

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, April 25

MS NEC Girls Golf at Clark, 10 a.m.
Track at Ipswich, 10 a.m.

Sunday, April 26

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m.; Sunday School, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 6 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 .m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Groton Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.
First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.
Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship 10:30 a.m.
JVT Practice, 1 p.m., Arena



Baseball at Lennox: vs. Lennox at 1 p.m. and West Central at 3 p.m.

Monday, April 27

Senior Menu: Turkey wraps, lettuce/tomato,cheese; potato salad, fruit.
School Breakfast: Eggs.
School Lunch: Beef stir fry, rice.
Spring Cleanup through May 1
Senior Citizens meet at the Groton Community Center with potluck at noon.
Grades 3-5 ELA & Math Testing
Junior High Track Meet at Britton, 3:30 p.m.
Girls Fast Pitch Softball in Groton: Varsity at 4 p.m. followed by Junior Varsity. (Also Senior Recognition Night)
Pickle Ball, 5:30 p.m., Elementary Gym

Groton Daily Independent
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1440

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

Gaza's First Elections

Palestinians in Gaza's Deir al-Balah city are expected to vote in local elections today for the first time in about 20 years. Officials hope the vote will set the stage for broader elections across Gaza.

The elections are being organized by the Palestinian Authority, a rival to Hamas that has coordinated security with Israel. It was forcibly ousted from power in Gaza by Hamas in 2007, after which the militant group appointed local officials. Hamas, which has resisted calls to forfeit its weapons, says it will hand power to the winners. Most candidates are officially politically independent, but some are linked to the Palestinian Authority's ruling party, Fatah. Others are accused of having ties to Hamas, a claim Hamas denies.

Deir al-Balah residents say they hope elected officials will improve local services, such as water and sewage. However, analysts are skeptical because Israel controls the flow of resources into Gaza, limiting what officials can realistically change. Israel says the restrictions are needed to prevent Hamas from acquiring weapons.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reveals cancer diagnosis.

Netanyahu said he underwent treatment for early-stage prostate cancer after doctors found a malignant tumor. The diagnosis was included in an annual medical report he delayed releasing for two months, saying he feared Iran would use the information against Israel. The 76-year-old leader is up for reelection in October; his approval rating is at 34%, down from 40% at the start of the Iran war.

Meanwhile, Israel says it struck Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon yesterday, hours after President Donald Trump announced a three-week extension of the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire. Hezbollah subsequently called the ceasefire "meaningless."

Justice Department drops investigation into Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell.

The probe into an alleged cost overrun on a \$2.5B renovation was punted to the central bank's inspector general yesterday. Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) had effectively blocked Kevin Warsh's confirmation to replace Powell unless the DOJ dropped the criminal inquiry. Lawmakers from both parties have raised concerns that the Trump administration launched the probe to pressure Powell into cutting rates or resigning.

Amazon-backed nuclear startup goes public with near \$12B valuation.

X-Energy shares closed up 27% in their NASDAQ debut yesterday. Founded in 2009 by an aerospace veteran, the company developing advanced nuclear reactors has secured backing from Citadel founder Ken Griffin and Amazon, among others. Interest in the company, which is years from building a reactor and obtaining regulatory licensing, is largely driven by artificial intelligence's energy demands.

FDA grants quick review of three experimental psychedelic drugs.

The Food and Drug Administration yesterday awarded priority review vouchers to three unnamed companies developing drugs for major depression and post-traumatic stress disorder that may also have psychoactive effects. Efforts to expand research into these alternative therapies have been driven, in part, by military veterans. The first of these drugs could be approved as early as this summer.

Tornado barrels through Oklahoma, damaging at least 40 homes.

Emergency crews yesterday worked to rescue trapped residents after a powerful tornado ripped through a rural community on Oklahoma's northern border Thursday (watch here). Only minor injuries have been reported as of this writing, but roofs were ripped off several homes, and others were reduced to rubble. Utility poles and power lines were also knocked down, and part of US Interstate 81 was closed.

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Giant octopus may have reigned over the prehistoric oceans.

A new analysis of fossilized jaws reveals 23- to 62-foot octopuses hunted in the seas roughly 66 million years ago, when dinosaurs roamed land. While prehistoric large sharks and marine reptiles are well-documented, octopuses have been harder to study because their soft bodies don't preserve as well. In this case, researchers reassembled images of delicate seafloor fossils into 3D models—a new technique.

Humankind(ness)

Dear readers—We're taking a brief intermission next month to feature stories about mothers and motherhood. Take a moment to share a memory, lesson, or note of gratitude [here](#) for a chance to be featured.

Today, we're sharing a story from reader Janet S. in Chicago, Illinois.

"For my 3-year-old grandson, his Build-A-Bear isn't just a toy—it is a connection to his hero. Known as "Dada Bear," it wears a San Diego Padres uniform and carries a treasure inside its paw: a voice recording of his father saying, 'I love you.'

"With his father currently deployed with the US Navy, my grandson takes Dada Bear everywhere, including to a recent Padres game where the unthinkable happened. While trying to navigate the crowd in the stadium with two small children, my daughter-in-law realized too late that Dada Bear had been lost. She contacted the Padres' lost and found and posted a photo of the bear on a Padres fan page. The posting caught the eye of a sympathetic stranger who reached out with an incredible offer. She provided the family with a generous Build-A-Bear gift card, covering the cost of a new bear and accessories to recreate the original Dada Bear.

"This act of kindness hit a home run for my son's family. It served as a reminder that even when a parent is deployed, there is a community back home ready to step up and keep the spirit of Dada alive."



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Groton Area middle school track teams shine on home track

GROTON — Competing on their home surface Friday, April 24, the Groton Area middle school track teams turned in an impressive showing, highlighted by a team title from the seventh-grade girls and a dominant performance by the eighth-grade boys.

The Groton Area eighth-grade boys claimed the team championship with 111 points, outpacing Roncalli (102) and Warner (81). The Tigers were powered by a strong sprint and relay presence, along with stand-out efforts from the Kucker brothers and a deep supporting cast.

Kyson Kucker led the way with victories in both the 400 meters (56.2) and 800 meters (2:24.9), while also running a leg on the winning 4x400 relay team that clocked 4:05.3 alongside Trey Tietz, Keegan Kucker and Liam Lord. Trey Tietz added a runner-up finish in the 400 (1:00.4), and Keegan Kucker placed fourth (1:02.5).

In the short sprints, Ryder Schwan paced a sweep for Groton Area in the 100 meters, winning in 11.9 seconds, followed by Trey Tietz (second), Trayce Schelle (third) and Liam Lord (fourth). Schwan also won the 200 meters (24.5), with Schelle adding a fourth-place finish.

Groton's 4x100 relay team of Keegan Kucker, Kyson Kucker, Trayce Schelle and Ryder Schwan also took first in 50.7. Schelle added a field event victory by clearing 5 feet, 2 inches in the high jump. In the throws, Liam Johnson placed fourth in the shot put (33-11.5) and fifth in the discus (87-7).

The seventh-grade boys placed sixth with 45 points, tying Wilmot. Ivan Schwan was a bright spot, winning the 200 meters (26.6) and running on the winning 4x100 relay team with Quinton Flores, Jack Schuelke and Micah Krause (56.3). Flores added a win in the 800 meters (2:37.7) and placed fourth in the 400.

On the girls side, Groton Area's seventh-grade team captured the championship with 142 points, well ahead of Warner (88) and Sisseton (86). The Tigers showed strength across nearly every event group, combining sprint speed, relay depth and hurdle dominance.

Andi Iverson led the charge with a win in the 100 meters (14.5) and a runner-up finish in the 800 (2:51.4), while also running on the winning 4x100 relay team with Mya Moody, Zoe Olson and Charli Jacobsen (59.9).

Kinley Sandness added a victory in the 200 meters (29.8), while Avery Huber won the 400 (1:10.7) and teamed with Taylor Fliehs for a 1-2 finish in that event. Huber also contributed to multiple relay placings.

In the hurdles, Charli Jacobsen dominated, winning both the 100-meter hurdles (18.6) and 200-meter hurdles (34.7), with Addison Steffes finishing second in both races.

Relay success continued as Groton Area placed second in the 4x200 (2:07.1) and 4x400 (5:09.0), showing strong depth throughout the lineup.

The eighth-grade girls placed seventh as a team with 31 points. Rowan Patterson highlighted the effort with a win in the 100 meters (14.0) and a role on two winning relay teams. Groton Area captured the 4x100 relay (58.0) with Patterson, Sandness, Libby Johnson and Brynlee Dunker, and also won the 4x200 relay (2:02.2) with Sandness, Patterson, Johnson and Iverson.

Boy's Division

Boys 7th Grade Team Scores: 1. Sisseton 113, 2. Roncalli 99, 3. Warner 82, 4. Webster Area 70, 5. Northwestern 61, 6. Groton Area 45, 6. Wilmot 45, 8. Langford Area 12

Boys 8th Grade Team Scores: 1. Groton Area 111, 2. Roncalli 102, 3. Warner 81, 4. Sisseton 63, 5. Webster Area 56, 6. Britton-Hecla 34, 7. Langford Area 19, 8. Frederick 11, 8. Northwestern 11, 10. Tiospa Zina 9

100 Meters 7th Grade: Ivan Schwan, 12.9; 15. Jack Schuelke, 15.5; 19. Micah Krause, 15.6; 25. Hank Fliehs, 17.3; 28. Titan Johnson, 18.3; 29. Weston Kettner, 18.6.

100 Meters 8th Grade: 1. Ryder Schwan, 11.9; 2. Trey Tietz, 12.7; 3. Trayce Schelle, 12.9; 4. Liam Lord, 13.0; 15. Wyatt Morehouse, 15.6.

200 Meters 7th Grade: 1. Ivan Schwan, 26.6; 14. Micah Krause, 33.5; 15. Jack Schuelke, 33.9; 20. Hayden Hubbard, 38.5; 21. Titan Johnson, 39.4; 23. Weston Kettner, 43.7.

200 Meters 8th Grade: 1. Ryder Schwan, 24.5; 4. Trayce Schelle, 26.8; 15. Wyatt Morehouse, 32.0;

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16. Gavin Hanten, 33.2

400 Meters 7th Grade: 4. Quinton Flores, 1:05.9.

400 Meters 8th Grade: 1. Kyson Kucker, 56.2; 2. Trey Tietz, 1:00.4; 4. Keegan Kucker, 1:02.5; 6. Liam Lord, 1:04.3.

800 Meters 7th Grade: 1. Quinton Flores, 2:37.7; 9. Hayden Hubbard, 3:14.3.

800 Meters 8th Grade: 1. Kyson Kucker, 2:24.9.

4x100 Relay 7th Grade: 1. Groton: (Quinton Flores, Jack Schuelke, Micah Krause, Ivan Schwan), 56.3.

4x100 Relay 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Keegan Kucker, Kyson Kucker, Trayce Schelle, Ryder Schwan), 50.7.

4x400 Relay 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Trey Tietz, Keegan Kucker, Liam Lord, Kyson Kucker), 4:05.3.

Shot Put - 8lb 7th Grade: 11. Hank Fliehs, 20' 8.5"; 16. Grayson Warrington, 17' 9".

Shot Put - 8lb 8th Grade: 4. Liam Johnson, 33' 11.5"; 12. Gavin Hanten, 23' 6.5".

Discus - 1kg 7th Grade: 15. Grayson Warrington, 49' 10"; 16. Hank Fliehs, 41' 4".

Discus - 1kg 8th Grade: 5. Liam Johnson, 87' 7"; 10. Gavin Hanten, 70' 10".

High Jump 8th Grade: 1. Trayce Schelle, 5' 2".

Long Jump 7th Grade: 17. Jack Schuelke, 10' 6"; 20. Weston Kettner, 9' 7"; 22. Titan Johnson, 9' 5"; 23. Hayden Hubbard, 8' 0".

Girl's Division:

Girls 7th Grade Team Scores: 1. Groton Area 142, 2. Warner 88, 3. Sisseton 86, 4. Roncalli 71, 5. Webster Area 62, 6. Langford Area 44, 7. Britton-Hecla 17, 8. Northwestern 14, 9. Wilmot 7, 10. Frederick 1

Girls 8th Grade Team Scores: 1. Sisseton 140, 2. Wilmot 85, 3. Roncalli 73, 4. Webster Area 47, 5. Langford Area 40, 6. Warner MS 37, 7. Groton Area 31, 8. Northwestern 19, 9. Tiospa Zina 13

100 Meters 7th Grade: 1. Andi Iverson, 14.5; 3. Avery Huber, 14.9; 4. Zoe Olson, 15.1; 9. Addison Steffes, J 15.5; 12. Shealee Gilchrist, J 15.9; 18. Rowan Hanson, 16.2; 23. Harley Furman, 16.4; 25. Gracie Borg, 16.6; 31. Hadley Heilman, 17.3; 34. Lennox Locke, 17.4; 38. Hallie Perkins, 18.4.

100 Meters 8th Grade: 1. Rowan Patterson, 14.0.

200 Meters 7th Grade: 1. Kinley Sandness, 29.8; 3. Shealee Gilchrist, 32.1; 5. Harley Furman, 32.7; 12. Gracie Borg, 35.3; 17. Lennox Locke, 36.4; 23. Hallie Perkins, 40.4.

400 Meters 7th Grade: 1. Avery Huber, 1:10.7; 2. Taylor Fliehs, 1:11.2; 11. Rowan Hanson, 1:22.6.

800 Meters 7th Grade: 2. Andi Iverson, 2:51.4; 3. Taylor Fliehs, 2:52.6.

100m Hurdles - 30" / 0.762m 7th Grade: 1. Charli Jacobsen, 18.6, 2. Addison Steffes, 19.8, 6. Hallie Perkins, 24.8.

200m Hurdles - 30" / 0.762m 7th Grade: 1. Charli Jacobsen, 34.7; 2. Addison Steffes, 37.6.

4x100 Relay 7th Grade: 1. Groton: (Mya Moody, Zoe Olson, Charli Jacobsen, Andi Iverson), 59.9.

4x100 Relay 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Rowan Patterson, Kinley Sandness, Libby Johnson, Brynlee Dunker), 58.0.

4x200 Relay 7th Grade: 2. Groton: (Mya Moody, Zoe Olson, Brynlee Dunker, Avery Huber), 2:07.1.

4x200 Relay 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Kinley Sandness, Rowan Patterson, Libby Johnson, Andi Iverson), 2:02.2.

4x400 Relay 7th Grade: 2. Groton: (Brynlee Dunker, Taylor Fliehs, Avery Huber, Rowan Hanson), 5:09.0.

Shot Put - 6lb 7th Grade: 14. Lillian Davis, 22' 0.75"; 19. Hadley Heilman, 18' 0.5".

Shot Put - 6lb 8th Grade: 12. Andi Gauer, 20' 8.5".

Discus - 1kg 7th Grade: 5. Lillian Davis, 52' 1".

Discus - 1kg 8th Grade: 8. Andi Gauer, 49' 10".

Nick Groeblichhoff Puts On Strong Contact Performance As Groton Area Tigers Varsity Take The Win Over Outlaws

By GameChanger Media

Nick Groeblichhoff collected three hits in five at bats, as Groton Area Tigers Varsity defeated Outlaws 16-11 on Friday at Miller. Groeblichhoff doubled in the fourth inning, doubled in the sixth inning, and singled in the second inning.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity collected 15 hits and Outlaws had 11 in the high-scoring affair.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity got on the board in the top of the first inning after an error scored two runs, and Case Reints drew a walk, scoring one run.

A double by Alex Abeln, and a single by TC Schuster helped Groton Area Tigers Varsity extend their early lead in the second.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity added one run in the third after .

Groton Area Tigers Varsity scored six runs on three hits in the top of the fourth inning. Groeblichhoff doubled, scoring two runs, an error scored one run, Reints doubled, scoring one run, a wild pitch scored one run, and Haiden Maul induced Schuster to hit into a fielder's choice, but one run scored.

Outlaws scored seven runs on five hits in the bottom of the fourth inning. Seth Roseland was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, Cody Fanning singled, scoring one run, Carter Fanning singled, scoring one run, Jett Kleinsasser grounded out, scoring one run, Chase Hurd singled, scoring two runs, and Gavin Runge drew a walk, scoring one run.

Groeblichhoff earned the win for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The pitcher allowed three hits and two runs over three and one-third innings, striking out five and walking one. Kleinsasser took the loss for Outlaws. The hurler went three and one-third innings, surrendering 13 runs (nine earned) on 11 hits, striking out six and walking five. Isaiah Scepaniak and Reints each appeared in relief for Groton Area Tigers Varsity.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity tallied 15 hits in the game. Karsten Fliehs and Groeblichhoff each collected three hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Schuster, Abeln, and Groeblichhoff each drove in two runs for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Lincoln Krause and Reints each collected multiple hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Gavin Englund led Groton Area Tigers Varsity with two walks. Overall, the team had a strong eye at the plate, collecting seven walks for the game.

Outlaws tallied 11 hits in the game. Kleinsasser and Hurd were tough to handle back-to-back in the lineup, as each drove in three runs for Outlaws. Hurd went 3-for-5 at the plate to lead Outlaws in hits. Jayson Lacombe collected two hits for Outlaws in five at bats. Outlaws turned one double play in the game.

Next up for Groton Area Tigers Varsity is a game at Lennox on Sunday, taking on Lennox at 1 p.m. and West Central at 3 p.m.

In-Person Absentee Voting Will Begin on Monday, April 27, 2026 In Brown County for June 2, 2026 Primary

Brown County, SD — The Brown County Auditor's Office is notifying voters that in-person absentee voting will officially begin on Monday, April 27, 2026 for the June 2 Primary Election in the Community Room of the Brown County Courthouse.

Registered voters in Brown County may cast an absentee ballot in person, during regular business hours, which are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. Voters are reminded that identification is required when voting, consistent with SDCL 12-18-6.1.

In-person absentee voting is conducted in accordance with SDCL 12-19-2, which authorizes absentee voting beginning forty-six days prior to an election. Absentee voting provides a convenient option for voters who may be unable to vote on Election Day. The in-person absentee voting period will close at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, June 1, 2026, the day before the election in accordance with SDCL 12-19-2.1.

Voter Registration deadline for the June 2nd Primary Election is May 18, 2026.

For additional information, regarding absentee voting, voter eligibility or ballot procedures, please contact the Brown County Auditor's Office at 605-626-7110 or visit <https://www.brown.sd.us/departments/auditors/elections>.

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

Lost season for some winter sports leads to adaptation in Black Hills visitor industry

Extreme snow shortages all but wiped out some activities, as fair-weather options benefited

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

Dry, dormant grass surrounded Terry Peak this winter. The ski area was a patch of artificial white amid miles of brown.

The Black Hills experienced one of its driest, warmest winters on record, according to state climatologist Laura Edwards.

"You see a lot of top 10s across South Dakota, essentially," Edwards said. "I think that's the story of the winter."

