

# Groton Daily Independent

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## 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 11 a.m. and West Central at 1 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**  
**PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445**  
**Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460**

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## We the People

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



By David Adler

### Justice Thomas' Speech: Political Attacks, Unanswered Judicial Questions

Justice Clarence Thomas's recent speech at the University of Texas, which began as a celebration of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, meandered across disconnected political postulates and resembled a cut-and-paste rehash of previous talks, filled with gaping holes in its reasoning. His remarks then descended into a diatribe against progressivism, in general, and included an indictment of American progressives, whom he blames for policies, programs and practices that have fundamentally betrayed the principles of the Declaration and wreaked so much havoc for more than a century that they cast doubt on the very survival of our culture and nation.

The historical errors that pockmark Justice Thomas' portrayal of the origins of progressivism in America are too numerous to review here. Suffice it to say that, contrary to his claims, Woodrow Wilson did not invent progressivism and, in fact, his contributions to the new political movement at the turn of the 20th Century were overshadowed by the signal efforts of Theodore Roosevelt, as well as a wide stream of legislators, judges and journalists who, like Roosevelt, recognized the deep and pervasive corruption of the Gilded Age and the harms posed by industrialization. Progressives initiated sweeping reforms to improve the quality of life for average, ordinary working-class Americans: child labor, worker safety in mines, mills and factories, a woman's right to minimum wage and the right to vote, measures to improve health standards in the meat and dairy industries, and direct election of U.S. Senators, among many other achievements.

In another section of his speech, Justice Thomas returned to one of his familiar themes-- Americans' "rights come from God, not government" --without explaining, precisely, what it is that judges, including Supreme Court Justices, will enforce. It is one thing to invoke the majestic language of the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, as Thomas does, but the Court has the fundamental duty to "say what the law is." While the Declaration declares that "all men are created equal, endowed by our Creator with unalienable rights, including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," Thomas rightly notes that that founding document is not "law." Can judges cannot be left to interpret and apply a body of indeterminable natural rights, what Thomas often refers to as "natural law"? Would this undermine the framers' efforts to temper judicial discretion?

The founders addressed this very issue, noting the historic importance of the theory of the Declaration while recognizing the problem of reconciling it with the fundamental judicial function to ascertain the law and apply it. In the Constitutional Convention, according to James Madison's records, there was no mention of "natural law" or "the law of nature." In the Convention, Edmund Randolph observed that a "display of theory, howsoever proper in the first formation of state governments, is unfit here since we are not working on the natural rights of men not yet gathered into society, but upon those right modified by society." The framers of the Constitution, and those who drafted the Bill of Rights, distinguished rights that preexisted society and the civil rights enjoyed by citizens once society has been created.

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In the founding period, the doctrine of natural rights and natural law had little acceptance as a basis for judicial decisions. It is easy to see why. The Constitution is a written document and, indeed, is recognized in Article VI as the "supreme law of the land." It cannot be superseded by an unwritten higher law which would justify governmental transgression of the very limits that the Constitution is intended to restrain. Constitutional restraints on governmental power, it is to be recalled, apply to the judiciary, as well as the other branches of government. An invitation for judges to apply an unwritten body of natural laws, perhaps impervious to all but the judge, is prescription for government by the judiciary.

If judges are precluded from foraging through an inchoate body of natural law, what Justice Felix Frankfurter called, "literary garniture," as a source for judicial rules and decisions, does that render insignificant the concept of "unalienable rights"? Not at all. Justice John McLean, in 1853, summed up the distinction that seems to have eluded Justice Thomas. "It is for the people in making constitutions and the enactment of laws, to consider laws of nature. This is a field which judges cannot explore. They look to the law and the law only."

*David Adler is president of The Alturas Institute, a non-profit organization created to promote the Constitution, gender equality and civic education. This column is made possible with the support of the South Dakota Humanities Council, South Dakota NewsMedia Association and this newspaper.*

## **Name Released in Lake County Fatal Crash**

**What:** Single vehicle fatal crash

**Where:** 451st Avenue and Pelican Point Road, three miles southwest of Madison, SD

**When:** 2:33 p.m., Tuesday, April 14, 2026

**Vehicle 1:** 2010 Lincoln MKX

**Driver 1:** David James Hanson, 66-year-old male from Nunda, SD, fatal injuries

**Seat belt Used:** No

Lake County, S.D. – A Nunda, SD man died Tuesday, April 14 in a single-vehicle crash three miles southwest of Madison, SD.

Preliminary crash information indicates David James Hanson, the driver of a 2010 Lincoln MKX, was traveling westbound across 451st Avenue from Pelican Point Road when the vehicle left the roadway and went into a grass field where it collided with a tree stump, causing the vehicle to overturn.

Hanson was not wearing a seat belt. He was pronounced deceased at the scene.

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

The Highway Patrol is an agency of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.



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## Tietz, Dunker set school records; boys break meet mark at Ipswich



**Rylee Dunker goes for the throw in the javelin, setting a school record at the Ipswich Tigers Relays held Saturday.** (Photo from Groton Area Facebook Page)

breaking the previous school record of 87'10" set by Emma Kutter in 2024. Dunker's mark earned her a second-place finish in the event.

Groton's sprint relay continued to impress, as the 4x100 team of Tietz, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, and Makenna Krause raced to a first-place finish in 52.16.

Krause also turned in a strong individual effort, placing second in the 100 meters (13.31), while Raquel Tracy added a seventh-place finish in the 200 meters (29.46). Additional contributions came from Ashlynn Warrington, who placed fifth in the 400 (1:05.43), and Ryelle Gilbert, who finished fourth in the 1600 meters (5:57.54). The sprint medley relay team also added points with a fourth-place finish.

The Groton Area boys team followed with a strong showing of its own, tying for third place in the team standings with North Central at 64 points. Ipswich won the boys title with 85 points, followed by Aberdeen Christian with 78.

The Tigers were led by dominant performances in the distance races. Jayden Schwan captured the 3200-meter run in 10:59.68, while Riley Shellenberger placed second in the same event (11:17.33) and added a third-place finish in the 1600 meters (5:08.17).

In the 800 meters, Jace Johnson recorded a runner-up finish in 2:16.24.

Groton also excelled in relay competition, highlighted by a historic performance in the sprint medley relay. The team of Lincoln Krause, Jordan Schwan, Keegen Tracy, and Jayden Schwan raced to first place in 3:41.58, breaking the Ipswich Tiger Relays meet record previously set by Webster in 1996 (3:43.54). The quartet's performance also vaulted them into the top 10 of Class A this season.

The 4x100 relay team (Krause, Jordan Schwan, Ryder Schwan, Tracy) added a runner-up finish in 45.49.

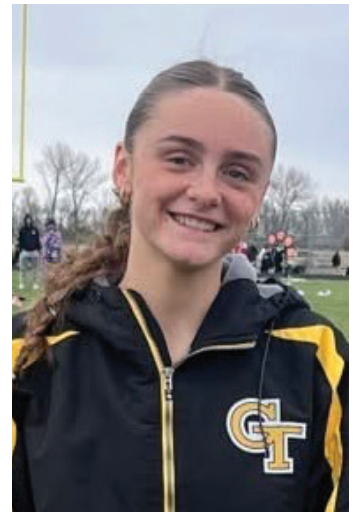
J.J. Muller added points with an eighth-place finish in the 200 meters (24.90) and fourth in the 400 (59.17), and Ethan Kroll contributed in the field events with a fourth-place finish in the long jump (19'2") and sixth in the triple jump (37'7").

IPSWICH — The Groton Area girls track and field team delivered a stand-out, record-setting performance Saturday at the Ipswich Tiger Relays, leading the way for the Tigers with multiple top finishes and two new school records.

Groton Area placed third in the girls team standings with 64 points, finishing behind Ipswich (141.5) and Warner (110.5).

McKenna Tietz highlighted the day by breaking her own school record in the 300-meter hurdles, winning the event in 47.25 — trimming .21 seconds off her previous mark. Tietz also added a third-place finish in the 100-meter hurdles (16.99), giving Groton valuable points in both hurdle events.

In the field events, Rylee Dunker etched her name into the record books with a throw of 106'4" in the javelin,



**McKenna Tietz breaks her own record in the 300m hurdle event at the Ipswich Tigers Relays held Saturday.** (Photo from Groton Area Facebook Page)



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## Boy's Division

**Team Scores:** 1. Ipswich 85, 2. Aberdeen Christian 78, 3. North Central 64, 3. Groton Area 64, 5. Warner 59, 6. Aberdeen Roncalli 57, 7. Frederick Area 49, 8. Northwestern 47, 9. Herreid/Selby Area 46, 10. Faulkton Area 45, 11. Sully Buttes 39, 12. Linton/HMB 32.5, 13. Gettysburg 28.5, 14. South Border (Wishek/Ashley) 28, 14. LaMoure/Litch-Marion 28, 16. Edgeley/Kulm 20, 17. Hoven 4

**100 Meters:** 11. Jordan Schwan, 12.11; 12. Ryder Schwan, 12.24; 36. Tate Johnson, 13.93.

**200 Meters:** 8. JJ Muller, 24.90; 29. Tate Johnson, 28.54.

**400 Meters:** 4. JJ Muller, 59.17; 17. Briggs Conn, 1:07.27.

**800 Meters:** 2. Jace Johnson, 2:16.24; 14. Briggs Conn, 2:42.57.

**1600 Meters:** 3. Riley Shellenberger, 5:08.17.

**3200 Meters:** 1. Jayden Schwan, 10:59.68; 2. Riley Shellenberger, 11:17.33.

**4x100 Relay:** 2. Groton: (Lincoln Krause, Jordan Schwan, Ryder Schwan, Keegen Tracy), 45.49.

**SMR 1600m - [200-200-400-800]:** 1. Groton: (Lincoln Krause, Jordan Schwan, Keegen Tracy, Jayden Schwan), 3:41.58.

**Discus - 1.6kg:** 27. Jordan Schwan, 62' 2".

**Long Jump:** 4. Ethan Kroll, 19' 2".

**Triple Jump:** 6. Ethan Kroll, 37' 7".

## Girl's Division

**Team Scores:** 1. Ipswich 141.5, 2. Warner 110.5, 3. Groton Area 64, 4. Northwestern 63, 5. LaMoure/Litch-Marion 61, 6. Aberdeen Roncalli 44, 7. North Central 42, 8. South Border (Wishek/Ashley) 37, 9. Edgeley/Kulm 35, 10. Faulkton Area 30, 11. Hoven 29, 12. Gettysburg 26, 12. Herreid/Selby Area 26, 14. Linton/HMB 25, 15. Mobridge-Pollock 20, 16. Aberdeen Christian 19, 17. Frederick Area 1

**100 Meters:** 2. Makenna Krause, 13.31; 19. Raquel Tracy, 14.58.

**200 Meters:** 7. Raquel Tracy, 29.46.

**400 Meters:** 5. Ashlynn Warrington, 1:05.43.

**1600 Meters:** 4. Ryelle Gilbert, 5:57.54.

**100m Hurdles - 33" / 0.838m:** 3. McKenna Tietz, 16.99; 1. Ella Kettner, 19.91; 13. Emerlee Jones, 20.30.

**300m Hurdles - 30" / 0.762m:** 1. McKenna Tietz, 47.25; 12. Ella Kettner, 57.54.

**4x100 Relay:** 1. Groton: (McKenna Tietz, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, Makenna Krause), 52.16.

**4x200 Relay:** 7. Groton: (Rylee Dunker, Raquel Tracy, Ella Kettner, Emerlee Jones), 1:59.71.

**SMR 1600m - [200-200-400-800]:** 4. Groton: (Makenna Krause, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, Ryelle Gilbert), 4:36.25.

**Shot Put - 4kg:** 15. Avery Crank, 26' 6.5".

**Discus - 1kg:** 5. Avery Crank, 94' 4".

**Javelin - 600g:** 2. Rylee Dunker, 106' 4"; 9. Avery Crank, 83' 3".

**Long Jump:** 25. Teagan Hanten, 11' 3.25"



**The 1600m Sprint Medley Relay team broke a meet record at the Ipswich Relays held Saturday with a time of 3:41.58. The record was previously held by a Webster team in 1996 (3:43.54). Team members are Senior Lincoln Krause, Freshman Jordan Schwan, Senior Keegen Tracy, and Senior Jayden Schwan. They now sit within the top 10 of Class A.** (Photo

from Groton Area Facebook Page)

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## Winter Sports Awards



### Boys Basketball

**Pictured left to right: Ethan Kroll – Scout Team Player of the Year; Logan Warrington – Tiger Award, Academic All-State; Ryder Johnson – Co-Most Valuable Offensive Player, NEC All-Conference 1st Team, Academic All-State, South Dakota Basketball Coaches Association Class A All-State 2nd-Team; Gage Sippel – Most Improved, NEC All-Conference-2nd Team, Academic All-State; Becker Bosma – Academic All-State; Keegen Tracy – Most Valuable Defensive Player, NEC All-Conference-2nd Team, Academic All-State; Karson Zak – Co-Most Valuable Offensive Player, NEC All-Conference 1st Team, State A All-Tournament Team.** (Courtesy

Photo Kristi Peterson)



### Cheerleading

**Pictured left to right: Paisley Mitchell – Most Valuable ; Breslyn Jeschke – Captain of the Year; Mya Feser – Most Dedicated; Elizabeth Cole – Most Improved.** (Courtesy Photo Kristi Peterson)



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## Girls Basketball

Pictured left to right: Mia Crank – Academic All-State; Kella Tracy – Game Changer Award; Jerica Locke – Defensive MVP, NEC All-Conference 2nd Team, Academic All-State; Jaedyn Penning – Tiger Award, NEC All-Conference 3rd Team, Academic All-State; Rylee Dunker – Hustle and Heart, Academic All-State; Taryn Traphagen – Offensive MVP, NEC All-Conference 3rd Team; Talli Wright – Academic All-State. (Courtesy Photo Kristi Peterson)



## Wrestling

Pictured in back, left to right: Gavin Englund – Most Valuable Wrestler, Region Champion, State Champion-285lbs; Liza Krueger – Most Valuable Female Wrestler, Conference Champion-110lbs, Region Champion, State Runner-Up-105lbs; Isaiah Scepaniak – Co-Most Improved Wrestler; Walker Zoellner – Co-Most Inspirational Wrestler, State Qualifier-190lbs; Kason Oswald – Co-Most Inspirational Wrestler; Ben Hoeft – Academic All-State; Layne Johnson – Conference Champion-215lbs, State Qualifier-215lbs; Pictured in front, left to right: Keegan Kucker – Most Dedicated Wrestler, State Qualifier-113lbs; Noah Scepaniak – Hardest Worker; Donovan Block – State Qualifier-157lbs; Grayson Flores – Co-Most Improved Wrestler; Kyson Kucker – Most Valuable Middle School Wrestler, State Qualifier-126lbs; Aiden Strom – Co-Most Improved Wrestler; Wyatt Hagen – State Qualifier-120lbs. (Courtesy Photo Kristi Peterson)



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## EARTHTALK

**Is Allergy Season Getting Longer & Worse?  
Here's What The Science Says  
by Rachel Berliner**

Dear EarthTalk: Why is allergy season longer and more intense lately? -- Sneezing in Snohomish

During springtime, many people develop a series of symptoms generalized as seasonal allergies: coughing, sneezing, itchy eyes and congestion, just to name a few. These symptoms are widespread; in 2024, the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America reported that some 81 million people in the U.S. suffer from seasonal allergies. This number is growing as symptoms are becoming more intense and allergy season is getting longer.

The cause of these allergies comes down to one product of flowering plants: pollen. This substance becomes more prevalent during the springtime, when the warm weather triggers flowers to open up. When pollen accumulates to high levels in the air, humans can develop an immune system response that leads to a physical reaction. The problem is that the air is getting warmer, and plants are producing pollen for a longer duration and in larger amounts than before. "A longer growing season means the plants have more time to produce pollen," says Dr. Rana Misiak, an allergy specialist at Henry Ford Health. "And that results in pollen circulating in the air for a longer period of time." In addition, droughts and dry weather can cause more pollen production, along with higher levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Air pollutants such as carbon dioxide damage the surface of the pollen, making it more allergenic.

Pollen production is heightened by climate change. Human activities are causing global temperatures to rise, subsequently worsening allergy season for many. "To me, [worsening allergies] highlight the fact that our health—even if you just have a pollen allergy—is being impacted by climate change," says Mary Margaret Johnson, MD, PhD, a research scientist of environmental health at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. "And some have much more severe health consequences from climate change." This means that the health of an individual is somewhat out of their hands—it is up to climate change to determine the severity of their allergies.

Taking action to reduce collective carbon emissions and effectively slow the rise of global temperatures will help minimize symptoms felt by allergy season. There are also many studies now being conducted, like the Citizen Science HD's Pollen Nation Project at Emory University or the National Phrenology Network, that allow civilian participation. If you are interested, you can learn more about these studies and contribute data towards their findings. In addition, any action to reduce your personal carbon footprint or advocate for pro-climate legislation will help to improve the current conditions of seasonal allergies.



**Allergy season seems to be worse than ever lately, and scientists are blaming — you guessed it — global warming.** Credit: Pexels.com.

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## THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE

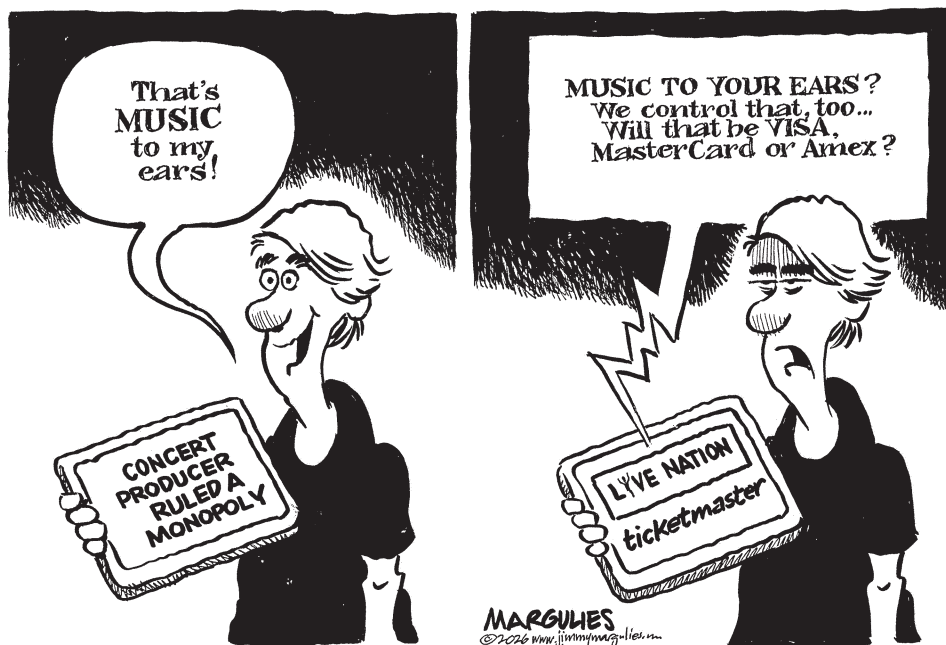
My soul is  
among lions;  
I lie among  
the sons of men  
who are set on fire,  
whose teeth are  
spears and arrows,  
and their tongue  
a sharp sword.

