.

Black Hills uranium exploration permit hearing postponed to May

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

A public hearing about an application to explore underground for uranium in the Black Hills has been rescheduled to May 18 through May 22.

The hearing will take place in Hot Springs at the Mueller Civic Center. It had previously been scheduled for this week but was postponed.

In March 2024, Clean Nuclear Energy Corporation and its Canada-based parent company Nexus Uranium filed an application to drill exploratory holes in search of uranium near Craven Canyon in the southern Black Hills.

The company plans to use 50 sites to drill holes as deep as 700 feet on state-owned land, according to its application. Each hole will take approximately two weeks to drill. The company has additional drilling plans on federally owned land, which are under review by the U.S. Forest Service.

Dozens of individuals and groups have raised formal complaints to the state's Board of Minerals and Environment about the potential adverse effects of the proposed drilling, including concerns for cultural resources and historic sites, such as ancient Native American petroglyphs in the canyon, and water quality.

Uranium is a metallic, radioactive element used as fuel in nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants. Interest in uranium exploration and mining has risen recently in response to nuclear energy's potential to meet the growing electricity demands of data centers, which handle the computing needs of artificial intelligence.

The state Board of Minerals and Environment can deny an application to explore for uranium for several reasons, including negative impacts on historical, archaeological or recreational aspects of an area, if those impacts outweigh the benefits of the exploration. The board can also deny the permit if it will negatively affect the productivity of aquifers.



The walls of Craven Canyon, in the southern Black Hills of South Dakota, are marked with ancient Native American petroglyphs. A proposal to drill exploratory holes in search of uranium near the canyon has sparked controversy. (Photo courtesy of Liliias Jarding/Black Hills Clean Water Alliance)

Trump picks fight with Pope Leo as Iran peace talks dissolve

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY



President Donald Trump speaks to reporters before boarding Marine One on the South Lawn of the White House in December 2025. (Photo by Tom Brenner/Getty Images)

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump lashed out at Pope Leo XIV Sunday night following the pontiff's sharp criticism of the U.S.-Israeli war in Iran and wider Middle East conflict.

In a lengthy post, littered with falsehoods, on his social media platform, Truth Social, Trump accused the first U.S.-born pope of being "WEAK on crime" and of supporting Iran having a nuclear weapon. The president also invoked the 70-year-old pontiff's

TRUTH.

← Donald J. Trump



Donald J. Trump

@realDonaldTrump · 11h

brother, Louis Prevost, "because Louis is all MAGA."

Leo, born Robert Prevost, is from Chicago.

During a flight to Algeria on Monday, Leo told reporters, "I have no fear of the Trump administration or of speaking out loudly of the message of the Gospel, which is what I believe I am here to do, what the church is here to do."

"We are not politicians," he said, as reported by Vatican media. "We don't deal with foreign policy with the same perspective he might understand it, but I do believe in the message of the Gospel, as a peacemaker."

List of complaints

Trump's Sunday night post criticized Leo for not backing his foreign policy and aggressive immigration agenda, and generally for not being more supportive of his administration.

The United States and Israel ordered military strikes on Iran in late February, despite not facing an imminent threat from the Islamic state. Trump did not give a clear rationale for the strikes until about a month after they launched, saying they were meant to prevent Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon.

"I don't want a Pope who thinks it's OK for Iran to have a Nuclear Weapon. I don't want a Pope who thinks it's terrible that America attacked Venezuela, a Country that was sending massive amounts of Drugs into the United States and, even worse, emptying their prisons, including murderers, drug dealers, and killers, into our Country," Trump posted just after 9 p.m. Eastern.



9.84k 2.96k 12.5k

A screenshot of Trump's now-deleted post.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 16 of 60

"And I don't want a Pope who criticizes the President of the United States because I'm doing exactly what I was elected, IN A LANDSLIDE, to do, setting Record Low Numbers in Crime, and creating the Greatest Stock Market in History," the president continued in his 334-word message about the pontiff.

Further, Trump claimed Leo should be "thankful" because Trump is responsible for the Chicago native being installed as the leader of the Roman Catholic church.

"He wasn't on any list to be Pope, and was only put there by the Church because he was an American, and they thought that would be the best way to deal with President Donald J. Trump. If I wasn't in the White House, Leo wouldn't be in the Vatican," he wrote.

Less than an hour later, the president posted an artificial intelligence-generated image of himself as Jesus Christ blessing an ailing man as what appear to be angels in full military fatigues hover in the clouds above with fighter jets nearby. Trump deleted the post Monday morning.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment Monday.

While speaking to reporters outside the Oval Office Monday afternoon, Trump said he posted the image but that he wasn't depicted as Jesus. Rather, he said, he was supposed to represent a doctor associated with the Red Cross.

"I did post it, and I thought it was me as a doctor, and had to do with Red Cross as a Red Cross worker there, which we support, and only the fake news could come up with that one," he said in response to a question about the image.

"So I just heard about it, and I said, 'how do they come up with that?' It's supposed to be me as a doctor, making people better. And I do make people better, I make people a lot better," he continued.

One minute after the post depicting Jesus, the president posted an AI-generated image of a skyscraper bearing his name on the moon's surface.

Iran talks crumble

In the hours prior to sounding off on the pope, Trump posted a video of himself shaking hands with mixed martial artist Paul Costa following an Ultimate Fighting Championship cage match he and Secretary of State Marco Rubio attended in Miami on Saturday night.

At the time of the fight, Vice President JD Vance was wrapping up failed peace talks with Iranian leaders in Pakistan. U.S. and Iranian leaders reached a two-week ceasefire deal last week. Trump described it at the time as a major step toward a permanent peace deal.

Trump threatened to establish a U.S. military blockade in the Strait of Hormuz Monday after talks collapsed. Not long after the war began, Iran effectively closed the narrow maritime passageway that moves one-fifth of the world's oil.

Vance, whose forthcoming book focuses on his conversion to Catholicism, was one of the last guests to visit Pope Francis before his death nearly one year ago.

Archbishop Paul Coakley, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a statement Sunday night disapproving of Trump's social media post about the pontiff.

"I am disheartened that the President chose to write such disparaging words about the Holy Father," said Coakley, the archbishop of Oklahoma City. "Pope Leo is not his rival; nor is the Pope a politician. He is the Vicar of Christ who speaks from the truth of the Gospel and for the care of souls."

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said Trump's post "viciously attacked" Leo's opposition to the Iran war. Trump's comments that the pope is "weak on crime," among other claims, reached "a new low," the New York Democrat added.

Schumer also said the president's AI-generated image of himself depicted as Christ "makes a mockery of millions of Christian Americans, many of whom voted for Trump and who fervently believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God."

"If King Herod had a Truth Social account in the first century, I think he'd probably describe Jesus Christ, who saved the penitent thief crucified alongside him, as weak on crime," Schumer said on the Senate floor.

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

SNAP work requirements don't boost jobs, but drop participation, research finds

BY: KEVIN HARDY

As states enact stricter work requirements for the federal food stamp program, a new analysis suggests those requirements won't enhance employment and will push more people off of food assistance.

The researchers conducted a review of studies on work requirements and concluded that "the best evidence shows they do not increase employment. Moreover, this research finds work requirements cause a large decrease in participation in SNAP."

The research from The Hamilton Project, an economic policy initiative at the left-leaning Brookings Institution, comes at a time of major upheaval for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. Participation is already declining as states implement changes mandated by the president's major tax and domestic policy law enacted last summer.

Since the fall, states and counties that administer SNAP have been notifying residents who rely on food stamps that they must meet work requirements or lose their food assistance. Those changes affected exemptions to work requirements for older adults, homeless people, veterans and some rural residents, among others.

Known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, the law mandated cuts to social service programs, including Medicaid and food stamps.

While SNAP enrollment is declining nationally, more people will likely lose food assistance as states continue to implement the work requirements and recertify participants, said Lauren Bauer, a fellow in economic studies at Brookings Institution and the associate director of The Hamilton Project.

"Everything that we know about work requirements is that they do not increase employment among the groups that are subject to them," she told Stateline. "All they do is make it more likely that they are disenrolled from the program. And so, should these work requirements continue to be rolled out and implemented, we would expect to see declining enrollment and no changes in employment."

Bauer said the growing body of research on SNAP has changed her mind about its ability to affect employment. While food stamps reach millions of people each year, the program's work requirements have proven ineffective, confusing and burdensome, she said.

"I am now of the mind that SNAP should be an anti-hunger program, and there are many, many ways to do workforce development, career ladders, career training, job search — all of those things. That's not an anti hunger program and it shouldn't be associated with it."

What's more concerning to her is how the stricter work requirements will affect people who lose jobs in an economic downturn. Traditionally, SNAP has been one of the most effective social supports for the unemployed, helping people who lose their jobs quickly gain food assistance. But laid-off workers will increasingly be told they cannot receive benefits without working.

"It's just this dissonant, unhelpful interaction that you have with the government," Bauer said. "I lost my



People shop for groceries at a Walmart store in Ohio. New research suggests SNAP work requirements won't enhance employment and will push more people off of food assistance.

(Photo by Marty Schladen/Ohio Capital Journal)

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 18 of 60

job, I need food benefits. Well, you can only get food benefits if you have a job.”

At least 2.5 million low-income people, or 6% of those enrolled, have lost SNAP benefits since the legislation was signed into law, according to a study by the left-leaning Center on Budget and Policy Priorities published Wednesday.

Bauer said it’s unclear how much of that decline is directly related to the federal legislation. That’s because SNAP participation generally declines during times of economic prosperity and increases during downturns.

But the program is facing unprecedented changes: Under the new law, states have also lost funding for nutrition education programs, must end eligibility for noncitizens such as refugees and asylees, and will lose work requirement waivers for those living in areas with limited employment opportunities. States are also forced to cover more of the costs of the program.

Earlier this week, a USDA spokesperson applauded the drop in SNAP participation, noting the program’s rolls had fallen below 40 million for the first time since the pandemic. The spokesperson told States Newsroom the program would continue “to serve those with the greatest need while also strengthening program integrity.”

Republicans, including U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana, have defended the legislative changes to SNAP, arguing they will help eliminate waste and fraud in the program.

In a June news release, he characterized SNAP as a “bloated, inefficient program,” but said Americans who needed food assistance would still receive it.

“Republicans are proud to defend commonsense welfare reform, fiscal sanity, and the dignity of work,” Johnson said in the release.

Stateline reporter Kevin Hardy can be reached at khardy@stateline.org.

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

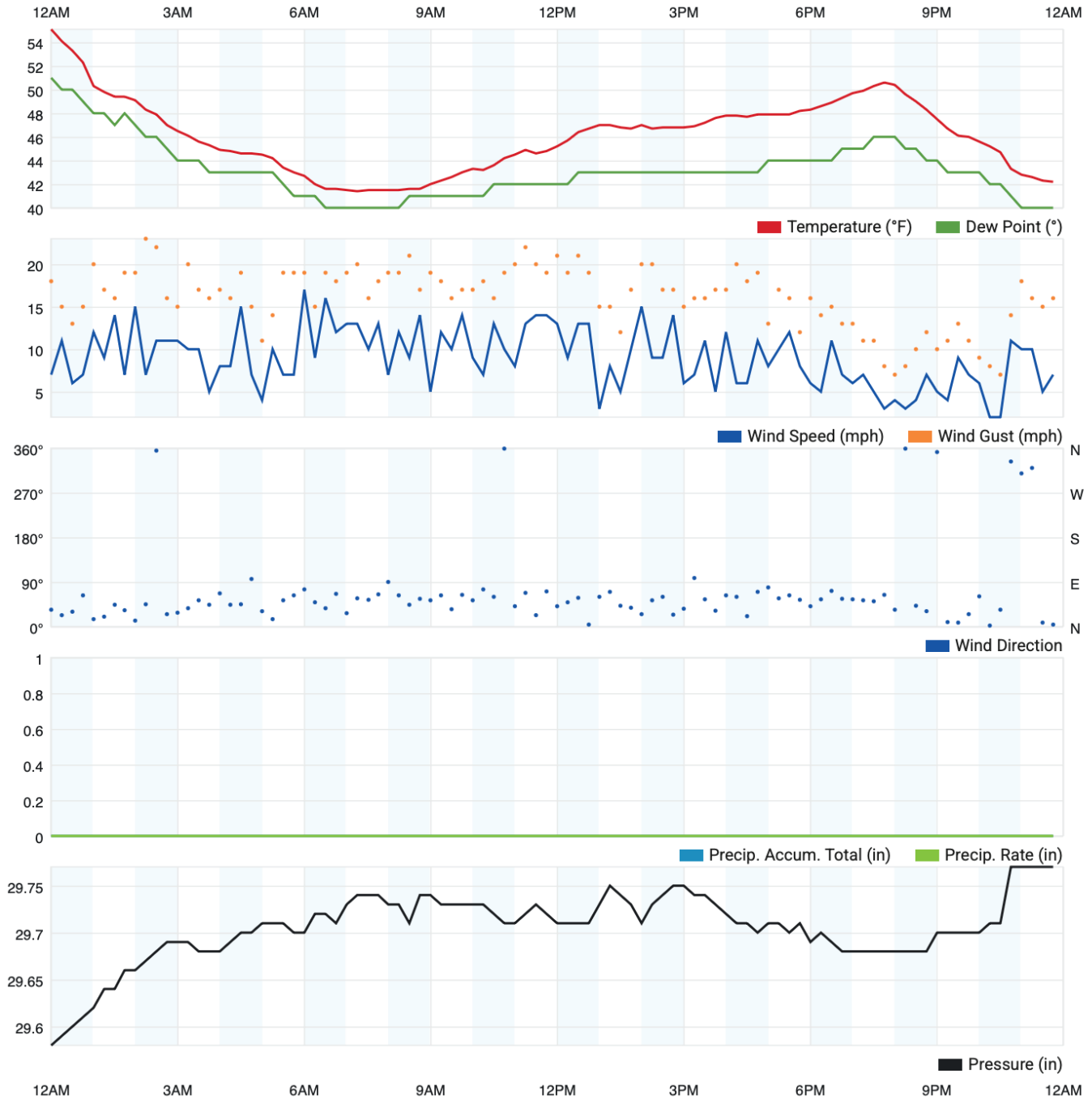
Kevin Hardy covers business, labor and rural issues for Stateline from the Midwest.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 19 of 60

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

April 13, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 20 of 60

Today



High: 64 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Tonight



Low: 40 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Wednesday



High: 71 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Wednesday
Night



Low: 46 °F

Mostly Clear

Thursday



High: 78 °F

Sunny



NWS Aberdeen, SD
www.weather.gov/abr

**Warming &
mainly dry
through the
day Thursday**

Today



60s

Wed



near 70°

Thurs



75-85°
Warmer

Fri



43-55°
Cooler

60% chance of
precipitation

N winds gusting
35-45 mph

Expect increasing high temperatures and mainly dry weather through the day Thursday. Highs today will be in the 60s, and rise into the mid 70s to mid 80s on Thursday. Friday will be cooler with a 60 percent chance of precipitation, along with winds out of the north gusting 35 to 45 mph.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 21 of 60

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 55 °F at 12:00 AM

Low Temp: 41 °F at 6:37 AM

Wind: 23 mph at 2:10 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 89 in 1908