In the Black Hills, winter weather is an economic lifeline during tourism's offseason. The visitor industry of the northern Black Hills, in particular, is built around snowy winters.

From October through early April, snowfall in the northern Black Hills was about 8 feet less than average. Other parts of the Black Hills saw deficits of 2-3 feet.

That lack of snow impacted businesses that depend on winter recreation, such as downhill skiing, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing. Owners and industry workers expect warmer winters to continue, forcing them to adapt.

Winter precipitation amounts are trending downward and average winter temperatures are trending upward in Lawrence County, which encompasses the northern Black Hills, according to data from the National Centers for Environmental Information. The county is trending an inch less in precipitation between December and March compared to the late 1800s, and it's trending 4 degrees Fahrenheit higher.

\$6.5 million investment keeps ski area open

This winter was among the "most challenging" in Linda Derosier's 38 years at Terry Peak.

"It's tough to remind people or get them to understand that there was snow at Terry Peak when they're looking at brown grass in their backyard," said Derosier, the ski area's marketing director.

Winters have become warmer in the last few decades, Derosier said, and snowfall in the northern Black Hills varies widely year to year.

The resort spent \$6.5 million over the past two years to update its snowmaking system, replacing water lines, adding snowmaking locations and installing permanent snow guns.

The investment more than tripled snowmaking capacity and helped sustain operations this season. Ski resorts across the United States closed early — or didn't open at all — because temperatures were too warm to make snow.

Derosier said employees often made snow overnight when temperatures were cool enough on the mountain, which is one of South Dakota's highest with a summit above 7,000 feet. She added that the visitors who came this year are more likely to return and buy season passes because they saw the resort was able to maintain reliable conditions.

Cross-country skiing, snowmobiling nearly nonexistent

No snow means no business for Recreational Springs Resort, said owner Brent Eslinger. In addition to lodging, the resort offers a restaurant, bar and snowmobile rentals.

Snowmobiling relies entirely on natural snowfall, and riders were largely unable to get out in the Black Hills this winter.

The annual Deadwood Snocross National was canceled in January because of lack of snow. Eslinger still hosted an annual vintage snowmobile club gathering, though members couldn't take their usual ride.

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Cross-country skiing was nearly nonexistent, said Eric Anderson, volunteer grooming coordinator for the Black Hills Nordic Ski Club. The nonprofit maintains cross-country skiing and snowshoe trails in the northern Black Hills.

The club typically grooms trails 30 to 40 times a year. This winter, Anderson said the club groomed three times.

"When skiing isn't available, people pivot to other things to do," Anderson said. "It makes it tough to maintain your user group, community and interest level when you don't have snow every year and it isn't as predictable."

Without winter recreation, Eslinger has to work harder to bring locals and visitors into his business. Recreational Springs Resort also rents all-terrain vehicles and hosts events and private parties, such as weddings and reunions.

"You need to have that winter traffic to help make it through the rest of the year," Eslinger said. "It's either that or become a seasonal operation. Which, even then, I have fixed costs I have to pay for and that winter income helps offset a lot of that."

Economic, visitor impact

Other Black Hills winter events were canceled due to warm, dry conditions. Chinook Days in Spearfish and the Burning of the Beetle in Custer were canceled, the former due to lack of snow and the latter due to high fire danger.

Visitor spending varied across the region this winter. Meade County, which includes Sturgis, experienced declines in winter visitor spending, according to the South Dakota Tourism dashboard, while Pennington County, which includes Rapid City, posted gains.

Custer County visitor spending fluctuated — down 23.8% in December compared with the previous year, up 22.6% in January and down 25.5% in February. Lawrence County, which includes Spearfish and Deadwood, had modest gains in December and January before a 7% drop in February.

Michelle Thompson, president of the Black Hills and Badlands Tourism Association, said snow-dependent businesses struggled, but other businesses benefited from the milder weather. Visitors had easier access to hiking trails, parks and museums.

The Black Hills Stock Show and Rodeo in Rapid City, an annual indoor winter event, "had a great year," Thompson said, with record crowds and sold-out performances.

Thompson said visitor numbers throughout the Black Hills and Badlands region remained comparable to years past — total visitor trips were down 0.8% compared with last winter, while visitor spending increased 1.7%. The winter season accounts for just under a quarter of annual visitation.

"We feel for the businesses that rely on winter sports, and we know it wasn't great for them," Thompson said. "When the weather is good, we draw in visitors for other experiences we have."

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

COMMENTARY

Democrats find few places in South Dakota for the grassroots to take root

by Dana Hess

If you're feeling a little confused while reading your local newspaper, that's not an uncommon occurrence this time of year. The story that's confusing is the roundup listing all the local candidates running for the Legislature. There's something about one of them that's familiar, but you just can't recall the context.

The roundup typically includes a little biographical data about each of the candidates. Since you're a good citizen, you dutifully read the story. That's when you realize what made the candidate familiar — he's

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your county's Democratic Party chairman.

That's not uncommon if no one else steps up to run for the Legislature. The local Democratic Party chairman has to take one for the team, usually in the hopes that someone more suited to the job will come along. As the election nears, some Democratic candidates drop out. It seems that taking one for the team doesn't include being humiliated at the ballot box.

South Dakota Democrats are going through something similar this year at the top of their ticket. Their candidate for governor is Dan Ahlers, executive director of the state party. It seems the best Democrats could do was field the candidate who's supposed to be recruiting candidates for their party.

There was another entrant in the Democratic gubernatorial sweepstakes, but 20-year-old college student Robert Arnold failed to gather enough valid signatures on his nominating petition.

Ahlers does have some qualifications for governor, having served in the Legislature for six years. Still, it looks like desperation when the top guy in the party hierarchy has to be enlisted to run for governor. But at least Democrats have a candidate for governor. The same can't be said for many of the legislative districts in the state.

Democrats have fielded 13 candidates for the state Senate, and two of those will face off in the only Democratic primary during this election cycle. That means in November they'll field 12 candidates for the 35-member Senate. Even if all those Democrats would get elected — a tall order in South Dakota — they would still be handing a Senate majority to Republicans.

The odds for Democrats aren't much better in the 70-member state House where they have fielded 33 candidates. That means, without a vote being cast, Democrats have handed over a majority to Republicans in that chamber, too.

Circumstances are considerably different in the Republican Party, where candidates are crawling all over themselves to get a place on the ballot. Republicans have fielded 58 Senate candidates and will have 23 Senate primaries. In the House, they have enlisted 111 candidates and will have 25 House primaries.

It certainly looks like a few more of those Democratic Party county chairs need to take one for the team. Unfortunately, that team is depleted. A look at the list of Democratic county chairs shows that in 34 of South Dakota's 66 counties, the chairman slot is listed as "vacant." It's hard to have a grassroots movement when there's no place for the grass to take root.

With just three members in the Senate and five in the House, the numbers for legislative Democrats have nowhere to go but up. It looked like this might be their year with an unpopular president conducting an unpopular war, gas prices soaring and the economy tanking. Those factors might get more people to vote Democratic.

Don't read this as an endorsement of Democratic policies or candidates. It's not necessarily the philosophy of Democrats that's needed so much as their presence. This election cycle, most of the debates on issues will once again be within the Republican Party. They will feature candidates seeking a few drops of contention in an ocean of agreement. Voters are better off with a debate featuring candidates who actually disagree on the state's path forward.

Voters may want to vent their anger at the polls, but in many cases across the state, that won't be an option. Once again, this state's Democratic Party has failed to recruit enough candidates to fill out a state ballot. In November, that will leave South Dakota voters without much of a choice.

Dana Hess spent more than 25 years in South Dakota journalism, editing newspapers in Redfield, Milbank and Pierre. He's retired and lives in Brookings, working occasionally as a freelance writer.

NewsMedia Association recognizes lawmaker for open government efforts

BY: SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT STAFF

State Rep. Mary J. Fitzgerald's work to improve South Dakota's open government laws has earned her recognition as the 2026 recipient of the South Dakota NewsMedia Association's Eagle Award.

The award is given to an individual or group demonstrating outstanding efforts to protect and enhance open government and the public's right to know.

Fitzgerald, a St. Onge Republican representing District 31, has sponsored various bills during her time in the South Dakota Legislature that have strengthened open government. This year, she sponsored a bill that helped clarify language in the open records laws to mirror similar language in the state's open meetings laws. It becomes law on July 1.

In 2025, she sponsored a bill that requires governing boards to annually review the open meetings laws and a bill that clarified the use of teleconferencing in the open meetings laws. Both bills became law.

"Rep. Fitzgerald has been a true advocate for open government issues during her time in the Legislature," SDNA Executive Director David Bordewyk said in a news release. "She is always willing to work for solutions that are reasonable, balanced and ultimately protect the public's right to know. We are appreciative of her commitment to these issues and are proud to honor her with the SDNA Eagle Award."

Fitzgerald is completing her third term as a state representative. She is a member of the House Judiciary Committee and the House Local Government Committee.

Fitzgerald will receive the Eagle Award during the association's annual convention on May 1 in Deadwood.

SDNA started the Eagle Award in 2002 to honor those who support and advocate for the First Amendment and open government issues in South Dakota. The first recipients were the 2002 state Supreme Court justices for their work to bring cameras into their courtroom proceedings. Among other recipients over the years have been the late journalist and educator Chuck Baldwin (2024), Rep. Tim Reed (2022), Sen. Arthur Rusch (2019), Gov. Dennis Daugaard (2018), Sioux Falls resident Gordon Heber (2010) and Attorney General Larry Long (2004).

The South Dakota NewsMedia Association, based in Brookings, represents the state's newspapers and digital news outlets, including South Dakota Searchlight.

Appeals panel strikes down Trump's ban on asylum seekers at southern border

BY: ARIANA FIGUEROA

WASHINGTON — A federal appeals court Friday blocked President Donald Trump's executive order that disallowed immigrants claiming asylum at the southern border.

A three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia found that immigration law allows those fleeing persecution to apply for asylum.

"Congress did not intend to grant the Executive the expansive removal authority it asserts," Judge J. Michelle Childs wrote, adding that they upheld a lower court's ruling.

The three panel judges who heard the case were Childs, Justin R. Walker and Cornelia T.L. Pillard. Walker, a Trump appointee, filed a separate opinion concurring in part and dissenting in part from the majority.

Childs was appointed by former President Joe Biden and Pillard was appointed by former President Barack Obama.

"The (Immigration Nationality Act) does not allow the President to remove Plaintiffs under summary removal procedures of his own making," according to the ruling. "Nor does it allow the Executive to suspend Plaintiffs' right to apply for asylum, deny Plaintiffs' access to withholding of removal under the INA, or curtail mandatory procedures for adjudicating Plaintiffs' Convention Against Torture claims."

The White House did not respond to States Newsroom's request for comment.

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"This decision puts an end to the inhumane Trump policy of sending people, including families with little children, back to horrific danger without even a hearing," American Civil Liberties Union attorney Lee Gelernt, who argued the appeal, said in a statement. "The court made clear that the president does not have the unilateral power to wipe away all of the asylum laws enacted by Congress."

One of Trump's first executive orders suspended entry to the southern border on the grounds that there was an "invasion," which the administration claimed was a condition that allowed the president to invoke a section of the law to suspend asylum claims.

The executive order is part of Trump's immigration crackdown, as he aims to conduct mass deportations of immigrants in the interior and cease migration to the U.S. through curbing access to asylum and refugee resettlement.

In response to the order, immigration advocacy groups filed a class action lawsuit against the Trump administration. The groups who brought the suit were the ACLU, the Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services, Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, and Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project.

RAICES, Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center and the Florence Immigrant And Refugee Rights Project provide legal services to immigrants, and argued that Trump's executive order harms the legal aid work of the individual plaintiffs.

Ariana covers the nation's capital for States Newsroom. Her coverage areas include immigration, congressional policy and legal challenges with a focus on how those policies impact the lives of immigrants and migrants coming to the U.S.

Trump administration investigation of Fed Chair Jerome Powell scrapped

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — The Department of Justice dropped its investigation Friday of the Federal Reserve and Chair Jerome Powell over building renovation costs, a move that could open the door for new Fed leadership next month — and signaled a victory for North Carolina Sen. Thom Tillis.

U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro said her office closed the probe after a request to the Fed's inspector general to examine the cost overruns.

"The IG has the authority to hold the Federal Reserve accountable to American taxpayers. I expect a comprehensive report in short order and am confident the outcome will assist in resolving, once and for all, the questions that led this office to issue subpoenas," Pirro wrote on X just after 10 a.m. Eastern.

Pirro said she "will not hesitate to restart a criminal investigation should the facts warrant doing so."

Powell, whose term expires in May, has been the target of repeated public criticism from President Donald Trump, who threatened to fire the central bank's chair if he did not lower interest rates.

The Trump administration's criminal inquiry into Powell for a \$2.5 billion renovation project at the Fed's offices has been eyed with suspicion, including from his own party.

Tillis, R-N.C., said he would not vote for Trump's pick to replace Powell, former Fed Board Governor Kevin Warsh, unless the administration dropped its "bogus" investigation.

A favorable vote by Tillis on the closely divided Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs is necessary to advance Warsh's nomination, as all panel Democrats oppose him.

Tillis's office did not immediately respond for comment.

A federal judge last month blocked the administration's subpoenas to probe the Fed and Powell.

The Department of Justice declined to comment and referred States Newsroom to Pirro's social media post.

A White House official reaffirmed Pirro's announcement Friday.

"American taxpayers deserve answers about the Federal Reserve's fiscal mismanagement, and the Office of the Inspector General's more powerful authorities best position it to get to the bottom of the matter.

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The White House remains as confident as before that the Senate will swiftly confirm Kevin Warsh as the next Federal Reserve Chairman to finally restore competence and confidence in Fed decision-making," White House spokesperson Kush Desai told States Newsroom in a statement.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., issued a statement dismissing the DOJ's announcement as "an attempt to clear the path for Senate Republicans to install President Trump's sock puppet Kevin Warsh as Fed Chair."

"Let's be clear what the Justice Department announced today: they threatened to restart the bogus criminal investigation into Fed Chair Powell at any time while failing to drop their ridiculous criminal probe against Governor (Lisa) Cook. Anyone who believes Donald Trump's corrupt scheme to take over the Fed is over is fooling themselves," she wrote on X and Bluesky late Friday morning, referring to Trump's abrupt August firing of Fed Board Governor Cook over alleged financial fraud.

Cook successfully challenged her firing in two lower courts. The U.S. Supreme Court is reviewing whether Trump legally dismissed Cook.

Trump, who routinely posts about news of the day on his own social media platform Truth Social, had not commented on the announcement as of 12:30 p.m. Eastern.

During an unrelated Oval Office event Thursday, Trump sidestepped a question about what he hoped to learn from Pirro's investigation into Powell and the Fed.

Instead, Trump responded by saying he could have completed the Fed's Washington, D.C., headquarters renovation for \$25 million and "had money left over."

"On top of that, he's been terrible on interest rates because he should have lowered interest rates. That's why call him Jerome 'too late.' 'Too late' — that's his nickname — Jerome 'too late' Powell. He likes me a lot," Trump said.

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.

How Trump's order on mail ballots threatens Postal Service independence

BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN

President Donald Trump's executive order on mail voting would shatter decades of U.S. Postal Service independence intended to shield it from partisan politics, postal experts and attorneys say.

Postal experts said Trump ordering the postmaster general to take any action — let alone on a matter as sensitive as elections — violates guardrails in federal law against presidential control of the mail. Multiple people with deep knowledge of Postal Service history said they couldn't recall a similar order in the agency's modern era.

"For the president to direct the postmaster general to do anything, including handling these ballots, is contrary to the statutes, contrary to law," said James Campbell Jr., an attorney in the Washington, D.C., area who consults on postal law.

The order, signed March 31, attracted swift condemnation as an unconstitutional attempt by Trump to control state-run elections. If it stands, the directive would also represent a White House power grab over the Postal Service, which remains a key part of American life and business.

Trump's order directs the postmaster general, who acts as the Postal Service's CEO, to set out rules that would require states to notify the Postal Service if they intend to send ballots through the mail during federal elections. States that want to use the mail would be required to provide lists of mail voters to the Postal Service, which would be prohibited from delivering ballots to individuals not on a list.

A Board of Governors leads the Postal Service, and holds the power to hire and fire the postmaster general. No more than five of the nine governors may belong to the same political party.

While presidents nominate the governors and the Senate confirms them, they serve seven-year terms. The length, in theory, insulates them from political pressure.

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S. David Fineman, a Philadelphia attorney nominated to the Board of Governors by President Bill Clinton who served as its chairman from 2003 to 2005, said he had never heard of the White House or a president directing the postmaster general to take certain actions. He called the executive order highly unusual.

"The postmaster general serves at the pleasure of the board," Fineman said.

The board currently has only four members, all appointed by President Joe Biden, and five vacancies. Trump has sent four nominations to the U.S. Senate this year. The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee has not scheduled confirmation hearings for the nominees.

Cash-strapped service

Trump has expressed interest in having more control over the mail.

Last year, he floated the possibility of merging the Postal Service with the Commerce Department, a move that would require approval by Congress. The Washington Post reported in February 2025 that Trump was expected to try to fire the Board of Governors and take control of the Postal Service.

The Trump administration takes a dim view of independent agencies. Many allies of the president subscribe to the unitary executive theory, the idea that the U.S. Constitution grants the president full power over the entirety of the executive branch — meaning Congress cannot constitutionally create agencies that exist outside of White House control.

Trump has moved to assert authority over a number of independent and quasi-independent agencies since taking office, most notably the Federal Reserve. The Department of Justice is investigating cost overruns on a Federal Reserve construction project, widely seen as a pretext to target Jerome Powell, the Federal Reserve chairman whose interest rate policy has angered Trump.

The Postal Service is under tremendous financial pressure — potentially making it more vulnerable to proposals to bring it under White House control. Mail volume peaked in 2006 at 213 billion pieces that year. The Postal Service today handles 109 billion pieces annually.

The current postmaster general, David Steiner, told a U.S. House committee last month that the Postal Service will run out of cash within a year without changes to its prices and operations. The Postal Service is generally funded through stamps and other forms of user revenue, not by tax dollars.

Steiner emphasized the independent nature of the Postal Service throughout his prepared testimony. He has laid out a number of options to improve the Postal Service's financial stability, including changes to pension funding and raising its borrowing limit from \$15 billion, a level that's remained unchanged since 1992.

"It is important to remember that we face these challenges as a self-financed, independent establishment of the Executive Branch," Steiner wrote.

Congress approved sweeping legislation in 1970 reorganizing the U.S. Post Office Department into the U.S. Postal Service, an independent corporation. Before that, the postmaster general was a Cabinet-level position nominated by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

Trump's order marks "a dramatic shift away from the intent of the 1970 legislation to insulate the Postal Service from interference," Joseph M. Adelman, a history professor at Framingham State University in Massachusetts who has researched mail history, said.