Psalm 57:4



Detail of "Mondnacht" by George Grosz (1916)

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## BIBLE

## TRIVIA

by Wilson Casey

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

2. What is God's act of making the heavens and the earth called? *Confirmation, Calvary, Creation, Communion*

3. How many books of the Bible begin with the letter "E"? 0, 2, 5, 6

4. What's a person who has changed from one religion to another? *Zealot, Convert, Mediator, Pillar*

5. From 2 Timothy 1, who was Timothy's devout grandmother? *Dorcas, Lydia, Lois, Hannah*

6. In biblical times, a daric was a Persian ...? *Gold coin, Headwear, Sailing ship, Well*

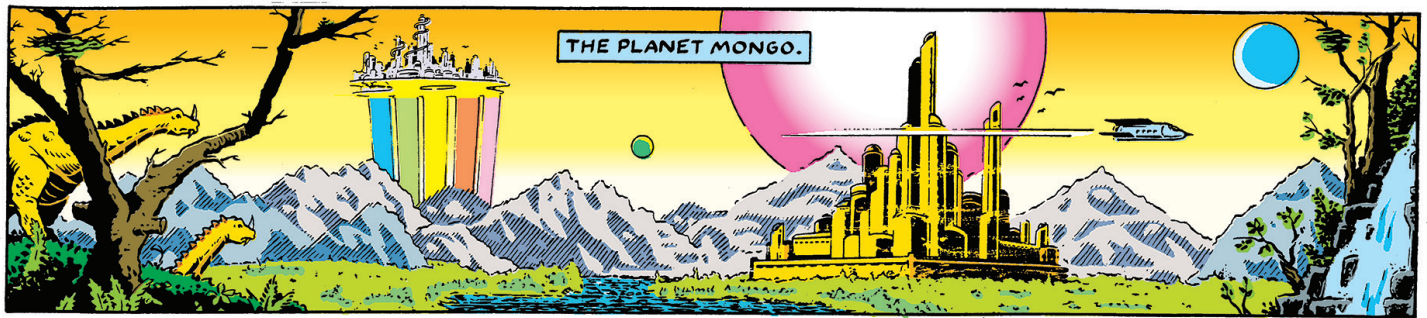
ANSWERS: 1) Neither, 2) Creation, 3) Six (Ecclesiastes, Ephesians, Esther, Exodus, Ezekiel, Ezra), 4) Convert, 5) Lois, 6) Gold coin

*More than 1,200 brand-new trivia questions in Wilson Casey's latest book "Quest for Bible Knowledge" available in bookstores and online.*



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## FLASH GORDON

4/11 BY JIM KEEFE

FEVERISHLY ILL, DR. ZARKOV LASHES OUT AT FLASH AND DALE.

YOU BLAME ME FOR BEING STRANDED HERE...

YOU'RE ALL AGAINST ME!



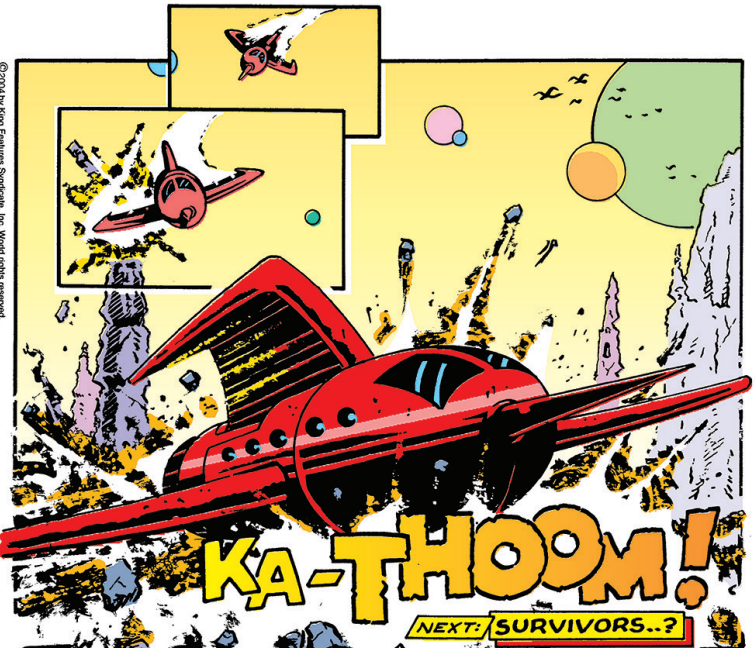
THIS SHOULD PUT HIM OUT FOR A WHILE.

UH H H H H...

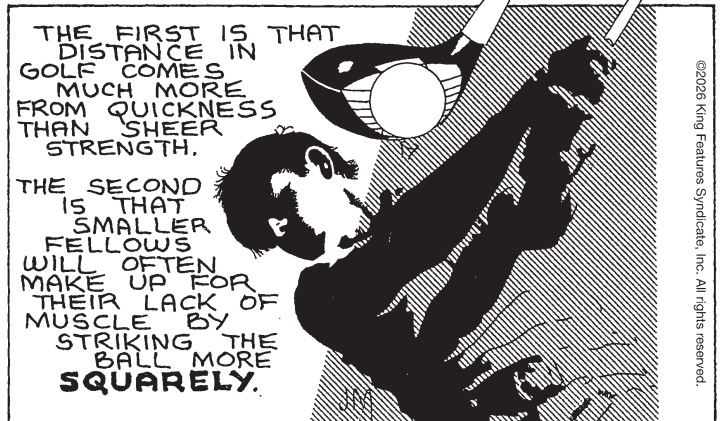
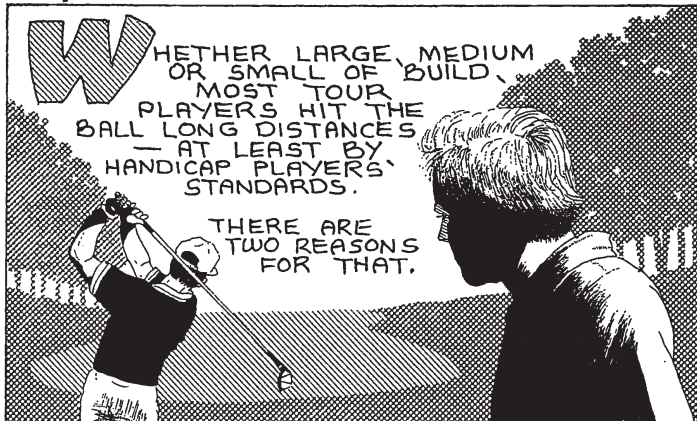


CONTROL PANEL'S SMASHED...

FALLING FAST!



## Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS





## A True Statement About CANCER Causes Intense Worry in Reader

DEAR DR. ROACH: I read your column every day. In a recent column, you wrote: "Since age is the major risk factor in getting cancer, it's likely that some people who were cured of their original cancer will later succumb to a different one."

This statement terrified me as I fall into this category. I had a lobectomy in 2009 to remove stage IA lung cancer that hadn't spread and for which I wasn't prescribed chemo or radiation. Annual CT scans since then have all been negative except for a pulmonary embolism in 2014, which resulted in a blood thinner prescription. I'm told that I will need to be on the blood thinner for the rest of my life.

Two years ago, my oncologist said that I could opt out of the scans and yearly visits since my chance of a recurrence was "less than 1%." (I think this was the percentage, or maybe I'm confusing it with something else she said.) Nevertheless, I decided to continue the scans and visits just to be on the safe side.

I rarely think about this cancer until it's time for a scan and a visit. However, your column shed new light on the situation, and as I said, now I'm scared to death. My first question is: Was it really necessary for you to include this statement since it was bound to frighten a great many people like me, who may not routinely worry about a 15-year-old cancer but will now most certainly worry?

My second question is: What can you say about my situation that may assuage my fears? -- J.G.

ANSWER: I'm sorry to scare you. Every cancer survivor does know that cancer can come back. However, this risk goes down over time. How much and how quickly the risk goes down depends on the type of cancer. Your oncologist is right that for non-small cell lung cancer (I'm making an assumption), the risk is very low after 18 years. You should continue to follow her advice about follow-up scans.

What I was really referring to is that a person who's had cancer is more likely to get a new and separate cancer than the average person (who has about a 25% to 30% chance of dying from cancer). So, a cancer survivor should be diligent about following recommended screenings for other cancers, such as a mammogram, colonoscopy or PSA test (as appropriate for their age and sex).

Not all people (especially women) with lung cancer are current or former smokers, but those who are or were smokers should have careful exams of their mouths and throats. Lifestyle changes can also make a big difference with cancer risk, especially diet. A mostly plant-based diet reduces the risk of many cancers, and regular exercise helps as well. This is good advice for everyone -- but especially those who have had cancer. Alcohol should be minimized or avoided entirely.

All of us live with the knowledge that we will die someday. Many people don't like to think about it, but physicians need to so that we can give our patients the best advice on how we can help them. For cancer survivors, this means being diligent about living wisely and getting the appropriate screening. It doesn't mean being obsessed with the possibility of an old cancer returning or a new cancer appearing.

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

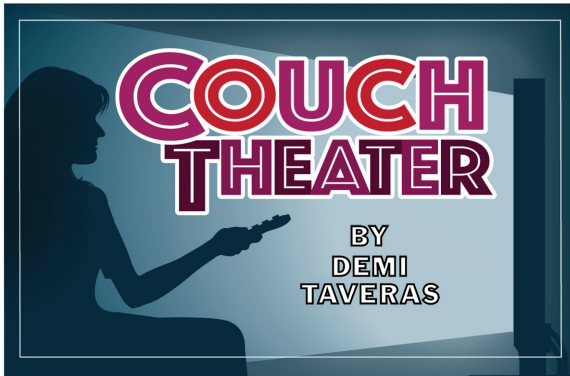
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**Mark Wahlberg and Paul Walter Hauser star in "Balls Up."** (Courtesy of MovieStillsDB)

"Malcolm in the Middle: Life's Still Unfair" (TV-14) -- The Reboot Era has brought yet another revival of a beloved sitcom: "Malcolm in the Middle," starring Frankie Muniz, Bryan Cranston, and Jane Kaczmarek. This is a major move for Muniz, who hasn't starred in a main role for television or movies in almost two decades! This miniseries picks up almost 20 years after the end of the original series, and Malcolm (Muniz) has since distanced himself from his chaotic family to maintain some semblance of peace in his life. He now has a daughter named Leah (Keeley Karsten) and a girlfriend named Tristan (Kiana Madeira), but when Hal (Cranston) and Lois (Kaczmarek) require his presence at their 40th anniversary, Malcolm gets sucked right back in! Life's still unfair, indeed! All four episodes are out now to stream. (Hulu)

"Balls Up" (R) -- Who will volunteer as tribute to stop Mark Wahlberg from making action/comedy films where he plays the same character every time? (The answer is no one!) Quips aside, "Balls Up" stars an interesting clan of comedic actors, including Paul Walter Hauser ("Springsteen: Deliver Me from Nowhere"), Molly Shannon ("Saturday Night Live"), and Sacha Baron Cohen ("Disclaimer"). Wahlberg and Hauser play two rival co-workers at a condom company who get a little too boozed up at the World Cup Final. When their drunken shenanigans cost Brazil the game, the pair must find a way to make it out of Brazil in one piece before the fans eat them alive. Stream it now! (Amazon Prime Video)

"Funny AF with Kevin Hart" (TV-MA) -- Comedian/actor Kevin Hart ("Borderlands") hosts this new competition show that searches for the next best stand-up comedian across the nation! With the help of guest judges like Chelsea Handler, Nikki Glaser, Kumail Nanjiani, and Keegan-Michael Key, Hart travels around the country to different venues where comics present their stand-up sets, and viewers at home can vote in real time for their favorite comic. The competition was created to mimic the journey of what comedians really go through on the road, which will poise the winner to become the next stand-up superstar! Six episodes are out currently, with the next two to be released on May 4 and May 5. (Netflix)

## In Case You Missed It

"Rental Family" (PG-13) -- Oscar winner Brendan Fraser ("The Whale") leads this comedy-drama film that takes place in Japan. Fraser plays an American actor named Phillip, who's based in Tokyo and struggles to find work after a successful toothpaste commercial put him on the map. But Phillip suddenly receives the offer of a lifetime through a company called Rental Family, which recruits actors to serve as stand-in family members or friends for strangers. At first, he finds the concept to be a bit odd, but as Phillip starts taking on jobs, he starts to make incredible connections with the strangers whom he encounters. The film received mostly positive reviews and is out now to stream! (Disney+)



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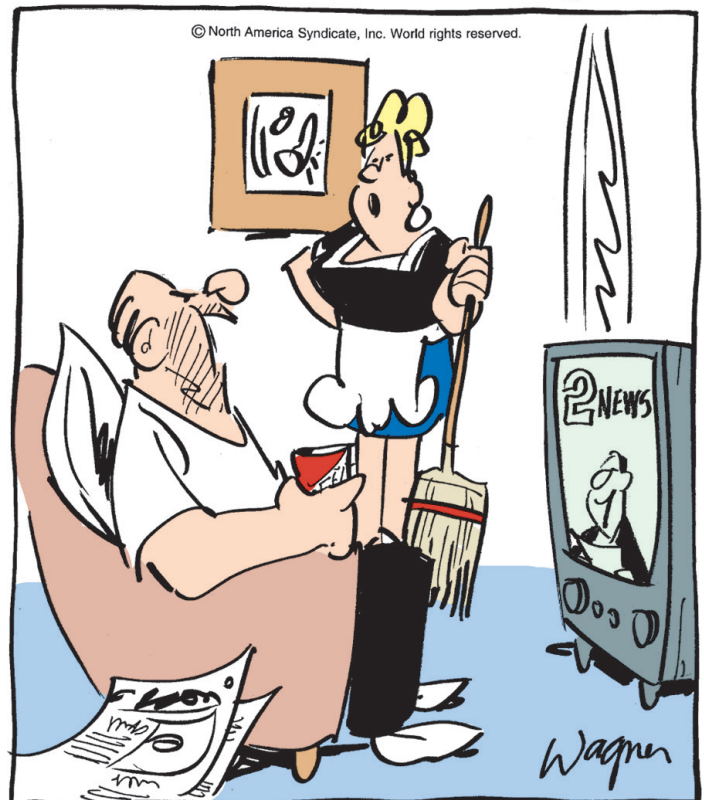


1. Which group had a hit with "Let Me Love You Tonight"?
2. Name the first artist to release "Say You Don't Mind."
3. Which group started out as Fat City?
4. "As Long as He Needs Me" was used in which musical?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Just look at you sitting there, Never looked better than tonight, And it'd be so easy to tell you I'd stay."

#### Answers

1. Pure Prairie League, in 1980. The song topped the Adult Contemporary charts in both Canada and the U.S. Vince Gill got his start with the group after an audition in 1978.
  2. Singer-songwriter Denny Laine, in 1967. The song did not chart, but Colin Blunstone released a cover in 1972 that reached the Top 20.
  3. Starland Vocal Band, in 1976, when they released "Afternoon Delight." The song won a Grammy Award for Best Arrangement for Voices, while the group won a Grammy for Best New Artist of 1976.
  4. "Oliver!" in 1960.
  5. "Don't Fall in Love With a Dreamer," by Kenny Rogers and Kim Carnes, in 1980. The song did well across several charts, including Hot 100, Country and Adult Contemporary, in both the U.S. and in Canada.
- (c) 2026 King Features Syndicate

## GRIN and BEAR IT



"I'm drowning in the mainstream media!"

## Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



# Groton Daily Independent

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## HOCUS-FOCUS

BY  
HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Leg is moved. 2. Design on lampshade is different. 3. Club is shorter. 4. Curtain is shorter. 5. Doorway is wider. 6. Streaks on windowpane are reversed.



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\* It's better to be a butterfly. Did you know, the more social you are, the better your health, researchers say.

\* Plastic grocery bags always come in handy. Try storing them in empty tissue boxes for the car or bathroom, or use an empty 12-pack soda box for more under your kitchen sink or in the garage.

\* "For foot cramps at bedtime, eat a banana in the evening. I think it is the potassium in the bananas, but it has had a good effect for me. And it can't hurt to get another serving of fruit per day, right?" -- L.I. in Missouri

\* "Another great use for baby powder (or corn starch): If you have a deck of cards that are stuck together, simply place them in a baggie and add a tablespoon of powder. Seal and shake,

getting the dust in between the cards. When you remove the cards, shuffle them over a kitchen towel and they will be like brand new." -- R.D. in Texas

\* You can fill a mop bucket with a dustpan? Yes! Use the large end of the dustpan as a funnel from the faucet over the side of the sink, where your mop bucket is waiting to catch the waterfall. The handle acts as a spout.

\* You can substitute black bean puree for flour when making brownies, and it tastes so good! It's an even swap. Just make sure you rinse the canned beans well to remove added sodium, and run them through a food processor to puree.

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

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## TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



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## King Crossword

### ACROSS

- 1 Lopsided win  
5 Have bills  
8 Wan  
12 Golden  
Fleece ship  
13 Fix illegally  
14 Final Four gp.  
15 Speed  
17 Teri of  
"Tootsie"  
18 Actor Estevez  
19 Looked  
closely (at)  
21 Pitcher  
Maglie  
22 Bath powder  
23 Speed (up)  
26 Poetic con-  
traction  
28 Period of rule  
31 El-Masry of  
"Star Wars"  
33 Bro, maybe  
35 Stair part  
36 Deeply  
touched  
38 Its cap. is  
Brussels  
40 "— outta  
here!"  
41 "Dream on!"  
43 Actor  
Holbrook  
45 Locust  
47 Talisman  
51 Seethe  
52 Maximum  
contents  
54 Diminutive  
suffix

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15				16					17			
18							19	20				
			21				22					
23	24	25		26		27		28			29	30
31			32		33		34		35			
36				37		38		39		40		
		41			42		43		44			
45	46					47			48	49	50	
51					52	53						
54					55				56			
57					58				59			

- 55 Hirohito's title  
(Abbr.)  
56 One-named  
supermodel  
57 Sun beams  
58 Verbalize  
59 Church sec-  
tion  
7 Pharaoh's  
land  
8 The "A" of  
UCLA  
9 Shortage  
10 Fast runner  
11 Lawn party  
site  
16 Pisa farewell  
20 Jug handle  
23 Zodiac  
animal  
24 Comic Philips  
25 Liveliness  
27 Tease  
29 "My word!"  
30 "Science  
Friday" net-  
work  
32 Secondhand  
deals  
34 "Cheer up!"  
37 Carried out  
39 Tibetan monk  
42 Confronts  
44 "— di Lam-  
mermoor"  
45 Driver with a  
handle  
46 Tiny bit  
48 Walk unevenly  
49 LAX guesses  
50 Broadway  
actress Daly  
53 Docs' org.