Record Low: 9 in 1928

Average High: 57

Average Low: 31

Average Precip in April.: 0.67

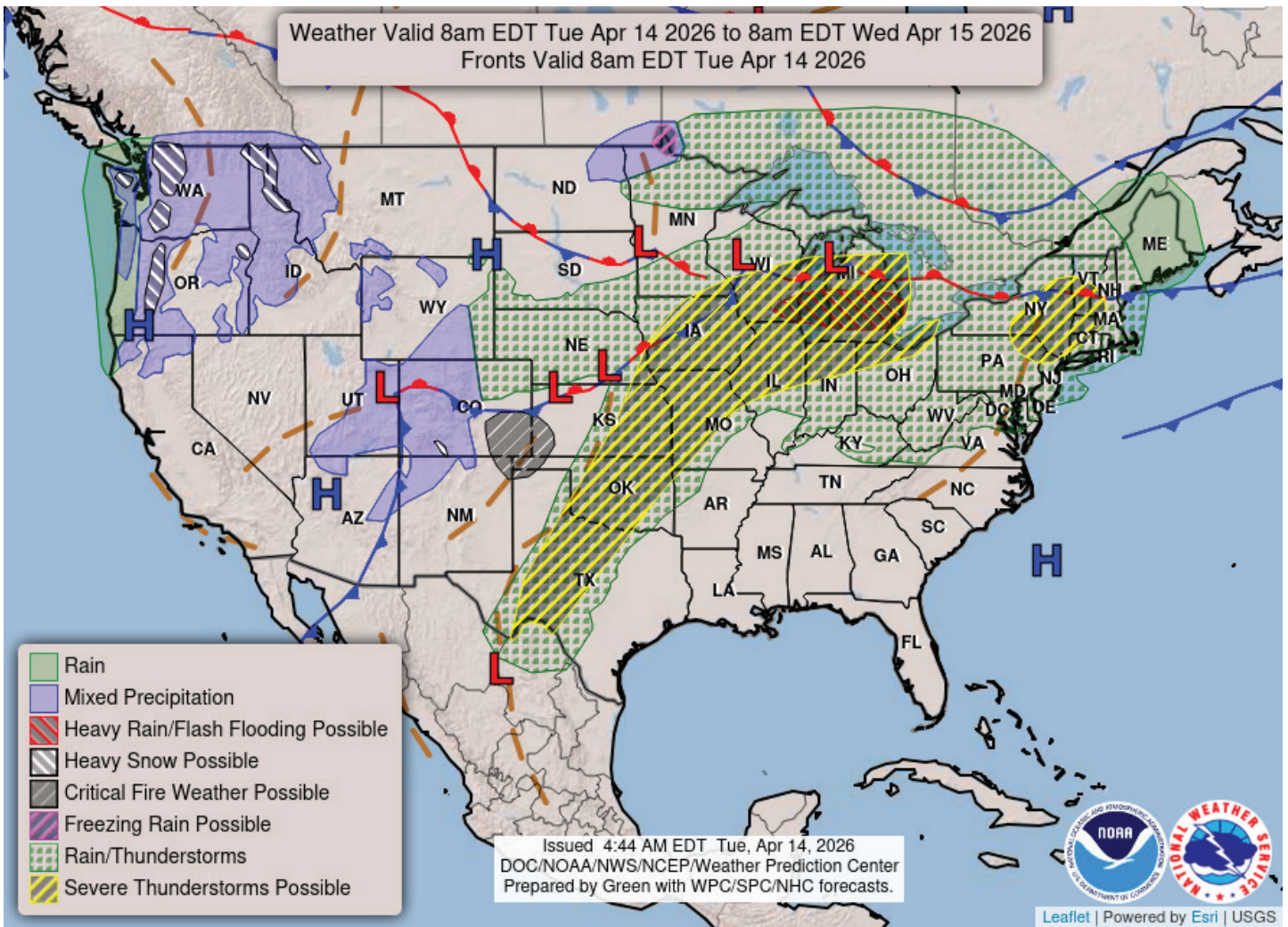
Precip to date in April.: 0.95

Average Precip to date: 2.73

Precip Year to Date: 2.57

Sunset Tonight: 8:16 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:46 am



Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 22 of 60

Today in Weather History

April 14th, 1991: Thawing ice on top of a television tower fell onto buildings below in Garden City, Clark County. The ice had accrued during a freezing rain event on the 11th and 12th. No one was injured, but damage estimates ranged from \$35,000 to \$40,000.

April 14th, 2005: A dust devil developed on the west side of Bison as a dry cold front passed through the area. As it moved east across town, it blew out windows on several automobiles, damaged a 160-square-foot section of roof from a house, and tore shingles off several buildings. The dust devil also pulled a flagpole out of the ground. No one was injured. The dust devil was approximately 20 feet wide, and the path length was one and a half miles.

1873 — A famous Easter blizzard raged across Kansas, Nebraska and South Dakota. Gale force winds blew the wet snow into massive drifts, however there were few deaths due to the sparse population and due to the gradual increase of the storm. (David Ludlum)

1886 — A devastating tornado, 800 yards in width at times, cut a twenty mile path through Saint Cloud MN killing 74 persons. The bottom of the Mississippi River was said to have been seen during the tornado's crossing. Eleven persons were killed at a wedding party near the town of Rice. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 — A storm system moving slowly northeastward across the Middle Mississippi Valley produced severe thunderstorms which spawned three tornadoes around Ottumwa IA, and produced up to four inches of rain in southeastern Nebraska, flooding rivers and streams. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — A weather disturbance off the southern coast of California brought parts of southern California their first rain in six weeks. Rain-slickened roads resulted in numerous accidents in southern California, including a ten car pile-up at Riverside. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Late afternoon thunderstorms in northern Florida soaked the town of Golden Gate with 4.37 inches of rain in about two hours, resulting in local flooding. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — Thunderstorms developing along a cold front produced severe weather in southeastern Texas during the mid morning hours. Thunderstorms produced dime size hail at Galveston, and wind gusts to 59 mph at Port Arthur. Afternoon thunderstorms over southeast Louisiana spawned tornadoes south of Bogalusa and at Rio. (Storm Data)

Seek God Early

Begin each morning with the Lord in His Word—this simple habit will bring more joy into your life.

Psalms 63:1-8:L 1 O God, You are my God; I shall seek You earnestly; My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, In a dry and weary land where there is no water.
2 Thus I have seen You in the sanctuary, To see Your power and Your glory.
3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips will praise You.
4 So I will bless You as long as I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.
5 My soul is satisfied as with marrow and fatness, And my mouth offers praises with joyful lips.
6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches,
7 For You have been my help, And in the shadow of Your wings I sing for joy.
8 My soul clings to You; Your right hand upholds me.

You've probably heard people say that breakfast is the most important meal of the day. A similar concept applies to our heart and mind. The fuel we give them each morning greatly affects the remainder of the day. Think of time in God's Word, prayer, and meditation as spiritual nourishment for your relationship with the Father.

David began his day with the Lord. In Psalm 63, he described seeking God early (the literal translation of "earnestly"). Having woken up hungry for time with his Creator, he rejoiced that his soul found satisfaction with the fullness of the Lord. And David broke out in thanksgiving and praise.

Just imagine having a day like that—filled with joy and gratitude. This is possible when we begin of our day with God, listening to Him speak through His Word and then talking with Him. Seeking the Lord not only fills our empty soul; it also increases our hunger for Him.

Do you find it challenging to set apart time with the Lord each morning? Habits begin with baby steps, not overwhelming resolutions. Start this morning (Psalm 5:3)—set aside five minutes. Be consistent and add a few minutes as you are able. You'll be amazed by the difference it makes.

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

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 24 of 60

The Groton Independent

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.2% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$52.00/year
- Colored \$80.00/year
- Colored \$49.00/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$35.00/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent

www.397news.com

Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$16.00
- 3 Months..... \$28.00
- 6 Months..... \$38.00
- 9 Months..... \$52.00
- 12 Months..... \$60.00

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

Pay with Venmo: @paperpaul Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 25 of 60



WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.13.26

2 13 15 35 41 2

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

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 11 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.10.26

3 18 36 42 49 6

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$120,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 56 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.13.26

1 18 19 35 50 9

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$21,960,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 11 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.11.26

4 11 13 19 20

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$52,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 26 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.13.26

25 30 39 47 56 16

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 55 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
04.13.26

38 43 59 63 64 15

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$58,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 55 Mins 30 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Takeaways from AP and Lee's report on how soybean farmers were impacted by tariffs, Iran war

By JOSH KELETY Associated Press

Midwest soybean farmers have faced persistent financial headwinds in recent years, which were compounded by tariffs and the war in the Middle East, reporting from Lee Enterprises and The Associated Press found.

Farmers' costs, such as equipment, have crept up over time while soybean prices have stayed low. Tariffs levied by the Trump administration last year and the monthslong trade war with China only made things worse, soybean producers say. Then the Iran war bottlenecked shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, restricting global fertilizer supplies and sending fuel and fertilizer prices soaring. A ceasefire deal announced April 7 raised hope that bottlenecks in the strait would abate, but the future of the agreement was uncertain and experts say it will take time for global supply chains to recover.

The AP and Lee Enterprises interviewed experts and soybean farmers across multiple Midwest states.

Here are key takeaways from the report:

Rising costs, low soybean prices have hurt farmers' margins

Soybeans, which are used for livestock feed, food and biofuels, are among the top U.S. agricultural exports. But soybean prices have been persistently low in recent years. The global market has been awash in soybeans, driven in part by Brazil, which surpassed the U.S. as the world's largest soybean producer years ago.

"If we look at global soybean production over the past several years, it continues to set record, after record, after record," said Chad Hart, an agricultural economist at Iowa State University. "There's been just large supplies globally, and that has led to depressed prices."

Meanwhile, Midwest soybean farmers' costs have risen. Overall farm production expenses, including seed and pesticide, have increased over time, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Operating costs for soybean production have stayed elevated since 2020 and are projected to increase again in 2026, according to the agency.

The cost of land also is a major issue for farmers, experts say. Midwest crop land values have increased. And most regional farmers rent some of their land, according to Joana Colussi, research assistant professor in the department of agricultural economics at Purdue University.

The U.S.-China trade war in 2025 has lasting impacts

Sweeping tariffs levied by President Donald Trump in April 2025 exacerbated a trade war with China, the top buyer of U.S. soybeans. China responded with retaliatory tariffs and effectively boycotted U.S. soybeans, cutting off a major export market for Midwest farmers and driving the price of soybeans even lower. The U.S. and China eventually reached a deal in late 2025. Beijing committed to buying 12 million metric tons of soybeans by January and at least 25 million metric tons annually for the next three years. China has since met its initial soybean purchase goal and the Trump administration also rolled out a \$12 billion temporary aid package in December to boost farmers affected by the trade war.

But the damage is already done, experts and farmers say. While China's renewed purchases and the federal payments are helping, it's not enough to recover farmers' losses. Even after federal assistance, farmers still lost almost \$75 per harvested acre of soybeans in the 2025 crop, according to the American Soybean Association. And the trade war further pushed China toward competing soybean exporters, such as Brazil — accelerating a trend of declining U.S. soybean exports to China.

Joseph Glauber, former chief economist at the Department of Agriculture between 2008 and 2014, said global competitors to U.S. soybean farmers gained from the trade war. The U.S. is not as dominant in the global soybean export market as it used to be, Glauber added.

The Iran war further drove up costs for farmers

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 27 of 60

After the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran on Feb. 28, a severe slowdown in shipping traffic through the Strait of Hormuz sent the price of oil soaring. The shipping disruption also largely stopped the export of nitrogen fertilizers manufactured in the Persian Gulf and limited access to key fertilizer ingredients. The price of urea, the most widely traded nitrogen fertilizer, skyrocketed.

Soybeans don't require nitrogen fertilizer, but it's vital for corn and most soybean farmers also grow corn. About half the global supply of urea comes from the Middle East, and Qatar and Saudi Arabia are two of the top sources of U.S. fertilizer imports, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation.

The U.S. and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire last week that included reopening the strait of Hormuz, but traffic remained slowed amid disagreements over Israeli attacks in Lebanon, and the price of urea remains elevated.

Many Midwest farmers bought their fertilizer well in advance of the spring planting season. But some farmers who didn't buy early face elevated prices.

The war also caused gasoline and diesel prices to surge, causing further headaches for farmers. Oil prices dropped following the ceasefire announcement, but the war and the closure of the strait will have lasting impacts on farmers, said Seth Goldstein, a senior equity analyst at Morningstar, an investment research company. Facilities in the Middle East that are critical for exporting chemicals, oil and other commodities were damaged or destroyed during the war and it will take time for supply chains to recover, he said.

Global shares gain and oil falls on hopes of renewed US-Iran talks

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — World shares were trading higher, tracking Wall Street gains, and oil fell on Tuesday as expectations rose over a possible second round of talks between the U.S. and Iran on an end to the Iran war.

In early European trading, Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.1% to 10,591.45. France's CAC 40 gained 0.6% to 8,285.37, while Germany's DAX was up 1% to 23,980.13.

Asian stocks ended higher Tuesday. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 was up 2.4% to 57,877.39. South Korea's Kospi jumped 2.7% to 5,967.75 after briefly topping 6,000 intraday.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.8% to 25,872.32, while the Shanghai Composite index climbed 1% to 4,026.63. China on Tuesday reported worse-than-expected export growth of 2.5% in March for the first month since the Iran war began, although some analysts believe Chinese exports of goods related to AI and renewable energy will continue to support overall export momentum for the year.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 gained 0.5%, and Taiwan's Taiex rose 2.4%.

Investors are still hopeful for a lasting de-escalation of the Iran war, which is in its seventh week, as the U.S. and Iran are said to be weighing a second round of talks before a temporary ceasefire agreement expires next week. The U.S. military on Monday began a blockade of Iranian ports as Washington steps up its pressure on Tehran, following ceasefire talks between the two sides over the weekend that ended without an agreement.

But U.S. President Donald Trump also suggested on Monday that the United States is still willing to engage with Tehran. "I can tell you that we've been called by the other side," he said, without further elaborating details.

Oil prices continued to pull back on Tuesday from earlier gains. Brent crude, the international standard, was down 0.4% to \$98.93 per barrel. It reached nearly \$104 early Monday morning over Iran war worries on limited progress from the weekend ceasefire talks.

Benchmark U.S. crude fell 2% to \$97.09 a barrel.

The global energy shock stemming from maritime traffic disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, where roughly a fifth of the world's oil is typically transported, has led to surging fuel prices and is threatening to push up inflation in many countries and impact economic growth.

Wall Street rose on Monday. The S&P 500 gained 1% to 6,886.24. The Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 0.6% to 48,218.25, and the Nasdaq composite added 1.2% to 23,183.74.

Shares of investment bank Goldman Sachs dropped 1.9% despite its announcement of better-than-expected quarterly profits.

In other dealings, gold and silver prices rose on Tuesday. Gold's price was up 0.8% to \$4,806.20 an ounce, while silver prices gained 2.9% to \$77.82 per ounce.

The U.S. dollar fell to 158.86 Japanese yen from 159.45 yen. The euro was trading at \$1.1793, up from \$1.1759.

Efforts underway for second round of US-Iran talks as ships reported transiting Strait of Hormuz

By MUNIR AHMED and SAM METZ Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The standoff between the United States and Iran deepened Tuesday as the U.S. declared it had blockaded Iran's ports, Tehran threatened to strike targets across the region, and Pakistan said it was racing to bring the sides together for more talks.

Though last week's ceasefire appeared to hold, the showdown over the Strait of Hormuz risked reigniting hostilities and deepening the region-wide war's economic fallout.

Talks aimed at permanently ending the conflict — which began Feb. 28 with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran — failed to produce an agreement last weekend, though Pakistan has proposed hosting a second round in the coming days.

Two Pakistani officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss the matter with the media, said that the first talks were part of an ongoing diplomatic process rather than a one-off effort.

Two U.S. officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomatic negotiations, said on Monday that discussions were still underway about a new round of talks. They said that the venue, timing and composition of the delegations hadn't been decided, but that talks could happen Thursday.

The war, now in its seventh week, has jolted markets and rattled the global economy as a great deal of shipping has been cut off and airstrikes have torn through military and civilian infrastructure across the region.

The fighting has killed at least 3,000 people in Iran, more than 2,000 in Lebanon, 23 in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Thirteen U.S. service members have also been killed.

Tanker reported rounding the corner

The blockade is intended to pressure Iran, which has exported millions of barrels of oil, mostly to Asia, since the war began. Much of it has likely been carried by so-called dark transits that evade sanctions and oversight, providing cash flow that's been vital to keeping Iran running.

Both the nature of enforcement and the extent to which ships will comply remained unclear during its first full day in effect on Tuesday. Tankers approaching the strait on Monday turned around shortly after it took effect, though one turned around and transited the waterway early Tuesday.

The tanker Rich Starry had been waiting off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, according to shipping data firm Lloyd's List, which cited data from the energy cargo-tracking firm Vortexa. It wasn't immediately clear whether the Rich Starry had earlier docked in Iran. Yet it is listed by the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control as linked to Iranian shipping.

Lloyd's List, citing ship registry and tracking data, reported that it's owned by a Chinese shipping company and ultimately bound for China.

U.S. Central Command didn't immediately respond to questions about the vessel after it cleared the 21-mile-wide (nearly 34-kilometer) waterway. A day earlier, it said that the blockade applied to vessels going to and from Iranian ports.

Since the start of the war, Iran has curtailed maritime traffic, with most commercial vessels avoiding the waterway.

Iran's effective closure of the strait, through which a fifth of global oil transits in peacetime, has sent oil prices skyrocketing, pushing up the cost of gasoline, food and other basic goods far beyond the Middle East.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 29 of 60

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday said that Iran's control of the strait amounted to blackmail and extortion as the U.S. blockade took effect. He said in a social media post that Iran's navy had been "completely obliterated," but still had "fast attack ships."