Election security

The White House didn't directly answer States Newsroom's questions about Trump's views on the independence of the Postal Service or the legal justification for the executive order.

"Election integrity has always been a top priority for President Trump, and the American people sent him back to the White House because they overwhelmingly supported his commonsense election integrity agenda," White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said in a statement.

"The President will do everything in his power to lawfully defend the safety and security of American elections and to ensure that only American citizens are voting in them."

Jackson also called on Congress to pass the SAVE America Act, which would require voters to prove

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their citizenship when registering.

The Postal Service didn't answer questions about how it plans to respond to the order. A USPS spokesperson said only that the Postal Service was reviewing it.

Lawsuits

Steiner has indicated he's awaiting a court decision on how to proceed.

"If a court says that's not what the law means, we'll follow that," Steiner told The New York Times after the executive order was signed. "And so from our perspective, we don't get involved in policy or law, we just follow the law."

The order on mail ballots faces at least five lawsuits. The Democratic National Committee, top Democrats in Congress and Democratic state officials have all sued. The legal challenges emphasize the Postal Service's independence in federal law.

The lawsuit filed by the DNC, top Democratic lawmakers and other Democratic campaign groups, asserts the Postal Service is structured to operate independently of partisan politics. The complaint calls the Postal Service "indispensable" to voting by mail, noting that it delivered more than 222 million pieces of ballot mail in 2024, including nearly 100 million general election ballots.

A dozen Republican state attorneys general filed motions in court this week seeking to defend the executive order from the Democratic legal challenges. The motions call the order an example of cooperative federalism to provide states with optional resources to help protect their elections.

The GOP officials argue the Democrats lack standing to challenge the Postal Service provisions of the order and that their objections are premature because the Postal Service hasn't finalized any new rules on mail ballots.

The order "simply directs" the Postal Service "to initiate rulemaking—it does not regulate the States directly and it does not directly inhibit anyone's voting rights," a court filing by the state attorneys general says.

The states involved in the Republican-led defense of the order include Alabama, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota and Texas.

Vote-by-mail

Mail-in voting surged in 2020's general election amid the COVID-19 pandemic, when 43% of voters cast their votes by mail. The percentage of voters mailing their ballots has fallen from that peak but remains above pre-pandemic levels. About 30% of voters cast mail ballots in 2024, according to data gathered by the U.S. Election Assistance Commission.

During the 2024 election, 584,463 mail ballots returned by voters were rejected by election officials — 1.2% of returned mail ballots. About 18% of those ballots were rejected because they didn't arrive on time.

American Postal Workers Union President Jonathan Smith said in a statement that the Postal Service doesn't block mailers from sending letters or refuse to deliver letters because of the identity of the sender. Postal workers take extraordinary measures to ensure ballots reach their destinations promptly and securely, he said.

"Postal workers take the sanctity of the mail seriously, and every process and policy of the Postal Service ensures that mail is accepted, processed, and delivered, no matter who sent it or where it is going," Smith said.

On Monday, more than 100 U.S. House Democrats sent a letter to Trump demanding he refrain from future actions that undermine the Postal Service's independence and calling on him to rescind the executive order. The letter says the order sets "a dangerous precedent for political interference" in postal service operations.

Senate Democrats followed up with a letter to Steiner and the USPS Board of Governors on Tuesday, urging the Postal Service to not implement the order. The letter, signed by 37 senators, including Minority Leader Chuck Schumer of New York, calls the Postal Service's independence a "hallmark" of its operations.

"The Postal Service doesn't care which politicians you may support," Sen. Gary Peters, a Michigan

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Democrat, said on the Senate floor last week. "Its only priority is to deliver the mail to every community in the country."

"The president is now trying to corrupt this mission," Peters, the top Democrat on the Senate committee that oversees USPS, said. "If the president is successful in forcing the Postal Service to play a role in running elections, he will completely erode the trust of this storied institution."

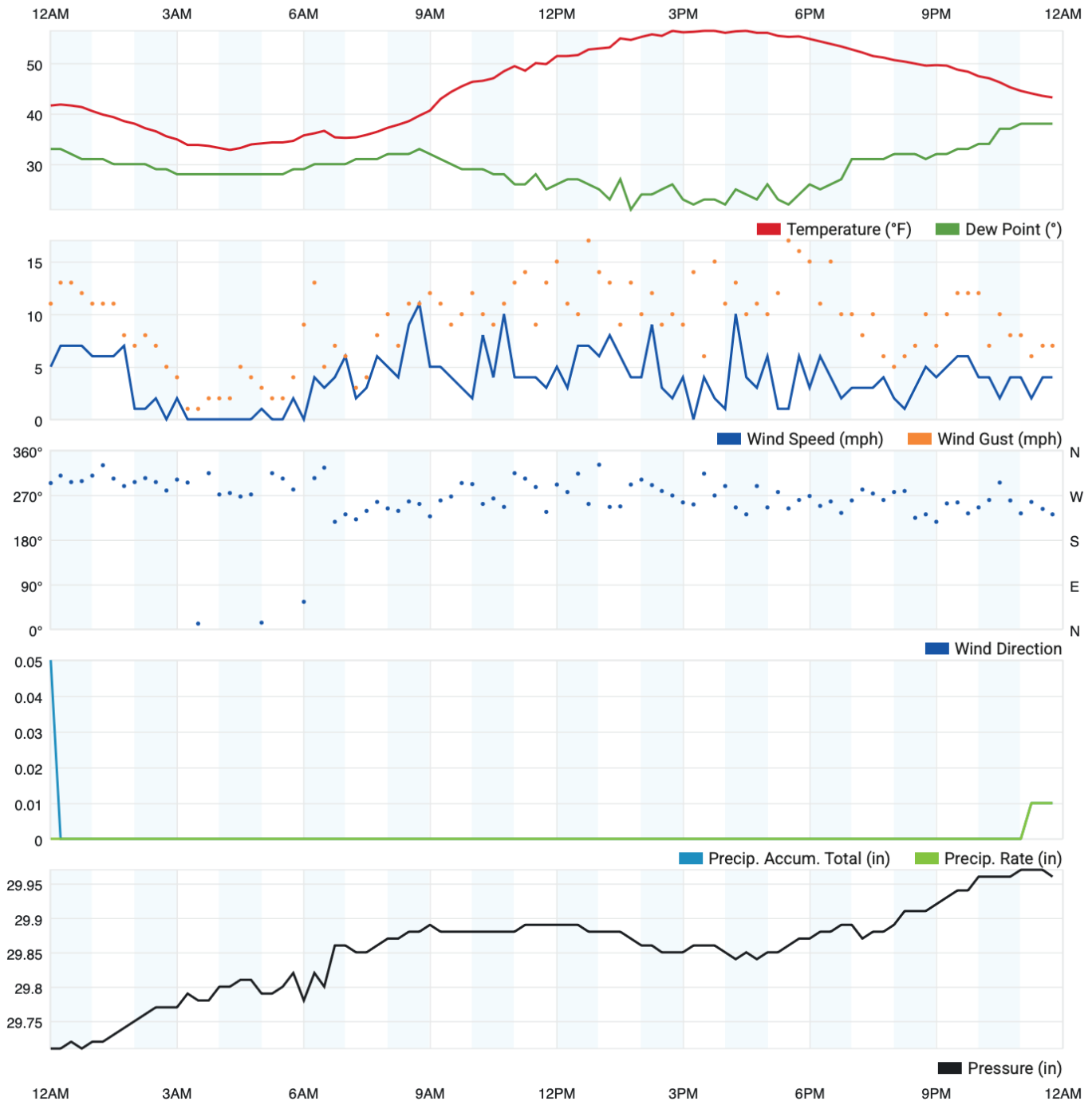
Jonathan Shorman covers democracy for States Newsroom. Based in Kansas City, his coverage area includes elections and voting rights, fights over state and federal power, civil liberties and more. An alumnus of the University of Kansas, he previously covered politics for The Kansas City Star.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

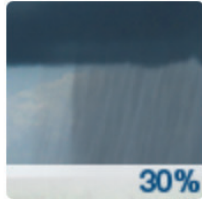
April 24, 2026



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Today



High: 50 °F

Chance
Showers

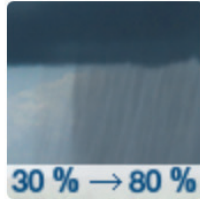
Tonight



Low: 31 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

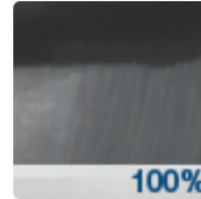
Sunday



High: 56 °F

Chance
Showers then
Showers

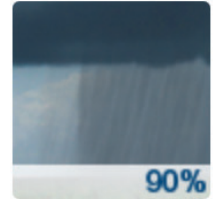
Sunday Night



Low: 41 °F

Showers

Monday



High: 51 °F

Showers and
Breezy

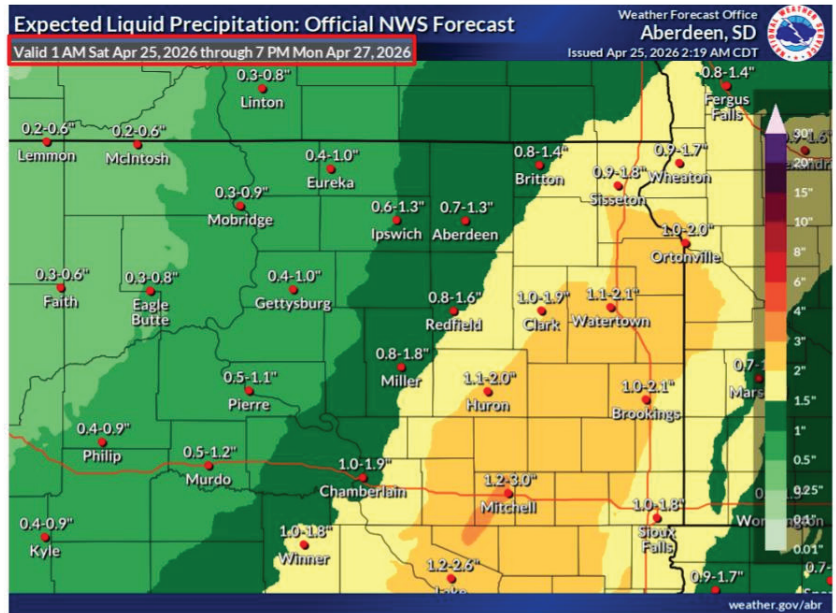


Will Anyone See Two Inches Of Rain?

April 25, 2026
3:26 AM

Cumulative Precipitation Forecast Amounts through 7PM CDT Monday, April 27th

- Combined precipitation forecast amounts from today's and Sunday/Monday's weather systems.
 - Through tonight: mainly less than 0.25in of precipitation expected.
 - Portions of Hamlin, Codington, Deuel and Grant Counties may see more than 0.25in from this current weather system.
- 1.00-1.50+ inches of precipitation possible from Sunday afternoon through Monday evening mainly in and east of the James River valley region.



National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

The first of 2 rounds of precipitation is occurring right now; the second round is forecast to develop during the day Sunday and persist through Monday evening. The current weather event should bring a trace to a couple tenths of an inch of precipitation, generally along and east of a line from Pierre to Aberdeen. The second round is expected to dump an inch or more of rain over the forecast area, particularly from the James River valley eastward.

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Near To Below Normal Temperatures

April 25, 2026
3:39 AM

Mostly below normal high temperatures throughout the 7-day forecast ↓

	Maximum Temperature (°F)						
	Forecast						
	4/25	4/26	4/27	4/28	4/29	4/30	5/1
	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Aberdeen	50	56	49	53	57	57	61
Miller	47	52	49	52	59	57	62
Mobridge	53	52	47	52	57	56	63
Murdo	45	47	46	49	59	57	63
Ortonville	48	57	53	51	55	53	56
Pierre	50	51	50	53	62	60	65
Sisseton	49	56	51	51	54	53	58
Watertown	47	54	51	50	54	52	56

40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75
Maximum Temperature Forecast (°F)

Similarly, mostly below normal low temperatures throughout the 7-day forecast ↓

	Minimum Temperature (°F)						
	Forecast						
	4/25	4/26	4/27	4/28	4/29	4/30	5/1
	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Aberdeen	37	31	37	30	31	32	31
Miller	37	34	38	30	31	32	31
Mobridge	24	30	36	28	31	31	31
Murdo	32	33	36	30	30	33	31
Ortonville	42	38	39	34	34	34	33
Pierre	36	35	39	31	32	34	33
Sisseton	40	36	38	33	34	35	33
Watertown	39	36	38	30	31	33	31

20 25 30 35 40 45 50
Minimum Temperature Forecast (°F)

Normal temperatures this time of year are in the upper 50s to mid 60s. Unfortunately, the forecast is not giving us those kinds of high temperatures. We are expecting upper 40s to upper 50s to continue through, at least, next Thursday. Lows are expected to be right around, to a little below, normal.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 57 °F at 3:03 PM

Low Temp: 33 °F at 4:10 AM

Wind: 17 mph at 11:05 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 97 in 1962

Record Low: 19 in 2013

Average High: 62

Average Low: 35

Average Precip in April.: 1.45

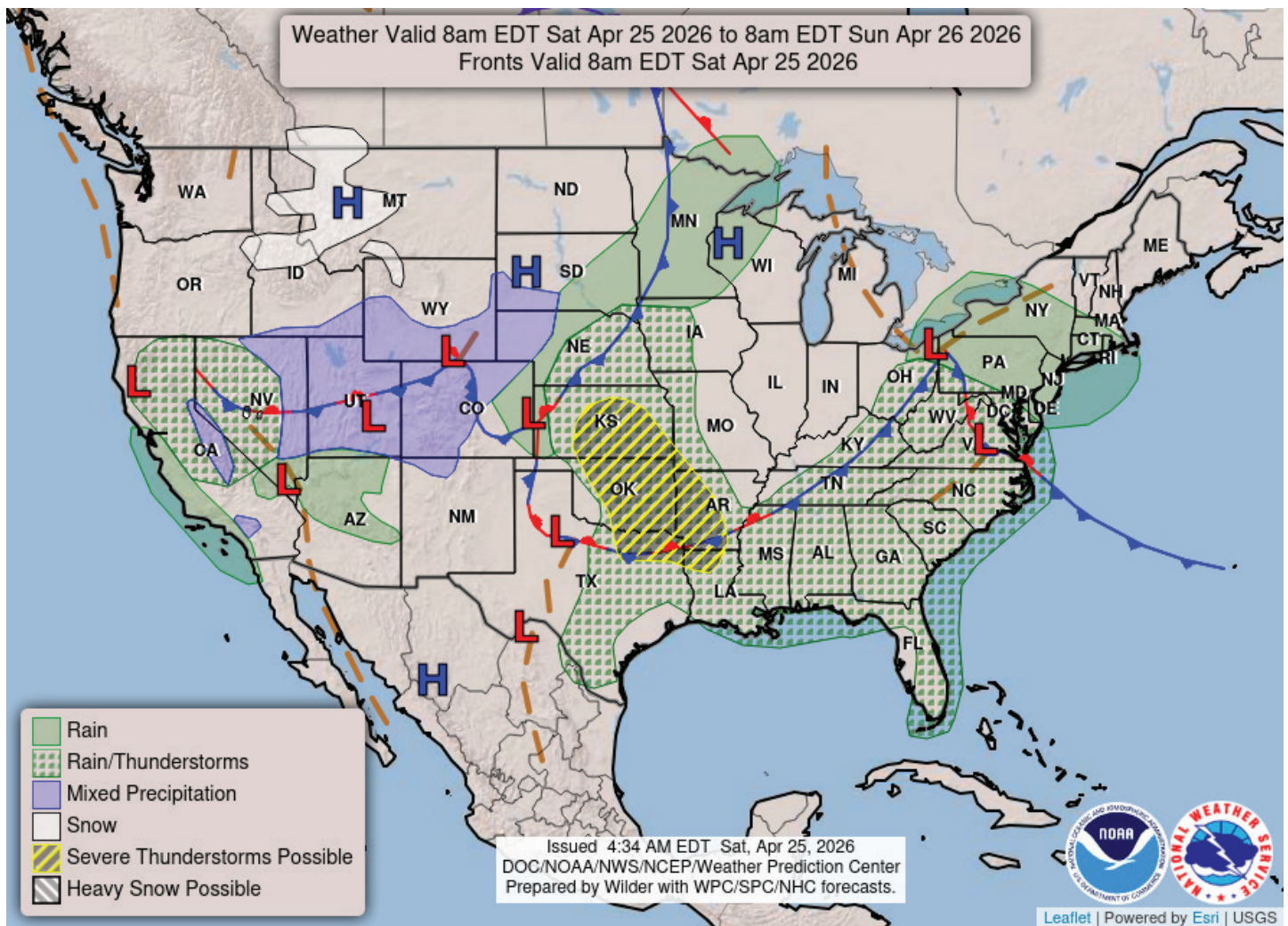
Precip to date in April.: 1.00

Average Precip to date: 3.51

Precip Year to Date: 2.62

Sunset Tonight: 8:30 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:28 am



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Today in Weather History

April 25th, 1994: Lightning from a thunderstorm 4 miles W of Aberdeen struck two houses, causing structural damage and starting a fire, which caused further damage to one home. The second house suffered damage only to a surge protector.

April 25th, 1996: An intense area of low pressure brought high winds of 30 to 50 mph with isolated gusts to 80 mph to central and north-central South Dakota from the morning to the evening of the 25th. The high winds picked up the dry April soil, lowering visibilities in blowing dust. Some places experienced dust storm conditions with low visibility and drifting dust. Many roofs lost shingles due to the strong winds. In Eagle Butte, the Vietnam Veterans Center roof was blown off. Other buildings were also damaged across the area, along with some broken windows. Some power poles and lines were downed west of Fort Pierre. Some trees and branches were also downed. Near Isabel, a cattle trailer was tipped over, and two calf shelters were destroyed. Also, a twenty-foot Conoco sign was blown down near Isabel, along with other signs damaged across the area. The dust storm reminded many of the 1930s. Some wind gusts include 60 mph at Mobridge and Selby, 70 mph at Miller, Pierre, and Murdo, and 80 mph at Isabel and Eagle Butte.