### DOWN

- 1 Gushing  
review  
2 Utah city  
3 Wrinkled fruit  
4 Workshop  
array  
5 Baltimore  
baseballers  
6 Humorist



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## — King Crossword — Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

R	O	U	T		O	W	E		A	S	H	Y
A	R	G	O		R	I	G		N	C	A	A
V	E	L	O	C	I	T	Y		G	A	R	R
E	M	I	L	I	O		P	E	E	R	E	D
			S	A	L		T	A	L	C		
R	E	V		O	E	R		R	E	I	G	N
A	M	I	R		S	I	B		S	T	E	P
M	O	V	E	D		B	E	L		Y	E	R
		A	S	I	F		H	A	L			
C	I	C	A	D	A		A	M	U	L	E	T
B	O	I	L		C	A	P	A	C	I	T	Y
E	T	T	E		E	M	P		I	M	A	N
R	A	Y	S		S	A	Y		A	P	S	E

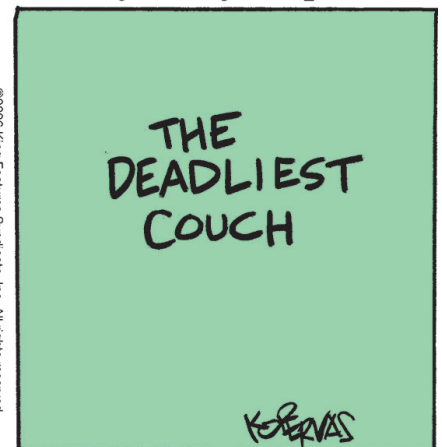
## Olive



## Out on a Limb

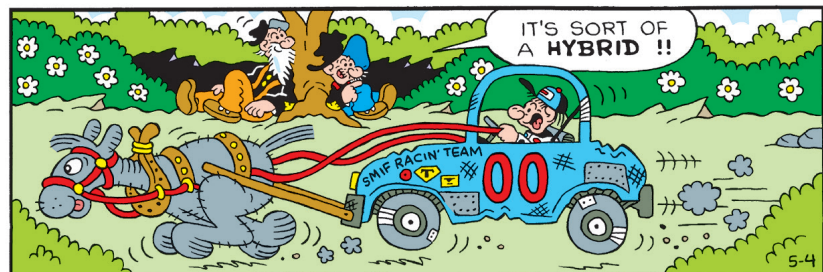
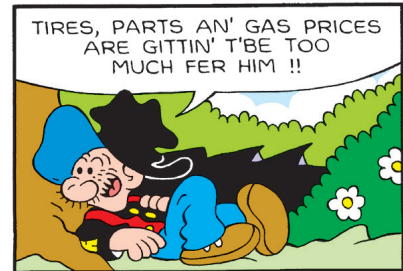
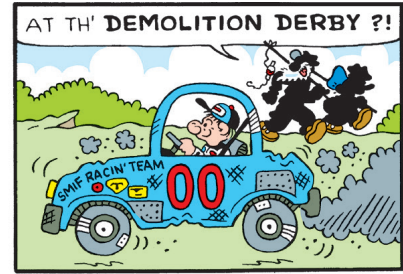
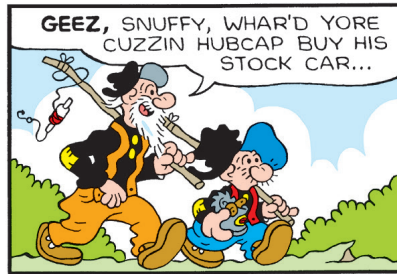
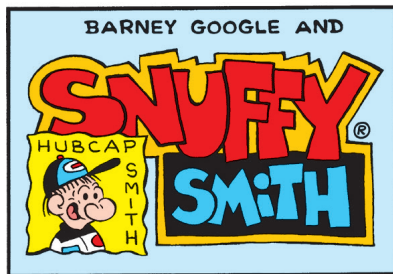
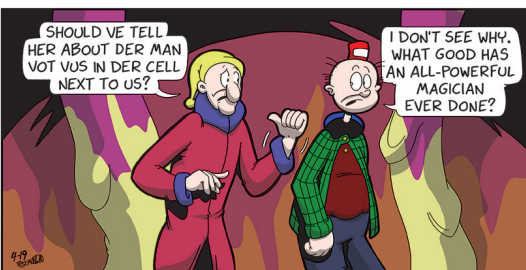
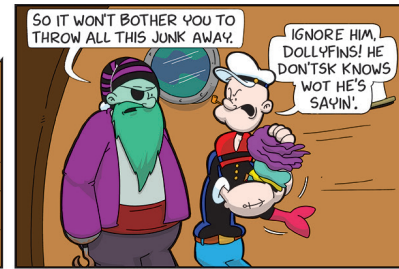
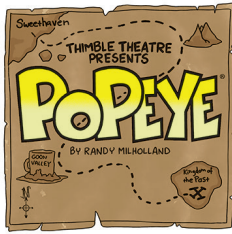


by Gary Kopervas



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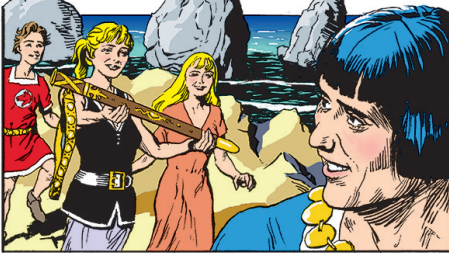


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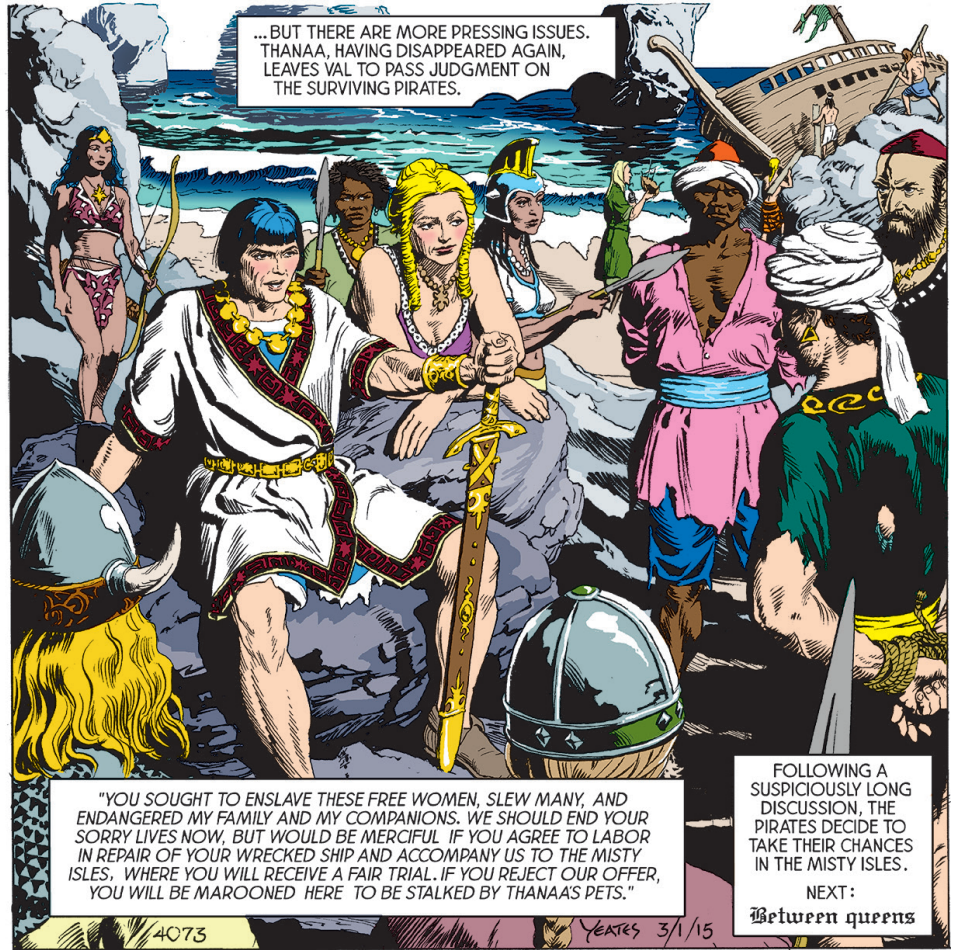
HAL FOSTER'S  
**Prince  
Valiant**  
BY SCHULTZ  
AND YEATES

WITH ALL PIRATES DEAD  
OR CAPTURED, VAL  
IS HAPPILY REUNITED  
WITH HIS FAMILY, WHO  
PRESENT HIM WITH HIS  
SALVAGED SCABBARD...



...AS WELL AS WITH GIOVANNI'S MYSTERIOUS  
ARTIFACT, JEALOUSLY GUARDED BY GURVAN. THIS  
THING WILL CALL FOR FUTURE INVESTIGATION...

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... BUT THERE ARE MORE PRESSING ISSUES.  
THANAA, HAVING DISAPPEARED AGAIN,  
LEAVES VAL TO PASS JUDGMENT ON  
THE SURVIVING PIRATES.

"YOU SOUGHT TO ENSLAVE THESE FREE WOMEN, SLEW MANY, AND  
ENDANGERED MY FAMILY AND MY COMPANIONS. WE SHOULD END YOUR  
SORRY LIVES NOW, BUT WOULD BE MERCIFUL IF YOU AGREE TO LABOR  
IN REPAIR OF YOUR WRECKED SHIP AND ACCOMPANY US TO THE MISTY  
ISLES, WHERE YOU WILL RECEIVE A FAIR TRIAL. IF YOU REJECT OUR OFFER,  
YOU WILL BE MAROONED HERE TO BE STALKED BY THANAA'S PETS."

FOLLOWING A  
SUSPICIOUSLY LONG  
DISCUSSION, THE  
PIRATES DECIDE TO  
TAKE THEIR CHANCES  
IN THE MISTY ISLES.

NEXT:

Between queens

4075

YEATES 3/1/15

## The Spats

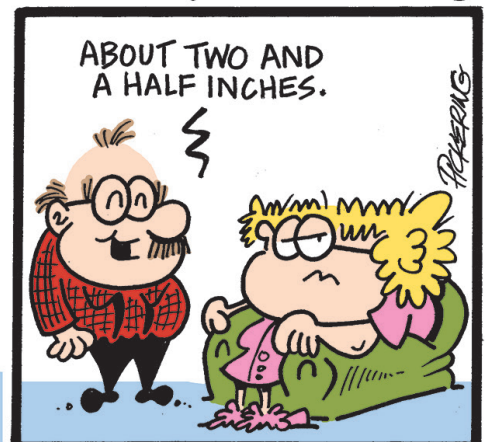
by Jeff Pickering



HOW LONG HAVE  
YOU GROWN  
THAT MUSTACHE?



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ABOUT TWO AND  
A HALF INCHES.

PICKERING

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## SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

### Teen teaches seniors about cyber security

Tejasvi Manoj, a 17-year-old from Texas, was named in 2025 as TIME magazine Kid of the Year. Her claim to fame? Teaching seniors how to avoid cyber scams.

Her reasoning for the task was personal -- her grandfather was nearly hit by a scammer who was pretending to be a relative demanding money. Thankfully the grandfather called another relative before he hit that "send" button.

This is one brilliant young lady. Not only does she teach cyber security at senior centers, but she developed an online teaching program called Shield Seniors ([www.shieldseniors.com/About-us](http://www.shieldseniors.com/About-us)). While the site isn't fully up and running yet, it's one we will need to keep an eye on when it does start.

Have you heard of TED Talks? TED is a platform where the best and the brightest among us give short talks on all types of topics. If you want to see this sharp young lady during her TED talk, go online to [www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3800D3xHQo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v3800D3xHQo). If you want to hear more from her while you're on YouTube, put her name -- Tejasvi Manoj -- in the search box. You'll be impressed.

Two years ago there were 860,000 scams reported by seniors and \$4.8 billion was lost in one year alone. Why is it scammers come after us? They perceive that we have a lot of money (after all, we're retired, so we must be rich, right?)

We didn't grow up in the tech generations -- taught to handle digital devices by the age of 3 and able to easily spot scams.

We're also, to our occasional detriment, too polite and trusting when we talk to others. It makes it all too easy for a scammer to manipulate us on the phone.

To learn more about how to avoid scams, go online to the Federal Trade Commission website ([ftc.gov](http://ftc.gov)) and put "scammers," "scams against seniors" or "senior scams" in the search box.

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15 N Main St. - Ste. 101  
Downtown Groton

Call/Text Paul: 605-397-7460  
Call/Text Tina: 605-397-7285



Living Heart Fitness Center

Senior Citizens 65+

Physical Therapy.

\$20 a month



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1. In 1974, the Major League Baseball Rules Committee permitted the use of what material in the manufacture of official baseballs?

2. How many times did Vic Toweel knock down Danny O'Sullivan in their 1950 world bantamweight title boxing match before O'Sullivan retired in the 10th round?

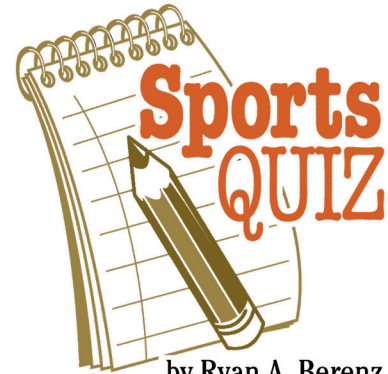
3. Pauley Pavilion is the home arena of what men's and women's college basketball teams?

4. Mikhail Shaidorov, gold medalist in men's figure skating at the 2026 Milan Cortina Winter Olympics, competed for what country?

5. The Harley J. Earl Trophy, first awarded in 1959, is presented to the winner of what auto race?

6. In January 2016, the Detroit Pistons' Andre Drummond set a new NBA record for missed free throws in a single game with how many?

7. What tennis player defeated Pete Sampras to seal the upset win for France over the U.S. at the 1991 Davis Cup, and later served as director of the French Open from 2016 to 2021? (Hint: His name is not memorable.)



by Ryan A. Berenz

## Answers

1. Cowhide (baseballs were historically made from horsehide).

2. 14, a title fight record.

3. The UCLA Bruins.

4. Kazakhstan.

5. NASCAR's Daytona 500.

6. Drummond missed 23 of 36 attempts.

7. Guy Forget.

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## Amber Waves



by Dave T. Phipps



## Preventing animal cruelty: You can make a difference

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: It seems like every day I see another news story about animals being rescued from terrible situations: hoarding, breeding mills and so on. I want to help, but I can't keep animals due to my apartment building's rules. What can I do? I'm tired of feeling helpless. -- Macy G., Smyrna, Georgia

DEAR MACY: You are awesome. Thank you for wanting to step in and take action to stop animal abuse. That's the first, most important step.

Now, here's the next step: You can make a difference right in your community, primarily by being watchful and noticing the pets and other animals in the neighborhood. Does a neighbor's dog look emaciated or cower around their owner? Take notes.

On your daily drive, notice the animals that you pass.

Is there a house with a lot of animals living outside? If you pass a farm or barn that has livestock or horses, how do the animals look? Are their ribs showing? Do they seem neglected?

From here, take steps:

- Talk to your neighbors. Learn whether they've noticed the same things.
- Create a WhatsApp or Signal group where members can privately share information.
- Get the phone number and email address of the local authority where you can make reports about possible animal cruelty. This may be animal control or the police department.
- When you make a report, include as many details as possible.

Another way to get involved is to support your local animal shelter. Donate funds, food or bedding. Ask about volunteering a few hours a month. Shelters are often the first place that rescued animals are taken to -- and the more resources they have, the better they can respond to the needs of these victims.

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

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## Strange BUT TRUE

\* An 1898 book predicted the Titanic's sinking 14 years before it happened.

\* During the 1904 Tour de France, Maurice Gerin jumped on a train and caught a ride between cities to get ahead of the other cyclists.

\* Antarctica is the world's largest desert, as it is a polar ice desert with very low precipitation.

\* As a young, poor artist, Pablo Picasso once burned his own paintings to keep warm.

\* The naked man orchid, aka the hanging man orchid, resembles -- yes, you guessed it -- a nude dude. Native to Mediterranean regions, it's also classified as threatened, possibly due to its popularity as an antidiarrheal, antifatulent and aphrodisiac.

\* Pretzels were originally created by monks around 610 A.D. to reward children for learning prayers, with their shape designed to resemble arms crossed in prayer.

\* Snake wine, a traditional alcoholic beverage found in Vietnam, China and Southeast Asia, is created by infusing whole, often venomous, snakes in rice wine or grain alcohol for months. The high alcohol content denatures the venom, making it safe for consumption, though the drink is banned in some areas.

\* In 2018, scientists at Caltech played a microscopic game of tic-tac-toe built from DNA.

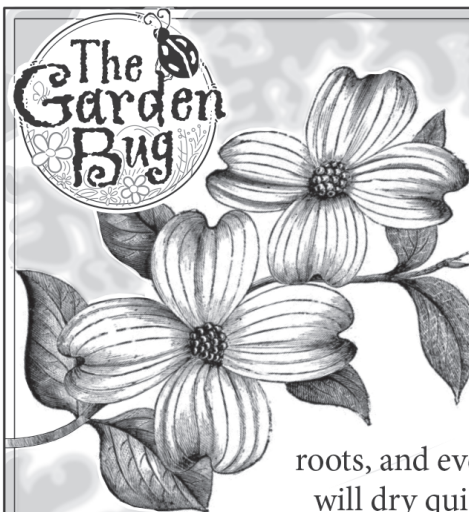
\* The dirt on Mars is made up of dust particles just 4% the width of a human hair and contains toxic metals and other harmful compounds that can cause hormonal imbalances and serious disease.

\* Feeding pigeons in Venice, Italy, is prohibited to protect historical monuments.

\*\*\*

Thought for the Day: "You build on failure. You use it as a stepping stone. Close the door on the past. You don't try to forget the mistakes, but you don't dwell on it. You don't let it have any of your energy, or any of your time, or any of your space." -- Johnny Cash

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### Dogwood trees

These lovely trees thrive in "sun-dappled" environments that enjoy protection from hours of direct sun. They like being next to tall buildings or taller trees. The most crucial factor when planting dogwoods is water access; they have shallow roots, and even with shade these root systems will dry quickly. If the leaves are light-green, prickly, or crispy, more water is needed. -- Brenda Weaver

Source: [www.thetreecenter.com/flowering-trees/dogwood-trees](http://www.thetreecenter.com/flowering-trees/dogwood-trees)

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by Freddy Groves

## Two VA grants

Two of the grants recently announced by the VA will have wide-ranging benefits for veterans.

The first, a \$16 million set of grants, supports organizations that provide adaptive sports programs for veterans and service members. Over time, the program has awarded \$160 million in grants. Whether it's for hunting, skiing, cycling or any of the dozens of sports and recreation activities (including art), the programs foster independence and a better quality of life.

The Adaptive Sports Grant Program ([department.va.gov/veteran-sports/grant-program](http://department.va.gov/veteran-sports/grant-program)) provides the funding for non-federal entities who are experienced in running programs that include instruction and competition in adaptive sports, assistance to the coaches and recreation therapists, and so much more. Paralympic athletes can receive a monthly training allowance, and seniors have their own Golden Age games.

If your organization wants to apply for a grant, look for VA Form 10096 Adaptive Sports Grant Application and see the Grants.gov website.

If you're a veteran or service member who wants to participate in the sports or art, see [department.va.gov/veteran-sports](http://department.va.gov/veteran-sports). Don't wait too long -- many of the events take place in the summer.