He warned that "if any of these ships come anywhere close to our BLOCKADE, they will be immediately ELIMINATED."

Iran threatened to retaliate against Persian Gulf ports if attacked.

"If you fight, we will fight," Iran's parliamentary speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, said in a statement addressed to Trump.

Israel and Lebanon scheduled for talks

Meanwhile, direct talks between Israel and Lebanon were set to begin in Washington on Tuesday, the first such negotiations in decades.

Israel has pressed ahead with its air and ground campaign since last week's ceasefire in Iran, insisting that it doesn't apply to fighting in Lebanon. It has, however, halted strikes in the country's capital since April 8, after a deadly bombardment that hit several crowded commercial and residential areas in central Beirut. It sparked an international outcry and threats by Iran that it would end the ceasefire.

After more than a year of near-daily strikes in southern Lebanon, Israel escalated its offensive in the early days of the war following Hezbollah launching rockets into Israel. The fighting has carved a path of destruction from agricultural towns near the border to Beirut, killing more than 2,000 people and displacing in excess of 1 million others, according to Lebanese authorities.

The talks are expected to be preliminary, focused on setting parameters rather than resolving core issues. Lebanese officials have pushed for a ceasefire, while Israel has framed the negotiations around Hezbollah's disarmament and a potential peace deal, without publicly committing to halting hostilities or withdrawing its forces.

Israel wants Lebanon's government to assume responsibility for disarming Hezbollah, much like was envisaged in a November 2024 ceasefire. But the militant group has survived efforts to curb its strength for decades and said on Monday that it won't abide by any agreements that may result from the talks.

Pope Leo XIV in Algeria to walk in footsteps of his spiritual father, St. Augustine

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ANNABA, Algeria (AP) — Pope Leo XIV is following in the footsteps of his spiritual father, St. Augustine, making a pilgrimage to the archaeological ruins of eastern Algeria where the fifth-century titan of early Christianity lived, died and wrote some of the most important works in Western thought.

Leo's visit to Annaba, the modern-day Hippo, is a spiritual homecoming for the American pope on his second full day in Algeria. He arrived Monday on the first-ever papal visit, against the backdrop of the war in Iran and his calls for peace that have sparked a feud with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Leo proclaimed himself a "son of St. Augustine" on the night of his election and has cited Augustine prolifically in his first year, making clear that he's the guiding inspiration of Leo's pontificate. For this trip, where he's aiming to press a message of peace and Christian-Muslim coexistence, he's focusing on Augustine as a bridge-builder.

But the visit is also drawing attention to the North African origins of Augustine, who only spent five years in Italy but is often considered through a Eurocentric lens as one of the greatest Western thinkers of Christianity for his writings on truth, evil, creation and grace.

Leo's Augustinian religious order was founded in Italy in the 13th century, inspired by the saint.

A life in North Africa, looking to Rome

St. Augustine was born in 354 to a Berber mother and Roman father in Thagaste, today the Algerian city of Souk Ahras near the border with Tunisia. At the time, the swath of North Africa was part of the Roman Empire, including Carthage in today's Tunisia, where Augustine was educated and taught rhetoric.

He left North Africa for Rome in 383 and then Milan, where he converted to Christianity. He returned to

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 30 of 60

his homeland soon thereafter, founded a monastery at Hippo, became a bishop and there wrote some of the most important works in the Western canon, including "Confessions" and "The City of God."

A new book, "Augustine the African," by Catherine Conybeare, an Augustine scholar at Bryn Mawr college in Pennsylvania, explores Augustine from his perspective: As a North African, looking to Rome as the center of his universe but feeling insecure there about his Punic-accented Latin.

"One of the most important thinkers in the Western intellectual tradition actually came from Africa, spent almost his whole life in Africa," Conybeare told The Associated Press. "How does that change things?"

"Of course, because his successors — the people who carried on his heritage — were in Europe, they got to tell the story," she said. And Europe got his body: After dying in Hippo, Augustine's body was taken eventually to Pavia, Italy, though a forearm remains in the basilica in Annaba.

In welcoming Leo on the first-ever papal visit to Algeria, President Abdelmadjid Tebboune expressed the "immense pride" Algerians feel over St. Augustine. He called him "a cherished son of this land, which having been his first cradle, proudly became his initial resting place."

A personal visit for Leo

Leo made clear en route to Algeria and even in his remarks to Algerian authorities how deeply personal and important this visit is to him, because of his spiritual connection to St. Augustine. He had visited twice before, while he was superior of the Augustinian order.

"This journey, which is very special for several reasons, was supposed to be the first of my pontificate," Leo told reporters on the papal plane. "As early as last May, I had said that on my first journey, I would like to visit Africa. Several people immediately suggested Algeria because of St. Augustine."

In the end, other trips intervened, but he kept the appointment.

The saint, he said, represents "a very important bridge in interreligious dialogue" that the world could use.

"We must always seek bridges to build peace and reconciliation," he said. "This journey, then, truly represents a valuable opportunity to continue with the same voice, with the same message, that we wish to convey: to promote peace, reconciliation, respect and consideration for all peoples."

While in Annaba, Leo will visit the archaeological ruins of the ancient Roman city of Hippo, including its theater, market and thermal baths. The Vatican said that the site includes the ruins of the basilica where Augustine preached and the adjoining baptistry.

Leo will also visit an order of nuns and the small community of Augustinians in Annaba. He was finishing the day by celebrating Mass at the Basilica of St. Augustine, built in the late 1800s, which contains the relic of the saint. Thousands of pilgrims visit the basilica each year, including Muslims.

Lebanon and Israel to hold first direct diplomatic talks in decades in Washington

By KAREEM CHEHAYEB and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Lebanon and Israel are set to hold the first direct diplomatic talks in decades on Tuesday in Washington following more than a month of war between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group that has rocked the tiny Mediterranean country.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio will take part in the talks in Washington with Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Yechiel Leiter and Lebanese Ambassador to the U.S. Nada Hamadeh Moawad.

At least 2,089 people have been killed in Israeli strikes in Lebanon, the Health Ministry said, among them 252 women, 166 children and 88 medical workers, while 6,762 others were wounded. More than 1 million people are displaced.

The Lebanese government hopes the talks will pave the way to an end to the war. While Iran has set ending the wars in Lebanon and the region as a condition for talks with the United States, Lebanon insists on representing itself.

Hezbollah and critics are skeptical and believe Lebanon's government in Beirut has no leverage and should take advantage of the position of Iran, the group's key ally and patron.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 31 of 60

The Israeli military continues an invasion into southern Lebanon, which some Israeli officials have said aims to create a depopulated "security zone" from the border to the Litani River, some 30 kilometers (20 miles). Iran-backed Hezbollah, though weakened in its last war with Israel that ended in November 2024, still fires drones, rockets and artillery daily into northern Israel and on ground troops inside Lebanon.

The Israeli and Lebanese governments are meeting to discuss ways to ensure long-term security on Israel's northern border and support for Lebanon seeking to take control of its territory and political future from Iran-backed Hezbollah, a U.S. State Department official said.

They will be the first talks between the two since 1993, according to the official, who was not authorized to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Lebanon's top political authorities, critical of Hezbollah's decision to fire rockets towards Israel on March 2 in solidarity with Iran, quickly proposed direct talks in a bid to stop the escalation, hoping that Israel would not launch its ground invasion.

Israel did not respond positively until last week, after it launched 100 strikes across the country, including in the heart of the Lebanese capital.

Beirut wants a truce as a prerequisite to talks, similar to Pakistan-brokered negotiations between the U.S. and Iran.

"Israel's destruction of Lebanese territories is not the solution, nor will it yield any results," said President Joseph Aoun Monday, who came to power vowing to disarm non-state groups including Hezbollah. "Diplomatic solutions have consistently proven to be the most effective means of resolving armed conflicts globally."

Israel has ruled out a ceasefire.

"We will not discuss a ceasefire with Hezbollah, which continues to carry out indiscriminate attacks against Israel and our civilians," Shosh Bedrosian, a spokeswoman for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said Monday.

Hezbollah and its supporters have been critical, calling it a free concession to Israel.

Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Kassem delivered a fiery speech calling on Lebanon to cancel the talks. Hezbollah wants a return to the 2024 agreement under which talks were conducted indirectly with the U.S., France and the United Nations peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon as mediators.

A gunman opens fire at a high school in Turkey, wounding at least 16 before killing himself

ANKARA, Turkey (AP) — A former student opened fire at a high school in southeast Turkey on Tuesday, wounding at least 16 people before killing himself, an official said.

The 18-year-old attacker, armed with a shotgun, fired randomly at a vocational high school in Siverek, Sanliurfa province, before hiding inside the building. He later killed himself with the same shotgun, Gov. Hasan Sildak said.

The attack left 10 students, four teachers, a canteen employee and a police officer wounded, Sildak said. While most of them were being treated in Siverek, five of the wounded teachers and students were transferred to a hospital in the provincial capital because their conditions were more serious, the governor said.

The motive for the attack remains unclear. School shootings are rare in Turkey.

Earlier, media reports said all students were evacuated and police special operations units were deployed after the assailant refused to surrender.

"The individual was cornered inside the building through police intervention and died after shooting himself," Sildak told reporters, adding that a "comprehensive" investigation into the shooting would be carried out.

Video footage showed dozens of students running out of the school toward the gate and onto the street.

Afghanistan's capital is in the grip of a water crisis

By ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The woman was furious. Standing in the muddy lane sloping up the hill in one of the Afghan capital's poorer neighborhoods, she pulled her headscarf aside to reveal thick grey-white hair.

"You see this hair? Even I with my white hair, I have to carry water," said Marofa, 52, a resident of Kabul's Deh Mazang neighborhood who, like many Afghans, goes by one name. "These containers are heavy. We have no strength left in our backs, no strength left in our legs."

A mosque down the hill has its own well that provides free water, but it is undrinkable — yellow and brackish — and has to be carried. Potable water is trucked into the neighborhood on three-wheeled motorcycles and sold. For many, the price is too steep.

"We have no money for food. How can we get water?" said Wali Mohammad, 90, another local resident who didn't hide his rage.

Both said that a few months after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in 2021, the new authorities cut pipes some residents had laid to siphon water from a communal well to their homes.

"They cut off our water. They are powerful and they don't even give us a reason why," Mohammad said.

But another resident, 32-year-old Najibullah Rahimi, said the pipes to people's homes made the well's water level drop, leaving those living higher up the hill with no water at all. "So the government came and cut the pipes."

Kabul's dwindling water resources

Nestled in a high-altitude valley of the Hindu Kush mountains, Kabul is rapidly running out of water. Its population relies mostly on groundwater extracted from wells. But the groundwater has been receding at an alarming rate, and some wells have to be dug as deep as 150 meters (nearly 500 feet) to reach it.

An April 2025 report by the aid group Mercy Corps said the level of Kabul's aquifers had plunged by 25-30 meters (about 80-100 feet) over the past decade. Aquifers hold massive amounts of water deep under land surfaces. Water in them collects slowly over years as precipitation seeps in. Too much extraction from aquifers, or changes to the climate bringing less water, leads to depletion.

"Without large-scale changes to Kabul's water management dynamics, the city faces an unprecedented humanitarian disaster within the coming decade, and likely much sooner," it said.

Climate change, mostly caused by the burning of gasoline, oil and coal, has played its part. Repeated droughts have reduced snowfall, whose gradual melting can replenish groundwater. Instead, Kabul sees more sudden, heavy rainfall that leads to flooding but not enough of it reaches the aquifer.

A long developing crisis

The changing climate has only compounded what has long been a growing crisis, said Najibullah Sadid, a Germany-based water resources and environment expert with the Afghanistan Water and Environment Professionals Network.

"Even without climate change Kabul would have seen this crisis, with the enormous, unprecedented increase in population and urbanization," Sadid said.

The city has more than doubled in size over the past two decades. Kabul saw a major influx of Afghans returning from neighboring countries after the fall of the Taliban in 2001. It is seeing another now, since Pakistan and Iran began expelling Afghans in 2023. From a population of around 2.5 million in 2001, Kabul now holds an estimated 6 million people.

In some parts, shallow aquifers have already run dry, Sadid said. And recent rains have little effect as Kabul is now so built up there is little unpaved, natural ground where water can penetrate.

"Even if it is raining every day, it will not impact groundwater levels anymore, because there is no place to impact the groundwater," Sadid explained.

Mismanagement of water resources has compounded the problem, he said, singling out beverage companies and greenhouses that use large amounts of groundwater.

Water management efforts

Authorities are acutely aware of the problem.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 33 of 60

"The water situation in Kabul city is in a critical state," said Ministry of Water and Energy spokesman Qari Matiullah Abid. "The main reasons are that the population has increased significantly, rainfall has decreased and consumption has increased."

He said the government is taking action. It imposed restrictions on groundwater extraction by beverage companies, farmers and other commercial users. Water meters have been installed and quotas imposed on businesses such as car washes and large buildings, and those exceeding their limit are told to move out of Kabul.

To help replenish groundwater, check dams – small, temporary structures across waterways – have been constructed in Kabul's 14 districts, and thousands of absorption wells that help manage stormwater have been dug, Abid said.

He also pointed to the completion of Kabul's Shah wa Arous Dam, inaugurated in 2024 and designed to hold 10 million cubic meters (353 million cubic feet) of water, and the removal of millions of tons of sediment from the Qargha Dam, increasing the reservoir's capacity.

But those are not enough.

Potential solutions are still out of reach

Two major projects which could significantly alleviate the crisis have been delayed.

One is a roughly 200-kilometer (124-mile) pipeline from the Panjshir River north of Kabul, and the other is a planned dam and reservoir known as the Shah Toot Dam about 30 kilometers (18 miles) southwest of the city. Together, they could provide water for around 4 million people, according to the Mercy Corps report.

"A combination of both would be a sustainable solution for the future," said Sadid. Although constructing the dam would take several years, the pipeline could be completed relatively fast, he said.

Shafiullah Zahid, Kabul Zone Director in Afghanistan's Urban Water Supply and Sewage state corporation, said the Panjshir pipeline's roughly \$130 million budget has been approved. The original survey, completed under the previous government, "has been completely revised, and now another review is needed," he said. Once that is completed, "practical work can begin."

The Shah Toot Dam, announced months before the Taliban takeover, was to have been a joint Afghan-Indian project. It too has run into funding delays. If construction begins, it would take six to seven years to complete, Zahid said.

But Sadid said Afghanistan's governments, both current and previous, prioritized other infrastructure over critical water projects.

"Numerous roads are being built, flyovers are being built with a lot of money. But there is no priority for water projects," he said. "They are just doing the projects which are eye-catching and not the projects which are fundamental to the people's health and people's fundamental rights. Water is essential. Water is more important than roads."

Aviation safety bill based on deadly midair collision near Washington faces a House vote

By JOSH FUNK AP Transportation Writer

An aviation safety bill seeking to address lessons learned from last year's midair collision of a jet with an Army helicopter near the nation's capital is up for a vote Tuesday evening in the House, but key senators and the families of the 67 victims think the bill needs to be strengthened.

The House bill, called the Alert Act, has the backing of key industry groups. The National Transportation Safety Board said recently that the legislation, since amended, now addresses its recommendation to require all aircraft flying around busy airports to have key locator systems that let pilots know more precisely where other aircraft are flying around them.

The NTSB has been recommending the new technology systems since 2008, and Chairwoman Jennifer Homendy has said such a system would have prevented the collision of the American Airlines jet and Army Black Hawk helicopter that plunged into the icy Potomac River on Jan. 29, 2025.

Two key House committees unanimously advanced the bill last month. The bill is now being brought up

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 34 of 60

for a full House vote under rules that won't allow any amendments. But victims' families said they want to make sure the bill has strict timelines to guarantee the reforms will be completed.

Sponsored by Republican Sam Graves and Democrat Rick Larens, the legislation needs to secure two thirds of House support to advance to the Senate. Separate legislation called the ROTOR Act that the Senate crafted came up one vote short in the House. Senators Ted Cruz and Maria Cantwell have also said the Alert Act still needs to be improved.

Earlier this year, the NTSB's Homendy sharply criticized the original version of the bill as a "watered down" measure that wouldn't do enough to prevent future tragedies. But the board said the revised version would now address the shortcomings their investigation identified and require the Federal Aviation Administration, Transportation Department and the military to take needed actions.

National Transportation Safety Board members at a hearing in late January were deeply troubled over years of ignored warnings about helicopter traffic dangers and other problems, long before the collision.