1875 — New York City received three inches of snow, the latest measurable snow of record for that location. (David Ludlum)

1898 — The temperature at Volcano Springs CA hit 118 degrees to establish a U.S. record for the month of April. (The Weather Channel)

1910 — Chicago, IL, was blanketed with 2.5 inches of snow, and a total of 6.5 inches between the 22nd and the 26th. It was the latest significant snow of record for the city. (The Weather Channel)

1920 — Atlanta, GA, received 1.5 inches of snow, and experienced their latest freeze of record with a morning low of 32 degrees. The high of just 39 degrees was only their second daily high colder than 40 degrees in April. (The Weather Channel)

1984 — A late season snowstorm struck the Northern Rockies and the Northern Plains. The storm produced some unusually high snowfall totals. The town of Lead, located in the Black Hills of western South Dakota, was buried under 67 inches of snow. Red Lodge, located in the mountains of southern Montana, reported 72 inches of snow. Up to 60 inches blanketed the mountains of northern Wyoming. It was rated the worst late season storm of record for much of the affected area. (25th-28th) (Storm Data) (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Low pressure off the coast of North Carolina produced heavy rain flooding creeks in the foothills and the piedmont area, before moving out to sea. The low pressure system also produced wind gusts to 50 mph in Virginia. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 — Thunderstorms racing at 65 mph produced large hail in Alabama and Georgia. Hail damage in Alabama was estimated at fifty million dollars, making it their worst weather disaster since Hurricane Frederick in 1979. Hail three inches in diameter accompanied a tornado near Valdosta GA. Hail four and a half inches in diameter was reported south of Atlanta GA. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front produced severe weather from North Carolina to Indiana and Ohio, with more than 70 reports of large hail and damaging winds. A strong (F-2) tornado hit Xenia OH injuring 16 persons and causing more than a million dollars damage. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather from Texas to Nebraska. Thunderstorms spawned fifteen tornadoes, including a powerful (F-4) tornado near Weatherford TX. Between 3 PM and 8 PM, a storm complex tracking northeastward across central Kansas spawned four tornadoes along a 119-mile path from Ness to Smith Center, with the last tornado on the ground for 55 miles. Del Rio TX was raked with hail two inches in diameter, and wind gusts to 112 mph. Brown County and Commanche County in Texas were deluged with up to 18 inches of rain, and flooding caused more than 65 million dollars damage. Two dozen cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Highs of 87 degrees at Flint MI and 90 degrees at Alpena MI were records for April. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

2008 — Anchorage, AK, receives a record 17.2 inches at the airport and 22 inches in northeast Anchorage from the 25th to 26th. The 15.5 inches on the 25th makes it the third most received on any one day in Anchorage.



The Enemy of Security

God's grace is inexhaustible—no sin is too great, no failure too frequent.

1 John 5:1-9: 1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.

3 For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

5 Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

7 For there are three that testify:

8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.

9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son.

God promised that anyone who believes Jesus died on the cross for their sin will live forever in heaven (John 6:40). However, unconfessed sin creates a barrier between the Lord and the believer, which can short-circuit faith and assurance.

When we confess wrongdoing, the Father forgives and cleanses us (1 John 1:9). By failing to admit to sin, however, a Christian will feel distant from God. He or she may feel unworthy of the Father's love and can even struggle with a sense of rejection. Some might even feel as if they are no longer saved. But that is impossible—while we can lose our assurance, we can never lose our salvation.

Too often, people mistake the Lord's chastening hand for confirmation of their lost condition. Actually, the opposite is true. The heavenly Father disciplines those He loves, so correction is proof that we are His children as He guides us back into fellowship with Him (Hebrews 12:6-7).

Jesus is our advocate before God. Like ancient Israel's high priests who offered blood sacrifices, He atoned for our sins by His own death on the cross. We can't sin our way out of His grace. The minute we confess our wrongdoing, blessed assurance from our Father comes flooding back into our heart.

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

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The Groton Independent

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.24.26

12 26 28 29 47 4

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 32 Mins 6
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.24.26

7 16 32 35 40 12

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$163,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.22.26

15 20 32 46 48 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$22,990,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 32 Mins 6
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.22.26

5 6 9 14 32

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$64,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 47 Mins 6
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.22.26

3 9 15 35 57 19

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 16 Mins 6
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.22.26

24 29 32 49 63 11

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$118,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 16 Mins 6
Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Miss Indian World pageant winners mark the end of a decades-long tradition

By SAVANNAH PETERS Associated Press

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Codi High Elk was a shy teenager most comfortable caring for horses on her family's ranch on the Cheyenne River Reservation when she threw away an application to compete in a new pageant for Indigenous women — an application her brother fished out of the trash, sending her on a path to becoming the first Miss Indian World.

That was in 1984, when High Elk remembers letting her six older siblings do most of the talking and wanting no part in a competition that required public speaking. But the event that transformed her from shy teen to an ambassador for her people has come to an end.

"From the day I got my crown, my life changed," said High Elk, who credits her time as Miss Indian World with giving her the confidence to pursue two degrees and a career expanding credit access for Lakota people. "I want that same opportunity for my granddaughters."

The pageant has been a headlining event at Gathering of Nations, a massive and at times controversial event that bills itself as the largest powwow in North America, for more than four decades. The competition shaped the lives of young women from across the U.S. and Canada eager to share cultural knowledge and compete for the prestigious title and iconic, intricately beaded crown.

But this year will be the last for the powwow, with the final Miss Indian World named in 2025. Organizers have said the time has come for the events to end, but gave no other details.

The pageant's rotating collection of beaded crowns are set to be retired when the two-day gathering culminates Saturday. In time they may be offered to a museum for display, said Melonie Matthews, daughter of the Gathering of Nations founder.

Stiff competition

Dania Wahwasuck, of the Prairie Band Potawatomi and Pyramid Lake Paiute tribes, won her title before a roaring crowd last year. Her pastel-colored crown and sash featuring a star quilt motif and another set that sparkles with rhinestones and shades of pink will be among those retired Saturday.

The pageant invited Indigenous women, aged 18 to 25, to compete. Contestants had to be single, with no children and pledge to maintain specific moral standards.

Contestants described an intense five-day process with interviews, public speaking and a highly anticipated traditional talent showcase.

Tori McConnell, who won the title in 2023, sought advice from Karuk and Yurok elders while developing her performance. She showcased traditional basketry, explaining first in Karuk and then in English how she weaved using materials gathered from her ancestral homelands in northwest California.

"To have our art recognized on that level was so validating," McConnell said. "Not just for me but for my community."

A cultural ambassador

The Miss Indian World crown has traveled around the world, from a Māori Haka competition in New Zealand to the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima, Japan and the Oceti Sakowin camp at the height of protests at Standing Rock against an oil pipeline.

In the summer of 1984, High Elk recalls scouring a Paris grocery store for ingredients to make fry bread and Lakota tripe soup for the university students who had invited her there.

"You become an ambassador not just for your own culture but for all Indigenous peoples," said Shayai Lucero, who was crowned Miss Indian World in 1997.

Lucero, who comes from Acoma and Laguna pueblos in New Mexico, did not grow up in a powwow culture. But at the 1997 Stanford University Powwow, she was embraced by a community of pueblo people who had been in the Bay Area for decades due to a federal program that sought to relocate Native Americans

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off reservations and into cities.

"All these people showed up who knew my family, knew our language and traditions," said Lucero. "Suddenly, I felt at home."

During their tenure, winners have advocated for causes ranging from Indigenous language revitalization to domestic violence prevention.

Cheyenne Kippenberger, Miss Indian World 2019, focused on mental health as COVID-19 forced ceremonies, cultural events and community gatherings to shut down. As the only two-year titleholder, she hosted online events and encouraged Native people to get vaccinated.

"I remember thinking, everybody's feeling really lonely and confined. We need to find a way to connect people," said Kippenberger, a citizen of the Seminole Nation of Florida.

The end of an era

There are no plans for the Miss Indian World pageant to continue, the organization said. The title is trademarked by the Gathering of Nations, Ltd., the nonprofit that operates the powwow and pageant.

Over the years, Gathering of Nations has been criticized and called overly commercial. Founder Derek Mathews, who at times has claimed distant Cherokee ancestry but is not a tribal citizen, has made few public comments in response.

Melonie Matthews, who is Santa Clara Pueblo on her mother's side, said the organization did not consider transferring the Miss Indian World trademark to any other group.

"The Miss Indian World pageant goes hand in hand with the powwow. It was never a stand-alone event," she said in an emailed statement.

Several former titleholders, however, have been exploring the creation of a new national pageant for Indigenous women.

"A lot of us were saying 'Miss Indian World is bigger than one powwow,'" Lucero said. "We don't need the powwow to continue her legacy."

Many tribal nations and powwows crown royalty. But young women who dream of representing their communities on a national, Native-focused pageant stage won't have that avenue. Five years ago, Miss Native American USA crowned its last winner. The Miss Indian Nations and Miss Indian America titles also are defunct.

Many past Miss Indian World titleholders who went on to become lawyers, teachers, entrepreneurs, language and culture bearers and sisters to one another say the crown empowered them as leaders.

"It's a bittersweet feeling," said Kippenberger, who now heads a tribal consulting firm. "But I feel full confidence and optimism that something positive will fill in the gap."

South Dakota Supreme Court rules officer names can be kept secret

By BART PFANKUCH/South Dakota News Watch South Dakota News Watch

Two police officers involved in a shootout with a suspect in 2024 can have their names protected from public view to prevent someone from potentially locating or harassing the officer or their families, according to a ruling Thursday by the South Dakota Supreme Court that reversed a lower court's decision.

Justices ruled that Marsy's Law, a state constitutional amendment approved by South Dakota voters to protect victims of crimes, applies to police officers.

"Whether a victim's name, initials or other information should be redacted will depend on the unique circumstances of each case and the asserted interests that should be balanced by the court," the ruling states.

The justices heard oral arguments in the case during a traveling court session held in March at the Hamre Recital Hall on the campus of Augustana University in Sioux Falls.

The case "State versus Albaidhani" centers around an April 3, 2024, incident in which two Sioux Falls officers stopped a vehicle and then exchanged gunfire with Samir Albaidhani. One officer and Albaidhani were shot but survived.

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As the criminal case progressed, the two officers' names were published in court documents, but they later asked a court to redact their names from future documents related to the case.

Marsy's Law is a constitutional amendment passed by South Dakota voters in 2016 that provides crime victims with a variety of rights, including being treated with fairness and respect and to be free from intimidation or harassment.

The law includes, "The right, upon request, to prevent the disclosure to the public, or the defendant or anyone acting on behalf of the defendant in the criminal case, of information or records that could be used to locate or harass the victim or the victim's family."

A circuit judge ruled that the two officer names or other identifying information could not be redacted from documents. The court noted that "a name alone does not provide location details about the individual. Nothing in the plain language of Marsy's Law prevents the disclosure of a victim's name."

That ruling prompted the appeal.

The officers were represented by Jeffrey R. Beck, an attorney representing the Fraternal Order of Police.

Beck told the court that releasing names of victims, including police officers, makes it easy for someone to find out where they live. Beck said he searched his own name online and found extensive information about himself, including everywhere he had lived back to his childhood.

Attorneys for Albaidhani included Kylie Beck and Emily Herbert of the Minnehaha County Public Defender's Office. Kylie Beck argued that keeping people's names out of public records could make it difficult for lawyers to contact them or subpoena them for interviews. She also said redacting names could interfere with a defendant's right to due process.

The case will now go back to circuit court "for further proceedings consistent with this opinion," the Supreme Court ruling states.

Gunfire and blasts rock Mali as attackers hit capital and other cities, residents say

By MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Gunmen attacked several locations in Mali's capital and other cities early Saturday in a possible coordinated assault, residents and authorities said.

Mali's army said in a statement that "unidentified armed terrorist groups targeted certain locations and barracks in the capital." It added that soldiers were "currently engaged in eliminating the attackers."

Mali has been plagued by insurgencies fought by affiliates of al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, as well as a separatist rebellion in the north.

An Associated Press journalist in Bamako heard sustained heavy weapons and automatic rifle gunfire coming from Modibo Keita International Airport, around 15 kilometers (9 miles) from the city center, and saw a helicopter over nearby neighborhoods. The airport is adjacent to an air base used by Mali's air force. A resident living near the airport also reported gunfire and three helicopters patrolling overhead.

Residents in other cities in Mali reported gunfire and blasts on Saturday morning, suggesting a possible coordinated attack by armed groups.

Gunmen entered the northeastern city of Kidal, taking control of some neighborhoods and leading to gunfire exchanges with the army, a former mayor of Kidal told AP over the phone. He spoke on condition of anonymity out of fear for his safety.

The Azawad separatist movement has been fighting for years to create the state of Azawad in northern Mali. They once drove security forces from the region, before a 2015 peace deal that has since collapsed paved the way for some ex-rebels to be integrated into the Malian military.

Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadane, a spokesperson for the Azawad Liberation Front, said on Facebook its forces had taken control of several areas of Kidal and Gao, another northeastern city. The AP could not independently verify his claim.

A resident of Gao said gunfire and explosions started in the early hours of Saturday and could still be heard in the late morning.

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"The force of the explosions is making the doors and windows of my house shake. I'm scared out of my wits," the resident told AP by phone. He spoke on condition of anonymity because of concerns for his safety. The resident said the gunfire came from the army camp and the airport, which are right next to each other.

A resident of Kati, a town near Bamako that is home to Mali's main military base, also said he was woken up early in the morning by the sounds of gunfire and explosions. Gen. Assimi Goita, the leader of Mali's military junta, resides in Kati.

The U.S. Embassy in Bamako issued a security alert, saying "there have been reports of explosions and gunfire near Kati and the Modibo Keita International Airport in Bamako" and that "U.S. citizens should shelter in place and avoid travel to these destinations until further information becomes available."

In 2024, an al-Qaida-linked group claimed an attack on Bamako's airport and a military training camp in the capital, killing scores of people.

Mali, alongside neighboring Niger and Burkina Faso, has long been battling armed groups affiliated with al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, a fight that has escalated over the past decade.

Following military coups, the juntas in the three countries have turned from Western allies to Russia for help combating Islamic militants.

But the security situation in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso has worsened in recent times, analysts say, with a record number of attacks by militants. Government forces have also been accused of killing civilians they suspect of collaborating with militants.

Trump claims progress in Mideast wars, but grievances could reignite them

By SAM METZ Associated Press

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AP) — The post-Oct. 7 order in the Middle East — such as it is — is barely pieced together by conditional ceasefires and mutual threats.

Iran has suffered severe blows, yet not enough to shake its posture at the negotiating table. Its allies Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza are degraded but functioning, with Israel still regularly launching strikes at both. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is under mounting pressure to translate military achievements into clear dividends ahead of elections later this year.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who boasts of his peacemaking abilities, still appears to be seeking a nuclear deal with Iran and wider peace in the Middle East. But talks so far have produced no results and the two countries are locked in an escalating standoff over the Strait of Hormuz.

Major military operations have halted, but the underlying grievances — which long predate Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack — have not been addressed. Millions of people are still displaced, and many fear the fighting could resume at any time.

Ceasefires "don't fix anything — they just stop things from getting worse," said Michael Ratney, a former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia. "It's part of an answer to an immediate political problem, which is (Trump) needs to get out of war and can't figure out how to do that."

A closed strait and an escalating standoff with Iran

For weeks, Trump has vacillated between threats to unleash major attacks on Iran's infrastructure — at one point threatening to end "a whole civilization" — and attempts to negotiate an agreement over its nuclear program and other disputes going back decades.

This week he extended a ceasefire but said he would maintain a U.S. naval blockade on Iranian ports. On Wednesday, he vowed to attack Iranian fast boats in the Strait of Hormuz, which Tehran has effectively choked off since the start of the war, sparking a worldwide energy crisis.

Iran has given no public indication it is willing to make concessions on its nuclear program, ballistic missiles or support for regional proxies. It says the strait will remain closed until the U.S. lifts its blockade and Israel halts attacks on Iran-backed groups like Hezbollah.

Neither side seems to want full-scale war and a new round of ceasefire talks was planned Saturday in

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Pakistan.

Iran's leaders, based on their statements on social media, seem to have concluded that they can withstand the blockade longer than Trump can bear soaring gas prices and an unpopular war, especially with U.S. midterm elections later this year.

Jon Alterman, chair of Global Security and Geostrategy at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, said Trump's record shows his instincts lean toward making headlines and announcing quick results.

"The most visible part of the fighting has stopped, but the less visible efforts are roaring ahead," he said. "Ceasefires can seem comfortable but lock in unsustainable patterns, with one side feeling it has lost the urgency to resolve the underlying conflict."

A shaky truce in Lebanon

A truce in Lebanon agreed to last week has largely held outside of the border area, where fighting continues. Israel has indicated it plans to occupy a swath of southern Lebanon indefinitely. The Iran-backed Hezbollah, which is not an official party to the truce, is demanding that Israel withdraw.

Trump announced a three-week extension of the truce on Thursday after a meeting between Israeli and Lebanese officials at the White House.

The U.S. and Israel have demanded that Lebanon's government assume responsibility for disarming Hezbollah. Beirut tried to enact part of a plan to do so before the outbreak of the latest fighting. But Lebanese leaders acknowledged their limited capacity, and their efforts yielded little as Hezbollah retained the ability to fire thousands of missiles and drones toward northern Israel over the past two months.

With Beirut unwilling to risk civil war by confronting the militants directly — especially while Israel occupies Lebanese territory — the ceasefire offers some reprieve.

As in Gaza, Israeli forces have drawn a "yellow line" in southern Lebanon, demolishing homes that Israel claims were used by Hezbollah, preventing people from returning and announcing strikes on people it says are militants attempting to cross it. Many in Lebanon fear a return to Israel's 1982-2000 occupation of the south, which ended after years of deadly Hezbollah attacks on Israeli troops.

On Wednesday, a day before the talks in Washington, Israeli strikes killed a well-known Lebanese journalist covering southern Lebanon and wounded another reporter. Health officials said Israeli forces fired on an ambulance crew that was trying to rescue journalist Amal Khalil and forced it to turn back. Israel denied that it targeted journalists or rescue teams.

Gaza's ceasefire holds, with no end in sight to its suffering

A U.S.-brokered ceasefire reached in October led to the release of the last remaining hostages held by Hamas and has halted major military operations. But Israel still carries out regular strikes against what it says are militant targets. Health officials in Gaza, seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts, have reported more than 790 Palestinians killed since last year's ceasefire, including about 225 children. There have also been occasional attacks on Israeli forces.

Israel says its withdrawal from the half of Gaza its forces control, the return of hundreds of thousands who were displaced, the establishment of a new political authority and desperately needed reconstruction all hinge on Hamas disarming — something the militant group has shown no sign of doing.

Hamas says it has offered proposals to give up its weapons while seeking further Israeli concessions and accusing Israel of violating the ceasefire.

That has left the vast majority of Gaza's more than 2 million people confined to sprawling tent camps or the ruins of their homes, with no end in sight to their suffering.

Israel says it has the right to respond to any ceasefire violations or movement across another "yellow line" there. Health officials say scores of civilians have been killed in the strikes.

A committee of Palestinian technocrats has been established to govern Gaza temporarily, but Israel has not allowed them to enter from Egypt, and Hamas still rules half of the territory.

Russian attacks kill 5 and wound more than 30 in Ukraine's Dnipro; 1 killed in Russia

By ELISE MORTON and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian drone and missile strikes on the Ukrainian city of Dnipro killed at least five people and wounded 34, local authorities said Saturday.