Second, the Highly Rural Transportation Grants (HRTG) program gives free VA health care appointment rides to veterans who live in very rural areas with fewer than seven people per square mile. The VA has announced grants totaling \$7 million for organizations (Veteran Service Organizations and State Veterans Service Agencies) who provide the transportation.

Seven people per square mile -- that's extremely rural and sparsely inhabited. The areas served include portions of Alaska, Maine, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Washington State and Wyoming.

If you're a veteran who lives in the rural parts of those states and you need transportation to VA medical appointments, go online to [www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vtp/highly\\_rural\\_transportation\\_grants.asp](http://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vtp/highly_rural_transportation_grants.asp) and see the list of contacts for your state. There is no cost to you for the transportation.

If your organization wants to apply for grants to become a transportation provider in a rural area, see [www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vtp/grant\\_applicants.asp](http://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/vtp/grant_applicants.asp).

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## Wishing Well®

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

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

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1. MOVIES: What is Indiana Jones' real first name in "Raiders of the Lost Ark"?

2. LITERATURE: What is Charlie's last name in the children's book "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory"?

3. GEOGRAPHY: What isthmus connects the Asian and African continents?

4. MATH: What is the first prime number to follow 19?

5. GEOLOGY: What type of rock is formed by cooled lava?

6. TELEVISION: What is the title character's famous line in the TV detective show "Columbo"?

7. BUSINESS: What company's stock ticker symbol is LUV?

8. ASTRONOMY: Which four planets in our solar system have rings?

9. HISTORY: About how many people worldwide were infected by the Spanish flu in the early part of the 20th century?

10. ANIMAL KINGDOM: If an animal eats only plants, what is it called?

### Answers

1. Henry.
2. Bucket.
3. Isthmus of Suez.
4. 23.
5. Igneous.
6. "Just one more thing."
7. Southwest Airlines.
8. Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune.
9. Nearly one-third of the world's population.
10. An herbivore.

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South Dakota Governor



**Larry Rhoden**



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

## Keeping Taxpayers Top of Mind

Every taxpayer dollar belongs to the people. It's our job as elected leaders to spend the people's money as efficiently as possible to keep South Dakota strong, safe, and free. In recent years, South Dakotans made one thing very clear that they wanted property tax cuts – and this session, we delivered the largest property tax cuts in South Dakota history.

Since session ended, though, there's been a lot of misinformation about those property tax cuts. Recently, I celebrated Administrative Professionals Day by having some of my team over for breakfast. They answer countless phone calls, letters, and questions from South Dakotans. And they mentioned a recent uptick in questions about taxes. A lot of the calls were driven by misinformation that the Legislature raised sales taxes this session. So, I'm here to clear up the facts.

This session, most legislators agreed with me that South Dakotans deserve real, meaningful property tax relief. But there was a lot of division – about 50 different bills to address property taxes. So, we put the work in, and by the end of session we accomplished the largest property tax cut in South Dakota history. It wasn't easy. It took grit, hard work, and good 'ol fashioned negotiating. Here are the facts behind that tax cut:

Next year, the sales tax holiday is due to expire, meaning the state sales tax is set to go up by 0.3% next July. The Legislature tried to make that tax cut permanent and wasn't successful, and some legislators were chomping at the bit to spend those new tax dollars. So instead, we redirected that into a statewide property tax cut for homeowners. And you'll see that tax cut next year on taxes payable in 2027. That's not a new sales tax increase – the tax was already going up, and we're reinvesting it in a statewide property tax cut.

On top of that, we passed my bill to give the people in each county the option to cut property taxes further. Each county will have the option to replace some or all of their homeowner property taxes with a local half-cent sales tax. It's not a mandate – it's a choice. Local leaders and local voters will decide whether it's the right opportunity for their community – and I'm a big fan of local control!

There was one other bill that promotes local control: HB 1245. I received countless messages of support on this bill from mayors, city councilors, and business leaders from all over the state. They wanted their communities to be able to avoid bonding for projects (and avoid future property tax increases) by instead passing a penny sales tax for up to five years – and only if 60% of the people in their community were supportive.

I was initially skeptical of this idea, but I studied the bill and all of its safeguards. I recognized that it could be a good tool to keep our communities Open for Opportunity. As Mayor TenHaken points out, if Sioux Falls had this local option years ago, the city could have saved over \$50 million on the construction of the Denny Sanford Premier Center.

We do a lot of things right in South Dakota. We have the 2nd lowest taxes in America because we always keep taxpayers top of mind. So, if you've called our office or stopped in and asked questions, thank you. It is important for me to understand your concerns and your questions. I hope I have answered some of them for you.



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**April 13-19, 2026**

Welcome back to another edition of the Weekly Round[s] Up. I spent our Easter in-state work period back in South Dakota traveling around the state and meeting with constituents. I traveled to Huron for an event organized by American Bank & Trust to meet with local bank presidents, business leaders and ag

bankers. I also made a trip to Box Elder for the Defense and Industry Symposium and stopped in Selby to attend the WEB Water Development Association and the Water Investment in Northern South Dakota (WINS) Treatment Plant dedication. I wrapped up the recess in Humboldt, where I met with more than 40 South Dakota farmers to discuss the issues impacting agriculture across the state and the future of the Farm Bill.

This past week, I was back in Washington, D.C. as fly-in season continues and South Dakotans make their way to our nation's capital. One day last week, I think I set a record for the year with 21 meetings and events in a single day. We will see how long that record lasts! They keep us busy in D.C. with our regularly scheduled votes, hearings and briefings, but I fill the rest of my time by meeting with as many South Dakotans as possible. This past week was a great example of that, and I appreciate all of the South Dakotans who make the trip out to visit with us.

More on these events and the rest of my week in the Weekly Round[s] Up.

South Dakota groups I visited with: South Dakota American Water Works Association; South Dakota Society of Professional Land Surveyors; South Dakotans with the American Clean Power Association; Brandon Maddox, CEO and Founder of Silencer Central based in Sioux Falls with the Firearm Industry Trade Association; South Dakota Biotech; South Dakotans from the U.S. Travel Association; AARP South Dakota; South Dakota college students with the Fraternal Government Relations Coalition; South Dakota Pork Producers Council; students from Marty Indian School; Robb Peterson, CEO of Glacial Lakes Rubber and Plastics; South Dakota Military Officers Association of America; South Dakotans with American College of Gastroenterology; South Dakotans with Growth Energy; and South Dakota pharmacists with National Community Pharmacists Association.

I also had the opportunity to speak at the Mortgage Bankers Association National Advocacy Conference and visit with Lorre Buhler, President of South Dakota's Association for Mortgage Professionals; Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association Board of Directors; and Dan Searbo, President, Vibram USA.

Met with South Dakotans from: Bath, Black Hawk, Brookings, Centerville, Ethan, Fort Pierre, Huron, Marty, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls, Tea, Utica, Vermillion, Watertown and Yankton.

Other meetings: David Mercer, CEO and Caroline Pham, Chief Legal Officer of Moonpay; Brad Boehler, President of Manitou North America; Javier Perez-Tasso, CEO of SWIFT; a classified meeting with the Cyber, Space and Intelligence Association; and the Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association Board of Directors.

This past week I joined Administrator Zeldin and gave remarks at an event hosted by the EPA announcing the Water Resue Action Plan 2.

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I also attended an appropriations legislative branch subcommittee meeting as we kick off our appropriations process for FY27. I asked the Acting Comptroller General of the Government Accountability Office a question related to the problems we are experiencing in South Dakota with the postal service. You can watch my questioning [here](#).

Hearings and Briefings: This past week, I attended two classified Senate Select Committee on Intelligence hearings and two classified Senate Armed Services Committee briefings.

Votes taken: 11 – This past week I voted for John Thomas Shepherd to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Arkansas and Christopher R. Wolfe and Andrew B. Davis, of Texas, to be United States District Judges for the Western District of Texas.

I once again voted against a resolution that would require the removal of U.S. Armed Forces from hostilities involving Iran. I also voted against a resolution that would block a proposed defense sale to Israel.

Lastly I voted in favor of a resolution to overturn a Bureau of Land Management rule that restricted mining and mineral development on certain federal lands in Minnesota.

Steps taken: 61,366 steps or 28.09 miles.

My Staff in South Dakota Visited: Aberdeen, Colton, Deadwood, Spearfish and Watertown.



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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries

PO Box 831313 - Ocala, FL 34483

1-352-216-3025

## Multitasking Is Not My Cup Of Tea

Usually, I have a lot of work on my desk, from writing to radio programs. Even though I have many projects, I can only do one at a time.

I have often wished I could multitask, which would help me get through many more projects more quickly. But that has never been my style of working. I focus on one project at a time and move on to the next when it is finished.

Some people can multitask, but that is not me. Often, it would be great if I could multitask and get a bunch of projects done at the same time. I have tried that, but it has not worked for me.

Multitasking is not my way of working.

For many years, I looked into multitasking to learn how to do it. I figured out that if I could do that, I could accomplish much more in my life. The more I studied it, the less I understood what it was all about.

When it comes to multitasking The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is the Queen. I am not sure how many she can do at once, but it is more than I can even think of. When she is doing something, she is doing everything. I only wish I had that skill.

Now that we are retired, her multitasking has grown even bigger. Whenever I walk by her craft room, I see her doing several things at once, and I am not quite sure how she manages it.

As I learn a little more about this multitasking, I begin to understand The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage more.

For example, when she is speaking to me, I really cannot follow all that she is saying because she is talking about at least six things at the same time. In her speaking, she does not have any "periods." Everything flows together, but I do not understand multitasking, so I do not understand what she is talking about.

Often she will say, "Don't you remember what I said yesterday?"

That is completely beyond my mental scope. Because yesterday she probably said a thousand things, and I did not get a handle on any of them.

I do not know if this is true, but I read somewhere that women speak 20,000 words a day, while men speak 7,000. I am not sure where they get that, but I'm not going to doubt that for a moment. It is pretty close to reality.

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The reason women speak 20,000 words to a man while he only speaks 7,000 is that they multitask while speaking. A man can never multitask while speaking, whereas a woman can multitask even while speaking.

When I am speaking, for example, I am thinking about one particular thought. I usually do not go beyond that one thought. I have noticed that when The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is speaking, she has many thoughts at that moment. Because I cannot multitask, I cannot figure out what she is talking about. That is what gets me into trouble all the time.

Don't get me wrong, I would sure enjoy being able to multitask like her. Of course, if I could multitask like her, we would never finish talking because we would be all over the place, not knowing exactly what we were talking about.

Often when she is talking, she will stop and say, "Did you hear what I just said?"

I do not say this, but I am thinking, "Yes, but I haven't been able to sort it out to find what you were talking about."

I listen, but I cannot keep up with everything she says at the time. Much of what she says is unrelated to each other, which is why I am often confused about what she is saying.

What she is saying is good, you can be sure, but it is not related to each other, which is why I get confused when she talks to me like that.

I try to be a thoughtful person and think before I speak. I cannot process half a dozen thoughts at once.

At my stage in life, I will probably never learn to multitask. I have tried studying that for a very long time, and I really have not discovered its secret.

I did find a secret to this multitasking in my relationship with The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage. Now that I know a little bit of how she multitasks, especially when she is talking, I can pretend to understand and go along with it. It does no good for me to try to sort out what she is saying, because by the time I do, she is on to another multitasking talk.

This year, we celebrate our 55th wedding anniversary. After all those years of being married, I have discovered that marital bliss is not about agreeing on everything. Rather, it is not contesting what you do not understand at the time.

A verse of scripture came to my mind on this subject.

James 1:19, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath."

This has become an important verse for me. I am trying to focus on hearing and not on speaking. The less I speak the less trouble I get into. What could be better?

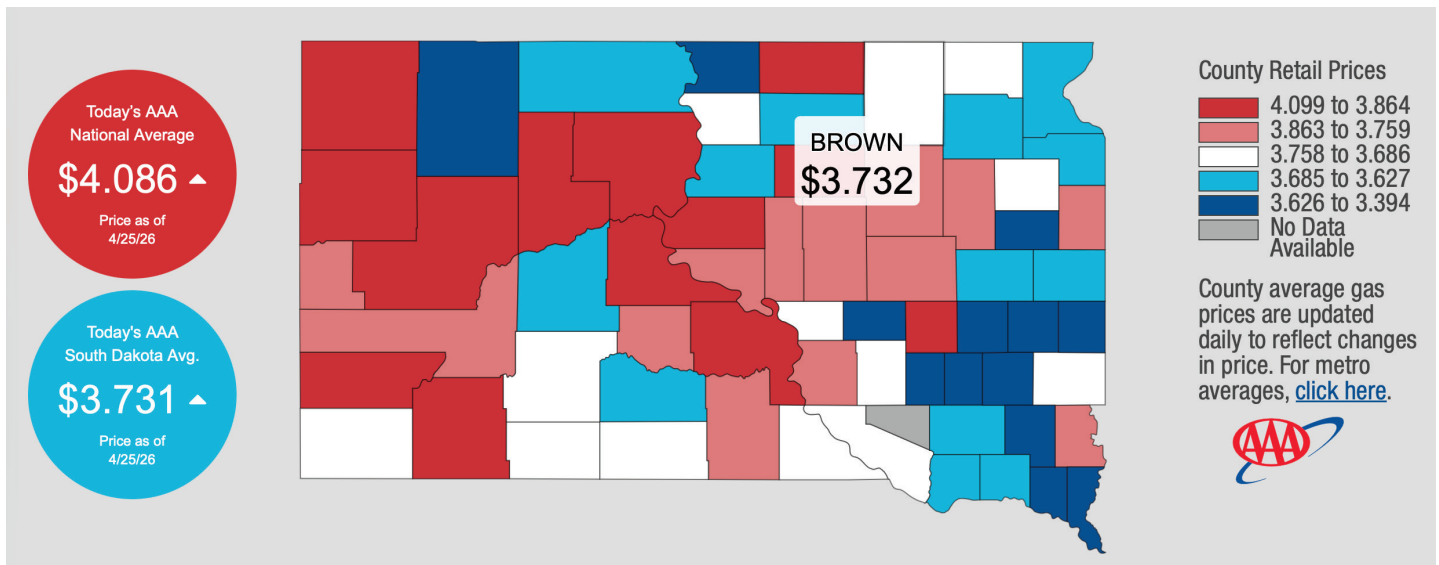
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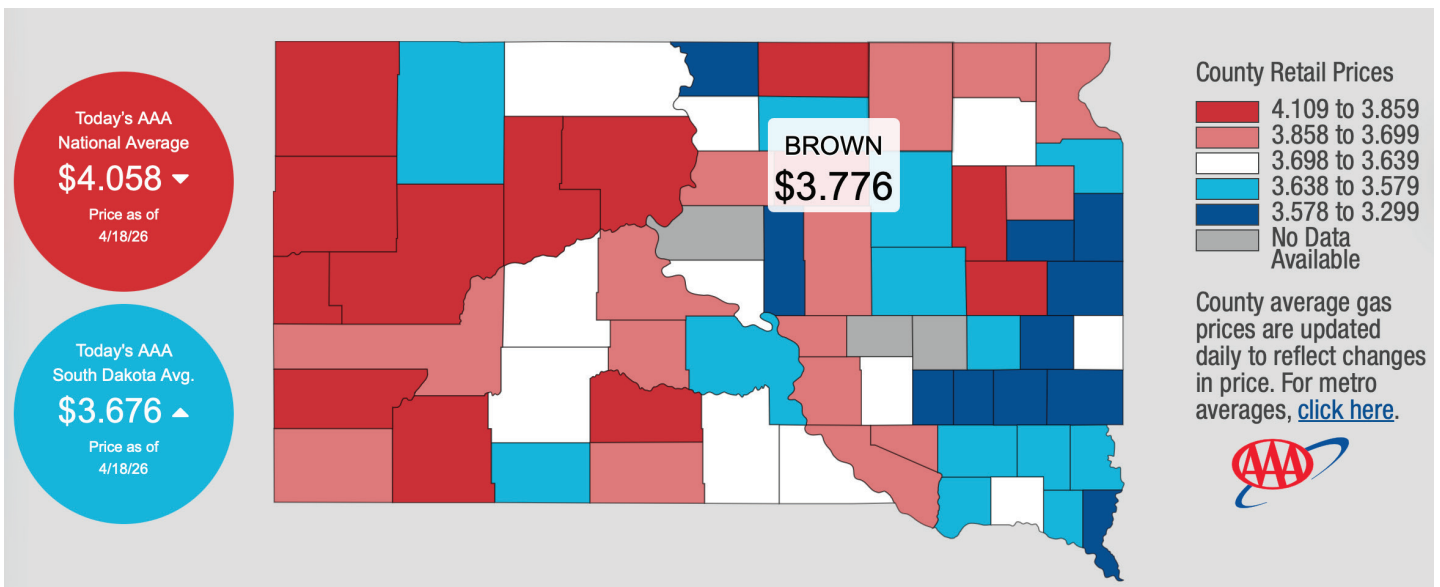
## South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.731	\$3.893	\$4.400	\$4.797
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.712	\$3.852	\$4.364	\$4.707
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.676	\$3.842	\$4.346	\$4.815
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.412	\$3.605	\$4.068	\$4.626
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.081	\$3.259	\$3.675	\$3.293

### This Week



### Last Week





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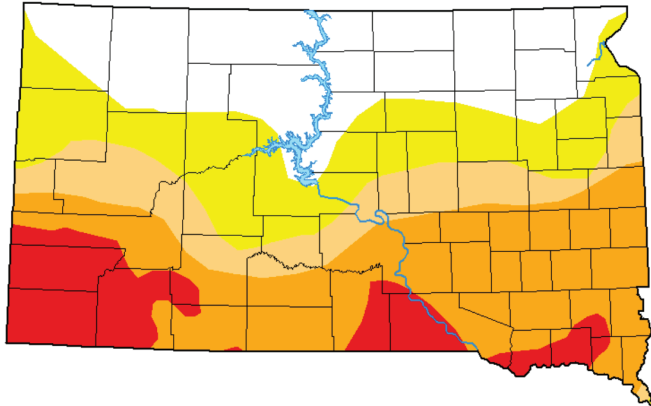
## Drought Classification

None  
D0 (Abnormally Dry)  
D1 (Moderate Drought)

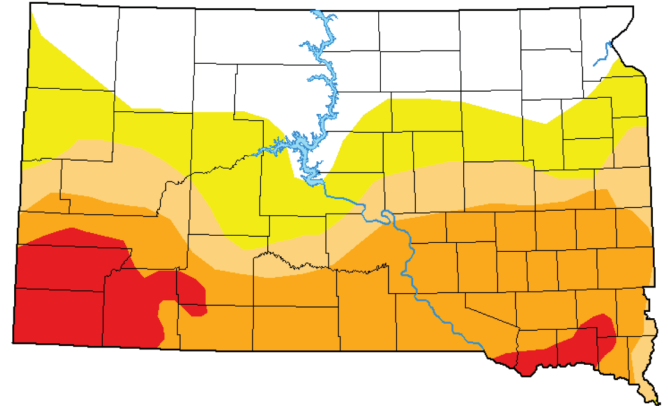
D2 (Severe Drought)  
D3 (Extreme Drought)

D4 (Exceptional Drought)  
No Data

## Drought Monitor



April 21



April 14

The region was mostly dry, with isolated rainfall in far southeast Nebraska, northern and southeast Kansas, and small areas of Colorado and North Dakota. Temperatures were generally above normal, with the warmest departures in southeast Nebraska and eastern Kansas.