Everyone aboard the American Airlines jet, flying from Wichita, Kansas, and the helicopter died when the two aircraft collided. It was the deadliest plane crash on U.S. soil since 2001, and the victims included 28 members of the figure skating community.

A helicopter route in the approach path of a Reagan National Airport runway didn't ensure enough separation between helicopters and planes landing on the airport's secondary runway, and the route wasn't reviewed regularly, the board said. The poor design of that route was a key factor in the crash along with air traffic controllers relying too much on pilots seeing and avoiding other aircraft.

The bill now requires planes to have Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast In systems that can receive data about the locations of other aircraft. Proponents of the use of such systems said they would have alerted the pilots of an American Airlines jet sooner about the impending collision with the Black Hawk helicopter. Most planes already have the complementary ADS-B Out systems that broadcast their locations.

The NTSB cited systemic weaknesses and years of ignored warnings as the main causes of the crash, but Homendy has said that if both the plane and the Black Hawk had been equipped with ADS-B In and the systems had been turned on, the collision would have been prevented. The Army's policy at the time of the crash mandated that its helicopters fly without that system on to conceal their locations, although the helicopter involved in this crash was on a training flight, not a sensitive mission.

The Trump and Leo chronicles: A president and a pope square off over Iran and its aftermath

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

Pope Leo XIV, a studious and soft-spoken cleric, and Donald Trump, an unapologetically bellicose and pugilistic politician, have long been on a rhetorical collision course. Now their disagreement over the war in Iran has escalated in spectacular fashion, and their comments show how differently each see the conflict and its impact.

On social media, Trump said Leo was "Weak" and captive to the "Radical Left," even suggesting that Leo somehow owed his position to Trump. The pope has declared Trump's threats toward Iran "truly unacceptable" and pointed his flock to Biblical text and church doctrine on war and peace, explaining that his purpose is not about Trump at all.

"I'm not afraid of the Trump administration," Leo said Monday on the way to Africa, "or of speaking out loudly about the message of the Gospel, which is what the Church works for."

It's an unusual spectacle involving the world's two biggest megaphones, both held by Americans for the first time. Here is how they got to this point.

Before the papacy, Robert Prevost did not mince words

WHAT HE SAID: When Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, the future pope was a bishop in Peru. He did not shy away from assigning clear blame to Moscow. On a Peruvian show "Weekly Expression," Prevost described an "imperialist invasion in which Russia wants to conquer territory for reasons of power given

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 35 of 60

Ukraine's strategic location."

The clip resurfaced in Italian media soon after he was elected pope on May 8, 2025.

In early 2025, then-Cardinal Prevost used social media to share a news analyses that criticized U.S. Vice President JD Vance, a converted Catholic, for justifying harsh immigration policy by arguing that Christianity sets a pecking order of caring for others, putting one's family, immediate community and fellow citizens above foreigners.

"JD Vance is wrong: Jesus doesn't ask us to rank our love for others," read the headline that the future pope shared.

CONTEXT AND WHY IT MATTERS: Catholic bishops comment often in their local media, and some achieve considerable influence. But they vary widely in how detailed they are about public policy and politics. Many stick to broad statements about church doctrine and values and avoid taking stands at odds with individual politicians. With his comments in Peru and then his rare retweet as a cardinal in Rome, Prevost showed he kept abreast of world affairs and was willing to be quite direct in his critiques.

Trump celebrated the 'Great Honor' of Pope Leo's election

WHAT HE SAID: "Congratulations to Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, who was just named Pope," Trump posted on Truth Social on May 8, 2025. "It is such an honor to realize that he is the first American Pope. What excitement, and what a Great Honor for our Country. I look forward to meeting Pope Leo XIV. It will be a very meaningful moment!"

Trump later said at the White House that "we were a little bit surprised and very happy" with Leo's election.

By Monday, he was using Truth Social to take credit for Leo's election: "He wasn't on any list to be Pope, and was only put there by the Church because he was an American, and they thought that would be the best way to deal with President Donald J. Trump."

WHY IT MATTERS: Trump sees Leo in terms of nationalistic pride and loyalty. The immediate look toward meeting Leo (something that still hasn't happened) reflected his typical embrace of power and celebrity, even when it isn't a natural political fit. Further, Trump's takes do not reflect any nuance about Leo's origins or the Vatican's relationship with the U.S.

The College of Cardinals historically has viewed the U.S. with some skepticism — specifically because of how Washington's military and economic policy have affected the world, especially poor nations, and with a general reluctance to grant the papacy to someone from the world's preeminent superpower.

Leo grew up, was educated and then ordained in the States but spent decades as a church leader elsewhere, including in poor areas of South America. "He was the least American of the Americans," said Steven Millies, a professor at Chicago's Catholic Theological Union, where a young Leo earned his master of divinity.

From the start, Pope Leo reflected church teachings on war and peace

WHAT HE SAID: "Peace with you all ... the first greeting of the risen Christ, the Good Shepherd who gave his life for the flock of God."

Those were Leo's first words from the balcony of St. Peter's. When he returned to the loggia for his first Sunday blessing, he addressed the Russian war on Ukraine and violence between Israel and Gaza, decrying a "third world war in pieces." The following Monday, Leo opened an audience with journalists by quoting Jesus. "In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proclaimed: 'Blessed are the peacemakers,'" the pontiff said.

WHY IT MATTERS: Leo's earliest statements all emphasized "peace" as a central message of Jesus — and previewed a likely theme of his papacy. Adding mentions of Ukraine, Russia, Israel and Palestine affirmed his willingness to go beyond theory and apply doctrine to what's happening to people around the world.

The pope was careful about any US branding

WHAT HE SAID: Just as important as the words of his opening papal statements on peace were the languages the polyglot Leo used: None of them were English.

At his introduction to the world from St. Peter's Square, Leo opened in Italian and then used Spanish to address Peruvian Catholics and citizens where he'd served. Leo's Sunday blessing was in Italian. He briefly greeted the journalist assembly in English, with the obvious inflection of a Chicago native, but then quickly transitioned to Italian for his remarks. Even in recent encounters with reporters, Leo has opened

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 36 of 60

in Italian before then answering in English.

WHY IT MATTERS: Latin and Italian are the official languages of the Vatican so it's no surprise that Leo speaks the local vernacular. But it's a conscious choice for the polyglot Leo to use his fluent Italian and Spanish. It underscores that he's the leader of a global institution with 1.4 billion followers.

"He doesn't want to be perceived, I think, as coming from the American side or as relying on his authority as American," said Catholic University professor William Barbieri. "He wants to speak in the name of the church."

Holy Week and Easter revealed a chasm

WHAT THEY SAID: Trump escalated threats to Iran around Easter, when Christians celebrate the story of Jesus' resurrection. Leo used his Palm Sunday message to call Jesus the "King of Peace" and say God "does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, but rejects them, saying: 'Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen: your hands are full of blood.'"

Trump welcomed conservative religious leaders to the White House for a Holy Week observance. His spiritual adviser Paula White compared the president to Jesus, saying they're both persecuted figures who endured.

In Rome, Leo washed the feet of others, as the story of the Last Supper records Jesus doing for his disciples. Speaking to reporters, Leo named Trump directly for the first time and said he hoped the president would seek an "off-ramp" in Iran. On Easter, Trump threatened widespread bombing of Iran's civilian infrastructure and eradication of a "whole civilization." Leo called that threat "truly unacceptable."

WHY IT MATTERS: Their starkly different viewpoints and personalities, combined with the gravity of the Iran war, finally stripped away any pretense or possibility that Trump and Leo could avoid engaging directly.

Trump is still treating Pope Leo as a domestic political rival

WHAT THEY SAID: In Trump's post Sunday blasting Leo as "weak," among other things, the president said, "I don't want a Pope who criticizes the President of the United States because I'm doing exactly what I was elected, IN A LANDSLIDE, to do." He added that Leo should "focus on being a Great Pope, not a Politician."

Leo, meanwhile, said again that he's not speaking as a politician.

"To put my message on the same plane as what the president has attempted to do here, I think is not understanding what the message of the Gospel is," Leo told The Associated Press aboard the papal flight to Algeria. "And I'm sorry to hear that but I will continue on what I believe is the mission of the church in the world today."

WHY IT MATTERS: It's all a rare exercise for the papacy, whose occupants often comment on global affairs without specifically naming secular politicians. And while Trump routinely lashes out at anyone he perceives as an enemy, these dynamics are uncommon for the president, too: This time, Trump is picking a fight with someone who does not accept the president's terms and faces no measurable political pressure to do so.

Race for California governor moves on after dramatic downfall of Rep. Eric Swalwell

By MICHAEL R. BLOOD AP Political Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — After the dramatic downfall of Democratic U.S. Rep. Eric Swalwell, the race for California governor is moving on.

Once a leading candidate to replace outgoing Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom, Swalwell suspended his campaign — then announced he would resign from Congress — following allegations that he sexually assaulted a woman. A lengthy lineup of remaining candidates is scheduled to gather Tuesday in Sacramento, their first public appearance together since Swalwell's departure reshaped the wide-open contest.

Meanwhile, lawyers said a woman would detail new allegations of misconduct against Swalwell on Tuesday in Beverly Hills.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 37 of 60

In a crowded race with no clear leader in the heavily Democratic state, Swalwell's exit presents an opportunity for his one-time rivals to pick off former supporters just weeks before mail ballots go to voters in early May. The outcome of the June 2 primary election featuring more than 50 candidates is unpredictable.

Democrats have feared for months that the large field of candidates dividing the vote could result in the party being locked out of the November election, with only Republicans appearing on the general election ballot under a quirk in the state's election rules.

Republicans, meanwhile, have yet to settle on a preferred candidate. President Donald Trump endorsed conservative commentator Steve Hilton, but Republicans at a state convention did not endorse a candidate for governor, with Hilton splitting support with Chad Bianco, the Riverside County sheriff.

No clear beneficiary with Swalwell out

Swalwell's decision to suspend his campaign Sunday followed allegations published in the San Francisco Chronicle and later by CNN. He remained defiant, saying, "I will fight the serious, false allegations that have been made — but that's my fight, not a campaign's."

On Monday, he said he planned to resign from Congress but did not provide a date for his departure. He wrote on X that it was unfair for his constituents to have him distracted from his duties. He said he would continue to fight the allegations against him and added, "I must take responsibility and ownership for the mistakes I did make."

It's difficult to predict where Swalwell's supporters will go, and it's possible they could scatter across the field of seven established Democrats remaining in the race, with some voters losing interest in the contest.

Swalwell is perhaps best known nationally as a House manager in Trump's second impeachment trial in early 2021, and he didn't have strong ties to Democrats across the state outside his San Francisco Bay Area district.

Democrats have been struggling to find traction with voters.

Billionaire hedge fund manager-turned-liberal activist Tom Steyer has tapped his personal fortune to blanket media with ads. Former Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa is trying for a comeback after he flopped in a 2018 run for governor, and Katie Porter is among the leading Democrats after she fell short in a 2024 run for U.S. Senate.

Porter posted a line from a San Francisco Chronicle column on X saying "Democrats can pull victory from the jaws of defeat by coalescing around Porter." Steyer said he secured the support of a handful of lawmakers, including Rep. Jared Huffman, a Democrat whose coastal district runs north of San Francisco, not far from Swalwell's home turf. Villaraigosa pitched a new ad promising to lower gas and grocery costs in a state known for its punishing cost of living.

While Swalwell has suspended his campaign, his name cannot be removed from the ballot.

"Nobody has really caught fire," said Democratic consultant Andrew Acosta, who is not involved in the campaign. Swalwell's supporters "will scatter out to other candidates."

Many Democrats hoped former Vice President Kamala Harris, or U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla, would enter the contest, but they declined.

Lawmakers switch support

In Sacramento, a handful of state lawmakers quickly switched their support from Swalwell to Steyer. Democratic Assemblymember Nick Schultz said he believes Steyer will put in the work to form strong relationships with the legislature. Steyer's business background — he has never held public office — means he'll challenge the status quo, Schultz added.

Democratic Assemblymember Corey Jackson — who also shifted to Steyer — said he wanted to back a candidate who had a legitimate chance of winning. He said in a statement that he and Steyer shared a "commitment to building an economy rooted in dignity for working people."

San Jose's Democratic Mayor Matt Mahan, running for governor in his first statewide election, sought to distinguish his record from Steyer and Hilton, the Republican candidate known for hosting a show on Fox News for six years.

With Swalwell out, "now we have a field that's got a billionaire who made his fortune investing in private prisons, ICE facilities, oil and gas companies ... and a MAGA-backed TV commentator on the other hand,"

Mahan said on MS NOW's "Morning Joe."

"California deserves so much better," Mahan said.

Swalwell's swift downfall came amid rising pressure for him to leave Congress. He earlier lost the support of powerful labor unions that had backed his candidacy, along with one-time allies, including California U.S. Sen. Adam Schiff and Rep. Jimmy Gomez.

Pope starts Africa tour in Algeria and calls for peace against Iran war's backdrop

By NICOLE WINFIELD, AOMAR OUALI and PAOLO SANTALUCIA Associated Press

ALGIERS, Algeria (AP) — Pope Leo XIV called for peace and the end of "neocolonial tendencies" in world affairs on Monday during the first papal visit to Algeria, all while facing an extraordinary broadside by President Donald Trump over his criticism of the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran.

Leo's arrival in Algiers marks the start of an 11-day tour of four African nations — Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea — that will bring the first U.S.-born pope deep into the growing heart of the Catholic Church.

Leo is in Algeria to promote Christian-Muslim coexistence in the majority Muslim nation at a time of global conflict, and to honor the locally born inspiration of his religious spirituality, St. Augustine.

The trip began, however, against the backdrop of a growing feud between the Leo and Trump over the Iran war. Trump overnight said he didn't think Leo was doing a good job as pope and suggested he should "stop catering to the Radical Left."

Leo responded by saying his appeals for peace and reconciliation are rooted in the Gospel, and that he didn't fear the Trump administration.

'Neocolonial tendencies'

In his first remarks in Algiers, Leo tied his current appeal for peace to the country's struggle for independence from France, obtained in 1962. Hundreds of thousands of people died in the revolution during which French forces tortured detainees, disappeared suspects and devastated villages as part of a strategy to maintain a grip on power.

"God desires peace for every nation, a peace that is not merely an absence of conflict but one that is an expression of justice and dignity," Leo told a crowd of several thousand people at the monument to Algeria's martyrs.

At a later meeting with President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and other government authorities, Leo praised Algerians for their solidarity and respect for one another, which he said provided an important perspective today "on the global balance of power."

"Today, this is more urgent than ever in the face of continuous violations of international law and neocolonial tendencies," he said without elaborating, though he has previously spoken about Russia's war in Ukraine, the Iran war and Israel's invasion of southern Lebanon.

Great Mosque visit

Leo's visit dominated news headlines in Algeria, where a tiny Catholic community of around 9,000 people made up mostly of foreigners exists alongside the Sunni Muslim majority of about 47 million.

El Moudjahid, a state-run daily newspaper, declared that "the planet is staring at Algeria," while Arabic-language daily Echorouk wrote that "the land of peace and coexistence speaks to the world."

Leo visited the country's Great Mosque and stood silently with his hands clasped in front of him, as if in prayer. He thanked the mosque rector for receiving him in this "divine space, space of God" that is also a study center.

"Through this place of prayer, through the search for truth, including through study and through the ability to recognize the dignity of every human being, we know — and today's gathering is proof of this — that we can learn to respect one another, live in harmony, and build a world of peace," Leo said in Italian in a rare, off-the-cuff comment.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 39 of 60

Tebboune hailed the historic nature of Leo's visit and the pride Algerians felt over St. Augustine, "a cherished son of this land."

But others downplayed the significance of the visit.

"God's religion is Islam, which has illuminated this land for 14 centuries," said Lamia Sellimi, a literature teacher at a high school near the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa. "Algerians are deeply attached to their religion, which is one of the foundations of our identity. As such, this visit is merely a circumstantial event."

A violent past of martyrs

Algeria fought a civil war in the 1990s that is known locally as the "black decade," when around 250,000 people were killed as the army fought an Islamist insurgency. Among them were 19 Catholics, including seven Trappist monks from the Tibhirine monastery south of Algiers, who were kidnapped and killed in 1996 by Islamic fighters. Also among them were two nuns from Leo's Augustinian religious family.

All 19 were beatified in 2018 as martyrs for the faith in what was then the first such beatification ceremony in the Muslim world.