The bodies of four people were found in the ruins of a house destroyed in overnight attacks, Dnipropetrovsk regional head Oleksandr Hanzha said.

"The Russians have been hitting Dnipro and other cities and communities practically all night," Hanzha wrote on Telegram of the attacks, which caused fires to break out across Dnipro and partially destroyed several apartment buildings, businesses and a private house, wounding 27 people.

Another person was killed in a separate Russian attack on Dnipro Saturday afternoon, according to Hanzha, in the same residential area hit by the overnight strikes. A further seven people were wounded.

To the southwest, two people were wounded in overnight drone attacks on the Odesa region. Residential buildings, port infrastructure and cars were damaged in the south of the region, regional head Oleh Kiper said Saturday.

In Russia, a woman was killed and a man was seriously wounded by a Ukrainian drone strike in the border region of Belgorod, local officials said.

Following the overnight attacks, Romania's defense ministry said Saturday that drone fragments were found in a residential area of the southeastern city of Galati, near the NATO member's border with Ukraine. No casualties were reported.

Romania has confirmed drone fragments on its territory on multiple occasions.

The overnight attacks followed a prisoner swap Friday, in which Russia and Ukraine exchanged 193 service members.

Periodic prisoner exchanges have been one of the few positive outcomes of otherwise fruitless monthslong U.S.-brokered negotiations between Moscow and Kyiv. The talks have delivered no progress on key issues preventing an end to Russia's invasion of its neighbor, now in its fifth year.

While meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on Saturday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukraine is open to continuing peace talks with Russia in Azerbaijan.

"We have already held such talks — in Turkey and with our American partners in Switzerland," he said. "We are also ready for upcoming negotiations in Azerbaijan, if Russia is ready for diplomacy."

Don't count on rate cuts just yet: Warsh as Fed chair may not lead to big policy changes

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump has made it clear he expects his choice for Federal Reserve chair to quickly cut interest rates once he takes office. Yet Americans shouldn't pencil in lower borrowing costs for mortgages, auto loans, or business loans just yet.

The odds of Kevin Warsh becoming chair by the time Jerome Powell's term ends May 15 shot higher Friday when U.S. Attorney for Washington, D.C., Jeanine Pirro, said she would drop her probe into Powell over his testimony last summer about the Fed's costly building renovations.

But should he be confirmed, Warsh will still face several hurdles to reducing rates, including rising gas prices that are pushing up inflation, questions about his political independence, and 11 other Fed policy-makers who have a vote on the decision, with most of them not ready to cut.

At a Senate hearing Tuesday, Warsh pledged to be independent from White House pressure, but said relatively little about the direction he would take rates. While economists say he was likely just being cautious, he missed a chance to lay out an argument for rate cuts.

"Warsh's stated outlook is much more consistent with an extended hold than additional cuts," Aditya Bhawe, head of U.S. economics at BofA Securities, wrote in a client note.

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Trump, meanwhile, has kept up the pressure. When asked last week on Fox Business whether he still expects interest rates to decline, Trump said, "when Kevin gets in, I do ... interest rates should be much lower."

Here's what you need to know about Warsh and what he will face as next Fed chair:

Rising inflation will make it harder to cut rates

Warsh, who was a member of the Fed's governing board from 2006 to 2011, regularly argued for rate cuts last year as he sought Trump's nomination to replace Powell. But since being named in late January, he has kept quiet, and hasn't made any public comments since the Iran war started Feb. 28.

The war has pushed up oil and gas prices, which caused inflation to spike to a two-year high of 3.3% in March, above the Fed's target of 2%. The Fed typically keeps its short-term rate — currently at about 3.6% — elevated to combat inflation, or even raises it.

The Fed reduces its rate to spur more spending and hiring, and earlier this year several Fed officials worried that a slowdown in job gains demonstrated that the rate was too high. But in recent weeks there are signs the job market may be stabilizing, possibly undercutting the need for a rate reduction.

Christopher Waller, a Fed governor who voted in favor of a rate cut in January, last week expressed concerns that rising inflation could mean the Fed would have to stand pat. He also suggested that with the unemployment rate a still-low 4.3%, rate cuts might not be necessary.

And Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said last week that if the Fed wanted "to wait for some clarity" before cutting rates, "I understand that," a statement widely seen as providing some cover for Warsh to keep rates unchanged for at least a few months.

For now, Wall Street investors see little chance for a rate cut until October 2027, according to futures pricing.

Certainly, if inflation cools in the coming months and unemployment worsens, more Fed officials could end up supporting a rate cut. The economy has been volatile for the past year, at times looking healthy and other times anemic.

Warsh is just one of 12 voters at the Fed

Another challenge for Warsh is that he will be just one of 12 voters on the Fed's rate-setting committee, which meets eight times a year to decide on where to set its overnight interest rate. Most have indicated in recent speeches or votes that they are reluctant to lower borrowing costs with inflation as high as it is. The committee voted 11-1 to keep rates unchanged in March.

Next week, at a meeting likely to be Powell's last, the committee is widely expected to keep rates where they are.

Stephen Miran, a governor Trump appointed last September, was the only official to vote for a rate cut in March and has voted to cut rates at every meeting he has attended. But Warsh will replace Miran. Another governor Trump named in his first term, Michelle Bowman, has also occasionally dissented in favor of a rate cut.

But there is a larger faction on the committee that wants the Fed to start considering the possibility of hiking rates, rather than cutting them, at upcoming meetings, according to minutes of their March gathering.

Members of the Fed's board typically seek to support the chair, former Fed officials say. But rarely can a chair single-handedly and quickly swing an entire committee in his or her direction.

Jon Faust, an economist at Johns Hopkins and former adviser to Powell, said that the last time a chair was able to achieve something close to that was in the late 1990s, when then-chair Alan Greenspan famously persuaded the rest of the committee that rising productivity from the Internet would prevent inflation from taking off, and so the Fed didn't need to raise rates.

Yet that was after Greenspan had been chair for several years and had built support on the committee, Faust said.

"Warsh comes in with essentially none of the gravitas that Greenspan had," Faust said. "Instead, Warsh comes in with the baggage that Trump has really loaded on him. It's not Warsh's fault, but Trump has led to legitimate questions about whether he'll act independently."

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One way to establish independence would be for Warsh to not cut rates right away, economists have said. Warsh didn't make a big case for cuts.

In his remarks at Tuesday's hearing, Warsh acknowledged that "we have a short window to try to bring inflation back down to where it should be," which some economists said sounded more like an argument for rate hikes, rather than cuts.

Warsh also said that the job market is essentially at what the Fed considers "maximum employment," or the lowest the unemployment rate can go before it starts to push up inflation. That also suggests the Fed doesn't need to cut to boost hiring.

Before being nominated, Warsh had often argued that artificial intelligence would accelerate growth and make the economy more efficient. Similar to the Internet, he often said, it would allow the Fed to reduce interest rates without worrying about inflation.

At his hearing, Warsh repeated his claim about AI, but added, "we don't know that, we can't bank on that," which struck many economists as a step back from his previous stance.

Warsh's views "didn't have a lot of clarity going in," Claudia Sahm, chief economist at New Century Advisers and a former Fed economist, said. "And then he muddled the waters. There were so few specifics."

Despite Iran tensions, King Charles III will follow his mother's lead in celebrating US-UK bonds

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The challenge for King Charles III when he embarks on next week's state visit to the U.S. is, as always, to live up to his mother's example.

The late Queen Elizabeth II wowed Congress in 1991 with a speech that celebrated the shared democratic traditions of Britain and the United States, quoted Abraham Lincoln, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and highlighted the deep bonds between the two nations.

Those themes will also be at the top of Charles' agenda as he celebrates America's 250th birthday and seeks to calm tensions surrounding Prime Minister Keir Starmer's refusal to support U.S. President Donald Trump's war against Iran, said Douglas Brinkley, a presidential historian at Rice University in Texas.

"We've got to always make the distinction that there's a difference between the government of the U.K. and the kings and queens of Great Britain, who are really always coming to try to put (on) a good face," Brinkley told The Associated Press. "Politics come and go, prime ministers, presidents, come and go, but there's something deeper about the special relationship between the United States and the U.K."

Behind the scenes

Beneath the pomp and pageantry of Charles' four-day trip to Washington, New York and Virginia beginning Monday is a carefully choreographed diplomatic event staged, like all royal visits, at the request of the British government. Starmer resisted pressure to cancel it after Trump belittled the British military's sacrifices in Afghanistan and criticized him personally for failing to back the U.S. in Iran.

Despite those tensions, Trump has continued to speak warmly about Charles.

"History has shown that President Trump really tries to be impressive whenever he's dealing with British royalty," Brinkley said. "And I'm sure it'll be the same this time around."

Ever since 1939, when King George VI became the first British monarch to set foot on the soil of the country's former colony, there's been a special sort of excitement whenever the royals come to the United States.

Take that first visit, which took place as World War II loomed over Europe. The royals toured the east coast and attended a "picnic" at Roosevelt's private home in Hyde Park, New York. "King tries hot dog and asks for more," declared the New York Times.

But the big moment was when the royals traveled to Mount Vernon to lay a wreath at the tomb of George Washington, America's first president. It showed respect at a time of isolationism.

"People could see the handwriting on the wall and know that it was going to be important for the United States and Britain to stay strong for fighting against Hitler," said Barbara Perry, a presidential scholar at

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the University of Virginia's Miller Center.

But bonding over sausages had broader benefits, helping the royals build links to the general public as well as its leadership. After war broke out in September 1939, Queen Elizabeth, the wife of George VI and mother of the future Elizabeth II, wrote to first lady Eleanor Roosevelt to say how moved she'd been by letters from Americans who enclosed small sums for British forces.

"Sometimes, during the last terrible months, we have felt rather lonely in our fight against evil things, but I can honestly say that our hearts have been lightened by the knowledge that friends in America understand what we are fighting for," she wrote.

The queen's connection

Queen Elizabeth II built on those relationships, making four state visits to the U.S. during her 70-year reign. She helped President Gerald R. Ford celebrate America's bicentennial in 1976 and met with President George W. Bush in 2007 as British and American forces fought in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Smoothing turbulent waters and reminding both sides about their common bonds were what those trips were all about.

Charles' visit will be no different. It includes a commemoration of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, a ceremony honoring fallen service members and an event to be attended by Queen Camilla to mark the 100th anniversary of Winnie the Pooh stories by British author A.A. Milne.

Awkward events will be avoided.

The royals won't meet with Jeffrey Epstein's victims, despite calls for the king to address his brother's links to the convicted sex offender. Nor are there plans for Charles to meet with his son Prince Harry, who has been a critic of the monarchy since giving up royal duties and moving to California.

Those issues aren't the priority, said Robert Hardman, author of "Elizabeth II: In Private. In Public. The Inside Story."

"He's going because 250 years ago the Founding Fathers of the USA kicked out his great-times-five grandfather, and he's going to say, 'No hard feelings, it's been a great divorce, we've had a lovely 250 years and let's reflect on the high points,'" Hardman said. "I mean, there are going to be some very, very large elephants in the room during that visit ... but, you know, there are plenty of other things for the king to focus on."

History, not politics

Charles' speech to a joint session of Congress offers the chance to deliver the message that long-term friendship is more important than transient disputes.

He is also likely to offer a bit of humor, as his mother did when she faced lawmakers in 1991.

Wearing soft peach amid a sea of gray suits, the diminutive monarch began her remarks with a joke about an earlier blunder at the White House when her lectern was so tall it obscured the audience's view of her.

"I do hope you can see me today from where you are," she deadpanned.

The chamber erupted in laughter. A standing ovation followed. Then she launched into a speech about democratic values, the rule of law and the Atlantic Alliance.

But Charles will have to offer his own take on those ideas, Brinkley said.

"The theme of the speech is going to be American exceptionalism, American history, the importance of U.S.-British alliance, and some memories from the past," he said. "But also about the love affair the two countries share with each other, even though it goes over rocky rapids from time to time."

Trump to send envoys to Islamabad as Iran rules out direct talks

By MUNIR AHMED, SAMY MAGDY, and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — U.S. envoys are expected to travel to Pakistan on Saturday in a new bid to salvage ceasefire talks with Tehran, even as Iran ruled out direct negotiations with U.S. representatives as its top diplomat arrived in Islamabad.

The latest effort to broker a deal comes as an indefinite ceasefire has paused most fighting, but the

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economic fallout is still mounting with global energy shipments disrupted by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

On Saturday, Iran resumed commercial flights from Tehran's international airport for the first time since the conflict with the U.S. and Israel began about two months ago. Iran's state-run television reported that flights were scheduled to depart for Istanbul, Oman's capital of Muscat and the Saudi city of Medina. Iran partly reopened its airspace earlier this month amid a ceasefire with the U.S. which halted fighting between the two countries.

The airport opening comes as Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met twice with Pakistan's top military and political leaders since arriving in Islamabad on Friday night, officials said.

According to Pakistan's Foreign Ministry, the Iranian delegation will hold talks with Pakistan's senior leadership as the U.S. envoys were expected to travel to Islamabad on Saturday. Officials have not specified when Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner are due to arrive.

Pakistan works to get US and Iran back to the negotiating table

Pakistan's capital of Islamabad was in a near-lockdown early Saturday ahead of the talks, where the weeklong security restrictions have disrupted daily life across the capital. Residents struggle to commute even short distances as checkpoints, road closures, and diversions have become a routine sight, particularly around sensitive zones.

The usually busy arteries leading to the airport and the heavily fortified Red Zone were largely deserted early Saturday, with movement tightly restricted. Security forces, including troops, paramilitary commandos, and police, maintained a strong presence at key intersections, especially near the airport, while helicopters circled overhead throughout the morning.

Pakistan has been trying to get U.S. and Iranian officials back to the table after Trump this week announced an indefinite extension of the ceasefire with Iran, honoring Islamabad's request for more time for diplomatic outreach.

The White House said Friday that President Donald Trump would send Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to meet with Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. But shortly after Araghchi arrived in Islamabad, his ministry said any talks would be indirect, with messages conveyed between the two sides by Pakistani officials.

Araghchi and the two Trump envoys held hours of indirect talks in Geneva on Feb. 27 over Tehran's nuclear program, but walked away without a deal. The next day, Israel and the United States started the war against Iran.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told Fox News that the president had decided to send Witkoff and Kushner to Pakistan "to hear the Iranians out."

"We've certainly seen some progress from the Iranian side in the last couple of days," Leavitt said. She did not offer any details about what U.S. officials were hearing.

Trump extends the Jones Act waiver for 90 days

Separately Friday, the White House said Trump issued a 90-day extension to the Jones Act waiver, making it easier for non-American vessels to transport oil and natural gas.

He first announced a 60-day waiver in March in a move intended to stabilize energy prices and ease oil and gas shipments to the U.S. following the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic waterway through which a fifth of the world's oil passes in peacetime.

Iran has kept its stranglehold on traffic through the strait, attacking three ships earlier this week, while the U.S. is maintaining a blockade on Iranian ports and Trump has ordered the military to "shoot and kill" small boats that could be placing mines.

The price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, retreated on the news, vacillating between \$103 a barrel and more than \$107 — still nearly 50% higher than where it was on Feb. 28, when the war began.

The squeeze on shipments through the strait has rippled through global maritime trade flows, including through the Panama Canal nearly halfway around the world.

Also on Saturday, Germany's Defense Minister Boris Pistorius announced that the country will send mine-sweeper ships to the Mediterranean so they are in place to remove mines Iran has placed in the Strait of

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Hormuz once the hostilities end.

A growing toll even as ceasefires hold

Since the war began, at least 3,375 people have been killed in Iran, and more than 2,490 people in Lebanon, where new fighting between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah broke out two days after the war started, according to authorities.

Additionally, 23 people were killed in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Fifteen Israeli soldiers in Lebanon and 13 U.S. service members throughout the region have been killed.

The U.N. peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon has also sustained casualties. UNIFIL said Friday that an Indonesian peacekeeper died of wounds sustained in an attack on his base on March 29, raising to six — four Indonesians and two French — the number of force members killed since the war erupted.

Tensions linger in Lebanon despite extended truce

The situation in Lebanon remained tense after Trump on Thursday announced that Israel and Lebanon had agreed to extend a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah by three weeks. Hezbollah has not participated in the diplomacy brokered by Washington.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a video statement released by his office on Friday, hailed “a process to achieve a historic peace between Israel and Lebanon.”

Earlier, the Israeli army asked residents of the southern Lebanese village of Deir Aames to evacuate, saying Hezbollah was using the village to launch attacks against Israel.

Israel’s military said it had downed a drone over Lebanon following the launch of a small surface-to-air missile by Hezbollah. The militant group, meanwhile, said it shot down an Israeli drone with a surface-to-air missile over the outskirts of the southern port city of Tyre.

Philadelphia museum brings Rocky statue inside after decades of tension

By TASSANEE VEJPONGSA Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Every day, visitors from around the world make their way to the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art — not necessarily for the galleries inside, but for a statue of a fictional boxer from South Philadelphia.

The bronze figure of Rocky Balboa — arms raised in victory, clad in boxing trunks and boots — has become a point of pilgrimage for people around the world.

For decades, the museum kept an uncomfortable distance from this kind of devotion. Now, it is embracing it — and inviting Rocky in.

Opening this weekend, “Rising Up: Rocky and the Making of Monuments” examines how a fictional fighter became a real-world symbol, placing the statue within the sweep of art history and Philadelphia’s identity. The exhibition is the brainchild of guest curator Paul Farber, who spent years exploring the meaning of the statue and public monuments — including through his NPR podcasts — before bringing the conversation into the museum.

The exhibition spans more than 2,000 years of boxing imagery, tracing a thread of human struggle that Louis Marchesano, the museum’s deputy director of curatorial affairs and conservation, said helps explain Rocky’s enduring pull.

“The common theme that runs throughout 2,000 years of boxing imagery is that people respond to the body under struggle, a conflict in much the same way today as they did 2,500 years ago,” Marchesano said. “It’s not simply about watching two people beat each other up — it’s about endurance, internal fortitude and internal struggle.”

When the bronze statue was left on the steps after filming the “Rocky” movies, the museum fought to have it removed. It was eventually relocated to South Philadelphia before returning to the bottom of the steps in 2006. It was welcomed back, but never fully embraced. The city owns the spot where the statue sits — not the museum.

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"The museum has had — and I hate to say this, no pun intended — a rocky relationship with the statue," Marchesano said.

"It took us decades to come to terms with it," he added. "But I'm glad that we did."

According to the Philadelphia Visitor Center, about 4 million people visit the steps each year — rivaling the nearby Liberty Bell in annual foot traffic.

David Muller, a wrestling coach from France who recently brought his students to the steps, said he thinks Balboa's trials and travails are "good for the next generation."

"The movie 'Rocky' is important for the mind of sport and the mind of life," Muller said, after running with them up the steps as they raised their hands at the top, smiling and punching the air like boxers.