Dryness and a warm spring led to widespread degradation. Extreme drought expanded across central and western Nebraska and into northwest Kansas. Severe drought expanded in central and southwest Kansas, with new extreme drought in far southwest Kansas.

Degradation continued across the plains of Wyoming and Colorado, with expansion of moderate to extreme drought. Extreme drought was also introduced in southern South Dakota.

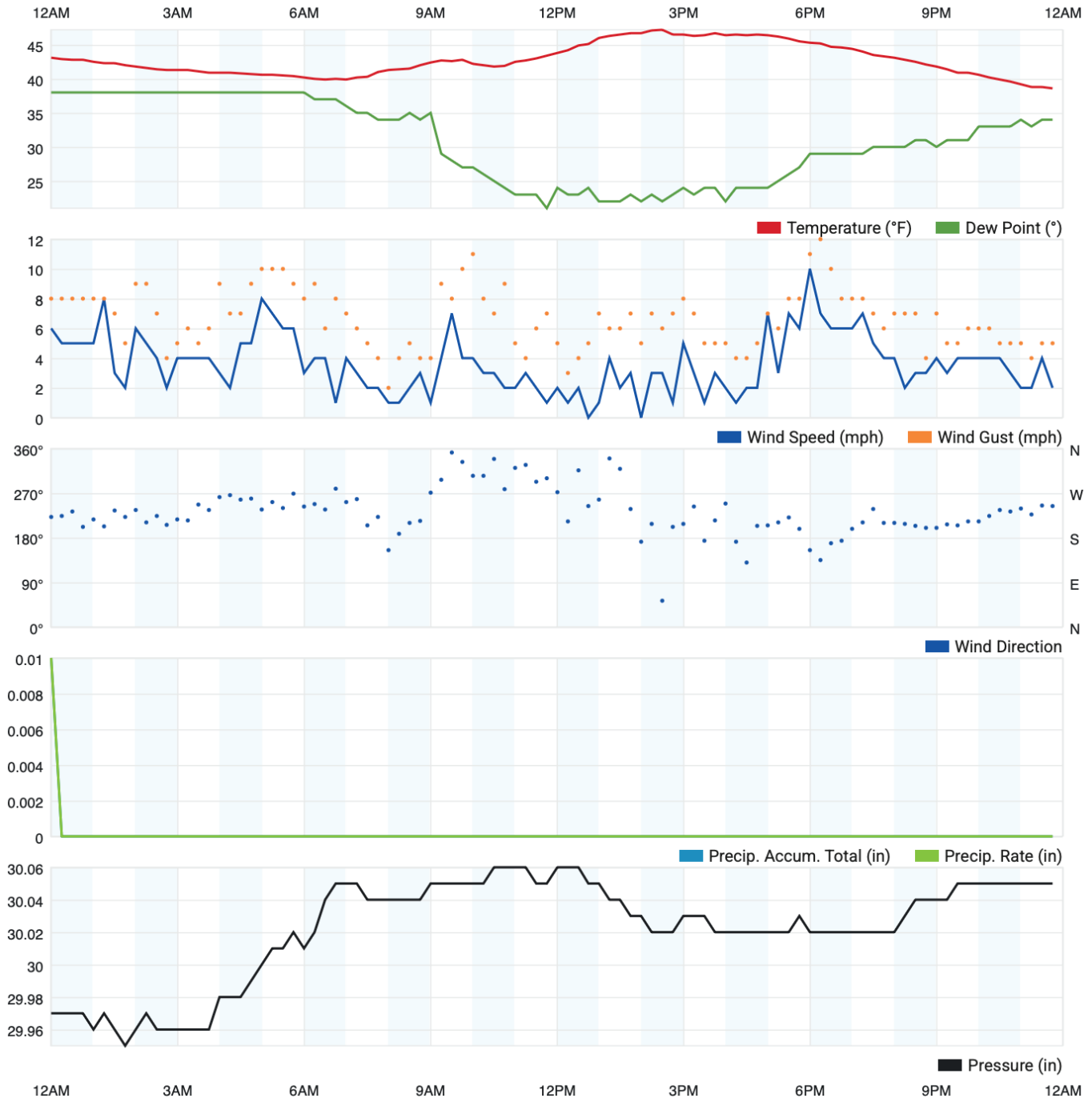
Some improvements occurred in southeast Kansas, where moderate drought and abnormally dry conditions were reduced due to recent rainfall.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

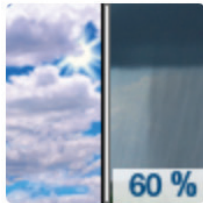
April 25, 2026



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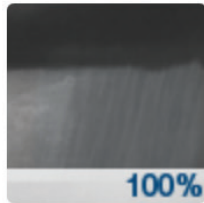
Today



High: 54 °F

Mostly Cloudy  
then Showers  
Likely

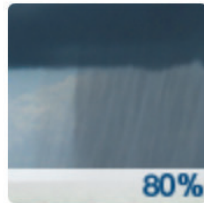
Tonight



Low: 39 °F

Showers and  
Patchy Fog

Monday



High: 48 °F

Showers and  
Breezy

Monday Night



Low: 29 °F

Mostly Cloudy  
and Blustery  
then Partly  
Cloudy

Tuesday



High: 52 °F

Partly Sunny



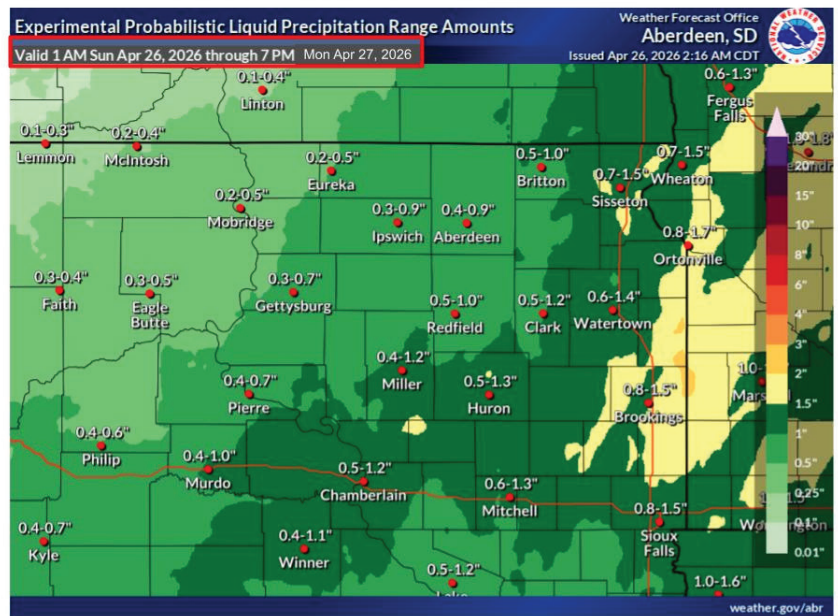
## Next Round Of Rainfall Starts Today Continuing Into Monday

April 26, 2026  
3:32 AM

\*\*\*Two Day Precipitation Forecast Event through 7 PM CDT Monday, April 27th\*\*\*

- The next precipitation event gets rolling this morning, continuing through Monday afternoon.
- 0.25-0.50 inches of precipitation possible from Sunday afternoon through Monday morning throughout north central South Dakota.
- 0.50-1.50+ inches of precipitation possible roughly along and east of a line from Pierre to Aberdeen Sunday through Monday evening.

For specific precipitation probabilities for your area, check out: <https://www.weather.gov/crh/pqpf?sid=abr>



National Weather Service  
Aberdeen, SD

The next round of precipitation over the forecast area kicks off this morning across central and south central South Dakota, spreading north and east as the day wears on. There may be a few breaks in the rainfall between today and Monday evening. Overall, up to a half inch of rainfall is expected across north central South Dakota, while 0.50in to 1.50+in of rainfall is anticipated over central into northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota.



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## Is There A Warm Up In Sight?

April 26, 2026

3:48 AM

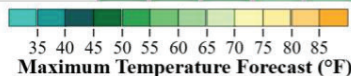
Mostly below normal high temperatures forecast until Friday.



### Maximum Temperature (°F)

#### Forecast

	4/26	4/27	4/28	4/29	4/30	5/1	5/2
	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Aberdeen	54	48	53	58	57	65	72
Miller	48	47	52	59	59	65	73
Mobridge	51	49	53	59	58	66	70
Murdo	42	46	47	60	57	64	72
Ortonville	50	47	51	55	53	61	69
Pierre	47	50	52	62	62	67	74
Sisseton	53	46	51	55	53	61	70
Watertown	48	45	49	54	53	60	68



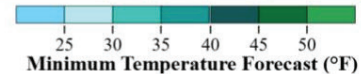
Similarly, mostly below normal low temperatures forecast until this upcoming weekend.



### Minimum Temperature (°F)

#### Forecast

	4/26	4/27	4/28	4/29	4/30	5/1	5/2
	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Aberdeen	31	39	29	33	33	31	37
Miller	32	38	28	33	33	32	39
Mobridge	29	36	28	31	33	32	40
Murdo	32	36	30	32	35	33	40
Ortonville	39	39	32	35	36	34	39
Pierre	31	39	30	33	35	33	40
Sisseton	36	39	31	35	36	34	41
Watertown	36	38	30	33	34	32	38



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 until out at the end of the week into next weekend. We are expecting upper 40s to upper 50s to continue through almost the end of this week. Lows are expected to be near to slightly below normal until this upcoming weekend.

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## Yesterday's Groton Weather

**High Temp: 48 °F at 2:10 PM**

**Low Temp: 39 °F at 11:17 PM**

**Wind: 13 mph at 6:17 PM**

**Precip: : 0.00**

## Today's Info

Record High: 86 in 1952

Record Low: 20 in 1931

Average High: 63

Average Low: 35

Average Precip in April.: 1.54

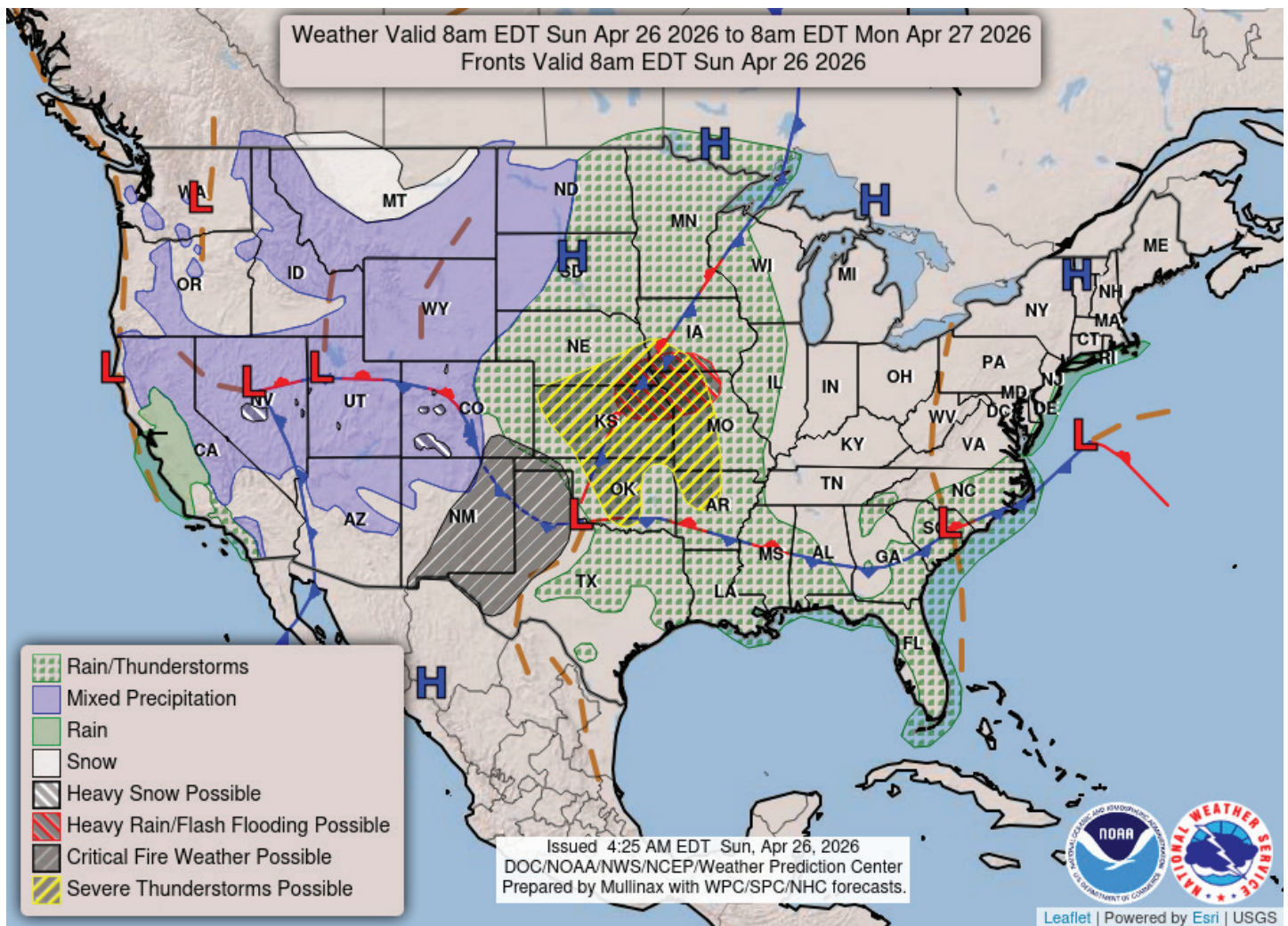
Precip to date in April.: 1.00

Average Precip to date: 3.60

Precip Year to Date: 2.62

Sunset Tonight: 8:31 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:26 am



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## Today in Weather History

April 26th, 1986: Intense thunderstorms swept across southeast South Dakota, southwest Minnesota, and northwest Iowa. Baseball size hail fell in a 15-mile wide swath from near Pickstown to Scotland, South Dakota. The large hail caused extensive damage to windows, roofs, siding, and vehicles in the storm's path. Wind gusts of 70 to 80 mph and rain amounts of 2 or more inches in a short period (including 5 inches at Centerville) were reported in southeast South Dakota. Several tornadoes moved across northwest Iowa, including one that ran across part of Lyon County, destroying several farmsteads. Another tornado moved through Lyon County, Iowa, into Nobles County, Minnesota, damaging at least 16 farms. Another tornado touched down briefly on the south side of Okebena in Jackson County, destroying or damaging several houses.

April 26th, 1991: During a severe thunderstorm, large hail fell over parts of Brown, Spink, Hand, and Buffalo Counties. Both Brown and Hand Counties received hail up to 1.75 inches in diameter.

April 25-26th, 2008: An area of low-pressure brought widespread heavy snow of 6 to 20 inches to most of northeast South Dakota for much of the 25th and into the early morning hours of the 26th. The precipitation began as light freezing rain in the early morning across parts of the area before changing to all snow by mid-morning. Snowfall rates and north winds also increased as the low-pressure area intensified. The heavy snow combined with the high winds created widespread visibility problems and large snowdrifts. Snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Andover, Britton, Gann Valley, and 15 miles south of Miller, 8 inches at Roy Lake, 9 inches at Clark, Big Stone City, Hillside Colony, and Sisseton, 10 inches 7 miles south of Bristol, and 11 inches at Hayti. Locations with a foot or more of snowfall included 12 inches at Wilmot, Webster, and Waubay, 13 inches at Milbank, 15 inches at Castlewood, 16 inches near Victor and Summit, 17 inches at Clear Lake, 19 inches at Watertown, and 20 inches at Bryant.

Some automobiles went into the ditch, and many other vehicles were damaged in accidents. Many stranded motorists had to abandon their cars in the hardest hit areas. Travel was not advised across the entire region. A school bus slid into a ditch east of Castlewood with no injuries. Interstate-29 was closed from 3 pm the 25th until 3 pm on the 26th from Brookings north to the North Dakota border. Also, South Dakota State Highway 12 was closed from Webster to the Minnesota line from the afternoon of the 25th until the late morning of the 26th. Most counties affected by the storm opened emergency shelters when Interstate 29 was closed to house stranded motorists. Also, many schools were closed across the area.

The very heavy snow set several records across the area. The 19 inches at Watertown broke its all-time 24-hour snowfall record of 16 inches. Both Victor and Clear Lake had their second-highest snowfall ever recorded in a 24-hour period. Watertown and several other locations in northeast South Dakota received near-record or record snowfall for April. Watertown's 29.5 inches of snow for April was almost their average seasonal snowfall.

1834 — Killer frosts were reported in the Deep South. The frost was quite severe around Huntsville AL, and highlighted a backward spring in the South that year. (David Ludlum)

1978 — An unusually strong occluded front swept out of the Gulf of Alaska and produced the first April thunderstorm of record at Fairbanks. Pea size hail fell northeast of Fairbanks from thunderstorms whose tops were less than 8000 feet. (The Weather Channel)

1984 — Severe thunderstorms associated with an intense cyclone spawned a total of forty-seven tornadoes in two days from Louisiana to Upper Michigan. The tornadoes killed 16 persons and injured 259 others. (Storm Data)

1991 — Severe thunderstorms in the central U.S. spawned fifty-five tornadoes from northeastern Texas to Iowa and eastern Nebraska killing twenty-one persons. Early evening thunderstorms over south central Kansas spawned a violent (F-5) tornado which traveled 45 miles from southwest of Wichita to north of El Dorado. It killed seventeen persons, including thirteen at the Golden Spur Mobile Home Park in Andover. The tornado also caused 62 million dollars damage to McConnell Air Force Base as it crossed the south side of Wichita. (National Weather Summary)

2003 — Twenty inches of snow falls in California's Sierra Nevada Mountains. Alpine Meadows ski resort just north of Lake Tahoe reports more than 100 inches and Kirkwood south of Tahoe reports 112 inches.



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Daily Devotion

## Intimacy With God

**You are already known, loved, and wanted by God. His favor is a gift, not a reward.**

Romans 8:14-17: 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

How would you characterize your relationship with God? Would you say He is like a friend you meet occasionally for coffee? Or would you say He's a valued member of your household who is included in every aspect of daily life? Most likely, the nature of your bond falls somewhere in between.

Whatever the state of your relationship with the Lord, be assured that He wants something closer and more meaningful. God desires a connection so deep and strong that words like friendship and fellowship cannot fully describe it.

Of all the creatures on earth, human beings are the only ones made in God's image. Like Him, we can think, reason, feel, and make choices, though we do none of these things as fully or perfectly as He does.

Jesus called His followers "friends" (John 15:15), and Paul wrote that believers are sons of God (Galatians 4:7). Those are not distant, impersonal relationships! When we spend time with the Lord, we grow as close to Him as a beloved child to a father.

Some believers have the mistaken idea that doing something "Christian" is the way to make God happy. But the way to please our Father is by being Christian. He wants us to live in such a way that others see He is our Father and best friend.