Leo paid homage to the 19 martyrs and visited the remaining Augustinian nuns who run a social services project out of the Algiers basilica that helps people of all faiths.

The Algiers archbishop likes to remind audiences that Leo was elected on May 8, the Catholic feast day of the 19 martyrs. Immediately after Leo's election, Vesco invited him to visit.

Leo has also made a mantra out of one of the sayings of the martyred prior of the Tibherine monastery, Christian de Chergé, who spoke of an "unarmed and disarming peace." Leo has cited the line starting from the night of his election.

Personal and pastoral visit

Leo's Augustinian religious order was inspired by the teachings of St. Augustine of Hippo, the fifth-century theological and philosophical titan of the early Christian church who was born in what is today Algeria and spent all but five years of his life there.

On Tuesday, Leo will visit Annaba, the modern-day Hippo where St. Augustine was bishop for three decades, and will literally walk in the footsteps of the saint.

From his first public words as pope, Leo proclaimed himself a "son of St. Augustine," and he has repeatedly cited the church father in speeches and homilies.

"I don't know if I have seen a statement, a homily, an apostolic letter or exhortation that doesn't reference Augustine," said Paul Camacho, associate director of the Augustinian Institute at Villanova University, Leo's Augustinian-run alma mater outside Philadelphia. "The shadow that he casts on Western thought, not just the Roman Catholic Church but on Western thought more broadly, is very, very long indeed."

Dallas Wings select Azzi Fudd of UConn No. 1 in WNBA draft with a \$500,000 payday waiting

By DOUG FEINBERG AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Azzi Fudd is on her way to Dallas as the No. 1 pick in the WNBA draft with a \$500,000 payday waiting for the former UConn star. A record-setting six UCLA players followed her into the league.

"I'm not really sure I have words to describe that feeling, what that meant," Fudd said of getting drafted. "I don't think it's fully sunk in. It's nothing I could have imagined. The feeling of sitting with my family, with Morgan (Valley), hearing your name called, go up there. Such a surreal feeling,"

Fudd will pair again with former Huskies teammate Paige Bueckers, who was the Wings' top pick last year. Bueckers — who along with Fudd gave UConn a record seven No. 1 selections — was in attendance at the draft along with Fudd's Huskies teammates.

"Paige is an incredible player, everyone knows that," Fudd said. "She's someone that makes playing basketball with easy."

UCLA stars Lauren Betts and Gabriela Jaquez went in the top five, a little over a week after leading the Bruins to their first NCAA championship.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 40 of 60

Their teammate, Kiki Rice, went sixth to Toronto, the first pick for the expansion franchise. The Tempo chose to have the higher pick in the college draft after winning a coin toss, giving the Portland Fire the top choice in the expansion draft earlier this month.

UCLA broke UConn's record of having four players drafted in the first round, a mark the Huskies set in 2002, when Angela Dugalic went ninth to Washington, teaming her again with Betts. And, Gianna Kneepkens was chosen by Connecticut with the last pick of the opening round.

The Bruins later broke the mark for the most players drafted from one team when Charlisse Leger-Walker was selected by Connecticut with the third pick in the second round. Tennessee (1997, 2008), Notre Dame (2019) and South Carolina (2023) held the previous record with five players taken.

The new collective bargaining agreement that was ratified last month gave huge pay raises to rookies. Fudd will make nearly seven-times what Bueckers earned last season as the top choice. The No. 2 and No. 3 picks will get \$466,913 and \$436,016, respectively.

Second- and third-round picks will make \$270,000 — which is more than the previous maximum salary in the old CBA.

"I'm just blessed and grateful to come at this time," said No. 8 pick Flau'jae Johnson, who was drafted by Golden State before getting traded to Seattle. "The 30th season. My goal is to leave it better than I found it. It's a gratitude thing, but also a responsibility thing. I'm taking that with full force."

Minnesota took Olivia Miles of TCU with the No. 2 pick. Miles decided to stay in college last season instead of enter the WNBA draft. She transferred from Notre Dame to the Horned Frogs. She helped the team reach the Elite Eight for the second consecutive year.

"Deep breath that's why I got emotional," Miles said of finishing her journey. "It's finally here, finally heard my name. This is what this was for."

After Seattle took Spain center Awa Fam Thiam at No. 3, Washington selected the 6-foot-7 Betts before the Chicago Sky followed with Jaquez, who is the sister of Miami Heat player Jaime Jaquez Jr. She now has family bragging rights not only with a national championship, but also was picked higher than him. Jaime was taken 18th in the NBA draft in 2023.

Portland took Spanish guard Iyana Martin Carrion with its first-ever pick. Indiana took South Carolina's Raven Johnson with the 10th pick and Washington drafted Cotie McMahon of Ole Miss next.

Connecticut took French player Nell Angloma with the 12th pick. A second Gamecock went next with Madina Okot drafted by Atlanta. Seattle drafted Duke's Taina Mair with the 14th choice.

The Sun closed out the first round choosing Kneepkens.

International flavor

There were 11 international players taken in the draft who didn't play at a U.S. college, including three in the first round with Fam Thiam, Martin Carrion and Angloma.

Fam Thiam was the highest selected player from Spain ever drafted in the league. Three Spanish players were taken in all.

"Incredibly excited for our country and the global game," said Marta Suarez, who was drafted by Seattle in the second round before getting traded to Golden State. "The WNBA is growing, attracting talent from all over the world."

WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert said in her pre-draft press conference that the league planned to play either an exhibition game or a regular-season game overseas next year.

Mother-daughter combo

Fudd and her mother, Katie Smrcka-Duffy Fudd, became the second mother-daughter pair to have been drafted into the WNBA. Smrcka-Duffy Fudd was taken in 2001 by the Sacramento Monarchs in the fourth round, but never played a game. Pam McGee was taken second overall in the 1997 draft, also by Sacramento. Her daughter, Imani McGee-Stafford, was drafted 10th overall by Chicago in 2016.

Trump says US military has blockaded Iranian ports to pressure Tehran

By SAMY MAGDY, JULIA FRANKEL and MIKE CORDER Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump said Monday the American military had begun a blockade of Iranian ports as part of his effort to force Tehran to open the Strait of Hormuz and accept a deal to end the war that has raged for more than six weeks.

Iran responded with threats on all ports in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, taking aim at U.S.-allied countries.

At least two tankers approaching the strait Monday turned around soon after the U.S. blockade began, vessel tracker MarineTraffic said in a post on X.

The U.K. Maritime Trade Operations agency said the blockade restricted “the entirety of the Iranian coastline, including ports and energy infrastructure.” Its notice to mariners said transit through the strait to or from non-Iranian places was not reported to be impeded though ships “may encounter military presence.”

The U.S. blockade and Iran’s threatened retaliation set up an extraordinary showdown that posed serious risks for the global economy and raised the specter that the ceasefire could collapse and the fighting could resume. Talks aimed at permanently ending the conflict — which began Feb. 28 with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran — failed to reach an agreement this past weekend.

Trump says the blockade has begun

“We can’t let a country blackmail or extort the world because that’s what they’re doing,” Trump said of Iran at the White House, where he announced the blockade had started.

He suggested the U.S. remains willing to engage with Iran.

“I can tell you that we’ve been called by the other side,” Trump said, adding that “they want to work a deal.”

Discussions between the U.S. and Iran about a second round of in-person negotiations are underway, two U.S. officials and a person familiar with the development said Monday. A diplomat from one of the mediating countries said Tehran and Washington have agreed to more talks.

All four spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive diplomatic negotiations.

Iran’s effective closure of the strait, through which a fifth of global oil transits in peacetime, has sent oil prices skyrocketing, pushing up the cost of gasoline, food and other basic goods far beyond the Middle East.

Before the U.S. blockade, Tehran had allowed some ships perceived as friendly to pass while charging considerable fees, leading to accusations it is holding the global economy hostage.

Some analysts are doubtful that the United States can restore normal shipping through force alone. And it’s not clear how the blockade will work or what the dangers might be to U.S. forces.

The question is essentially who can endure the most pain: Could a blockade make Iran’s economic situation untenable and force it to concede? Or will it drive global oil and other prices so high that Trump is forced to back down?

The blockade could have far-reaching effects

The U.S. military’s Central Command announced the blockade would be enforced “against vessels of all nations entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas” on the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman.

CENTCOM’s decision to allow ships traveling between non-Iranian ports to transit the strait was a step down from Trump’s earlier threat to blockade the waterway.

In a social media message, Trump said Iran’s navy had been “completely obliterated” but still had “fast attack ships.” Trump warned that “if any of these ships come anywhere close to our BLOCKADE, they will be immediately ELIMINATED.”

Iran issued threats of its own.

“Security in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman is either for everyone or for NO ONE,” the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting reported Monday. “An Iranian military statement said: “NO PORT in the region will be safe.”

The threats halted the limited ship traffic that resumed in the strait since the ceasefire, according to a

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 42 of 60

report from Lloyd's List Intelligence. Marine trackers say over 40 commercial ships have crossed since the start of the ceasefire last week, down from 100 or more vessel passages per day before the war.

The blockade is intended to pressure Iran, which has exported millions of barrels of oil since the war began, much of it likely carried by so-called dark transits that evade Western sanctions and oversight.

But the effects will be felt far beyond Iran. The price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, hovered Monday just under \$100 per barrel. It cost roughly \$70 per barrel before the war.

Iran says 'if you fight, we will fight'

Top-ranking Iranian officials threatened retaliation.

Ebrahim Rezaei, a spokesperson for the Iranian parliament's National Security Commission, dismissed U.S. the threat of a U.S. blockade as "more bluffing than reality."

"It will make the current situation (Trump) is in more complicated and makes the market — which he is angry about — more turbulent," he said in a post on X.

The Iranian parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, addressed Trump in a statement: "If you fight, we will fight."

Meanwhile, Iran's representative to the United Nations, Amir-Saeid Iravani, demanded compensation from five Middle Eastern countries — Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates — that Iran says violated international law by aiding the war effort against it, the Islamic Republic's state-run media reported.

Legal experts are watching

U.S. military officials have offered few details about how the blockade will actually work.

The U.S. Navy has 16 warships, including the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, in the Middle East, a defense official said. A second defense official said no American warships are in the Persian Gulf, which forms most of Iran's coastline. Both spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military operations.

Under international law, the blockade must be impartially enforced. Legal experts will also be watching to see if the U.S. allows humanitarian aid to reach Iran.

"How it is carried out will determine whether it is lawful or not," said Todd Huntley, a retired Navy captain and director of Georgetown University's national security law program.

Ceasefire holds after talks end without agreement

The blockade threat came after marathon U.S.-Iran ceasefire talks in Pakistan ended without an agreement on Saturday.

U.S. Vice President JD Vance said the talks stalled after Iran refused to accept American terms on refraining from developing a nuclear weapon. Vance told FOX News Channel's "Special Report" that some progress was made on nuclear issues, but he felt Iran's negotiators couldn't make a deal without approval from Tehran.

Iran has insisted its nuclear program is peaceful. However, it has pushed forward with steps that could give it the ability to build a nuclear weapon, including enriching uranium to near weapons-grade levels and developing long-range missiles potentially capable of delivering a bomb.

Iran's ambassador to India, Mohammad Fathali, said the main sticking points for Tehran were its nuclear program, war reparations and sanctions relief.

The ceasefire expires April 22. The fighting has killed at least 3,000 people in Iran, 2,089 in Lebanon, 23 in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Thirteen U.S. service members have been killed.

Rep. Eric Swalwell of California says he will resign after sexual misconduct allegations

By KEVIN FREKING, LISA MASCARO and JOEY CAPPELLETTI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Democratic Rep. Eric Swalwell of California announced Monday he will resign from Congress following sexual assault and misconduct allegations that prompted loud bipartisan calls for him to step down.

The decision caps a swift political fall for the seven-term lawmaker, who had been seen as one of the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 43 of 60

leading candidates in California's gubernatorial race before dropping out Sunday after the allegations surfaced, claims he has continued to deny.

The San Francisco Chronicle, followed by CNN, first reported allegations that Swalwell had sexually assaulted a woman twice, including when she worked for him. CNN also reported that three other women alleged various kinds of sexual misconduct by Swalwell — including sending them unsolicited explicit messages or nude photos.

"I am deeply sorry to my family, staff, and constituents for mistakes in judgment I've made in my past," Swalwell said on social media. "I will fight the serious false allegation made against me. However, I must take responsibility and ownership for the mistakes I did make."

The House Ethics Committee had begun an investigation into whether Swalwell engaged in sexual misconduct toward an employee working under his supervision, the panel announced Monday. Other lawmakers were pushing for a quick vote to expel him from Congress.

Another lawmaker, Republican Rep. Tony Gonzales of Texas, said Monday that he would file his "retirement from office" when Congress returns Tuesday. Gonzales, who had already said he would not seek reelection, gave no further details on his plans to step down.

Gonzales had acknowledged an affair with a staff member who later died by suicide and was also facing renewed calls for an expulsion vote in the wake of the allegations against Swalwell.

Several Democrats had quickly called on Swalwell to resign in the days after the allegations came to light, including prominent allies such as Arizona Sen. Ruben Gallego. California Sen. Adam Schiff, who withdrew his endorsement for Swalwell's gubernatorial bid, told reporters Monday that "the whole thing is just shocking and deeply upsetting."

"I think he made the right decision to resign," Schiff said.

Swalwell wrote in the statement posted to social media that he was "aware of efforts to bring an immediate expulsion vote" and that it was "wrong" without due process.

"But it's also wrong for my constituents to have me distracted from my duties. Therefore, I plan to resign my seat in Congress," Swalwell wrote. He did not provide a timeframe, saying only that he would work with his staff in the coming days to ensure their work can continue.

Swalwell, an Iowa native, was elected in 2012 and represents a House district east of San Francisco. He launched a presidential run in April 2019 but shuttered it a few months later after failing to catch on with voters.

Swalwell was one of Donald Trump's top Democratic antagonists in Congress, serving as a prominent member of the House Judiciary and Intelligence committees during the president's first term and as one of several Democratic prosecutors for Trump's second impeachment after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.

He was removed from the intel committee by then-House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in 2023 based on his contact with a suspected Chinese spy, Christine Fang.

Fang was reported to have come into contact with Swalwell's campaign as he was first running for Congress in 2012 and participated in fundraising for his 2014 campaign.

Federal investigators alerted Swalwell to their concerns and briefed Congress about Fang in 2015, at which point Swalwell says he cut off contact with her. He was not accused of wrongdoing and a House Ethics Committee investigation that was opened in 2021 closed two years later without any action.

Swalwell's planned departure from the House will trigger a special election in his district, which he won by over 30 percentage points in 2024. In California, the governor is responsible for calling a special election, which he must do "within 14 calendar days of the occurrence of the vacancy," according to state election law.

The future of the House Ethics probe is uncertain, as the panel often ends its investigations when lawmakers resign. The Ethics Committee said the mere fact that it is investigating the allegations against Swalwell, and publicly disclosing its review, does not itself indicate that any violation has occurred.

Man accused in Molotov cocktail attack of OpenAI CEO's home charged with attempted murder

By OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ, JUAN LOZANO and LEKAN OYEKANMI Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — The man accused of throwing a Molotov cocktail at OpenAI CEO Sam Altman's home had written about AI's purported risk to humanity and traveled from Texas to San Francisco intending to kill Altman, authorities said Monday.

Authorities allege 20-year-old Daniel Moreno-Gama threw the incendiary device about 4 a.m. Friday, setting an exterior gate at Altman's home alight before fleeing on foot, police said. Less than an hour later, Moreno-Gama allegedly went to OpenAI's headquarters about 3 miles (4.83 kilometers) away and threatened to burn down the building.

Moreno-Gama is opposed to artificial intelligence, writing about AI's purported risk to humanity and "our impending extinction," according to a federal criminal complaint.

"This was not spontaneous. This was planned, targeted and extremely serious," said FBI San Francisco Acting Special Agent in Charge Matt Cobo during a press conference.

No one was injured at Altman's home or the company offices, authorities said.

Moreno-Gama faces state and federal charges

Moreno-Gama faces charges including two counts of attempted murder and attempted arson in California state court, San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins. He tried to kill both Altman and a security guard at Altman's residence, she alleged. He is set to appear in court Tuesday, and online state court records do not yet show if he has an attorney.

Jenkins said the state charges carry penalties ranging from 19 years to life in prison.

On Monday morning, FBI agents went to Moreno-Gama's home in Spring, Texas, a suburb of Houston, where they spent several hours before leaving. He has been charged by federal prosecutors with possession of an unregistered firearm and damage and destruction of property by means of explosives. Those charges carry respective penalties of up to 10 years and 20 years in prison.