Kate Tarchalska traveled from Poland with family and made the statue one of their stops.

"He was my hero when I was younger," she said. "And now I am so glad I could be in the same spot as him."

Suraj Kumar, visiting his aunt in Philadelphia from St. Louis, made a point to photograph the statue to share with his father, who first introduced him to the films when he was growing up in Bengaluru, India.

"When I got to know this statue is here, I was like, I really have to come down here," he said.

One gallery places Rocky in the global boxing fever of the 1970s, featuring works by Keith Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol — all created during a time when boxing had the world's attention.

"In the 1970s, we knew minute by minute who the heavyweight champion of the world was," Marchesano said. "The artists in this gallery are responding to that global frenzy. Sylvester Stallone, in 'Rocky,' was doing the same — thinking about internal and external struggle."

Another gallery turns to Philadelphia itself, presenting photographs of the Blue Horizon boxing gym and a section on Joe Frazier, whose real-life story at least partially inspired Rocky.

"Without Joe Frazier, Rocky doesn't exist," Marchesano said.

When the exhibition closes in August, the statue inside will move to a permanent home at the top of the museum's steps — a place it has never officially held. The statue currently outside remains on loan from Stallone.

Rocky's longtime spot at the bottom of the steps won't be empty — a statue of Frazier will replace it.

EU considers helping with Mideast energy infrastructure to bypass conflict zones

By MENELAOS HADJICOSTIS and SAM McNEIL Associated Press

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — A painful fuel crunch and soaring oil and gas prices triggered by the Iran war have nudged the European Union to look hard into funding alternative energy routes in the Middle East to circumvent hot spots like the Strait of Hormuz.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Friday that the EU is ready to work with Persian Gulf countries for new projects conveying energy to global markets that wouldn't be held hostage to war or geopolitical strife.

"The events of the past month have taught us a hard lesson," von der Leyen told a news conference at the end of an informal meeting of EU leaders in the capital of Cyprus. "Our security is not just related, it is intrinsically linked. A threat to a merchant vessel in the Strait of Hormuz is a threat to a factory, for example, in Belgium."

The EU executive called for ramping up defense ties and promoted the bloc's maritime security mission in the Red Sea as a possible naval security option in the Persian Gulf, but focused her public remarks on European support for repairing and building Middle East energy sites.

Diversification of Middle East energy infrastructure

"We are also ready to team up with the Gulf countries to diversify export infrastructure away from solely the bottleneck of the Hormuz Strait," she said, also offering to help repair Gulf energy infrastructure damaged in the war.

A fifth of the world's oil and gas normally passes through the Strait of Hormuz, but the war has largely

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closed the waterway, spiking fuel prices.

Early Friday, Brent crude was up 98 cents at \$100.33 a barrel. U.S. benchmark crude picked up 81 cents to \$96.66 per barrel.

Von der Leyen repeated that as a result of the oil and gas price hikes, the 27-nation bloc's energy bill in the last 43 days skyrocketed by 25 billion euros (\$29.3 billion.)

Neither she nor European Council President Antonio Costa offered precise details on which projects are being considered or when they'll move forward. But von der Leyen referred to the India-Middle-East-Europe Economic Corridor between the EU and the world's largest democracy.

Von der Leyen said a summit between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council scheduled for later this year will give both sides the opportunity to explore such projects.

The EU's focus on its southern neighbors

The rotating EU presidency is currently held by Cyprus, an island nation adjacent to Lebanon, Syria, Israel and Turkey. Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides has sought to bring the bloc closer to countries in the Middle East to shore up their economies and bolster their security.

That focus was underscored by his guests at the EU leaders informal summit: Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah El Sissi, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, Jordan's Crown Prince Hussein and GCC Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi.

"We know that Europe needs Syria as much as Syria needs Europe," Al-Sharaa said, while Aoun called on EU support for rebuilding his war-ravaged country.

Costa praised Aoun for banning the military activities of Hezbollah that he called "an existential threat" to Lebanon, pledging to assist the country in disarming the militant group.

Costa said that "the European Union is not part of the conflict, but we will be part of this solution."

Human rights groups blasted EU leaders for not increasing pressure on Israel over its military campaigns in the Middle East.

EU leaders including German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said they would not lift sanctions on Iran until a wide array of issues were resolved, including ending its missile program and support for proxies within the region.

"It's too early to talk about relief of any kind of sanctions," said Costa.

Cyprus itself came under attack early in the war when a Shahed drone fired from Lebanon on March 2 damaged an aircraft hangar at a British military base on the island's southern coast. Greece, France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands dispatched warships with anti-drone capabilities to defend the island.

That has spurred renewed interest in a clause in the EU's foundational treaties about mutual assistance if a member nation is attacked.

Christodoulides said the EU leaders had agreed to start creating a formal mechanism for such responses because they agreed that "ad hoc arrangements" are unreliable.

Violent tornado tears through Oklahoma town, damaging 40 homes but sparing lives

By SEAN MURPHY Associated Press

ENID, Okla. (AP) — Raeann Hunt scrambled to her cellar as a tornado bore down on her Oklahoma community.

"It is headed right for us," she recalled thinking, as she peeked outside, unable to contain her curiosity. Huddled inside the dark 8-by-8 foot (2.44-by-2.44 meters) concrete shelter with her husband, brother-in-law and a neighbor, she heard roaring, metal slapping on the door and glass breaking.

Afterward, they emerged unscathed, but found the windows smashed out of the one-story brick home in Enid and the roof badly damaged.

The scene was repeated Thursday night across the city of about 50,000 people about 85 miles north of Oklahoma City as the EF-4 tornado hit. It was on the ground for 9 miles (14.48 kilometers), packing winds

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of 170 to 175 mph and measuring 500 yards across at its widest, said Rick Smith, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service.

For those 30 to 40 minutes, at least 40 homes were damaged, some blown off their foundations. But no one was killed and only minor injuries were reported.

"People around here have a plan," Hunt explained, noting that residents of this tornado-alley state are trained to either take shelter in a room near the center of their home or get underground.

Basements aren't common in Oklahoma because of the red clay soil and elevated water tables that make it difficult and expensive to install them, but many homes — like Hunt's — have storm cellars or safe rooms with reinforced concrete walls where people can take cover.

People here also know to flip on the TV and set up weather alerts on their phones — particularly in the springtime, when the risk of violent twisters is highest.

"Especially in Oklahoma, we have great meteorologists," said Justin Hunt of Enid, who described the storm's aftermath as a "disaster."

Storm leaves rubble in its wake

Commercial buildings just south of the city were turned into a pile of twisted metal, splintered wood and insulation by powerful winds that pushed the buildings completely off the concrete foundations.

The tornado knocked down utility poles and left power lines wrapped with huge chunks of debris. A home had part of its metal roof torn off and trees were left stripped of bark and limbs. At another home, a section of one wall had peeled away to reveal the interior of the home with some furniture still in place.

"Usually when we come to a neighborhood that's been hit this bad, there's one or two deaths," Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt said during a news conference Friday. "We're just so thankful there wasn't a loss of life."

People pick through rubble, clear away debris

Police and fire departments and the Oklahoma Highway Patrol conducted multiple home searches, rescuing some trapped residents, Enid Mayor David Mason said Friday.

"Supplies have poured in already," Mason posted online. "This is who Enid is in challenging moments — we continue to show up for one another."

Dave Lamerton of Enid spent Friday morning salvaging what was left of his son Joseph's woodworking shop just south of the city, along with some family members and a group of volunteers who traveled from Kansas to help with cleanup.

"The tornado just swung right through here and just hit us directly," Lamerton said, pointing to a giant mess of splintered wood beams, furniture, debris and heavy machinery that was pushed into a massive pile at the edge of the building's foundation. "We've got stuff on the property we can't even find."

Meteorologists describe powerful storm system

One striking image from Thursday's storms shows a tornado in the Enid area with a dark clouds of debris extending in V-shape on either side. That is typical of higher-end tornadoes, according to Mark Fox, the meteorologist in charge of the National Weather Service's office in Norman.

It has such a violent motion as winds pick up dirt, debris and things like parts of people's houses.

"If you start seeing things like this, you know it's a violent tornado," he said.

Neighboring counties also reported some flooded roads and barn damage. The National Weather Service was sending two crews out Friday to do damage surveys related to six potential tornadoes in the Enid and Braman areas of north-central Oklahoma, meteorologist John Pike said.

Air force base is damaged

Fences and some equipment were knocked down at nearby Vance Air Force Base, about 80 miles (129 kilometers) north of Oklahoma City. The base was closed until further notice "due to ongoing power and water restoration efforts," it posted online Friday.

Everyone assigned to the base has been accounted for and no injuries were reported, 71st Flying Training Wing Public Affairs Chief Ashley D. Hendricks said in an email Friday.

More bad weather possible

More storms are possible through Friday night across south-central and southeast Oklahoma, the weather

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service said. Strong to severe thunderstorms are expected to develop Saturday, including in the Enid area.

It was a stormy night in other states, too. In Kearney, Missouri, north of Kansas City, officials reported downed trees, debris blocking roadways and damage to homes on Thursday night after storms passed through the area. Officials said in a social media post that no injuries had been reported. Crews worked to make roads passable by early Friday and were expected to continue cleanup efforts during the day.

US military strike on alleged drug boat kills 2 in eastern Pacific

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military said it launched another strike Friday on a boat accused of ferrying drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing two people.

The Trump administration's campaign of blowing up alleged drug-trafficking vessels in Latin American waters has persisted since early September and killed at least 183 people in total. Other strikes have taken place in the Caribbean Sea.

The military has not provided evidence that any of the vessels were carrying drugs.

The attacks began as the U.S. built up its largest military presence in the region in generations and came months ahead of the raid in January that captured then-Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro. He was brought to New York to face drug trafficking charges and has pleaded not guilty.

In the latest attack Friday, U.S. Southern Command repeated previous statements by saying it had targeted the alleged drug traffickers along known smuggling routes. It posted a video on X showing a boat floating in the water before a explosion left it in flames.

President Donald Trump has said the U.S. is in "armed conflict" with cartels in Latin America and has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs into the United States.

Critics, meanwhile, have questioned the overall legality of the boat strikes.

Growing wildfires blamed for death of Florida firefighter and destruction of 120 Georgia homes

By EMILIE MEGNIEN and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

NAHUNTA, Ga. (AP) — A volunteer firefighter died battling a wildfire in northern Florida while more than 120 homes have been destroyed in southeast Georgia and thousands more remain threatened by two large blazes, one of which investigators suspect was sparked by a foil balloon touching power lines, officials said Friday.

An unusually large number of wildfires are burning this spring across the Southeast, where scientists say the threat of fire has been amplified by a combination of extreme drought, gusty winds, climate change and dead trees still littering some forests after being toppled by Hurricane Helene in 2024.

In northern Florida, the Nassau County Sheriff's Office said Friday that volunteer firefighter James "Kevin" Crews suffered an unspecified medical emergency while suppressing a brush fire. Crews was rushed to a hospital where he died Thursday evening, according to a news release posted to social media.

"Kevin was the epitome of courage and dedication," Hilliard Volunteer Fire Chief Jerry Johnson said in a statement. "His sacrifice will never be forgotten."

'No way to stop this fire' without soaking rain

After getting a firsthand look at firefighting efforts in southeast Georgia, Gov. Brian Kemp told reporters that state officials believe 87 homes burned in rural Brantley County this week are the most destroyed by a single wildfire in the state's history.

An additional 35 homes have been lost to a larger fire burning in sparsely populated Clinch and Echols counties near the Florida state line, Kemp said. That blaze has burned about 50 square miles (129 square kilometers), an area twice the size of Manhattan.

Kemp said officials suspect the Brantley County was sparked by a foil party balloon that touched live power lines, creating an electrical arc that ignited the ground. He said investigators suspect the larger fire started with a man welding a gate outside.

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Spread across nearly 12 square miles (31 square kilometers) and still growing, the Brantley County blaze was 15% contained Friday, the Georgia Forestry Commission said. An estimated 4,000 homes in the county were under evacuation orders Friday, said commission spokesperson Seth Hawkins.

"There's no way to stop this fire," Kemp said. "They're having to contain the flanks and the back of it and then, hopefully, we get a change in the weather."

No fire deaths or injuries have been reported in Georgia.

Firefighters are battling more than 150 other wildfires in Georgia and Florida that have sent smoky haze into places far from the flames, triggering air quality warnings for some cities.

'We've lost everything, but I'm one of the lucky ones'

Michael Gibson was at his job Thursday at a chicken feed producer when his fiancée called urging him to come home. By the time he arrived, firefighters were already on the road where Gibson, his fiancée and their four children lived. He said he took his family to safety and tried to return to salvage belongings, but police stopped him.

Gibson said the fire consumed his mobile home and one beside it where his fiancée's brother lived. His family has been staying in a camper on a relative's property.

"We've lost everything, but I'm one of the lucky ones," Gibson said Friday. "We've been prepared to leave. And I'm truly blessed to have my family and to have somewhere to sleep. ... A lot of people in my county didn't make it out with the clothes on their backs."

Jennifer Murphy said she had little time to react when firefighters knocked at her door in the Brantley County community of Hortense.

She said she barely had a chance to gather her dog, Chip, and a single bag of belongings before firefighters urgently helped her walk down her wheelchair ramp and grab a rolling walker from her van outside.

"It was like, 'Get out now, right now. You've got to leave,'" Murphy said Friday at the local church where she had spent the night on a couch.

Firefighters are hosing down homes, trying to limit destruction

While crews with bulldozers work to clear fire breaks around the burning areas, firefighters from dozens of local agencies have focused on protecting nearby homes and other structures — clearing away dry brush and using hoses and sprinklers to keep houses and yards wet.

"We've definitely had the local fire guys out there literally hosing stuff down," said Hawkins of the forestry commission.

In Florida, firefighters were battling more than 120 wildfires Friday, mostly in the state's northern half. Fire crews in Georgia responded to 31 new and relatively small blazes Thursday, the state forestry commission said.

Officials say soaking rain is badly needed to snuff out the large fires, and that possible showers forecast this weekend won't bring enough rainfall. There's also a chance of thunderstorms, raising concerns that lightning could spark more fires.

"It is going to take 8 to 10 inches before we can walk away from these fires," said Johnny Sabo, director of the Georgia Forestry Commission.

He said long-range forecasts predict less than average rainfall until July.

Ukrainians thought they had reduced the risks at Chernobyl. Then Russia invaded

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

PRIPYAT, Ukraine (AP) — The two explosions at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant came decades apart in the dead of night.

The first, at 1:23 a.m. on April 26, 1986, spread a cloud of deadly radiation that raised fears across Europe and shook the very foundations of the Soviet Union. Some say it led to its eventual collapse.

The second, at 1:59 a.m. on Feb. 14, 2025, was blamed by Ukrainian officials on a Russian drone with an explosive warhead. While not as catastrophic, it sparked new anxieties about Moscow's invasion of its

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neighbor, striking the site that symbolized so much suffering for Ukraine.

"What once seemed unthinkable — strikes on nuclear facilities and other hazardous sites — has now become reality," said Oleh Solonenko, head of a radiation safety shift at Chernobyl, which Ukrainians transliterate as Chornobyl.

The drone hit the outer layer of what is known as the New Safe Confinement structure, or NSC, the vast, \$2.1 billion archlike shell that was completed in 2019 to enclose the original, hastily built concrete "sarcophagus" to keep the damaged Reactor No. 4 and its deadly debris from leaking radiation. Moscow denied targeting the plant, alleging Kyiv staged the attack.

It sparked a fire on the structure — which is tall enough to cover the Statue of Liberty — but did not penetrate it, damaging an area with low contamination. Monitors detected no rise in radiation levels outside the arch, and no one was injured.

Still, the International Atomic Energy Agency warned that the damage could significantly shorten the arch's 100-year lifespan, upending its core safety function.

For Klavdiia Omelchenko, who works with over 2,200 engineers, scientists and others at the defunct plant, it rekindled memories of a horrible spring day 40 years ago.

A lifetime near Chernobyl

Omelchenko was a 19-year-old textile factory worker in 1986, asleep in her home in Pripyat, where most of Chernobyl's workers lived. She didn't hear the explosion at Reactor No. 4 during a routine test.

She woke to rumors of an accident, but only understood its scale weeks later — after being evacuated with a small bag holding her documents and some cosmetics. Her former home was now inside Chernobyl's "exclusion zone," a 2,600-square-kilometer (1,000-square-mile) area that remains uninhabited.

Soviet authorities did not immediately reveal the scope of what became known as the world's worst nuclear disaster, which spewed a cloud of radiation over what is now Ukraine and Belarus, and caused alarm across Europe. Dozens of people died in the immediate aftermath, while the long-term death toll from radiation is unknown.

Omelchenko never found another home and came back in 1993 to work in the plant's cafeteria. That return "wasn't as scary as now. Back then, at least, there was no bombing," she added.

To her, the full-scale invasion in 2022 and last year's drone attack are more fearful than radiation.

She said she got headaches after the 1986 accident and later had surgery for a precancerous condition, but at age 59, she dismisses the risk of contamination.

"We grew up in it," she said. "We don't pay attention to it anymore."

Covering the sarcophagus

Yellow daffodils bloom beside wartime fortifications at the Chernobyl plant as workers in ordinary clothes, with badges and special permits, pass through the restricted zone.

It has not produced electricity since 2000, when the last of four reactors was shut down. A global effort built the protective NSC — a landmark project designed to stabilize the site and enable the dismantling of the crumbling Soviet-era sarcophagus covering the reactor.

But Russia's invasion has put that project on hold.

Liudmyla Kozak, an engineer who has worked at Chernobyl for over two decades, was on duty when Russian troops seized the plant in February 2022. The staff kept operations running under armed guard for nearly three weeks, exposing personnel to radiation doses well beyond the limits of their normal rotation schedules.

"We had no hope we would make it out alive — it was really that scary," she said.

Kozak said workers slept on floors and desks, with Russian soldiers occupying key areas. Equipment was damaged and stolen, she added. The troops also drove heavy vehicles through contaminated areas and dug trenches, stirring up radioactive dust.

"With the drone strike as well, it will be much more complicated," Kozak said.

The IAEA found the damage has left the arch unable to fully perform its core functions, which is containing radioactive material and enabling the safe dismantling of the reactor remains. Left unrepaired,

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the structure would gradually weaken, increasing radiation exposure risks to Ukraine and other countries.

Dismantling work on hold

Serhii Bokov, who oversees operations for the NSC, said he was on duty early on Feb. 14, 2025, when the dull blast from the drone rippled through the structure.

He and his colleagues ran outside, smelling smoke, but initially saw nothing. A nearby military checkpoint confirmed a strike, and firefighters arrived about 40 minutes later.

Climbing up into the structure, they finally found fire smoldering through the outer membrane. Hoses were stretched across the arch as crews battled flames that kept resurfacing. The fire took more than two weeks to extinguish fully.