*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

Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition

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## WINNING NUMBERS

### MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.25.26

3 22 26 44 47 2

TOP PRIZE:

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

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 45 Mins 8 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:

04.25.26

3 15 23 32 36 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$23,300,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.25.26

7 14 15 17 19

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$69,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.25.26

3 6 9 51 65 12

TOP PRIZE:

**\$10,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

### POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.25.26

4 30 36 52 57 2

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

**\$130,000,000**

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)



## News from the **AP** Associated Press

### **A growing amateur choir brings joy and community to hundreds in Serbia**

By JOVANA GEC Associated Press

BELGRADE, Serbia (AP) — An amateur pop choir that started with a couple dozen singers in a small Serbian town has found unexpected success across the country. Its motto? Anyone can sing.

While community choirs are common in other countries, they are relatively rare in Serbia. The no-stress and fun approach has attracted hundreds of people, mostly women of all ages.

Modeled after similar projects abroad, the choir is encouraging “everyone from 5 to 105” to join and sing for joy and stress relief.

Since starting out in a small town in central Serbia four years ago, Pop Hor has spread to 10 towns across the Balkan country with an ambition to grow further. There are no auditions or voice tests, and newcomers don’t have to know how to read music.

“People come as total amateurs, most of them say they have no clue about singing,” said Nenad Azanjac, who trained as a music teacher and who founded Pop Hor, or Pop Choir, with his wife.

Nevenka Bila, 72, said the choir has provided a much-needed positive contrast to the everyday reality of political tensions and pro-democracy protests in the troubled Balkan country.

“In this madness that we are living, where I spend half of my free time in the streets fighting for basic human rights, I found something that feels so good for me,” Bila said. “I discovered a new world.”

The group packs halls and venues across the country weekly to belt out popular tunes — mostly in Serbian, though sometimes they also sing songs by Croatian and Bosnian bands and singers. Though amateur, the choir often performs at festivals and events in Serbia and abroad.

“I never miss a class,” said Radmila Kozarac, a 62-year-old economist. The choir has changed her life for the better, she said, adding that she has made wonderful new friends and can’t wait for their after-class chat and coffee together.

The choir has had “a very positive effect on me, psychologically,” she said. “It is joyful, it reduces stress.”

Music is known for positive neurobiological and psychological effects, psychologist and Singidunum University professor Aleksandra Djuric said. In a group, she added, “we release the energy together, cortisol (levels) come down and positive hormones rise out of union and happiness.”

“I keep telling my students that we can’t be exposed on a daily basis to information, to be bombarded by information and follow everything all the time,” Djuric said. “We need to find a space to calm down, relax and connect.”

Serbia endured years of wars, international sanctions and economic crisis in the 1990s. The country remains politically divided and struggles economically. Youth-led protests against populist President Aleksandar Vucic erupted in 2024 over a train station tragedy blamed on widespread negligence and corruption in big state-run infrastructure projects.

Azanjac said many people have joined his choir after their therapists recommended singing as an anti-stress activity. They “find a sense of belonging here, they enjoy it,” he added, describing a “feeling of togetherness.”

“Singing comes second, socializing comes first,” Azanjac said.

In total, some 2,000 people have sung with Pop Hor since it started in the town of Gornji Milanovac in 2022. Azanjac said he’s not stopping there.

The plan is “to have the whole region sing,” he said.

## **Shots fired as gunman charges toward ballroom at White House correspondents' dinner. Trump unharmed**

By SEUNG MIN KIM, AAMER MADHANI, COLLIN BINKLEY, ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and DAVID BAUDER  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A man armed with guns and knives stormed the lobby outside the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner attended by President Donald Trump on Saturday night, charging toward the ballroom in a chaotic encounter with Secret Service agents as guests dived under tables at the sound of shots being fired.

The president was uninjured and was rushed off the stage. The armed man, who officials said was a guest at the Washington Hilton where the dinner was being held, was taken into custody and was expected in court Monday. Police believe he opened fire and acted alone but did not say who was his intended target or describe a motive.

"When you're impactful, they go after you. When you're not impactful, they leave you alone," Trump, safe and uninjured and still in his tuxedo, said at the White House two hours later. "They seem to think he was a lone wolf."

The shooting unfolded just outside the vast subterranean ballroom holding thousands of dinner guests, disrupting minutes after it began an annual event meant to honor journalism and the First Amendment that was being especially scrutinized this year because it was the first time since Trump became president that he had attended. Trump told reporters later that he hoped the event would be rescheduled within 30 days, though the fact that an armed man was able to rush toward the ballroom raised instant questions about security precautions at an event attended each year by senior government officials.

Video posted by Trump showed the suspect running past security barricades as Secret Service agents ran toward him. One officer was shot in a bullet-resistant vest but was recovering, officials said. The gunman was tackled to the ground and was not injured, but was being evaluated at a hospital, police said.

The shooting suspect was identified as Cole Tomas Allen, 31, of Torrance, California, according to two law enforcement officials who spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation. He is facing two firearm-related charges, including a count of assaulting an officer with a deadly weapon.

Inside the ballroom, guests scurried for cover at the sound of shots while Secret Service agents, including the heavily-armed counterassault team, swarmed the stage after the incident.

Vice President JD Vance was removed from the room first, while agents initially covered Trump in place before escorting him and first lady Melania Trump from the room. Trump briefly stumbled on the way offstage, before being assisted by his security detail.

He was held for some time in a secure presidential suite at the hotel as the president and organizers initially sought to resume the event -- hotel staff refolded napkins and refilled water glasses, and aides adjusted the teleprompter for the president -- before Trump was returned to the White House on the advice of the Secret Service.

It was the third time since 2024 that the president had been under threat by an attacker in his immediate vicinity — including the assassination attempt in Butler, Pennsylvania, that injured him and killed a local firefighter.

"Today we need levels of security that probably nobody has ever seen before," the president said. But he also said, "We're not going to let anybody take over our society."

FBI Director Kash Patel, flanking Trump, said the agency is examining a long gun and shell casings recovered from the scene, as well as interviewing witnesses from the dinner. He urged anyone with information to come forward.

Dinner turns to disorder

Guests were dining on a spring pea and burrata salad when noise began — noise Trump said he initially thought was a tray dropping but some journalists believed were five to eight gunshots.

The Secret Service and other authorities swarmed the room as guests ducked under tables by the hun-

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dreds. Audible gasps echoed through the ballroom as guests realized something was happening; hundreds of journalists immediately got on phones to call in information.

"Out of the way, sir!" someone yelled. Others yelled to duck. From one corner, a "God Bless America" chant began as the president was escorted offstage. Outside the hotel, members of the National Guard and other authorities flooded the area as helicopters circled overhead.

After an initial attempt to resume, the event was scrapped for the night and will be rescheduled.

"We will do this again," said Weijia Jiang, president of the White House Correspondents' Association. Shortly afterward, staff began breaking down table settings and the presidential lectern.

House Speaker Mike Johnson said he and his wife, Kelly, who both attended the event, were "praying for our country tonight." The House Democratic leader, Rep. Hakeem Jeffries of New York, wrote on social media, "The violence and chaos in America must end."

The banquet hall — where hundreds of prominent journalists, celebrities and national leaders were awaiting Trump's remarks — was immediately evacuated. Members of the National Guard took up position inside the building as people were allowed to leave but not immediately reenter. Security outside was also extremely tight.

Republican Rep. Mike Lawler of New York, a guest at the dinner, said he heard a pop and "we didn't know what the hell it was. And then you heard all sorts of things clatter." Lawler said he gets "death threats often" and said, "I think we live in a climate where everybody recognizes it's a problem, but I don't think people fully appreciate how much of a problem it really is."

The event had initially appeared set to resume after the disorder. Servers refolded napkins and refilled water glasses in preparation for Trump's return. Another worker prepared the president's teleprompter for the remarks he was scheduled to make.

Generally, the Hilton hotel, where the dinner has taken place for years, remains open to regular guests during the correspondents' dinner, and security has typically been focused on the ballroom rather than the hotel at large, with little screening for people not entering the dinner itself. In past years, that has created openings for disruptions in the lobby and other public spaces, including protests in which security moved to remove guests who unfurled banners or staged demonstrations.

In 1981, President Ronald Reagan was shot by John Hinckley Jr. outside the Hilton — an event that prompted redesigns of the property that increased security and added a special presidential suite near the entrance where chief executives could be taken. Trump was dispatched there briefly after the incident Saturday night.

Event would have highlighted Trump's relationship with press

Trump's attendance at Saturday's annual dinner in Washington for his first time as president was expected to put his administration's often-contentious relationship with the press on full public display.

Trump arrived to an event where the leaders of a nation at war mingled with celebrities, journalists and even a puppet — Triumph the Insult Comic Dog — in a dinner that typically generates debate about whether the relationship between journalists and their sources should include socializing together and putting aside sometimes adversarial relationships.

Trump was being watched closely at the event held by the organization of reporters who cover him and his administration. Past presidents who have attended have generally spoken about the importance of free speech and the First Amendment, adding in some light roasts about individual journalists.

The Republican president did not attend during his first term or the first year of his second. He came as a guest in 2011, sitting in the audience as President Barack Obama, a Democrat, made some jokes about the New York real estate developer. Trump also attended as a private citizen in 2015.

Trump entered the banquet hall of the Washington Hilton to the strains of "Hail to the Chief" and greeted prominent journalists on the dais, also pausing to laud White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt with a cheerful pointing of his finger.

Past dinners have also featured comedians who poke at presidents. This year, the group opted to hire mentalist Oz Pearlman as the featured entertainment.



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Between berating individual reporters, fighting organizations like The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal and The Associated Press in court and restricting press access to the Pentagon, the administration's animus toward journalists has been a fixture of Trump's second term.

A few dozen protesters stood across the hotel in the run-up to the event. One was dressed in a prison uniform, wearing a Pete Hegseth mask and red gloves. Another carried a sign saying, "Journalism is dead."

## **Here's what we know about security measures at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner**

By KONSTANTIN TOROPIN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The suspect detained after a shooting at the White House Correspondents' Association dinner is believed to have made it past the outermost layer of security at the event at which President Donald Trump was scheduled to speak because he was a guest of the hotel, officials said Saturday.

The shooting suspect was identified as Cole Tomas Allen, 31, of Torrance, California, two law enforcement officials told the AP. Officials told reporters after the incident that Allen was armed with a shotgun, a handgun and multiple knives.

Security for the annual event is always tight when the president attends, especially given the venue's history — 45 years ago, the Washington Hilton was the site of an attempted assassination of President Ronald Reagan — and law enforcement argued that their "multi-layered protection" worked as designed. Still, the incident was sure to set off more questions about security around the president and political events in the wake of high-profile acts of political violence in recent years.

Here's what we know about the security of the correspondents' dinner.

The perimeter at the Washington Hilton

The interim police chief for Washington's Metropolitan Police Department, Jeffery Carroll, told reporters Saturday evening that investigators believe that the suspect was staying in the hotel and that appears to be how he was able to enter the hotel at the time of the event.

The hotel was closed to the public beginning at 2 p.m. Saturday in anticipation of the dinner which began at 8 p.m. Outside, dozens of protesters gathered in the rain — mostly directing their criticism at the media attending the event.

Access to the hotel was restricted to hotel guests, people with tickets to the dinner itself, an invitation to one of the receptions that are held at the hotel before or after the dinner, or documents from the White House Correspondents' Association indicating affiliation with the dinner.

The 2,300 guests at the event in the hotel's cavernous subterranean ballroom had to pass through several additional checks to enter the room, including showing tickets to association volunteers and hotel staff and passing through magnetometers manned by the Secret Service and Transportation Security Administration.

It was not immediately released when the suspect checked into the hotel. Security camera footage released by Trump to social media shortly after the incident shows the gunman running past security officers who appear to be disassembling the metal detectors. Once the president was seated in the ballroom, additional attendees were not permitted to enter the secured area, which is why they were taking them down.

"It shows that our multi-layered protection works," Secret Service director Sean Curran said. His comments were echoed by Carroll, who said the security plan for the evening was developed by the Secret Service and "that security plan did work this evening."

Security measures inside the ballroom

Inside the ballroom for the dinner itself there were further security measures.

The U.S. Secret Service maintained another perimeter around the president that included a buffer separating him and others seated at the head table from the rest of the attendees. Armored plates were hidden under the table where Trump was seated. Secret Service agents were at their posts in front of the stage and in its wings, as were heavily armed counter-assault agents ready to respond to threats. Security details for dozens of other high-profile attendees were also in the ballroom.

A spokesperson for the hotel directed questions about their security measures to the U.S. Secret Service.

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Assassination attempt of Reagan at the Washington Hilton

The hotel itself has a long presidential history, and everyday people have regularly booked rooms or filled the lobby bar to watch people at an event that attracts Washington's elite and has also drawn celebrities like George Clooney and Kim Kardashian as well as hosts including Jimmy Kimmel and Trevor Noah.

Although known for the correspondents' dinner, the hotel regularly hosts large events in the nation's capital, especially those that feature the president. It was the site of the shooting of Reagan by John Hinckley Jr. on March 30, 1981.

Reagan was returning to his limousine after a speaking engagement when Hinckley shot him with a revolver, seriously wounding him. Hinckley believed the attack would impress the actress Jodie Foster.

Security overhauls and US Secret Service training

After that incident, the hotel built extensive security modifications specifically to accommodate the president, including a secured garage designed to fit the presidential limo which leads to a dedicated elevator and staircase to ferry them to a secured suite reserved for their personal use.

The suite includes a reserved bathroom that the hotel traditionally adorns with monogrammed towels for the president for the handful of times they are in the space every year.

Because of the venue's long presidential history, the Secret Service has long used the annual event to put some agents through their paces because the venue has been extensively studied by the agency for decades.

However, since the 2017 mass shooting in Las Vegas, many major hotels have also tightened security protocols, in some cases adopting measures such as periodic room checks or policies aimed at flagging extended privacy requests. It was not immediately clear when the person involved Saturday checked into the hotel, or whether any such measures would have had any bearing in this case.

## **Dosunmu scores 43 points as Timberwolves overcome injuries to beat Nuggets 112-96 for 3-1 lead**

By PATRICK DONNELLY Associated Press

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — When the Minnesota Timberwolves acquired Ayo Dosunmu from Chicago in February, they expected to get a strong defender and savvy offensive player. If he wants to be an elite scorer, they'll take that, too.

Dosunmu scored a career-high 43 points, stepping up after leg injuries to Anthony Edwards and Donte DiVincenzo with the highest-scoring playoff performance by a reserve in 50 years, and the Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Denver Nuggets 112-96 on Saturday night to take a 3-1 series lead.

"Ayo was just out of this world, man," Timberwolves coach Chris Finch said. "Just play after play after play."

Dosunmu made 13 of 17 shots, going 5 of 5 from 3-point range, and all 12 of his free throws in a season-high 42 minutes.

"He goes places quick. He's an unbelievable finisher. He makes big shots," Finch said. "He's not afraid. Just was going to ride him until he collapsed, really."

It was the best performance by a sub since Fred Brown scored 45 off the bench for Seattle in a 116-111 loss to Phoenix on April 15, 1976.

"I know it sounds cliché, but I can't and won't take this moment for granted," Dosunmu said, "because I understand how long and how hard it is to get here."

The game ended with the ejections of Denver's Nikola Jokic and Minnesota's Julius Randle after Jokic became angry when Jaden McDaniels made a meaningless layup with 2.1 seconds remaining and confronted the Wolves' swingman near his bench.

Jamal Murray led Denver with 30 points. Jokic added 24 points, 15 rebounds and nine assists. The Nuggets were just 6 for 27 from 3-point range.

The Wolves have won the last three games and can end the series in Game 5 on Monday night in Denver.

"I expect us to have a great effort in Game 5," Nuggets coach David Adelman said. "I really trust our

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two best players will find a rhythm, and they have to find that at home.”

Jokic and Murray were 6 of 24 from the field in the second half.

“We had the opportunity to score easier, get open looks, and we didn’t,” Jokic said. “And in the fourth quarter the momentum is on their side. They were making shots, they were playing with some energy and we didn’t have that.”

The Nuggets led by seven in the third quarter before the Timberwolves used a disruptive defense to get back into the game. Bones Hyland and Dosunmu scored breakaway layups on consecutive possessions after Minnesota forced the Nuggets to turn it over near halfcourt — two of nine second-half turnovers for the Nuggets.

Randle added a steal and fast-break dunk to put the Wolves up by four after three quarters.

Dosunmu had another steal and layup as part of a 9-0 run early in the fourth quarter that gave Minnesota a 95-82 lead. The basket that pushed the lead into double digits was a 3-pointer by 38-year-old Mike Conley, who played 20 minutes while filling in for DiVincenzo and Edwards.

## Talks in Pakistan on hold as Iran’s top diplomat leaves Islamabad and Trump’s envoys are a no-show

By MUNIR AHMED, SAMY MAGDY and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Attempts at ceasefire talks between the United States and Iran fell flat after Tehran’s top diplomat left Pakistan and President Donald Trump’s envoys stayed away after he told them not to travel to Islamabad.

The U.S. president indicated the ball was now in Iran’s court.

“If they want to talk, all they have to do is call!!!” Trump said on social media.

The negotiations were meant to follow historic face-to-face talks earlier this month between the U.S., led by Vice President JD Vance, and Iran, led by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf.

But Iranian officials have questioned how they can trust the U.S. after its forces started blockading Iranian ports in response to Iran’s grip on the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi left Islamabad, Pakistan’s capital, on Saturday evening, two Pakistani officials told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media.

Araghchi went on to Oman, on the other side of the Strait of Hormuz and a country that had mediated peace talks in the past. He said he would return to Pakistan again on Sunday before heading to Russia, Iran’s state-run IRNA news agency reported.

“Shared Iran’s position concerning workable framework to permanently end the war on Iran. Have yet to see if the U.S. is truly serious about diplomacy,” Araghchi said on social media about his talks in Pakistan about what he called Iran’s red lines for negotiations.

Meanwhile, another ceasefire — between Israel and the Iranian-backed Lebanese militant Hezbollah group — was shaken on Saturday as each side fired at the other and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the military to “vigorously attack Hezbollah targets in Lebanon.”

Iran had said any talks would be indirect

Last week, Trump announced an indefinite extension of the ceasefire with Iran. It has paused most fighting, but the economic fallout is growing, two months into the war as global shipments of oil, liquefied natural gas, fertilizer and other supplies are disrupted by the near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Both sides have continued to make military threats. Iran’s joint military command on Saturday warned that “if the U.S. continues its aggressive military actions, including naval blockades, banditry, and piracy” it will face a “strong response.”

Even before Saturday’s developments, Iran’s foreign ministry said any talks would be indirect and that Pakistani officials would act as go-betweens.

Trump later told journalists that within 10 minutes of him canceling the trip to Pakistan of his envoys — Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner — that Iran had sent a “much better” proposal. He did not elaborate but



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stressed that one of his conditions is that Iran "will not have a nuclear weapon."

Contentious points in talks also include Iran's enriched uranium and the Strait of Hormuz standoff, as well as concerns about Iran's missile program and its support for armed proxies in the region.