The federal court documents do not list an attorney for Moreno-Gama, and he has not yet had his first appearance in federal court.

Authorities allege Moreno-Gama traveled from his home in Texas to San Francisco and visited Altman's home early Friday morning.

Authorities say Moreno-Gama was opposed to artificial intelligence

When Moreno-Gama was arrested Friday, officials found a document on him in which he "identified views opposed to Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the executives of various AI companies," court documents say. The document discussed AI's purported risk to humanity and "our impending extinction," according to the criminal complaint.

Surveillance video images included in the criminal complaint show a person dressed in a dark hoodie and pants that the FBI alleges is Moreno-Gama approaching the driveway of Altman's home. In various images, the person can be seen tossing the Molotov cocktail, which landed at the top of a metal gate and started a small fire.

Surveillance video images from outside OpenAI's headquarters allegedly show Moreno-Gama grabbing a chair and using it to hit a set of glass doors. Authorities said Moreno-Gama was approached by the building's security personnel, who told investigators he "stated in sum and substance" that he came to the headquarters "to burn it down and kill anyone inside," according to the complaint.

San Francisco police arrested Moreno-Gama and recovered "incendiary devices, a jug of kerosene, a blue lighter, and a document." Moreno-Gama was being held Monday in the San Francisco County Jail on the state charges, and was expected to appear in court on Tuesday.

U.S. Attorney Craig Missakian said authorities "will treat this as an act of domestic terrorism, and together with our partners, prosecute him to the fullest extent of the law."

Authorities say Moreno-Gama's anti-AI document contained threats against Altman

The document in which Moreno-Gama discussed his opposition to AI also made threats against Altman,

officials said.

"Also if I am going to advocate for others to kill and commit crimes, then I must lead by example and show that I am fully sincere in my message," Moreno-Gama is alleged by authorities to have written in the document.

Advocacy groups that have issued grave warnings about AI's risks to society condemned the violence. Anthony Aguirre, president and CEO of the Future of Life Institute, said in a written statement Friday that "violence and intimidation of any kind have no place in the conversation about the future of AI."

Another group, PauseAI, said in a statement that the suspect had no role in the group but joined its forum on the social media platform Discord about two years ago and posted about 34 messages there, none containing explicit calls to violence but one that was flagged as "ambiguous."

Discord said Monday that it has banned Moreno-Gama for "off-platform behavior."

Altman addressed the threats in a blog post

Hours after the attack on his house, Altman posted a photo of his husband and their toddler in a blog post addressing the threats against him.

"Normally we try to be pretty private, but in this case I am sharing a photo in the hopes that it might dissuade the next person from throwing a Molotov cocktail at our house, no matter what they think about me," Altman wrote.

He added that "fear and anxiety about AI is justified" but it was important to "de-escalate the rhetoric and tactics and try to have fewer explosions in fewer homes, figuratively and literally."

Altman has become a preeminent voice in Silicon Valley on the promise and potential dangers of artificial intelligence. The attack comes days after The New Yorker published an in-depth investigation that touched on concerns some people have about him and the company.

Debate about the impact of AI is growing

The attack came at a time of growing debate about the societal effects of AI assistants like OpenAI's ChatGPT that millions of people are turning to for information, advice, writing help and to do work on their behalf.

An annual report published Monday by Stanford University called the AI index found that most people believe AI's benefits outweigh its drawbacks, "but nervousness is growing and trust in institutions to manage the technology remains uneven."

Republican Rep. Tony Gonzales of Texas says he will retire after bipartisan calls for expulsion

By KEVIN FREKING Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican Rep. Tony Gonzales of Texas said Monday he will retire from Congress after bipartisan calls to expel him.

Gonzales had already said he would not seek reelection after admitting to an affair with a staff member who had later died by suicide. His retirement announcement came just hours after Democratic Rep. Eric Swalwell of California said he would be resigning from Congress as he also confronted allegations of sexual misconduct.

House Republican leaders had already called on the three-term Gonzales to not seek reelection as they try to hold on to a strongly Republican district in November's midterm elections. And the House Ethics Committee had initiated an investigation. Under House ethics rules, lawmakers may not engage in a sexual relationship with any employee of the House under their supervision.

"There is a season for everything and God has a plan for us all," Gonzales said in a social media post. "When Congress returns tomorrow, I will file my retirement from office."

He said it has been a privilege "to serve the great people of Texas." He gave no further details on his plans to step down. Previously, he had insisted he would serve out the remainder of his term as the GOP works to hold its slim House majority.

Last month, the top Republican and Democratic members on the House Ethics Committee said in a joint statement that an investigative panel would look into whether Gonzales engaged in sexual misconduct toward an employee in his office and whether he discriminated unfairly by dispensing special favors or privileges.

That announcement came the same day that Gonzales, appearing on the "Joe Pags Show," was asked if he had a relationship with the aide, Regina Ann Santos-Aviles.

"I made a mistake and I had a lapse in judgment, and there was a lack of faith, and I take full responsibility for those actions," Gonzales said.

Gonzales went on to say he had reconciled with his wife and had asked God to forgive him. He also said he looked forward to the Ethics Committee investigation.

But as lawmakers returned from a two-week break on Monday, there was a growing clamor among members to take a stand against alleged sexual misconduct. Swalwell's alleged transgressions brought renewed attention to the issue.

Comments from lawmakers on social media suggested some were open to an expulsion trade-off of sorts that would affect each party equally.

Rep. Teresa Leger Fernandez, D-N.M., said both Gonzales and Swalwell "are not fit to serve in Congress given their sexual transgressions against women who work for them."

"There's already been a resolution announced to expel Swalwell that I will support. I will introduce a resolution to expel Rep. Gonzales," Leger Fernandez said.

In a separate post that came after the Texas lawmaker made his retirement announcement, she challenged Gonzales to make it "effective immediately."

"He has until 2PM tomorrow — when we will file his expulsion," she said on X.

Trump says he won't apologize to Pope Leo and explains his reason for posting much-criticized meme

By WILL WEISSERT, JOSH BOAK and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump refused to apologize to Pope Leo XIV on Monday after criticizing the pontiff for his opposition to the war in Iran — and he sought to explain away a now-deleted social media post depicting himself as Jesus by saying he had thought the image was of him as a doctor.

Trump was asked about his comments toward the U.S.-born head of the Catholic Church, as well as the post depicting himself as a saint-like healer, in a hastily called question-and-answer session with reporters at the White House.

"He was very much against what I'm doing with regard to Iran, and you cannot have a nuclear Iran. Pope Leo would not be happy with the end result," Trump said, adding, "I think he's very weak on crime and other things, so I'm not" going to apologize.

"He went public," the Republican president added. "I'm just responding to Pope Leo."

That response followed Leo pushing back on Trump's broadside against him the previous evening, telling reporters that the Vatican's appeals for peace and reconciliation are rooted in the Gospel and that he doesn't fear the Trump administration.

"To put my message on the same plane as what the president has attempted to do here, I think is not understanding what the message of the Gospel is," Leo told The Associated Press aboard the papal plane en route to Algeria. "And I'm sorry to hear that, but I will continue on what I believe is the mission of the church in the world today."

The back-and-forth between the world's two most influential Americans served to deepen a burgeoning schism as the U.S. war in Iran stretched into its seventh week.

History's first U.S.-born pope stressed that he was not making a direct attack against Trump or anyone else with his general appeal for peace and criticisms of the Iran war and other conflicts around the world.

"I'm not afraid of the Trump administration or of speaking out loudly about the message of the Gospel, which is what the Church works for," said Leo, who said he had a different perspective on foreign policy

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 47 of 60

than elected officials.

"I will continue to speak out strongly against war, seeking to promote peace, promoting dialogue and multilateralism among states to find solutions to problems," he said.

Trump speaks to his much-criticized social media post

The image posted by the president Sunday night showed Trump wearing a biblical-style robe and laying hands on a bedridden man as light emanates from his fingers — while a soldier, a nurse, a praying woman and a bearded man in a baseball cap all look on admiringly. The sky above is filled with eagles, an American flag and vaporous images.

"I did post it, and I thought it was me as a doctor and it had to do with the Red Cross," Trump said. "It's supposed to me as a doctor, making people better. And I do make people better. A lot better."

He blamed the "fake news" for any confusion over the image, though it drew criticism from a wide range of people, including some of Trump's own evangelical supporters, who objected to the notion that Trump was likening himself to Christ. Even Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian, assailed the "desecration of Jesus" while also speaking up to defend the pope.

The post was deleted from Trump's account late Monday morning. Trump didn't provide details on how that happened.

Trump had charged that Leo is not 'doing a very good job'

The president criticized the pope in a lengthy social media post while flying back to Washington from Florida on Sunday night. He kept up the denunciation after deplaning, telling reporters, "I'm not a fan of Pope Leo."

Leo said Saturday during an evening prayer service at St. Peter's Basilica that a "delusion of omnipotence" was fueling the U.S.-Israel war in Iran. The comments came the same day that the United States and Iran began face-to-face negotiations in Pakistan during a fragile ceasefire.

The talks were being led on the U.S. side by Vice President JD Vance, a Catholic who recently released a book about his faith. Asked about Trump's post depicting himself as Jesus on Monday evening, Vance told Fox News Channel that it was "a joke" and said it's "a good thing" that Trump "likes to mix it up on social media" and is "not filtered."

"Of course, he took it down because he realized a lot of people weren't understanding his humor," Vance said of the post.

The pope's Saturday criticisms meanwhile, followed him earlier naming Trump directly and expressed optimism that the president would seek "an off-ramp" in Iran. An even stronger condemnation came after Trump warned of mass strikes against Iranian power plants and infrastructure, writing on social media that "an entire civilization will die tonight." Leo described that as a "threat against the entire people of Iran" and said it was "truly unacceptable."

While it's not unusual for popes and presidents to be at cross purposes, it's exceedingly rare for the pope to directly criticize a U.S. leader — and Trump's stinging response is equally uncommon.

"Pope Leo is WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy," the president wrote in his post, adding, "I don't want a Pope who thinks it's OK for Iran to have a Nuclear Weapon."

Leo's opposition to war irked Trump

Leo, who began an 11-day trip to Africa on Monday, has previously said that God "does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, but rejects them." He's also referred to an Old Testament passage from Isaiah, saying that "even though you make many prayers, I will not listen — your hands are full of blood."

Still, in his comments on Monday, as in his Sunday night social media post, Trump went far beyond the war in Iran in criticizing Leo.

"I don't want a Pope who criticizes the President of the United States because I'm doing exactly what I was elected, IN A LANDSLIDE, to do." His post also claimed that Leo was only elected pontiff "because he was an American, and they thought that would be the best way to deal with President Donald J. Trump."

"If I wasn't in the White House, Leo wouldn't be in the Vatican," Trump wrote, adding, "Leo should get his act together as Pope, use Common Sense, stop catering to the Radical Left, and focus on being a Great

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 48 of 60

Pope, not a Politician. It's hurting him very badly and, more importantly, it's hurting the Catholic Church!" In his comments to reporters after stepping off Air Force One on Sunday, Trump said of Leo, "I don't think he's doing a very good job. He likes crime, I guess," adding, "He's a very liberal person."

Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, also said he was "disheartened" by Trump's comments.

"Pope Leo is not his rival; nor is the Pope a politician," Coakley said in a statement. "He is the Vicar of Christ who speaks from the truth of the Gospel and for the care of souls."

Florida teenager charged with sexually assaulting and killing stepsister Anna Kepner on cruise ship

By ED WHITE Associated Press

A 16-year-old boy has been charged with murder and aggravated sexual abuse in Florida in the death of his 18-year-old stepsister on a Carnival Cruise ship, the U.S. Justice Department said Monday.

Timothy Hudson was initially charged in February and subsequently indicted on March 10. But the breadth of the case was not known until a seal was lifted Friday, weeks after U.S. District Judge Beth Bloom in Miami said he would be prosecuted as an adult at the request of the government.

Anna Kepner had been traveling on the Carnival Horizon ship in November with her family. Before the ship was scheduled to return to Florida, her body was found concealed under a bed in a room she was sharing with two other teens, including the younger stepbrother.

The cause of Kepner's Nov. 6 death was determined to be mechanical asphyxia, which is when an object or physical force stops someone from breathing.

Kepner's father, Christopher Kepner, released a statement, saying the family was placing "trust in the justice system to pursue the truth with care and integrity."

"At the same time, we are deeply troubled that, despite the seriousness of the charges, he has not been taken into custody. ... The situation is deeply painful and complex for the entire family," Kepner said.

Email and voicemail messages seeking comment from Hudson's attorneys about the charges were not immediately returned Monday. Hudson has remained free in the care of an uncle since his arrest in February.

"Our hearts go out to the victim's family during this unimaginable loss," U.S. Attorney Jason Reding Quiñones said in a written statement. "A federal grand jury has returned an indictment charging serious offenses that allegedly occurred aboard a vessel in international waters."

Kepner was a high school cheerleader at Temple Christian School in Titusville, Florida, some 40 miles (65 kilometers) east of Orlando. At her memorial service in November, family members encouraged people to wear bright colors instead of the traditional black "in honor of Anna's bright and beautiful soul."

Teens are rarely prosecuted in federal court. Hudson pleaded not guilty when he was initially charged in February, though the proceedings were not public because of his age and neither were court documents. He was seen at the courthouse wearing a ball cap and a hoodie pulled tightly around his face.

A judge on Feb. 6 said Hudson must wear an electronic tether while living with an uncle. The order was changed to allow him to join his father for a few days last week at a landscaping business, newly unsealed court records show.

Prosecutors objected to Hudson's release, citing dangerousness, and asked a judge Monday to revisit that order now that he has been charged as an adult. Defense lawyers will have a week to respond.

"He committed these crimes against a victim with whom he had no apparent relational strife, and whom he was being raised to view as a sibling," Assistant U.S. Attorney Alejandra López said in a court filing.

Trump administration agrees to return rainbow Pride flag to New York's Stonewall monument

By JENNIFER PELTZ and MICHAEL R. SISA Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Trump administration said Monday it will resume flying a rainbow Pride flag on a

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 49 of 60

federal flagpole at the Stonewall National Monument in New York City, reversing course two months after removing the banner from the first national monument commemorating LGBTQ+ history.

The government revealed the decision in court papers as it agreed to settle a lawsuit filed by advocacy and historic preservation groups who had sought to block the Feb. 9 removal. A judge approved the deal.

The Interior Department and National Park Service "have confirmed their intention to maintain a Pride flag at Stonewall," lawyers for the government and the groups wrote in a joint court filing.

The flag — one of several Pride banners at the 7.7-acre (3.1-hectare) park — won't be removed, except for "maintenance or other practical purposes," the filing said.

Under the agreement, within a week, the park service will hang three flags on its flagpole at the monument. The Pride flag will be positioned below the U.S. flag, in accordance with U.S. flag code, and above the park service flag. Each will measure 3 feet by 5 feet (0.9 meters by 1.5 meters).

The site also features a large Pride flag on a city-controlled flagpole and smaller flags on a fence surrounding the monument, which is across the street from the Stonewall Inn, the gay bar where a 1969 police raid sparked an uprising and helped catalyze the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement. Those flags weren't removed.

"We fought the Trump administration and won," said Manhattan Borough President Brad Hoylman-Sigal wrote on X. The Democrat helped organize a protest Pride flag raising after the government-authorized banner was removed.

"We as an LGBTQ community celebrate the legal climb-down by the gutless Trump Administration on their contemptuous attempt to erase queer people from American history at Stonewall," Hoylman-Sigal, the first openly gay person elected to his job, wrote.

Mayor Zohran Mamdani, a Democrat, called the Trump administration's reversal "a victory for the LGBTQ+ community and for our entire city" and "a reminder that New Yorkers won't let our history be rewritten."

The Gilbert Baker Foundation, which honors the Pride flag creator who died in 2017, was among the organizations that sued over the removal.

"Stonewall is sacred ground in the fight for LGBTQ+ liberation, and this resolution helps ensure that the Rainbow Flag will continue to fly there, where it belongs," foundation President Charley Beal said.

The Pride flag had become a flashpoint for arguments over Republican President Donald Trump's approach to Stonewall and various other historical properties.

After a yearslong campaign by activists who wanted the flag symbolizing LGBTQ+ pride to be flown daily inside the park service-run site, the banner was formally installed in 2022 during Democrat Joe Biden's tenure.

At the time, park service officials called it a sign of the government's commitment to "telling the complex and diverse histories of all Americans."