"There was no feeling of fear, none at all. It was just a fire — something we practice in drills — only this time it was real," he said. "I didn't think, honestly, that we could lose the entire arch."

The damage is patched and hidden on the inside, while a sealed breach is visible on the outside.

Every night, Bokov walks more than a kilometer (about 1,100 yards) through the structure via what workers call the "golden corridor" — a passageway lined with yellow panels shielding them from radiation. It passes abandoned control rooms, including that of Reactor No. 4.

When the NSC was completed in 2019, he was proud of being part of something extraordinary, watching it rise and take shape, and being a member of the team keeping it running.

Now, however, the structure is no longer fully sealed. While there is no immediate radiation risk, work on dismantling the sarcophagus is on hold — set back, Bokov believes, by at least a decade.

"Everything depends on how quickly we can restore this and return to normal operations — and to preparing for dismantling," he said.

Bokov believes the arch can continue functioning in its current state for some time. But the real concern is the stability of the sarcophagus beneath it — and why it's urgent to resume its dismantling.

Oleh Solonenko, head of a radiation safety shift at the plant, said the drone damaged the outer layer of the protective NSC but did not fully penetrate it. The damage occurred in an area with low contamination, with no rise in radiation detected beyond the arch.

Still, the incident showed how the war has upended assumptions about nuclear safety, he said.

Without urgent repairs, the risk of the sarcophagus collapsing significantly increases, Greenpeace Ukraine warned in a report by engineer Eric Schmieman, who spent years at Chernobyl and helped design the NSC.

"It is difficult to comprehend the scale of the deadly, hazardous conditions inside the sarcophagus," he said. "There are tons of highly radioactive nuclear fuel, dust and debris. Now it is critical to find a way to restore the key functions of this facility."

Trump dispatches Witkoff and Kushner to Pakistan for new talks with Iran's foreign minister

By MUNIR AHMED, JON GAMBRELL and JAMEY KEATEN Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — President Donald Trump is sending his envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to Pakistan to meet with Iran's foreign minister, the White House said Friday, as officials in the South Asian nation pushed to revive ceasefire talks between the U.S. and Iran.

The talks planned for Saturday come as much of the world is on edge over a war that has snarled crucial energy exports through the Strait of Hormuz, clouded the global economic picture and left thousands dead across the Middle East.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Islamabad late Friday. Earlier on social media, he wrote that he was traveling to Pakistan on a trip focused on "bilateral matters and regional developments." He didn't specify who he would meet.

Shortly after Araghchi touched down, the country's government made it clear there would be no direct negotiations with American government representatives during this visit.

Foreign ministry spokesman Esmael Baqaei said on X that, "No meeting is planned to take place between Iran and the U.S."

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Instead, Baqaei said Pakistani officials would convey messages between the delegations. Baqaei thanked the Pakistani government for its "ongoing mediation & good offices for ending American imposed war of aggression."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt had said in an interview on Fox News Channel that Witkoff and Kushner would meet with Araghchi.

"We're hopeful that it will be a productive conversation and hopefully move the ball forward to a deal," Leavitt said.

She said Vice President JD Vance would not travel but that he remains "deeply involved," and would be willing to go to Pakistan "if we feel it's a necessary use of his time."

Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and the president's national security team are on "standby" to fly to Pakistan if needed, Leavitt said.

Araghchi and the two Trump envoys held hours of indirect talks in Geneva on Feb. 27 over Tehran's nuclear program, but walked away without a deal. The next day, Israel and the United States started the war against Iran.

Leavitt said the president decided to send Witkoff and Kushner to Pakistan "to hear the Iranians out."

"We've certainly seen some progress from the Iranian side in the last couple of days," Leavitt said. She did not offer any details about what U.S. officials were hearing.

Islamabad has sought to reinject momentum into the negotiations between Iran and the United States, which did not resume this week as had been expected.

Trump extends the Jones Act waiver for 90 days

Separately Friday, the White House said Trump issued a 90-day extension to the Jones Act waiver, making it easier for non-American vessels to transport oil and natural gas.

He first announced a 60-day waiver in March in a move intended to stabilize energy prices and ease oil and gas shipments to the U.S. following the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

"New data compiled since the initial waiver was issued revealed that significantly more supply was able to reach U.S. ports faster," the White House post on social media said.

The price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, retreated on the news, vacillating between \$103 a barrel and more than \$107 — still early 50% higher than where it was on Feb. 28, when the war began.

The squeeze on shipments through the strait has rippled through global maritime trade flows, including through the Panama Canal nearly halfway around the world.

Pakistan forges ahead with diplomatic efforts

Pakistan has been trying to get U.S. and Iranian officials back to the table after Trump this week announced an indefinite extension of the ceasefire with Iran, honoring Islamabad's request for more time for diplomatic outreach.

That hasn't lowered tensions in the strait, a strategic waterway through which a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas is shipped during peacetime.

Iran has kept its stranglehold on traffic through the strait, attacking three ships earlier this week, while the U.S. is maintaining a blockade on Iranian ports and Trump has ordered the military to "shoot and kill" small boats that could be placing mines.

"Iran has an important choice, a chance to make a deal, a good deal, a wise deal," U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told reporters on Friday. He said a second U.S. aircraft carrier will join the blockade in a few days.

Washington already has three aircraft carriers in the region; the USS George H.W. Bush in the Indian Ocean; the USS Abraham Lincoln in the Arabian Sea; and the USS Gerald R. Ford in the Red Sea.

It is the first time since 2003 that three American carriers have been operating in the region simultaneously. The force includes 200 aircraft and 15,000 sailors and Marines, U.S. Central Command said.

A growing toll even as ceasefires hold

Since the war began, at least 3,375 people have been killed in Iran, and more than 2,490 people in Lebanon, where new fighting between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah broke out two days after the war started, according to authorities.

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Additionally, 23 people have died in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Fifteen Israeli soldiers in Lebanon and 13 U.S. service members throughout the region have been killed.

The U.N. peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon has also sustained casualties. UNIFIL said Friday that an Indonesian peacekeeper died of wounds sustained in an attack on his base on March 29, raising to six — four Indonesians and two French — the number of force members killed since the war erupted.

Tensions linger in Lebanon despite extended truce

The situation in Lebanon remained tense a day after Trump announced Israel and Lebanon had agreed to extend a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah by three weeks. Hezbollah has not participated in the diplomacy brokered by Washington.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a video statement released by his office on Friday, hailed “a process to achieve a historic peace between Israel and Lebanon.”

Earlier, the Israeli army asked residents of the southern Lebanese village of Deir Aames to evacuate, saying Hezbollah was using the village to launch attacks against Israel.

Israel’s military said it downed a drone over Lebanon following the launch of a small surface-to-air missile by Hezbollah. The militant group, meanwhile, said it shot down an Israeli drone with a surface-to-air missile over the outskirts of the southern port city of Tyre.

US soldier charged with using classified intel to win \$400K on Maduro raid is granted bond

By GARY D. ROBERTSON Associated Press

RALEIGH, N.C. (AP) — A U.S. special forces soldier was granted bond Friday on charges that he used classified information about the mission to capture Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro to win more than \$400,000 on the prediction market Polymarket, a federal magistrate said Friday.

The magistrate in North Carolina who authorized Gannon Ken Van Dyke’s release told him to report to a New York federal courthouse by Tuesday to continue his case there.

Bearded with arm tattoos, Van Dyke said little during the nearly hourlong hearing, during which he was appointed a federal public defender who declined to comment afterward. The \$250,000 unsecured bond did not require Van Dyke to put up any money.

Federal prosecutors say Van Dyke used his access to classified information about the operation to capture Maduro in January to win money on Polymarket, one of the largest prediction markets. The sites allow people to trade on almost anything — from the Super Bowl to U.S. elections and even the winners of the TV reality shows.

Van Dyke, who is stationed at Fort Bragg near Fayetteville, North Carolina, was charged Thursday with the unlawful use of confidential government information for personal gain, theft of nonpublic government information, commodities fraud, wire fraud and making an unlawful monetary transaction.

He could face up to 10 years on four of the criminal counts, and up to 20 years on a fifth, the government said Friday. A publicly listed phone number listed for Van Dyke isn’t in service.

Van Dyke, 38, was involved for about a month in the planning and execution of capturing Maduro, according to the New York federal prosecutor’s office. He signed nondisclosure agreements promising to not divulge “any classified or sensitive information” related to the operations, but prosecutors say he used what he knew to make a series of bets related to Maduro being out of power by Jan. 31.

“This involved a U.S. soldier who allegedly took advantage of his position to profit off of a righteous military operation,” FBI Director Kash Patel said in a social media post.

Polymarket CEO Shayne Coplan said in a post on X that the company flagged the suspicious activity, turned it over to the government and cooperated with the investigation.

“Every trade is public, permanent, and auditable,” Coplan wrote. “Bad actors leave a trail.”

Massive profits from well-timed bets aroused public attention days after the raid in Venezuela and brought bipartisan calls for stricter regulation of the markets.

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The sudden rise of these markets has led to growing scrutiny by Congress and state governments. Some lawmakers alarmed by highly specific, well-timed trades on the U.S. and Israel's war against Iran and wagers on President Donald Trump's next moves have pushed for guardrails against insider trading.

The Trump administration has been supportive of the industry's expansion. The president's eldest son is an adviser for both Polymarket and its main competitor, Kalshi, and is a Polymarket investor. Trump's social media platform, Truth Social, is launching its own prediction market called Truth Predict.

Van Dyke moved into a home in Fayetteville just weeks ago, said Larry Duncan, one of his new neighbors.

"I introduced myself. I asked if he needed any assistance," said Duncan, who once served in the Marines. "I said, 'You look like special forces.' He just smiled. I worked on a contract at Fort Bragg. I know how those people carry themselves. He was tatted up, quiet, kind of secretive."

The Commodity Futures Trading Commission, the federal agency that regulates prediction markets, announced Thursday that it had filed a parallel complaint against Van Dyke.

That complaint alleges that Van Dyke moved \$35,000 from his personal bank account into a cryptocurrency exchange account on Dec. 26 — a little over a week before U.S. forces flew into Caracas and seized Maduro.

Van Dyke made a series of bets on when Maduro might be removed from power, according to the complaint. He placed those bets between Dec. 30 and Jan. 2, with the vast majority occurring the night of Jan. 2 — just hours before the first missiles struck Caracas.

The bets resulted in "more than \$404,000 of profits," the complaint says.

"The defendant was entrusted with confidential information about U.S. operations and yet took action that endangered U.S. national security and put the lives of American service members in harm's way," said Michael Selig, the commission's chairman.

Intel's best day since 1987 leads the US stock market to more records

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A surge for Intel following a blowout profit report led the U.S. stock market to more records Friday, while oil prices kept yo-yoing in the wait for what's next with the Iran war.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.8% and topped its prior all-time high, which was set on Wednesday. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 79 points, or 0.2%, and the Nasdaq composite rallied 1.6% to its own record thanks to the jump for tech.

Intel led the way and roared past its 2000 peak during the dot-com boom to an all-time high. It soared 23.6% for its best day since 1987 after reporting much stronger results for the first three months of the year than analysts expected. CEO Lip-Bu Tan said the next wave of artificial-intelligence technology is increasing the need for Intel's chips and products, and the company's forecast for profit in the spring topped analysts' estimates.

Such strong profit reports have helped Wall Street rally to records, and the S&P 500 has leaped nearly 13% in a little under a month. Hopes have also built in financial markets that the United States and Iran can find a way to avoid a worst-case scenario for the global economy because of their war.

A ceasefire is tenuously in place between the two, but tensions between them are still keeping oil tankers from passing through the Strait of Hormuz to deliver crude from the Persian Gulf to customers worldwide.

Oil prices climbed this week on worries about the strait, but an encouraging signal came Friday after Iran's top diplomat said he was heading to Pakistan. That's where officials have been trying to get the United States and Iran to convene for a second round of ceasefire negotiations.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt later said in an interview on Fox News Channel that President Donald Trump is sending his envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to Pakistan to meet with Iran's foreign minister.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude to be delivered in June yo-yoed for much of the day before settling at \$105.33, up 0.2%. The price for a barrel of Brent oil delivered in July, which is where more of the trad-

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ing is happening in the market, fell 0.2% to \$99.13.

On Wall Street, Procter & Gamble rose 2.5% after reporting stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. CEO Shailesh Jejurikar said it saw broad-based growth across regions and products, which include Bounty paper towels and Tide detergent.

That helped offset a drop of 25.5% for Charter Communications, whose profit for the latest quarter came in weaker than analysts expected. It lost 120,000 internet customers during the three months, more than some analysts expected.

Hartford Insurance Group fell 3.7% after reporting profit growth for the latest quarter that fell short of analysts' expectations.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 56.68 points to 7,165.08. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 79.61 to 49,230.71, and the Nasdaq composite rallied 398.09 to 24,836.60.

In the bond market, Treasury yields eased as traders upped their bets on the possibility that the Federal Reserve could resume its cuts to interest rates later this year.

The path appeared to clear Friday for Trump's nominee to chair the Fed, Kevin Warsh, after the U.S. Justice Department ended its probe into the Fed's current chair, Jerome Powell.

Sen. Thom Tillis, a North Carolina Republican, has said he would oppose Warsh until the investigation was resolved, effectively blocking his confirmation. Warsh is the choice of Trump, who has been arguing loudly for lower interest rates, which could help mortgages and other kinds of loans become less expensive.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury dipped to 4.30% from 4.34% late Thursday.

A report in the morning also said sentiment among U.S. consumers remains sour. A survey by the University of Michigan found weaker sentiment in April across political party, income, age, and education, though it improved a bit after the ceasefire in the war with Iran was announced earlier in the month.

In stock markets abroad, indexes were mixed across Europe and Asia. Japan's Nikkei 225 rose 1%, and France's CAC 40 fell 0.8% for two of the world's bigger moves.

Justice Department to allow firing squads for executions in move to ramp up capital punishment

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department will adopt firing squads as a permitted method of execution as the Trump administration moves to ramp up and expedite capital punishment cases, officials said Friday.

The Justice Department is also reauthorizing the use of single-drug lethal injections with pentobarbital that were used to carry out 13 executions during the first Trump administration — more than under any president in modern history. The Biden administration had removed pentobarbital from the federal protocol over concerns about the potential for unnecessary pain and suffering.

The moves were announced as part of a broader push to step up federal executions after a moratorium under the Biden administration. Only three defendants remain on federal death row after Democratic President Joe Biden converted 37 of their sentences to life in prison, though the Trump administration has so far authorized seeking death sentences against 44 defendants.

"The prior administration failed in its duty to protect the American people by refusing to pursue and carry out the ultimate punishment against the most dangerous criminals, including terrorists, child murderers, and cop killers," Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche said in a statement. "Under President Trump's leadership, the Department of Justice is once again enforcing the law and standing with victims."

The federal government has not previously included firing squad as a method of execution in its protocols, according to the Death Penalty Information Center. Five states currently allow executions by firing squad: Idaho, Mississippi, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Utah.

The pentobarbital protocol was adopted by Bill Barr, attorney general during Trump's first term, to replace a three-drug mix used in the 2000s, the last time federal executions were carried out before Trump's first term in office.

Attorney General Merrick Garland in the final days of the Biden administration withdrew the pentobarbital

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lethal injection policy after a government review of scientific and medical research found there remains "significant uncertainty" about whether its use causes unnecessary pain and suffering."

In 2020, under Barr's leadership, the Justice Department published a rule in the Federal Register to allow the federal government to conduct executions by lethal injection or use "any other manner prescribed by the law of the state in which the sentence was imposed."

A number of states allow other methods of execution, including electrocution, inhaling nitrogen gas or death by firing squad.

The Trump administration, in a report released Friday, said the Biden administration "got the standard and the science wrong." The Biden administration's findings, among other things, "failed to address the overwhelming evidence" that an injected with pentobarbital quickly "quickly loses consciousness—rendering him unable to experience pain," the report said.

Currently on death row are are Dylann Roof, who carried out the 2015 racist slayings of nine Black members of Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina; 2013 Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar Tsarnaev; and Robert Bowers, who fatally shot 11 congregants at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue in 2018, the deadliest antisemitic attack in U.S history.

NFL draft in NIL era includes players taking a pay cut to go from college to the pros

By MARK LONG AP Pro Football Writer

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — Philadelphia Eagles general manager Howie Roseman might do something this weekend he's never done in his storied NFL career: draft a player who will take a pay cut by entering the league.

It won't be the last time, either.

The minimum salary for an NFL draft pick in 2026 is slotted at \$915,120. But with college revenue sharing going into effect before the 2025 season — top programs are now spending up to \$20.5 million on student-athletes, with the majority earmarked for the most talented football players — there are undoubtedly players who will be drafted Saturday who topped the million-dollar mark last season and will earn less in the pros.

At least in Year 1.

"So the character of those players, their passion and love of the game come to the forefront even more," Roseman said.

Most of the players making more than \$1 million in college football are quarterbacks. Indiana's Fernando Mendoza and Alabama's Ty Simpson were first-round draft picks, with Mendoza going No. 1 to the Las Vegas Raiders and Simpson surprisingly landing with the Los Angeles Rams at No. 13.

Mendoza's NFL rookie deal is slotted to top \$57 million, including nearly \$10.5 million in 2026. Simpson's contract will be roughly half that — \$25.4 million total, including \$4.6 million in the first year.

LSU's Garrett Nussmeier and Miami's Carson Beck are projected to be the next quarterbacks selected, with both potentially coming off the board in the second or third round Friday night — and both likely earning less as NFL rookies than they made as established college starters.

Same goes for fellow QBs Drew Allar (Penn State), Taylen Green (Arkansas), Cole Payton (North Dakota State), Sawyer Robertson (Baylor), Cade Klubnik (Clemson), Joey Aguilar (Tennessee) and others.

Although revenue share payments are typically undisclosed, name, image and likeness valuations are much more public. Nearly half of the top 50 NIL valuations in 2025 belonged to QBs, according to On3, with two dozen of those over \$1.5 million.

"They come in almost like pros now," Raiders general manager John Spytek said. "I actually think it's made it easier because you know what the guys are going to do when they have money.

"You know the ones that love the game and are about the right things, and just because they've got more money than we all had when we were in college, they still prepare the right way, they play the right way, they love the game, they're there for their teammates. I think it's kind of been a little bit illuminating

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to the character of who they are.”

The financial component has less of an impact on NFL decision-makers as the age issue.

Ravens general manager Eric DeCosta said this is the third consecutive year in which 18% of the team’s draft board is comprised of players at least 24 years old. That number used to be 4%, he added.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the initial age surge. But soaring NIL payments and rev share could be the deciding force for years to come.

“That’s something that we don’t really understand fully and what that means,” DeCosta said. “I don’t think it’s a good thing, certainly. But historically we’ve tried to draft younger players when we can. That’s been something that we feel strongly (about), but now we’ve got 18% of the draft board that’s over 24 years old. So that’s going to change the way that maybe we target players.”