Tehran has noted that indirect talks with the U.S. last year and early this year over its nuclear program, the issue long at the center of tensions, ended with Iran being attacked by the U.S. and Israel, adding to its wariness.

The standoff around the strait continues

The price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, is nearly 50% higher than when the war began because of Iran's grip on the strait, through which a fifth of the world's oil passes in peacetime.

Iran attacked three ships last week, while the U.S. maintains a blockade on Iranian ports. Trump has ordered the military to "shoot and kill" small boats that could be placing mines.

Also Saturday, Iran resumed commercial flights from Tehran's international airport for the first time since the war began with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Feb. 28. Flights were scheduled to depart for Istanbul, Oman's capital of Muscat and the Saudi city of Medina, according to state-run television.

A growing toll even as ceasefires hold

Since the war began, at least 3,375 people have been killed in Iran and at least 2,496 people in Lebanon, where the Israel-Hezbollah fighting resumed two days after the Iran war started. Also, 23 people have been killed in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Fifteen Israeli soldiers in Lebanon, 13 U.S. service members in the region and six U.N. peacekeepers in southern Lebanon have been killed.

Trump announced Thursday that Israel and Lebanon had agreed to extend a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah by three weeks. Hezbollah has not participated in the Washington-brokered diplomacy.

But Israel struck southern Lebanon on Saturday, killing at least six people it said were Hezbollah militants, and several rockets and drones were launched at Israel from Lebanon.

## Philippine officials say 2 Americans among suspected communist rebels killed in clash with troops

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Two Americans were among 19 suspected communist guerrillas who were killed in clashes with Philippine troops in a central province earlier this week, a government anti-insurgency task force said Saturday night.

The National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict said the Americans were killed with 17 other suspected New People's Army guerrillas in a series of clashes with army forces on April 19 in the coastal town of Toboso in Negros Occidental province. The deadly fighting was first reported on Monday.

The task force warned Americans of Filipino descent in the United States to be wary of being lured by left-wing activist groups into joining or supporting Filipino insurgents in the Philippines in a recruitment process it described as "terror-grooming."

The U.S. and the Philippines have separately designated the New People's Army as a terrorist organization.

Human rights groups, however, called for an independent investigation into the clashes, saying that civilians were killed including a student leader from the state-run University of the Philippines, two local advocates for farmers' rights and a local community journalist who wanted to show support for impoverished villagers.

"We call on the international community to monitor this case closely, as it is not an isolated incident but part of a continuing pattern of International Humanitarian Law violations across the Philippine countryside," the National Union of People's Lawyers, a human rights group, said.

Undersecretary Ernesto Torres Jr., the executive director of the counterinsurgency task force, identified the two slain Americans as Lyle Prijoles and Kai Dana-Rene Sorem.

The U.S. Embassy in Manila did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Torres said that all 19 people killed have been identified and their remains have been turned over to family. "These facts point to a disturbing convergence: foreign nationals in a live combat setting, where

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the risks are immediate and the consequences irreversible," he said.

"The presence of two American fatalities in a single encounter should prompt careful reflection on how involvement in certain activities or networks may lead to unintended exposure to dangerous environments," Torres said.

The two Americans arrived in the Philippines in March and "were believed to have subsequently traveled to Negros Occidental, where they were killed on April 19," Torres said, without providing other details.

"Our thoughts are with their families, who now face the burden of loss under circumstances that unfolded far from their homes," Torres said.

Military officials said the clash erupted as army troops responded to information provided by villagers about the presence of suspected rebels, and that a rebel commander with a bounty of 1 million pesos (\$16,600) on his head was killed. A soldier was wounded in the fighting.

Troops seized 24 firearms at the scene of the clashes and an unspecified number of fleeing guerrillas were captured, the task force said.

At its peak decades ago, the insurgent force had an estimated 25,000 fighters, who waged one of Asia's longest-running communist rebellions. Battle defeats, factional divisions and surrenders, however, have reduced the number of rebels to below 900, according to security officials.

Peace talks brokered by Norway collapsed under the previous Philippine president, Rodrigo Duterte, after both sides accused the other of continuing deadly attacks despite the negotiations.

## **Getting the most out of barrier-free tours for yourself or someone with a disability**

By STEFANIE DAZIO Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — For people living with disabilities, barriers to tourism can range from the obvious — such as an out-of-service elevator — to the unseen, like an outing that's too long or a setting that's too loud.

As the baby boom generation ages, the travel industry is increasingly catering to older adults with the time and money to sightsee internationally and who sometimes need additional assistance. Truly inclusive accessibility, though, accommodates a much greater range of tourists, from individuals with physical disabilities to people with autism or dementia.

To better serve visitors with visible or invisible disabilities, museums and other cultural institutions worldwide have added specialized guides and barrier-free tours, some made possible by advances in technology.

These include sign-language tours for people who are deaf or hard of hearing, touch-based events for guests with blindness or low vision, and programs designed for people on the autism spectrum. Tourism agencies dedicated to serving disabled travelers have sprung up, too.

Offering barrier-free tours shows people with disabilities they are welcome in cultural spaces, said Ashley Grady, an accessibility program specialist at the Office of Visitor Accessibility of Washington's Smithsonian Institution.

The services are a way of saying, "we've thought of you," Grady said. "We want you to come to our museums. We want you to see yourselves reflected in our staff and our collections. And we want to make these programs as accessible as possible for you, your family, your loved ones, your friends."

Still, gaps remain. Ivor Ambrose, managing director of the nonprofit European Network for Accessible Tourism, said there's a continuing lack of awareness around the different levels of accessibility that travelers need.

"This is actually a really big market and an opportunity, which is still not fulfilled by the operators in all these different areas of tourism," he said.

Here is advice from several experts about how to take advantage of barrier-free options for yourself or someone else.

**Research and plan ahead**

Josh Grisdale, the founder of Accessible Japan, a website that publishes databases, resources and guides to navigating the country for people with disabilities, has cerebral palsy and uses a power wheelchair. Be-

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fore traveling to a new place, he peruses Reddit, watches travel videos on YouTube — even if the person filming didn't require accommodations — and browses Google's Street View to look for stairs or other features that aren't suitable for wheelchairs.

Facebook can be helpful, but tips often are buried in private groups that aren't searchable, Grisdale said. If a hotel has a concierge, he recommends working with them and calling ahead to ask if a place you'd like to visit has the proper accessibility. Most museums and cultural institutions have written guides and other resources online detailing their barrier-free options.

Grisdale also created the online platform tabifolk, which crowdsources knowledge about accessible travel from around the world. A lack of such information can make researching and planning a trip even more stressful, so he wanted there to be a place where people could help each other through their lived experiences.

"Even though I'm in a wheelchair and I've had a disability my whole life, there's things that I don't know about other disabilities," he said.

In Africa, proper planning is crucial for people with disabilities to be able to enjoy what the continent has to offer, such as going on a safari or climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, according to Joanne Ndirangu, the founder and director of accessible tourism agency Scout Group Agency.

Ndirangu promotes and advocates for expanding accessible tourism throughout Africa, particularly in Kenya. She urges visitors to work with local travel agents or other trained experts who know the region and what accessible options exist. Those people may have been the ones who worked to get a hotel or restaurant to install ramps or train the staff on helping someone who is neurodivergent.

"Let's say you want to see giraffes somewhere," Ndirangu said. "I can now advise you, 'That place is not viable if you're on a wheelchair or on crutches because of the hills and the valleys.' So I can give you an alternative — and you get to see the giraffes."

Seek out specialized programming

Tours organized for the general public may not be ideal for people with disabilities in many cases, whether it's because the exhibits are too high for anyone in a wheelchair to see, or too loud for a person with sensory issues.

The offerings at the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum complex, include the sensory-friendly "Morning at the Museum" program, which is designed so participants who are neurodivergent and their families can visit a Smithsonian museum in Washington once a month before it opens to the public. They can engage in hands-on, multi-sensory activities or just stroll around at their own pace.

"We can control the environment, we can reduce the crowds," Grady said. "It's a completely judgment-free environment and one that's really meant to hopefully be that full bridge to inclusion, where they are able to come to a museum, have a great experience, and then maybe come back when we're open to the public."

In Berlin, Catholic aid organization Malteser Deutschland noticed that people with dementia were often overlooked as visitors. The organization designed barrier-free tours specifically for this population at the Berlin Zoo, the Museum of Natural History, Britzer Garden and Charlottenburg Palace, with hopes of expanding to other locations.

The Berlin Zoo tour is limited to a handful of people, and runs about 90 minutes. The program skips the majority of the zoo's vast collection of species to focus a few habitats so the participants don't get too tired or overwhelmed.

Ask for what you need and give feedback

Ndirangu said her team was trained to ask visitors upfront if they or their family members require accommodations for any disabilities so they can suggest the best options. It's not always possible to mitigate what they don't know about ahead of time, she said. Most hotels in Kenya only have one or two accessible rooms, for example, and they might already be booked by the time a guest who needs it arrives.

"Give us that opportunity to give you solutions," she said. "We've had guests who don't mention anything."

The European Network for Accessible Tourism encourages travel companies to build the cost of provid-



ing barrier-free services into their programming so it's spread among all participants instead of only those who might require them. Many museums, for example, offer discounted rates for people with disabilities or free or reduced tickets for a companion.

Grady at the Smithsonian said the institution adapted its offerings after feedback from participants as well as an advisory group. Their advice has ranged from adjusting the colors on an app for people with low vision, to working with curators to ensure that upcoming exhibits are properly accessible for all.

"They're not asking for anything out of the ordinary," she said. "They're literally just trying to experience a visit just like anyone else."

## **The threat of light pollution puts the world's darkest skies in the Atacama Desert at risk**

By NAYARA BATSCHE Associated Press

THE ATACAMA DESERT, Chile (AP) — It takes a moment for the eyes to adjust. A faint spark appears in the darkness; then another, brighter one. Soon, stars, planets and entire constellations emerge. Before long, a whole galaxy stretches across the sky, visible to the naked eye.

In Chile's Atacama Desert, the night sky feels infinite. Considered the driest place on Earth, its darkness is also one of the clearest windows to the universe.

A rare combination of dry climate, high altitude and, crucially, isolation from urban light pollution, makes the Atacama an unrivaled hub for world-class astronomy and home to the world's largest ground-based astronomical projects.

"The conditions in the Atacama Desert are unique in the world," said Chiara Mazzucchelli, president of the Chilean Astronomical Society. "There are more than 300 clear nights per year, meaning no clouds and no rain."

But the world's darkest skies may be at risk.

Last year, the desert became a battleground between scientists and an energy firm proposing a green power complex just kilometers (miles) from the Paranal Observatory. Managed by the European Southern Observatory, ESO, the site also is the future home to what is to be the most powerful optical telescope ever built.

Although the energy project was canceled in January following a massive appeal from astronomers, physicists and Nobel laureates, it exposed deep concerns that existing sky preservation laws are lax, outdated and unclear. Since then, several environmental regulations have come under review, including one from Chile's science ministry targeting protected astronomical zones.

"We are working to ensure the new criteria are strict enough to guarantee that there will be no impact on astronomical areas," said Daniela González, director of the Cielos de Chile Foundation, a nonprofit founded in 2019 to protect the quality of Chile's night skies.

The best skies

The Associated Press spent three days visiting the Paranal facilities in the heart of the so-called Photon Valley. In this high-altitude corridor, several observatories operate side by side using some of the most sophisticated instruments ever engineered.

"Many of these large facilities are located in Chile, and ESO's telescopes in particular are the most powerful astronomical facilities on the planet," said Itziar de Gregorio-Monsalvo, the intergovernmental organization's representative in Chile.

Paranal is one of nearly 30 astronomical sites in northern Chile, most of which are managed by international organizations. Every year, the Atacama Desert draws thousands of astronomers and scientists from around the world to investigate the origins of the universe.

"We are lucky to be here," said Julia Bodensteiner, an assistant professor at University of Amsterdam, noting that the chances of being selected as a visiting astronomer at Paranal are just 20% to 30%.

Walking across the Atacama's rocky, uneven terrain is no easy task. At altitudes exceeding 3,000 meters (10,000 feet), oxygen becomes a luxury, while scorching days give way to relentlessly cold nights. But for

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space observation and exploration, these more than 105000 square kilometers (40,500 square miles) of desert are the perfect setting.

The exceptional conditions of the Atacama have enabled some of the most ambitious astronomical projects ever conceived, like the Extremely Large Telescope, ELT — a \$1.5 billion endeavor by ESO scheduled for completion in 2030.

With 798 mirrors and a light-gathering area of nearly 1000 square meters (a quarter of an acre), the ELT will be 20 times more powerful than today's leading telescopes and 15 times sharper than NASA's Hubble Space Telescope.

All the data compiled at these observatories play a fundamental role not only for life on Earth, but also for the possibilities of its development beyond our planet. Preserving these research spots is essential.

With the ELT, said ESO astronomer Lucas Bordone, "we should be able to see Earth-like planets in what we call the habitable zone, so basically the planets which are candidates towards life."

Darkness under threat

Twenty years ago, the Atacama Desert was "an ocean of darkness," recalled Eduardo Unda-Sanzana, director of the Astronomy Center at the University of Antofagasta. "It was just you and the universe."

Over the years, however, the landscape has changed drastically.

Driven by urban sprawl, industrial development, and the arrival of mining and wind farms, the desert has become a coveted territory where balance is not always easy to reach.

In Paranal, specialists live like moles in an underground residence designed to keep their presence almost undetectable. Windows must remain covered, hallways stay dark, and any outside movement is guided only by flashlight. Even the faintest light can interfere with the telescopes.

The announcement last year of an imminent green energy project sent shock waves through the international scientific community. Experts pressured authorities to protect Chile's night sky from the proposed site, which was slated for construction just 10 kilometers (6 miles) from Paranal.

The case raised the alarms due to its impacts, such as increased light pollution, micro-vibrations and dust, as well as greater atmospheric turbulence. These conditions would make astronomical activities unviable.

"If you place the ELT next to a city, it doesn't matter that its diameter is 40 meters long. It's just the same as having a tiny telescope," Gregorio-Monsalvo said.

Although the company canceled the project in late January, scientists warn that without new, updated regulations, similar projects could be proposed at any moment.

"Despite all the media hype in 2025, we find ourselves exactly where we were last year," said Unda-Sanzana, who is also part of a ministerial advisory commission that recently delivered recommendations to Chile's government following the incident.

There is no shortage of precedents. The first international heliophysics observatory in Chile — a major solar station operated by the U.S. Smithsonian Institution in the early 20th century — was forced to shut down operations in 1955 due to environmental pollution caused by the expansion of mining activity in the area.

"We've had 70 years to learn from history and avoid repeating those same mistakes," Unda-Sanzana said.

## 4 vying to be the next UN chief try to set themselves apart as race heats up

By EDITH M. LEDERER Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Four candidates vying to lead the United Nations have spent hours being grilled about their views on issues from restoring global peace to ending escalating poverty — in what the U.N. General Assembly president called one of the toughest job interviews in the world.

There was no clear victor after Chile's Michelle Bachelet, Argentina's Rafael Grossi, Costa Rica's Rebeca Grynspan and Senegal's Macky Sall fielded questions from U.N. ambassadors this past week.

Plus, other candidates could wait until after the initial auditions to jump into the race to succeed U.N.

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Secretary-General António Guterres on Jan. 1.

"This role matters," said General Assembly President Annalena Baerbock, who presided over the question-and-answer sessions. "The secretary-general is not only the head of the U.N. and the world's top diplomat — she or he also represents all 8 billion of us, defending the U.N. Charter and leading on peace, development, human rights."

How the candidates view the UN's work

All four said they would focus on those three pillars of the U.N., especially its founding role following World War II of ensuring international peace and security and preventing conflicts — which it has not been able to do in Iran, Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and other global hot spots because of wide divisions. They also pledged to spur reforms to the more than 80-year-old institution.

Bachelet, 74, a two-time president of Chile and former U.N. human rights chief, told the ambassadors that the U.N. must try to avoid crises and that she has the right leadership skills.

"I stand before you to reclaim the urgent need for dialogue," she said, stressing that the U.N. must anticipate, prevent and unite. The next secretary-general also needs to be "physically present in the field" to help tackle problems, she said.

Grossi, 65, a former Argentine diplomat who has been director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency since 2019, said that with the world so polarized, "there are enormous, huge doubts about our institution" in solving global problems.

Unless the U.N. has effective leadership and support from all countries, it won't regain a key place at the table, he said, "so we have to concentrate on that." He also said the next U.N. chief must visit global hot spots.

Grynspan, 65, a former Costa Rican vice president who has been secretary-general of the U.N. trade and development agency since 2021, said she knows how to stand up for principles while under pressure. As secretary-general, she said she would "continue to be the moral voice and the impartial voice that the secretary-general has to be."

The U.N. has become "a risk-conservative organization," she warned. "We need to take more risks — and I am ready to fail and try again."

Sall, 64, who was president of Senegal for 12 years, said the U.N. needs to "regain its place at the global table."

If chosen, he said he would be "a bridge-builder" and that his first priority would be "to contribute to restoring trust, to calm tensions, reduce fragmentation and breathe renewed hope into our collective action."

Some candidates are facing pushback

Bachelet, a medical doctor, responded to a letter from 28 Republican U.S. lawmakers calling her a "pro-abortion zealot" and asking Secretary of State Marco Rubio to veto her, saying the issue is controversial and that she respects every country's right to decide.

She called herself a strong believer in women's rights to decide on their own lives and how many children to have. As secretary-general, she said she would do whatever is necessary to advance agreements by U.N. member nations, including on promoting gender equality.

By tradition, the job of secretary-general rotates by region, and this year it is Latin America's turn. Sall, the only candidate from outside the region, said the U.N. Charter doesn't bar any candidates.

He noted that after a leader from the global north — Guterres is Portuguese — the next U.N. chief should be from the global south. Sall was also the only candidate to spark demonstrations outside U.N. headquarters — both for and against his quest to be secretary-general. Sall has been accused of corruption, which he denies.

What comes next in the race to lead the UN

The four candidates "tried to walk a political tightrope," said Daniel Forti, the International Crisis Group's head of U.N. affairs.

"It is not immediately obvious whether any candidate did enough to propel themselves ahead of the others, or to ward off potential challengers who might emerge later," he said.

The selection will be left to the 15-nation U.N. Security Council, especially its five veto-wielding mem-



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bers — the United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom and France — that remain tight-lipped. The 193-member General Assembly must give final approval.

Minh-Thu Pham, an adviser to former U.N. chief Kofi Annan and CEO of the Starling Institute think tank, said there is a widespread desire for a secretary-general who is willing to take risks and be more active in promoting peace. The U.N. isn't part of the conversation on major crises "because it hasn't had the courage to take risks."

Susana Malcorra, a former Argentine foreign minister and senior U.N. official who was a candidate for secretary-general in 2016, said the United Nations "more than ever" needs new leadership and energy.

The global advocacy group she leads, GWL Voices, has been campaigning for the next U.N. chief to be a woman.

## **Officer killed, another critically injured in Chicago hospital shooting, police say**

CHICAGO (AP) — A police officer died and another was critically injured after a man in police custody and receiving treatment at a Chicago hospital opened fire on them Saturday, according to officials.