When it removed the flag in February, the park service said it was complying with federal guidance on flag displays. A Jan. 21 memo largely restricted the agency to displaying U.S., Interior Department and POW/MIA flags, with exemptions that include providing "historical context."

The park service insisted the monument "remains committed to preserving and interpreting the history and significance of this site" through exhibits and programs. But LGBTQ+ activists saw the flag's removal as a targeted affront meant to diminish a site that is all about their fight for rights and visibility.

Activists Michael Petrelis and Steven Love Menendez, who fought to have the park service fly the Pride flag, said they were pleased with Monday's agreement. But, they said, they were dismayed that other symbols, such as the even more inclusive Progress Pride flag, were left out.

"I look forward to the day when the flag display can be restored to its original intent that allows all iterations of LGBTQ+ flags to fly," Menendez said. "Until then at least we have the original rainbow flag flying to serve as a beacon of light."

Democratic President Barack Obama created the Stonewall monument in 2016.

After Trump returned to office last year, he took aim at diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, and many references to transgender people were excised from the Stonewall monument's website and materials.

Trump's administration similarly has put national parks, museums and landmarks under a messaging microscope, aiming to remove or alter materials that it says are "divisive or partisan" or "inappropriately disparage Americans."

Minnesota authorities investigate arrest by ICE of a Hmong American man as a possible kidnapping

By MARK VANCLEAVE and STEVE KARNOWSKI Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — A Minnesota county is investigating the arrest of a Hmong American man by federal officers that was captured on video as a potential case of kidnapping, burglary and false imprisonment, officials announced Monday.

Ramsey County Attorney John Choi and Sheriff Bob Fletcher said at a news conference they are pursuing information from the Department of Homeland Security that they need for their investigation into the arrest of ChongLy "Scott" Thao, 56, on Jan. 18. Ramsey County includes the state capital of St. Paul.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers bashed open the front door of Thao's St. Paul home at gunpoint — without a warrant as far as Choi and Fletcher have been able to determine — then led him outside in just his underwear and a blanket in freezing conditions.

"There are many facts we don't know yet, but there's one that we do know. And that is that Mr. Thao is and has been an American citizen. There's not a dispute over that," Fletcher said. "There's no dispute that he was taken out of his house, forcibly taken out of his home and driven around."

The sheriff continued: "Is that good law enforcement, to take an American citizen out of their home and drive them around aimlessly, trying to determine what they can tell them?"

DHS, which oversees ICE, has refused so far to cooperate with Ramsey County, or with other state and local investigations into the killings by federal officers of two U.S. citizens in Minneapolis during the Trump administration's immigration crackdown.

"ICE does not 'kidnap' people," the agency said in a statement that called Ramsey County's announcement "nothing but a political stunt to demonize ICE law enforcement."

Choi said they're trying to determine whether any crimes were committed that they could prosecute under state or federal law. He also said St. Paul police were investigating another case related to the immigration crackdown for potential violations, but he declined to provide details.

"This is not about any type of predetermined agenda other than to seek the truth and to investigate the facts," Choi said.

Agents who arrested Thao eventually realized he was a longtime U.S. citizen with no criminal record, Thao said in an interview with The Associated Press in January. They returned him to his home after a couple of hours.

Homeland Security later said ICE officers had been seeking two convicted sex offenders. But Thao told the AP he had never seen the two men before and that they did not live with him. The Minnesota Department of Corrections later said one of the two wanted men was still in prison.

The ICE statement did not address the county's request for evidence, but it asserted that investigators "concluded sexual predator targets had ties to the property" — something that Thao and his family denied.

Videos captured the scene, which included people blowing whistles and horns, and neighbors screaming at more than a dozen gun-toting agents to leave Thao's family alone.

Thao declined to comment on the announcement Monday.

The director of the trial division in the County Attorney's Office, Hao Nguyen, said they wrote to DHS, ICE and local federal prosecutors March 20 outlining the evidence they're seeking.

"We know there are reports, there's just no way that there aren't," Nguyen said. "We want also to know who was working that day, who was working that month. Where did they report to? Who did they report to? We also want to understand what recordings might be out there in terms of digital recordings, witness interviews, video recordings."

They set a deadline of April 30, after which they could sue or convene a grand jury, Choi said.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 51 of 60

The state and the chief prosecutor in neighboring Hennepin County, which includes Minneapolis, sued the Trump administration last month to gain access to evidence they say they need to independently investigate three shootings by federal officers in Minneapolis, including the killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti. It happened during the surge of around 3,000 federal law enforcement officers into Minnesota.

Choi urged members of the public who might have evidence about Thao's case or other potential violations to come forward. Minnesota and Hennepin County have made similar appeals.

The Trump administration has suggested Minnesota officials lack jurisdiction to investigate federal law enforcement actions. But Fletcher said he believes they do.

"There is no such thing as absolute immunity for federal agents," the sheriff said. "There's qualified immunity for all law enforcement in a lot of different capacities. But seizing a person out of their home who's an American citizen, they're not immune from that."

Trump family deal spree could open door for future presidents to profit from office

By BERNARD CONDON AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — For the Trump family, business has never been this good.

Whereas the Trump Organization didn't do a single deal overseas in Donald Trump's first term as president, it did eight in the past year.

It got more than double the money in the four months of his second term selling Trump "meme" coins than it did in four years running a massive Washington D.C. hotel the last time he was in office.

And there are more potential conflicts as the family makes money investing in companies dependent on federal contracts and seeking taxpayer funded grants and loans.

"Whatever constraints there were in the first term appear to have completely disappeared," says Columbia University historian Timothy Naftali.

Princeton University historian Julian Zelizer worries about the message Trump is sending to future presidents.

"He has shown politically there is no price to be paid to making money," he said. "You know you can go there."

Deal-making spree abroad

The White House said Trump has no conflicts of interest, reiterated that his assets are in a trust managed by his children and said that he has "no involvement" in family deals. In a separate statement, the Trump Organization said, "The implication that politics has enriched the Trump family is unfounded."

But compared to Trump's first term, the gusher of recent family deals and the questions they raise stand out.

In Qatar, a Trump golf club and villa project is being developed in part by a company owned by the Qatari government. In Vietnam, where The New York Times reported the government pushed farmers off their land to make way for a Trump resort, the country's deputy prime minister signed off on the deal at a ceremony. And in Saudi Arabia, a planned "Trump Plaza" resort on the Red Sea is being built by a Saudi real estate developer close to the ruling family.

Whether the deals played any role in changing U.S. policies in ways these countries sought is nearly impossible to know but the countries did get what they wanted – access to advanced U.S. technology for Qatar, tariff relief for Vietnam and fighter jets for Saudi Arabia.

And the Trump Organization got something too: Tens of millions in fees.

The UAE, crypto and Binance

Another deal raising conflicts of interest questions relates to one of the family's crypto ventures.

Days before the inauguration, the Trump family sold nearly half of its World Liberty Financial crypto business to a UAE government-linked company run by a member of the UAE royal family for \$500 million.

A second UAE entity, a government fund, invested in the offshore cryptocurrency exchange Binance using \$2 billion worth of a digital currency called a stablecoin issued by World Liberty. That allowed the

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 52 of 60

Trump company that received the dollars to put it in safe investments such as bonds or money market funds and keep the tens of millions of dollars in interest for itself.

Shortly after, the Trump administration reversed a Biden-era restriction and granted the UAE access to advanced U.S. chips. Binance's founder, Changpeng Zhao, later got a pardon from Trump, despite having pleaded guilty to failing to stop criminals from using his platform to move money connected to child sex abuse, drug trafficking and terrorism.

Asked about the pardon, the White House said Zhao was a victim in what it called "The Biden Administration's war on crypto." A Zhao lawyer added in an email, referring to his initials, "Any claim of a quid pro quo by Binance or CZ, or preferential financial treatment by Binance, is a clear misstatement of the public record."

Crypto billions

World Liberty has also provided a separate income stream to a new Trump limited liability corporation through sales of "governance tokens" that give owners certain voting rights in its business, though not equity stakes, raising \$2 billion last year. That translates into hundreds of millions of dollars for the Trumps through their World Liberty ownership stake and a separate side deal allowing them a cut of these sales.

One big token investor was Justin Sun, a cryptocurrency billionaire who as a foreign citizen would be banned under U.S. law from making political donations to U.S. politicians. Between Trump's election and inauguration, Sun spent \$75 million on the tokens.

In February last year, a federal lawsuit charging Sun with duping investors was paused before being settled last month for a \$10 million fine.

Then there are the souvenir-type "meme" coins stamped with Trump's face that went on sale days before he took the oath of office last year.

Over the next four months, the coins generated \$320 million, mostly going to Trump-related entities, according to blockchain tracker Chainalysis. Unlike the lobbyists or campaign donors trying to influence Trump, the coin buyers can buy anonymously.

Add it all up and, according to Forbes estimates, Trump's net worth is now \$6.3 billion, soaring 60% from before he returned to office.

New year, new profits

In the first months of Trump's second year back in the White House, the momentum hasn't let up.

Last month, his oldest sons struck a deal giving them stakes in an armed drone maker seeking contracts with the Pentagon and with Gulf states under attack by Iran and dependent on the U.S. military led by their father.

Other government contractors in which one or both have gotten ownership stakes this past year include a rocket motor maker, an AI chip supplier and a data analytics company.

Asked about potential conflicts after the drone deal was announced, Eric said, "I am incredibly proud to invest in companies I believe in." A spokesman for Donald Jr. said he doesn't "interface" with the government on companies in his portfolio."

As for the president, he has mostly shrugged off the issue of conflicts, telling The New York Times in January, "I found out that nobody cared."

Judge dismisses Trump's \$10B lawsuit against WSJ, Murdoch over reporting on ties to Epstein

By MEG KINNARD and JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge dismissed President Donald Trump's \$10 billion defamation lawsuit against the Wall Street Journal and Rupert Murdoch on Monday over a story on his ties to Jeffrey Epstein.

U.S. District Judge Darrin P. Gayles in Florida wrote in the order that Trump had failed to make the argument that the article was published with the intent to be malicious, but gave the president a chance to file an amended complaint.

In a social media post several hours after the ruling, Trump said the decision "is not a termination" but

rather a "suggested re-filing" of his "powerful case," which Trump said would be done "on or before April 27th."

Trump filed the lawsuit in July, following up on a promise to sue the paper almost immediately after it put a new spotlight on his well-documented relationship with Epstein by publishing an article that described a sexually suggestive letter that the newspaper said bore Trump's signature and was included in a 2003 album compiled for Epstein's 50th birthday.

The letter was subsequently released publicly by Congress, which subpoenaed the records from Epstein's estate. Trump denied writing it, calling the story "false, malicious, and defamatory."

Attorneys for the newspaper and Murdoch had asked Gayles to rule that the article's statements were true and therefore couldn't be defamatory, but the judge wrote that "whether President Trump was the author of the Letter or Epstein's friend are questions of fact that cannot be determined at this stage of the litigation," Gayles wrote.

The ruling marks yet another blow in the Trump administration's efforts to manage fallout over its release of the Epstein files and the president's attempts to use the legal system to chill reporting he finds critical of him.

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. A spokesperson for Dow Jones, which publishes the Journal, said the organization was "pleased" with the judge's decision, adding, "We stand behind the reliability, rigor and accuracy of The Wall Street Journal's reporting."

Hungarian election victor Magyar says he'd speak with Putin and ask him to end the war in Ukraine

By SAM McNEIL and JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Hungarian election winner Péter Magyar said on Monday that if Russian President Vladimir Putin were to initiate a call with him, he would speak with him and tell him to end the war in Ukraine.

"If Vladimir Putin calls, I'll pick up the phone," he said at his first news conference after his landslide win against Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, a Putin ally. "If we did talk, I could tell him that it would be nice to end the killing after four years and end the war."

"It would probably be a short phone conversation and I don't think he would end the war on my advice," he said.

Magyar's statement was likely greeted with pleasure by many across the European Union who had grown accustomed to Orbán's conciliatory tone when discussing the war or Putin.

From the jubilant crowds along the Danube in Budapest to executive offices in Brussels, praise and even glee abounded for Hungary's next leader after he won Sunday's election in a landslide. But the outpouring after his victory focused mainly on the prospect of no longer having to deal with Orbán, who many saw as a threat to Europe's peace and prosperity.

From Madrid to Helsinki, many hope that Magyar's win will help unshackle the 27-nation European Union as it faces hybrid warfare attacks from Moscow, an antagonistic Washington and Beijing's economic pressure. EU leaders had been increasingly frustrated with Orbán over his takeover of democratic institutions and vetoing of strategic action like a 90-billion-euro (\$105 billion) loan for Ukraine.

It remains to be seen whether those hopes will be fulfilled. Magyar avoided talking about Ukraine or divisive issues like LGBTQ rights on the campaign trail, and was previously a longtime conservative insider in Orbán's party. He told The Associated Press that he would work more closely with the EU and the 32-nation NATO military alliance that was forged to thwart aggression from Moscow.

"All Hungarians know that this is a shared victory. Our homeland made up its mind. It wants to live again. It wants to be a European country," Magyar said during his victory speech on Sunday.

Olga Oliker, the director of European Security at the International Crisis Group, said that "where Orbán slowed actions and blocked consensus, Magyar, as he defines Hungary's relationships with its European allies, to say nothing of those with Ukraine, Russia and the United States, can help shape the future of

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 54 of 60

Europe.”

Unlocking EU funds for Ukraine

After Magyar takes his oath of office in May, the new prime minister could potentially lift Hungary’s veto and enable the European Commission to provide Ukraine with the 90-billion-euro (\$105 billion) loan that Orbán had agreed to in December and then backtracked on, enraging his fellow leaders.

EU diplomats will discuss Wednesday how best to fast-track the funds to Kyiv, a Cypriot official said on condition of anonymity because the person wasn’t authorized to be named. Cyprus currently holds the rotating EU presidency.

Hungary borders Ukraine, and the pro-Russia Orbán had long demonized Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. While congratulating Magyar on X, Zelenskyy said that “we are ready for meetings and joint constructive work for the benefit of both nations, as well as for the sake of Europe’s peace, security, and stability.”

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said that Russia respects the outcome of the Hungarian vote and expects to maintain contacts with the country’s new leadership.

He said that “as for what action Hungary’s new leadership will take, we probably need to be patient and see what happens.”

European institutions hope Orbán problem is over

The prospect of a nimbler, faster-acting Europe drove widespread praise for Magyar from several European leaders. EU negotiators had to increasingly find workarounds when Orbán blocked policy decisions. He also held up Sweden’s accession to NATO.

Magyar said that he received calls on Sunday night — before he even took the stage to announce his victory — from French President Emmanuel Macron, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, who was frequently vilified by Orbán during his campaign.

“Today, Europe is Hungarian,” von der Leyen said at a news conference in Brussels on Monday. “The people of Hungary have spoken and they have reclaimed their European path.”

“Today Europe wins and European values win,” said Spain’s left-wing Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez in a post on X on Sunday night. Poland’s center-right Prime Minister Donald Tusk exclaimed on social media: “Back together! Glorious victory, dear friends!”

Setback for Europe’s populist right

Orbán’s defeat has reverberated across the world, including across the Atlantic where U.S. President Donald Trump supported Orbán’s reelection bid and even dispatched U.S. Vice President JD Vance to Budapest last week to stump for the incumbent.

Magyar’s victory might signal a shift in European politics that has been dominated by a far-right shift over the past decade. Magyar comes from a right-wing background but distanced himself from Orbán’s leadership.

With nationalist parties making headways in Germany and France, the electoral earthquake in Hungary shows that “Hungarians are sending a signal to the world,” German lawmaker Daniel Freund said.

“The icon of illiberal anti-European forces has now failed — brought down by a disastrous economy, corruption and his own unfair electoral system,” he said.

Orbán’s populist allies in the EU, Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, congratulated Magyar, while praising the ousted strongman. But Fico also brought up the Druzhba pipeline, shuttered since an attack in Ukraine — an issue Orbán campaigned on and one exacerbated by rising energy prices over the Iran war.

Magyar has criticized Orbán’s government for failing to diversify its energy mix, and advocated for reaching new agreements and constructing new infrastructure to bring oil and gas from other sources into landlocked Hungary.

Both Babiš and Fico pledged to work with Hungary’s next leader.

The US is short 10 million houses. A new White House report lays out a blueprint to fix that

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — White House economists estimate the United States has a shortage of 10 million houses, according to a new report out Monday — and say regulatory cuts could lead to more construction to stabilize prices, increase home ownership and fuel faster economic growth.