And some of them will be millionaires before they even sign an NFL contract.

“That’s interesting. I don’t know that it’s rooted in financial thoughts as much as you talk about age quite a bit and whether or not tread on the tires is something of note,” Jacksonville Jaguars general manager James Gladstone said. “I think most of the times the guys have a little bit more financial awareness, and that can be a really helpful tool.

“The fact that they’re not just being dumped a good chunk of cash for the first time when they enter the NFL. They now have some version of experience navigating that, and that can be a really helpful piece for sure.”

FDA plans ultra-fast review of three psychedelic drugs following Trump directive

By MATTHEW PERRONE AP Health Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Food and Drug Administration said Friday it will offer ultra-fast review to three psychedelic drugs being developed to treat mental health conditions, including depression, the latest step by the Trump administration toward possible approval of the experimental treatments.

President Donald Trump signed an executive order last weekend directing the FDA and other federal agencies to speed research and loosen restrictions on psychedelics, a class of hallucinogenic drugs which remain illegal under federal law.

The FDA said it awarded priority review vouchers to two companies studying psilocybin — the active ingredient in magic mushrooms — for hard-to-treat forms of depression. A third company received a voucher for methylone, a drug related to MDMA, for post-traumatic stress disorder. The FDA did not name the companies in a press release announcing the news.

“We owe it to our nation’s veterans and all Americans who are suffering from these conditions to evaluate these potential therapies with urgency,” FDA Commissioner Marty Makary said in a statement.

The vouchers don’t guarantee approval, but instead mean that regulators will try to shorten their reviews from a period of months to weeks.

The recent moves on psychedelics reflect growing popular support for the mind-altering substances among Trump’s supporters, including combat veterans and followers of the Make America Healthy Again movement spearheaded by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Last July, Kennedy told members of Congress his department aimed to make psychedelics available for hard-to-treat psychiatric conditions within one year. Some of Kennedy’s top allies and staffers are proponents of the drugs.

Calley Means, a former Kennedy campaign staffer now serving as a senior health adviser, has previously written about the “mind-blowing” power of psychedelics and his plans to invest in companies developing the drugs.

FDA’s special treatment for psychedelics is likely to renew scrutiny of its program for speeding up drug reviews, known as the Commissioner’s National Priority Voucher program.

Democratic members of Congress have noted that vouchers have gone to companies that are politically favored by the White House, including those that have agreed to cut prices on their medications.

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In a separate move, the FDA authorized initial testing of a drug related to ibogaine, a powerful psychedelic made from an African shrub, for people with alcohol use disorder. Ibogaine is known to sometimes cause dangerous heart rhythms but has been embraced by combat veterans as a way to treat trauma and addiction.

The drugmaker, DemeRx, is led by a Florida-based researcher who first began studying ibogaine as a treatment for cocaine addiction in the 1990s, before federal health officials pulled funding for the work.

"Every grant proposal that I submitted to (the National Institute on Drug Abuse) was rejected," Deborah Mash, a neurologist and founder of DemeRx, told The Associated Press. "I couldn't get that funding and that's why ibogaine didn't advance in the 1990s."

Ibogaine is known to cause intense hallucinations, nausea, vomiting, tremors and sometimes dangerous irregular heart rhythms. Mash says DemeRx's drug is a metabolite of ibogaine, and doesn't carry the same hallucinogenic effects or risks as the original drug.

Saturday's White House event on psychedelics suggested Trump's political allies had a role in pushing the drugs to the top of his agenda.

Joe Rogan, the podcaster who appeared at the Oval Office event, said he texted Trump about the psychedelic ibogaine, which he's repeatedly discussed on his show. According to Rogan, the president quickly responded: "Sounds great. Do you want FDA approval? Let's do it."

Rogan's endorsement of Trump days before the November 2024 election was seen by White House aides as a key factor in his election victory.

On his show earlier this week, Rogan said he learned about ibogaine from his friend Ed Clay, a mixed martial arts trainer and entrepreneur who runs retreats making use of it in Mexico.

Virtually all psychedelics, including LSD, psilocybin and MDMA are classified as Schedule I substances, a category for high-risk drugs that have no medically accepted use.

For decades, drugmakers steered clear of the substances due to the difficulties of studying drugs that are illegal under federal law.

But dozens of small drugmakers, many fueled by Silicon Valley investors, have recently jumped into the race to win FDA approval for various psychedelics. For example, tech billionaire Peter Thiel — who has made political donations to both Trump and Vice President JD Vance — has invested in AtaiBeckley, a company studying MDMA and other psychedelic compounds.

Congress keeps holding all-nighters, creating dysfunction after dark

By MARY CLARE JALONICK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Just as the Senate prepared to launch into a late-night vote series, Republican Sen. John Kennedy of Louisiana went to the floor to vent.

Frustrated and seemingly exhausted Wednesday, Kennedy said he wanted more time to debate his amendments to a budget resolution to fund immigration enforcement agencies. But he had another complaint.

"Frankly I am worried about the health of some of our members," Kennedy said as 9 p.m. approached. "Not that they're in bad health, but it's hard to stay up all night."

More than 6 hours later, just past 3:30 a.m., senators wrapped up another marathon voting session on amendments and filed out of the chamber, dazed, tired and resigned to soon doing it all again.

It's a complaint as old as the Congress, with leaders in both major political parties often turning to the torturous grind of an overnight session to exhaust members, overcome objections and push legislation to passage. But it's a scenario that is playing out again and again, nearly business as usual, as the House and the Senate fracture and careen from one crisis to the next.

Lawmakers say it's a symptom of a broken Congress that leaders are increasingly forced to govern in the dead of night.

"The dysfunction is getting worse," said Republican Sen. Kevin Cramer of North Dakota, who has been in Congress for 14 years. Lawmakers have become "less mature," he said, as a growing number act only

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in their own self-interest and hold up bills or delay proceedings.

"It's not a healthy lifestyle," Cramer said, for the country or the lawmakers. "There's less concern for the team effort."

Late-night fights have become the norm

In the last few weeks, Congress has repeatedly debated pressing national issues at night — leading to confusion and turmoil in both chambers.

Much of the drama has centered, as it increasingly does, on government funding.

In late March, Senate Republicans struck a deal with Democrats to reopen most of the Department of Homeland Security, including the Transportation Security Administration, while Democrats continued to block money for Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol after the shootings of two protesters in Minneapolis. It was a breakthrough, and Majority Leader John Thune, R-S.D., passed the spending bill by voice vote — meaning there were no objections on either side — just past 2 a.m.

Senators then flew home for a two-week recess, leaving final passage to the House. But House lawmakers who were asleep when the final Senate agreement was announced woke up and angrily rejected it, saying they wouldn't pass legislation that didn't include funding for the immigration enforcement agencies. Senators were then forced to figure out a new plan for reopening the department, and it remains unresolved.

An equally contentious matter, the renewal of surveillance powers for federal spy agencies, also devolved into an after-hours affair.

House GOP leaders kept members in session well past midnight last week while trying and ultimately failing to pass different versions of a foreign surveillance bill. Scrambling to pass an extension of the law ahead of a Monday deadline, leaders eventually cobbled together a 10-day extension past 2 a.m.

Members of both parties were exasperated by the last-minute mayhem.

"Who the hell is running this place?" said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass. He said Republicans threw the bill together "on the back of a napkin in the back room in the middle of the night."

"Just about everyone agrees that this is serious stuff, the kind of debate that Congress ought to have in the open," McGovern said.

Tennessee Rep. Andy Ogles, a Republican and member of the House Freedom Caucus who opposed the leadership bills, said the outcome was predictable.

"We warned them that this was gonna happen," Ogles said. "Unfortunately, here we are at 2 in the morning."

Time-consuming partisan bills push Senate into late nights

The late-night vote series in the Senate this week was part of an arcane, complicated process called budget reconciliation that GOP leaders are using to try to fund the two immigration enforcement agencies that Democrats continue to block. It's become the default mode of governing for majorities in Congress as bipartisanship on major issues fades away.

Reconciliation allows the Senate majority to bypass the filibuster and pass budget-related bills along party lines. First, though, they have to get through two lengthy series of votes — and that's where the dreaded "vote-a-rama" comes in.

The process is open-ended, which means lawmakers in both parties can offer as many amendments as they want to put the other side on record — or, as Republican Sen. Lisa Murkowski of Alaska describes it, "to make each other miserable."

Leaders generally hold the votes in the middle of the night, as they did Wednesday into Thursday, in hopes of exhausting both sides and forcing senators to stay on the floor and vote quickly. But instead of waiting around between amendment votes, Murkowski walked back and forth between the chamber and her "hideaway," a small office each senator has in the Capitol building.

"I'm at 14,291 steps," she said just after 11 p.m., looking at her smartwatch, which was also telling her that her bedtime was approaching. She said if she couldn't sleep, she might as well get more exercise.

Senators went through the same reconciliation process last year, in extremes, as they labored for weeks to pass President Donald Trump's package of spending and tax cuts, which he dubbed One Big Beautiful Bill.

The bill had barely enough Republican support to pass, and the Senate and the House held nearly back-

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to-back all-night sessions to pass it by Trump's July 4 deadline. In the Senate, GOP leaders kept the long vote series open for hours on end as they worked to win support from Murkowski and others.

"It's insane," Murkowski said of the late nights. "My mom always said, 'Nothing good happens after midnight.'"

Overnights are not new but become more common

Overnight votes are certainly nothing new in Congress. The Affordable Care Act, President Barack Obama's signature health care law, passed the Senate in the early hours of Christmas Eve in 2009 after weeks of negotiations, just in time for senators to get home for the holidays. Countless other big bills have been passed in the dead of night, as well.

But lawmakers say the after-dark routine has gotten worse and more frequent.

"Part of what's changed here is there's a lot of heavy lifting that you have to do to get a bill passed," said Democratic Sen. Ron Wyden of Oregon, who has served in Congress since 1981, when he was elected to the House. "I think at some point you've got to have a forcing mechanism, and one of the easiest is to stay up until the wee hours so that everybody is basically trying not to fall asleep on national TV."

Democratic Sen. Andy Kim of New Jersey, a relative newcomer to the Senate elected in 2024, said there's an eventual question of whether anyone is watching.

In the middle of the night, he said: "Are the American people paying attention? How do we get the message out?"

Still, he said, it's important that lawmakers get their work done at any hour, especially when there is a war going on with Iran and lawmakers take long stretches away from Washington.

"I don't mind being here," Kim said.

Prosecutors used rap lyrics to help send a man to death row in Texas. It's not an uncommon tactic

By MARIA SHERMAN and CLAUDIA LAUER Associated Press

When he was 19, James Broadnax jotted down rap lyrics, thoughts and even job leads in a notebook that would become evidence at his capital murder trial.

Prosecutors selected lyrics with alleged references to gang affiliation and shootings to convince jurors that instead of life in prison, Broadnax, who is Black, should be put to death after his conviction — a move his lawyers argue biased the almost all-white jury.

Broadnax isn't the only defendant or even the only person on Texas' death row whose rap lyrics have been introduced to a jury. Rap lyrics have featured in hundreds of court cases in more than 40 states over the past 50 years, though judges often exclude other forms of creative expression from being used as evidence, researchers have found. Treating rap lyrics as diary entries minimizes their artistic value while playing on negative racial stereotypes to influence jurors, experts say.

"It denies rap music the status of art. It is characterized as autobiography," said Erik Nielson, co-author of the book "Rap on Trial." "It really does speak to underlying assumptions that some people have about young men of color — and that's almost exclusively who this practice targets — that they aren't sophisticated enough to engage in various literary devices. That there isn't metaphor here."

Rap lyrics are commonly used in racketeering or gang-related cases. Prosecutors try to establish the defendant's involvement in an underlying crime by introducing lyrics as evidence, Nielson said. If someone is charged with a shooting, for example, prosecutors look for lyrics that mention a shooting.

"If the lyrics were written before the alleged crime, the prosecutors will say this is evidence of motive," Nielson said. "If they're written afterward, they're characterized as a straight-up confession."

Rap lyrics introduced in court as autobiographical

Broadnax and his cousin were charged with murder for the 2008 shooting deaths of two men outside a suburban Dallas music studio. After more than a decade on death row, he is scheduled to be executed April 30.

In their pending appeal asking the U.S. Supreme Court to halt Broadnax's execution, his attorneys argue

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that a judge should have considered the potential for racial bias and instructed the jury that his lyrics should not be viewed as autobiographical.

"The emphasis on the rap lyrics was a key element in this racially charged narrative," Broadnax's attorneys wrote. "Worse, the record in this case confirms that the jury delivered a death sentence based on the racial stereotypes invoked by the rap lyrics."

Kemba, a rapper featured in the documentary "As We Speak: Rap Music on Trial," told The Associated Press that introducing rap lyrics is particularly effective with juries because of innate prejudices — and because prosecutors want convictions.

"There's a lot of people that don't see rap or Black music as artistic expression," he said. "And when you're in a court case, there's already an assumption that you've done something (wrong)."

The defendants in these cases are "almost exclusively young men of color, often with very limited resources," and many can't afford a private attorney, Nielson said.

But some high-profile rappers have had their songs introduced in court, like Young Thug, whose lyrics were used as evidence at his trial on gang and racketeering charges. He pleaded guilty to those charges and was released from custody in 2024.

Stereotypes about rap emerge

"The criminalization and the targeting of hip-hop has been going on for all 50 years of the culture," said Nielson, who noted the use of rap lyrics in court ramped up in the early 1990s.

The monitoring of Black artistic expression dates back to the antebellum South, he said, though that intensified as rap music became more critical of power structures, like N.W.A.'s 1989 song "F--- the Police," which condemns police brutality.

In 2022, The New York Times' Jaeah Lee looked for non-rap examples of lyrics used at trial from 1950 onward and found only four. Three cases were thrown out and one led to a conviction that was overturned. In that same time period, Nielson found roughly 700 examples of rap lyrics used in court cases, including lyrics that someone rapped but didn't even write.

Another study conducted by University of Nevada assistant professor Adam Dunbar examined stereotypes of rap. He presented people with lyrics, saying they were from rap, country or metal music. When it came to rap, respondents overwhelmingly considered the lyrics to be autobiographical.

"But if they're given the same lyrics and told that those are country or heavy metal lyrics, they say, 'No, it's just art,'" said J.M. Harper, director of "As We Speak."

Some rappers have begun directly attesting to the fictional nature of their music. The year before he was fatally stabbed in 2021, Drakeo the Ruler released the song "Fictional" from behind bars because his lyrics were being treated as nonfiction. In 2023, 21 Savage described his raps as "fiction as hell."

"There's no doubt in my mind that they are doing this for fear of prosecution," Nielson said.

Rules of evidence can be open to judge's interpretation

A number of A-list rappers, including Travis Scott, T.I. and Killer Mike, have filed briefs at the Supreme Court in support of Broadnax, cautioning against considering rap lyrics autobiographical.

Prosecutors in the case said Texas law allows evidence relevant to a defendant's reputation at sentencing and contend the court shouldn't consider the argument against the lyrics because Broadnax failed to raise concerns in previous appeals. State courts have ruled against other appeals by Broadnax's attorneys.

"At the end of the day, the most important thing is not the prosecutors," rapper LL Cool J told the AP in 2024, adding that judges should better block rap lyrics from trials. "The question is: Why is it even admissible?"

Lucius T. Outlaw III, a professor at Howard University School of Law who filed the amicus brief on behalf of Nielson and Killer Mike, said judges enforce rules of evidence specific to each state.

One judge might view rap lyrics as relevant; another may disagree. One might worry about triggering "anti-rap, which is anti-Black, bias," he said, "where another judge will say, 'I don't see that prejudice.'"

"Guidelines about what is relevant when it comes to artistic expression and what is overly prejudicial is so needed," he said.

Jeff Bellin, a professor at Vanderbilt Law School, said current rules tell judges to exclude evidence if it

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has low value as proof and a danger of creating bias.

"The safeguard should be judges, but they are often not aware of the social issues, or the context, when it comes to rap lyrics," he said.

New legislation seeks protection for lyrics

Bellin said legislating around the issue is difficult because lawmakers don't want to create rules that would exclude evidence truly relevant to any case.

In the past five years, at least 27 bills have been introduced federally and in a half-dozen states to limit the use of a defendant's creative expressions, including rap lyrics, in criminal proceedings, according to an AP analysis using the bill-tracking software Plural.

On April 9, Maryland became the third state to pass legislation, creating "guardrails and a test for judges to impose anytime prosecutors want to use artistic expression, not just rap," Outlaw said, noting it requires a factual connection between the potential evidence and the charges.

"It's not the cure-all, but it's a huge, important step," he said.

Today in History: April 25, Spanish-American War declared

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, April 25, the 115th day of 2026. There are 250 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 25, 1898, the United States Congress declared war against Spain. The 16-week Spanish-American War resulted in an American victory, after which the U.S. took possession of the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam.

Also on this date:

In 1507, a world map produced by German cartographer Martin Waldseemueller contained the first recorded use of the term "America," in honor of Italian navigator Amerigo Vespucci (veh-SPOO'-chee).

In 1859, ground was broken in Egypt for construction of the Suez Canal.

In 1915, during World War I, Allied soldiers invaded the Gallipoli (guh-LIH'-puh-lee) Peninsula in an unsuccessful attempt to take the Ottoman Empire out of the war.

In 1945, during World War II, delegates from 50 countries opened a conference in San Francisco to create the Charter of the United Nations.

In 1959, the St. Lawrence Seaway opened to commercial traffic, connecting all five Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.

In 1990, the Hubble Space Telescope was deployed in orbit from the space shuttle Discovery. (It was later discovered that the telescope's primary mirror was flawed, requiring the installation of corrective components to achieve optimal focus.)

In 2014, city officials in Flint, Michigan, changed the source of its water supply from Lake Huron (provided by the city of Detroit) to the Flint River in a cost-cutting move. The river water exposed Flint residents to dangerous levels of lead and bacteria, leading to a public health crisis that took five years to resolve.

In 2015, a magnitude 7.8 earthquake rocked Nepal, killing nearly 9,000 people, injuring more than 22,000 others and damaging some 1 million houses and buildings.

In 2022, the world's richest person, Elon Musk, reached an agreement to buy Twitter for roughly \$44 billion, promising a more lenient approach to policing content on the social media platform that he would rebrand as X.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Al Pacino is 86. Musician-producer Björn Ulvaeus (ABBA) is 81. Actor Talia Shire is 80. NBA Commissioner Adam Silver is 64. Actor Hank Azaria is 62. Sportscaster Joe Buck is 57. Actor Gina Torres is 57. Actor Renée Zellweger is 57. Actor Jason Lee is 56. Basketball Hall of Famer Tim Duncan is 50. Singer and actor Sara Paxton is 38. NFL safety Jordan Poyer is 35. Actor Allisyn Snyder is 30.