The analysis, part of the Economic Report of the President, outlines both a political risk and a messaging opportunity for President Donald Trump, whose public approval has slumped because of concerns about his tariffs, the Iran war and his unfulfilled promises to slash inflation and unleash stronger growth.

Trump signed two executive orders in March directing federal agencies to reduce housing regulatory burdens and make it easier for smaller banks to provide mortgages but he's been slow to take other steps that would show that high housing costs are a top priority for his administration.

The White House has been trying to focus on housing and other affordability issues for months to get ready for what's expected to be a challenging midterm season for Republicans, but it has been thrown off course by a series of global issues. In January, a speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, that had been billed as focusing on housing turned into a showdown for Trump over control of Greenland.

Meanwhile, the Iran war has driven up the cost of buying homes, with average rates for 30-year mortgages jumping from just under 6% to 6.37%.

Trump also has argued in favor of keeping home prices high to protect values for existing owners. "I don't want to drive housing prices down," Trump told his Cabinet earlier this year. "I want to drive housing prices up for people that own their homes, and they can be assured that's what's going to happen."

The report lays out a blueprint on housing

The housing chapter of the annual economic report, obtained by The Associated Press before its release, lays out a blueprint for how more home construction would help the middle class and the overall economy, setting up an argument that Trump could make to voters.

Put together by staff at the White House Council of Economic Advisers, it finds there would be 10 million more houses in the country if "homebuilding and the growth of the single-family housing stock had continued at their historical pace instead of falling dramatically" after the 2008 global financial crisis. That crisis was caused largely by a wave of defaults in the housing market, where prices had been fueled by problematic lending practices.

The analysis notes that home prices have risen 82% since 2000, while incomes are up just 12% — a mismatch that had been masked for a period by historically low mortgage rates. But when rates jumped with inflation in the aftermath of the pandemic, monthly mortgage costs also rose for buyers and affording a home, a signifier of middle class status, became a top concern for voters under 40.

The White House maintains that the executive orders in March, in addition to the plans to purchase mortgage-backed securities, show that the president is focused on housing issues.

The report says that various regulations on home construction, which it calls "the bureaucrat tax," add more than \$100,000 in costs to building. That cost includes changing the building codes over the past decade, compliance costs and zoning approval fees, among other expenses.

By the report's estimates, a reduction in those regulatory costs could help spur construction of as many as 13.2 million homes. That could add on average 1.3 percentage points to annual economic growth over the next decade and support 2 million manufacturing and construction jobs, it argues.

Trump could decide to make federal funding to state and local governments contingent on reducing some of the regulations, according to an administration official, who insisted on anonymity to discuss the report before its release.

The report also attacks the green energy housing standards introduced during the Biden administration as a factor in increasing construction costs. Those steps gave preferences for more efficient air conditioning units and water heaters as well as higher standards for the related duct work.

But getting rid of some of those requirements could increase other costs for homeowners over the long

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 56 of 60

run, such as utility bills.

The report relies on a 2021 analysis by National Association of Home Builders that says the standards could add up to \$31,000 to the price of a new home, while it could take as many as 90 years for a home-buyer "to realize a payback on the added cost of the home."

It is not clear how much savings would occur from rolling back Biden-era housing standards because of existing legal challenges regarding their enforcement and different practices by states. In March, a federal judge in Texas agreed with 15 states led by Republicans that said the standards for federally backed housing were unlawful.

Magyar wants to take over as Hungary's prime minister as early as May 5

By JUSTIN SPIKE and SAM McNEIL Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Hungary's election winner, Péter Magyar, called Monday on the country's president to convene the parliament to form a new government "as quickly as possible," in hopes that he can take over from Viktor Orbán as prime minister as early as May 5.

With an overwhelming new mandate, Magyar pledged to cooperate with other European countries, ending Orbán-era obstruction of Europe-wide policies, while also representing Hungarians' wishes.

At a news conference Monday in Budapest, he promised to restore rule of law and overhaul government structures to make them more independent and able to fight corruption, and to create new ministries to address acute problems in areas like public health, environmental protection and education.

He said he opposes fast-track EU membership for Ukraine while the country is still in a war. But he suggested he wouldn't veto a 90-billion-euro EU loan for Ukraine, as Orbán did, and instead wants Hungary to "opt out" of participating in the loan because of its own financial struggles.

He didn't immediately address his eventual relations with U.S. President Donald Trump, who supported Orbán's campaign.

Magyar said his Tisza party received "a never-before-seen mandate," a super-majority that would allow it to embark on ambitious program and reforms.

"The Hungarian people didn't vote for a simple change of government, but for a complete change in regime," he said.

In his campaign, Magyar also pledged to end Hungary's drift toward Russia. On Monday, Magyar thanked Moscow and Beijing for offering their congratulations and willingness to work with Hungary's new government.

"Hungarians said yesterday they will write their history, not in Moscow, not in Beijing, not in Washington," he added.

During his long time in office, Orbán ruled with the power of a two-thirds parliamentary majority, allowing him to pass a new constitution, rewrite the electoral system and reshape the judiciary.

Magyar's party secured exactly such a mandate Sunday when it won 138 of parliament's 199 seats, giving it broad authority to undo much of the legislation that allowed Orbán to stack the courts, manipulate the electoral system, crack down on press freedom and discriminate against the LGBTQ+ community.

Still, there are potential pitfalls that could stand in the way of the radical changes many Hungarians had hoped for.

Historic win

Magyar's victory was met with jubilation on the streets of Budapest late Sunday with tens of thousands, many of them young people, celebrating what they view as a ray of hope that Orbán's loss will make Hungary freer, happier and firmly rooted within the fold of European democracies.

On streets and avenues across the capital, drivers blared car horns and cranked up anti-government songs while people marching in the streets chanted and screamed.

During the celebrations, Adrien Rixer said he'd come back to Hungary from his home in London "because I really wanted to make my vote count, and I'm over the moon."

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 57 of 60

"Finally I can say that I'm a proud Hungarian, finally after 16 years," he said.

Many Hungarians, and others across Europe who were closely watching the election, had feared that a simple majority for Tisza would have been inadequate to truly transform Orbán's system.

Yet others remain uncertain about what the authority of a two-thirds majority will bring, with some uneasy about taking such a mandate from Orbán and delivering it to his opponent.

"It's hard to see that with two-thirds that it's going to be a fair government, but we will see," said reveller Dániel Kovács. "Let's hope that it's going to be a promising four years."

The election win for Magyar and Tisza was without precedent in Hungary's post-Communist history: They received more votes and more parliamentary seats than any party ever had before.

Bulcsú Hunyadi, an analyst with the Budapest-based think tank Political Capital, said that while Tisza's constitutional majority gives it broad powers to roll back many of Orbán's policies, Hungary's key institutions are "led by people who are cemented in their position for many years."

As part of his broader effort to consolidate control over Hungary's democratic system, Orbán installed loyal allies at the helm of key institutions, from the media authority to the public prosecutor's office and the Constitutional Court.

In several cases, mandates were extended or new appointments pushed through before existing terms had expired — moves that effectively kept loyal leadership locked in place for years, well beyond any potential change in government.

Magyar called for such officials — including Hungary's president — to step down of their own accord. Beyond that, Hunyadi said, "they don't really have any other tools to remove these people."

Pressure from the EU

Magyar accuses Orbán and his government of mismanaging Hungary's economy and social services, and overseeing unchecked corruption he says has led to the accumulation of extreme wealth within a small circle of well-connected insiders while leaving ordinary Hungarians behind.

He's vowed to hold such abuses to account, and plans to create an Office for the Recovery and Protection of National Assets to reclaim what he says are Orbán's allies' ill-gotten gains.

Magyar campaigned heavily on a promise to bring home billions of euros in European Union funding that has been frozen over corruption and rule-of-law concerns under Orbán. He's also pledged to introduce the euro to Hungary by 2030 — something Orbán's government long resisted.

Hunyadi, the analyst, said Magyar's government will be under "tight pressure" by the EU to quickly carry out reforms in order to get access to those frozen funds that are badly needed by Hungary's faltering economy.

"There are deadlines in terms of unfreezing the funds. They will have to deliver certain laws and reforms by August this year, which is only a few months away," he said.

Tisza's win raised hopes across the EU that a new government in Budapest would reverse Orbán's antagonistic approach to Ukraine and his obstruction of efforts to assist the war-ravaged country as it defends against Russia's full-scale invasion.

Orbán has used his veto power in the EU to stymie sanctions on Russia and block crucial funding to Kyiv. He's also vowed never to allow talks on Ukraine joining the EU to resume.

In a statement on Monday, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said Orbán's election campaign, "which unfortunately was marked by manipulative rhetoric about Ukraine, is now behind us."

"We expect that ... the election results will also contribute to a normalization of political relations," Sybiha said.

In their words: How leaders reacted to Viktor Orbán's defeat in Hungary's election

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Hungary's Viktor Orbán had such an outsize global influence that his crushing electoral defeat is resounding far and wide.

Here's how global leaders reacted, in their own words. There was no immediate comment from the Trump administration, which campaigned for Orban.

Ukraine has a lot at stake

Orbán repeatedly blocked aid for Ukraine to fend off Russia's full-scale invasion. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy quickly reached out to incoming leader Péter Magyar in hopes of support.

"It is important when constructive approach prevails. Ukraine has always sought good-neighbourly relations with everyone in Europe and we are ready to advance our cooperation with Hungary," he posted on social media.

"We are ready for meetings and joint constructive work for the benefit of both nations, as well as peace, security, and stability in Europe," Zelenskyy said.

Russia and China played it safe

Orban was Russia's closest ally in the European Union, and courted China. Both countries seemed to distance themselves from him after Magyar's win.

"Hungary has made its choice, and we respect that choice," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "We expect to continue our very pragmatic contacts with the new Hungarian leadership."

Asked about the impact of Hungary's vote on the conflict in Ukraine, Peskov responded that "I don't think this has anything to do with the future of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun said in Beijing that "China attaches great importance to the development of China-Hungary relations and stands ready to work with Hungary's new government based on mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit."

For many in Europe, a sigh of relief

Orbán was constantly critical of the EU, even though his country enjoys billions in funding from the bloc. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, a frequent target of Orbán's pronouncements, said, "Europe is Hungarian today."

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer called it "an historic moment, not only for Hungary, but for European democracy."

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz messaged Magyar: "Let's join forces for a strong, secure and, above all, united Europe. Gratulálok, kedves Magyar Péter!"

French President Emmanuel Macron said that "France welcomes the victory of democratic participation, the Hungarian people's commitment to the values of the European Union."

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk, traveling in South Korea, posted a video clip apparently showing him speaking to Magyar by phone while overlooking the Korean capital.

"Oh, I am so happy. I think I am happier than you, you know," Tusk said in English.

In his victory speech, Magyar said that his first foreign stop would be to Poland, which has historically had friendly ties to Hungary.

Fellow populists chose their words carefully

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni thanked her "friend Viktor Orbán" for their collaboration. "I know that even from the opposition he will continue to serve his Nation."

France's far-right National Rally, jockeying to replace Macron in the French presidency next year, supported Orbán and tread cautiously after his defeat.

"This result, respectfully welcomed by Viktor Orbán, shows that the incessant accusations by European institutions in recent years against Hungarian democracy were unfounded," posted the party's president, Jordan Bardella.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for his part, offered his "heartiest congratulations" to Magyar on X.

"I look forward to working closely with you to further strengthen our bilateral cooperation and to advance the vital India-EU Strategic Partnership for the shared prosperity and well-being of our peoples," he wrote.

At least 100 dead in Nigeria after air force 'misfire' on market, sources say

By DYEPAZAH SHIBAYAN and HARUNA UMAR Associated Press

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria (AP) — A Nigerian Air Force strike targeting jihadi rebels hit a local market in north-eastern Nigeria, killing over 100 civilians including children and injuring many others, a rights group and local media reported on Sunday. Officials confirmed a misfire without providing details.

Amnesty International cited survivors as saying that at least 100 people were killed in the airstrike on Saturday on a village in Yobe state, near the border with Borno state, which is the epicenter of the jihadi insurgency that has ravaged the region for over a decade.

"We have their pictures and they include children," Isa Sanusi, Amnesty International's Nigeria director, told The Associated Press, referring to the casualties.

"We are in touch with people that are there, we spoke with the hospital," he said. "We spoke with the person in charge of casualties, and we spoke with the victims."

A worker at the Geidam General hospital, in Yobe, said at least 23 people injured in the incident were receiving treatment. The worker spoke anonymously as he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Such misfires are common in Nigeria, where the military often conducts air raids to battle armed groups who control vast forest enclaves. At least 500 civilians have died since 2017 in such misfires, according to an AP tally of reported deaths. Security analysts point to loopholes in intelligence gathering as well as insufficient coordination between ground troops, air assets and stakeholders.

The large, remote market located near the Borno-Yobe border is known to be often used by Boko Haram jihadis to buy food supplies.

Abdulumumin Bulama, a member of a civilian security group working with the Nigerian military in the northeast, said there was intelligence that Boko Haram terrorists had gathered very close to the market and were planning an attack on nearby communities.

"The intel was shared and the Air Force jet acted based on the credible information," Bulama said.

The Yobe State Government confirmed in a statement that a Nigerian military strike was targeting a stronghold of the Boko Haram jihadi group in the area and that "some people ... who went to the Jilli weekly market were affected."

The Yobe State Emergency Management Agency also acknowledged that an incident had occurred resulting in "casualties affecting some marketers" and said it had dispatched response teams to the area.

Nigeria's military issued a statement saying it conducted a successful strike on a "terrorist enclave and logistics hub" belonging to jihadis in the area, killing scores of them as they rode on motorcycles. It did not provide any detail about a possible misfire, but noted that motorcycles remain prohibited in conflict hot spots and "any such movements in restricted areas are therefore treated with the utmost seriousness."

Amnesty International has called for an independent investigation into the incident, adding that the military is "fond of" labeling civilian casualties as bandits

Nigeria, which is Africa's most populous country, is battling a complex security crisis, especially in the north, where there is a decade-long insurgency and several armed groups that kidnap for ransom.

Among the most prominent Islamic militant groups are Boko Haram and its breakaway faction, which is affiliated with the Islamic State group and known as Islamic State West Africa Province. There is also the IS-linked Lakurawa group operating in communities in the northwestern part of the country that borders Niger Republic.

Groton Daily Independent

Tuesday, April 14, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 313 ~ 60 of 60

Today in History: April 14

Abraham Lincoln fatally shot at Ford's Theatre

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, April 14, the 104th day of 2026. There are 261 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 14, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln was shot and mortally wounded by John Wilkes Booth during a performance of the play "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theatre in Washington; Lincoln was taken to a boarding house across the street and died the following morning at 7:22 a.m.

Also on this date:

In 1828, the first edition of Noah Webster's "American Dictionary of the English Language" was published.

In 1912, the British liner RMS Titanic collided with an iceberg in the North Atlantic at 11:40 p.m. ship's time and began sinking. (The ship went under two and a half hours later, killing over 1,500 people.)

In 1910, William Howard Taft became the first U.S. president to throw the ceremonial first pitch at a baseball game as the Washington Senators beat the Philadelphia Athletics 3-0.

In 1935, the devastating "Black Sunday" dust storm descended upon the central Plains as hundreds of thousands of tons of airborne topsoil turned a sunny afternoon into total darkness.

In 1981, the first test flight of America's first operational space shuttle, the Columbia, ended successfully with a landing at Edwards Air Force Base in California.

In 2021, a white former suburban Minneapolis police officer, Kim Potter, was charged with second-degree manslaughter for killing 20-year-old Black motorist Daunte Wright in a shooting that ignited days of unrest. (Potter would be found guilty and serve 16 months in prison.)

In 2022, the missile cruiser Moskva, the flagship of Russia's Black Sea fleet, sank while being towed to port after being hit by two Ukrainian missiles and gutted by fire, U.S. officials confirmed.

Today's Birthdays: Former NYPD detective Frank Serpico is 90. Actor Julie Christie is 86. Rock musician Ritchie Blackmore is 81. Actor Peter Capaldi is 68. Actor Brad Garrett is 66. Actor Robert Carlyle is 65. Golf Hall of Famer Meg Mallon is 63. Baseball Hall of Famer Greg Maddux is 60. Actor Anthony Michael Hall is 58. Actor Adrien Brody is 53. Rapper Da Brat is 52. Actor Sarah Michelle Gellar is 49. Actor-producer Rob McElhenney is 49. Actor Abigail Breslin is 30. Soccer player Dean Huijsen is 21.