"Officers transported an individual over to the Swedish hospital for an observation, at which time two of our officers were shot," Chicago police Superintendent Larry Snelling said at a news conference in the afternoon. "One was shot critically. It (the death) was pronounced. The second officer right now is fighting for his life in the hospital behind us."

The officer remained in critical condition Saturday evening, authorities said in a statement.

The suspect, who was not publicly identified, fled the Endeavor Health Swedish Hospital after the shooting at around 10:50 a.m. He was later detained and a gun was recovered, police said.

The hospital said its campus was placed on lockdown, and patients and staff at the health facility were safe.

"Today is a real difficult moment for our city. It's a tragedy," Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson said at the news conference. The city is providing mental health support services to police officers so they can do their jobs, he said.

Snelling said there is an ongoing investigation, and he could not provide details. But the hospital said in a Facebook posting that an individual in custody of law enforcement was brought to the emergency department for treatment and was "wanded upon arrival," following the protocols. He was escorted by law enforcement at all times, the hospital said.

It said that the man later fired shots at the law enforcement officers and exited the hospital building. He was later apprehended.

"Those officers were there as transport officers," Snelling said, referring to the police officer who died and the one who was injured. A weapon was recovered, he said.

He noted that the names of the officers were not released because they want to be sure that their families have been notified. One of them was a 38-year-old officer who had been working for 10 years in the department. The other is a 57-year-old officer with 21 years of service, Snelling said.

## **Islamic militants and separatists claim sweeping attacks across Mali**

By MARK BANCHEREAU Associated Press

DAKAR, Senegal (AP) — Islamic militants and separatists said they attacked several locations in Mali's capital, Bamako, and other cities on Saturday in one of the largest coordinated attacks in the West African country in recent years. The government gave no death toll but said that 16 people were wounded in the attacks.

Mali has previously faced insurgencies fought by militants affiliated with al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, as well as a separatist rebellion in the country's north.

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Most of the details of the unfolding attacks on Saturday came from local residents, who spoke to The Associated Press over the phone.

The al-Qaida-linked militant group JNIM claimed responsibility for the attacks on Bamako's international airport and four other cities in central and northern Mali. The claim, posted on its website Azallaq, said the attacks were carried out jointly with the Azawad Liberation Front, a Tuareg-led separatist group.

The Malian army said in a statement that "unidentified armed terrorist groups targeted certain locations and barracks" in Bamako and that soldiers were "engaged in eliminating the attackers."

Another statement later said the situation was under control.

Near-simultaneous attacks

An Associated Press journalist in Bamako heard sustained heavy and automatic weapons gunfire from the direction of Modibo Keita International Airport, around 15 kilometers (9 miles) from the city center. A helicopter flew 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 overhead.

The U.S. Embassy in Bamako issued a security alert citing reports of explosions and gunfire near Kati and the international airport, and urged U.S. citizens to shelter in place and avoid travel there.

Mali's government spokesperson Gen. Issa Ousmane Coulibaly, said on state television late Saturday that 16 people were wounded, including civilians and military personnel, and that several militants were killed. He did not provide a death toll.

The governor of Bamako's district, Abdoulaye Coulibaly, announced a three-day overnight curfew, from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m.

A resident of Kati, a town near Bamako that is home to Mali's main military base, said he was woken by the sound of gunfire and explosions.

Gen. Assimi Goita, the leader of Mali's military junta, resides in Kati. The residence of Mali's defense minister, Sadio Camara, was heavily damaged by an explosion during the attack, a nearby shopkeeper told the AP.

The residents spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

Videos on social media showed militant convoys in trucks and motorcycles moving through Kati's deserted streets, while residents looked on fearfully. Residents of Sevare and Mopti, two towns in central Mali, also reported attacks by gunmen.

Other videos — from the northern towns of Kidal and Gao — showed gunfire exchanges in the streets, with dead bodies lying on the ground.

Insurgents entered Kidal, taking control of some neighborhoods and leading to exchanges of fire with the army, a former mayor of the town told the AP by phone, speaking on condition of anonymity out of fear for his safety.

Separatists join Islamic militants

Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadane, a spokesperson for the separatist Azawad movement, said in a post on Facebook that its forces had taken control of Kidal as well as some areas in Gao, another northeastern city.

The AP could not independently verify the claim. Azawad separatists have been fighting for years to create an independent state in northern Mali.

Kidal had long served as a stronghold of the separatist rebellion before being taken by Malian government forces and Russian mercenaries in 2023. Its capture marked a significant symbolic victory for the junta and its Russian allies.

A resident of Gao, the largest city in northern Mali, said gunfire and explosions started in the early hours of Saturday and were still heard later in the morning.

"The force of the explosions is making the doors and windows of my house shake. I'm scared out of my wits," the resident said by phone, speaking 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.

Ulf Laessing, head of the Sahel program at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, said the assault seems to be the largest coordinated attack in years in Mali.

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"It's especially concerning that JNIM apparently has been coordinating today's attacks with Tuareg rebels," Laessing said. Jihadis and Tuareg rebels teamed up before, in 2012, he added.

At the time they jointly overran northern Mali, "sparking the region's security crisis," Laessing said.

Turning to Russia

Along with Mali, neighboring Niger and Burkina Faso have also been battling al-Qaida and ID affiliates.

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

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.

## 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. A new round of ceasefire talks appeared to fall apart Saturday in Pakistan when Iran's foreign minister left Islamabad and Trump said he had told U.S. envoys not to go.

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.



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"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.

## Talks stumble as Iran's top diplomat leaves Pakistan and Trump says he told envoys not to go

By MUNIR AHMED, SAMY MAGDY and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — The latest ceasefire talks between the United States and Iran appeared to fail Saturday before they began, as Tehran's top diplomat left Pakistan and President Donald Trump soon afterward said he had told envoys not to travel to Islamabad.

The negotiations were meant to follow historic face-to-face talks earlier this month between the U.S., led by Vice President JD Vance, and Iran, led by parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf. But Iranian officials have questioned how they can trust the U.S. after its forces started blockading Iranian ports in

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response to Iran's war grip on the Strait of Hormuz waterway.

"If they want to talk, all they have to do is call!!!" Trump said on social media, adding: "Too much time wasted on traveling, too much work!" The White House on Friday said Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner would be going to Islamabad.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi left Islamabad on Saturday evening, two Pakistani officials told The Associated Press, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media.

"Shared Iran's position concerning workable framework to permanently end the war on Iran. Have yet to see if the U.S. is truly serious about diplomacy," Araghchi later said on social media.

Another ceasefire, between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah, was shaken Saturday as each side fired at the other and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered the military to "vigorously attack Hezbollah targets in Lebanon."

Iran had said any talks would be indirect

Trump this week announced an indefinite extension of the ceasefire with Iran. It has paused most fighting, but the economic fallout is growing two months into the war as global shipments of oil, liquefied natural gas, fertilizer and other supplies are disrupted by the near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Both sides have continued to make military threats. Iran's joint military command on Saturday warned that "if the U.S. continues its aggressive military actions, including naval blockades, banditry, and piracy" it will face a "strong response."

Even before Saturday's developments, Iran's foreign ministry said any talks would be indirect and that Pakistani officials would convey messages. In Pakistan, Araghchi met with Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif about what he called Iran's red lines for negotiations.

Araghchi went on to Oman, a mediator in talks before the war and the country on the other side of the Strait of Hormuz. The foreign minister will visit Pakistan again on Sunday before visiting Russia, the state-run IRNA news agency reported.

Trump later told journalists that within 10 minutes of him canceling the envoys' trip to Pakistan, Iran sent a "much better" proposal, with no details. He stressed that one of his conditions is that Iran "will not have a nuclear weapon."

Contentious points in talks include Iran's enriched uranium and the standoff on the Strait of Hormuz as well as concerns about Iran's missile program and its support for armed proxies in the region.

Tehran has noted that indirect talks with the U.S. last year and early this year over its nuclear program, the issue long at the center of tensions, ended with Iran being attacked by the U.S. and Israel, adding to its wariness.

The standoff around the strait continues

The price of Brent crude oil, the international standard, is nearly 50% higher than when the war began because of Iran's grip on the strait, through which a fifth of the world's oil passes in peacetime.

Iran attacked three ships this week, while the U.S. maintains a blockade on Iranian ports. Trump has ordered the military to "shoot and kill" small boats that could be placing mines.

Germany's Defense Minister Boris Pistorius said his country was sending minesweeper ships to the Mediterranean to help remove Iranian mines from the strait once hostilities end.

Also Saturday, Iran resumed commercial flights from Tehran's international airport for the first time since the war began with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Feb. 28. Flights were scheduled to depart for Istanbul, Oman's capital of Muscat and the Saudi city of Medina, according to state-run television.

A growing toll even as ceasefires hold

Since the war began, authorities say at least 3,375 people have been killed in Iran and at least 2,496 people in Lebanon, where new fighting between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah broke out two days after the Iran war started.

Trump announced Thursday that Israel and Lebanon had agreed to extend a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah by three weeks. Hezbollah has not participated in the Washington-brokered diplomacy.

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But Israel struck southern Lebanon on Saturday, killing at least six people it aid were Hezbollah militants, and several rockets and drones were launched at Israel from Lebanon.

Additionally, 23 people have been killed in Israel and more than a dozen in Gulf Arab states. Fifteen Israeli soldiers in Lebanon, 13 U.S. service members in the region and six members of the U.N. peacekeeping force in southern Lebanon have been killed.

## **Georgia wildfires that destroyed more than 120 homes continue to threaten residents**

NAHUNTA, Ga. (AP) — Two wildfires in southeastern Georgia continued to threaten homes and lives on Saturday as officials warned that strong winds could spread the flames.

Brantley County Manager Joey Cason called it a “dynamic situation” in a video posted to social media and begged residents to “please evacuate” if ordered to do so.

“This fire is going to move rapidly once these winds get here later today,” he said.

The Highway 82 Fire has been burning since Monday and has destroyed at least 87 homes. Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp said Friday that is the most for a single wildfire in the state’s history.

The blaze was started by a foil balloon hitting live power lines. That created an electrical arc that ignited combustible material on the ground.

An infrared flight that detects heat was conducted overnight Friday, helping officials to better map the fire. A joint statement issued by multiple government agencies said the fire’s perimeter was more than 14.8 square miles (38 square kilometers) and it was only about 10% contained.

Meanwhile a second fire about 70 miles (110 kilometers) to the southwest in Clinch and Echols counties, near the Florida state line, has burned more than 46.9 square miles (121 square kilometers) and destroyed at least 35 homes. Started by sparks from a welding operation, that wildfire was also about 10% contained.

Firefighters have been 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.

An unusually large number of wildfires are burning this spring across the Southeast. 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, Nassau County Sheriff’s Office volunteer firefighter James “Kevin” Crews died Thursday evening after he suffered an unspecified medical emergency while suppressing a brush fire. No fire deaths or injuries have been reported in Georgia.

## **Mexico says 2 US federal agents who died were not authorized to participate in any local operation**

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico’s government said Saturday that two U.S. federal agents recently killed in a car crash in the country’s northern region were not authorized to participate in operations in Mexico.

The role of the two CIA agents who were returning from destroying a clandestine drug lab in the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua remains unclear.

Local government officials have said they were part of a convoy when their car drove off a ravine last weekend and the vehicle exploded. Two Mexican officers also were killed.

The Americans killed were from the CIA, The Associated Press confirmed earlier this week with a U.S. official and two other people familiar with the matter who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence matters.

The CIA has declined to comment.

A statement from Mexico’s Ministry of Security said one U.S. agent entered Mexico as a visitor while the other entered with a diplomatic passport.

It also asserted that Mexico’s government was not aware of foreign agents operating or planning to participate in an operation on its soil.



The ministry said it is reviewing the case with local authorities and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico.

"Mexican law is clear: it does not permit the participation of foreign agents in operations within the national territory," the ministry said in a statement.

It added: "The Government of Mexico reiterates its willingness to maintain a close, serious, and respectful relationship with the Government of the United States for the benefit of the security of both countries."

Officials from both countries have offered contradictory accounts on the issue, with Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum admitting on Wednesday that federal forces were involved after Mexico's government said it had no knowledge of any operation or U.S. involvement.

## **Roommate charged with two counts of murder in death, disappearance of two USF students**

By HOLLY RAMER Associated Press

A former University of South Florida student has been charged with killing his roommate and the roommate's girlfriend — two doctoral students from Bangladesh who disappeared earlier this month, authorities said Saturday.

Hisham Abugharbieh, 26, is facing two counts of premeditated murder in the first degree with a weapon in the deaths of Zamil Limon and Nahida Bristy, students at USF, according to the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. He made an initial court appearance Saturday in Tampa, where he was ordered held without bond. A hearing is set for April 28.

Limon's remains were found on the Howard Frankland bridge Friday morning, but Bristy is still missing, Hillsborough County Chief Deputy Joseph Maurer said on Friday.

Abugharbieh, a native-born U.S. citizen, was initially taken into custody on Friday at his family's home on preliminary charges that include unlawfully moving a dead body, failure to report a death, tampering with evidence, false imprisonment and battery. Online court records do not list an attorney for him. Messages were sent via email and phone to the public defender's office in Hillsborough County.

Officers encountered Abugharbieh as they responded to a report of domestic violence at his family's home, just north of the campus, and were able to move his relatives to safety. But then he barricaded himself inside and refused to come out. A SWAT team responded — along with a drone, a robot and crisis negotiators — before Abugharbieh came out with his hands up, apparently wearing nothing but a blue towel.

Limon and Bristy, both 27, were considering getting married, a relative said. They disappeared from campus on April 16. Limon was last seen at his home in an off-campus apartment complex where he lived with Abugharbieh. Bristy, who lived off campus, was last seen an hour later at a campus science building.

An autopsy is being done on the remains to determine the manner and cause of Limon's death, and those results are expected Saturday morning, Maurer said Friday.

Abugharbieh had been a USF student but was not currently enrolled. University records showed he had attended the school from Spring 2021 through Spring 2023, and had pursued a BS in Management, a university spokesperson said.

Limon was studying geography, environmental science and policy, and Bristy was studying chemical engineering. She was a graduate of Noakhali Science and Technology University. The school, which spelled her last name as Brishti, said in a statement Saturday that she was a Ph.D. candidate and described her as a talented and promising student.

"Her sudden passing has deeply saddened all of us," Vice Chancellor Mohammad Ismail said. "The university family pays deep respect to her memory. At the same time, we demand punishment for those involved in her death and compensation for the victim's family."

The search for Bristy continues. Anyone with information regarding her disappearance is asked to contact the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office.

Abugharbieh had several previous arrests, the sheriff's office said. He was charged with battery and burglary of an unoccupied dwelling in September 2023, and with battery that May — both classified in court records as misdemeanors.

Court records show Abugharbieh entered into a diversion program for first-time offenders charged with misdemeanors. He completed the program in 2024 and the charges were discontinued. A phone call to his lawyer in that case was not immediately returned.

Hillsborough County Court records also showed two domestic violence petitions filed by a family member in 2023. A judge granted an injunction in one case and denied the other petition. He also was accused of traffic violations.

## **A sudden shift: ICE arrests drop nearly 12% after Minneapolis killings and immigration shake-up**

By AARON KESSLER and TIM SULLIVAN Associated Press

At the peak of the crackdown, carloads of masked immigration officers were a common sight in the streets of Minneapolis, while thousands of people were being arrested every week in Texas, Florida and California.

"Turn and burn," top Border Patrol commander Gregory Bovino called the strategy, with relentless displays of force and teams of agents descending on restaurant kitchens, bus stops and Home Depot parking lots.

In December, arrests by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents peaked at nearly 40,000 nationwide and were nearly as high the next month, according to data provided to UC Berkeley's Deportation Data Project and analyzed by The Associated Press.

In late January, the killings in Minneapolis of two American citizens by immigration officers and growing concerns over the government's heavy-handed tactics led to a shake-up of top immigration officials. In the weeks that followed, ICE arrests across the country dropped on average by nearly 12%.

Polling has found the general public felt the immigration enforcement operation in Minnesota went too far, a factor that may have contributed to the abrupt firing of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem in early March.

The numbers don't follow the same pattern everywhere

Bovino, who swaggered through raid scenes in tactical gear and was the public face of the Trump administration crackdown, was pushed aside following the killings in Minneapolis of Renee Good and Alex Pretti. Border czar Tom Homan was then sent to the Twin Cities to chart a new course for immigration enforcement, and he announced the drawdown of immigration agents in the state on Feb. 4.

An AP analysis of ICE arrest records show the department averaged 7,369 weekly arrests nationwide in the five weeks after Homan's drawdown announcement, the most recent period for which data is available, down from 8,347 per week in the previous five weeks. Those arrest numbers were still higher on average than during much of the first year of President Donald Trump's second term, and were dramatically higher than during the Biden administration.

The numbers were not, however, uniform across the country.

ICE arrests rose significantly in Kentucky, Indiana, North Carolina and Florida during those five weeks, in some cases hitting their highest weekly count since the start of Trump's second term. In Kentucky alone, weekly arrests more than doubled, reaching 86 by early March.

Those increases were offset by steep drops in a handful of large states, including Minnesota and Texas. Many arrested were not Trump's 'worst of the worst'

The Trump administration insists it is targeting the most vicious criminals living illegally in the U.S., and the president has referred to them as "the worst of the worst."

In some cases the description is accurate, but the reality is complicated.

Many of the toughest criminals taken into ICE custody were already in prison, but many others who were arrested have no criminal history.

Nationally, some 46% of the people ICE arrested in the five weeks before Feb. 4 had no criminal charges or convictions, dropping to 41% in the five weeks that followed.

Yet that's still above the 35% weekly average for the time since Trump returned to office. And in a number of states, even after Feb. 4, the share of noncriminals being arrested went up, not down.

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Has there been a change in approach?

Across the country, thousands of federal court filings offer an imperfect window into how the Trump administration's deportation tactics remain in high gear, even if activity has waned.

Like the 21-year-old Honduran man with no criminal record who has filed a petition for release after being arrested Feb. 22 in a suburban San Diego traffic stop. The father of three U.S. citizen children — ages 5, 3 and 10 months — had been under ICE surveillance, the petition says, before officers in tactical gear pulled him over.

Or the 33-year-old Venezuelan woman, a well-known South Texas doctor who worked in a region designated as medically underserved, who was arrested earlier this month with her five-year-old daughter, a U.S. citizen, on her way to her husband's asylum hearing.

She was arrested, officials said, for overstaying her visa.

Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, a senior fellow with the research and advocacy group the American Immigration Council, says he sees signs of change in lower arrest and detention numbers but warns it's too early to know if those shifts are permanent.

"The Trump administration says: 'We're not slowing down,' 'Nothing has changed,'" in immigration enforcement, he said. "But it's very clear that they have pulled back from some of the tactics of Operation Metro Surge," the crackdown that swept Minneapolis.

## US says it's hunting for explosive mines in latest push to open the Strait of Hormuz

By BEN FINLEY, KONSTANTIN TOROPIN and DAVID McHUGH Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump says the U.S. Navy is clearing Iranian mines from the Strait of Hormuz, a vital sea route for oil shipments whose disruption is increasingly threatening the global economy.

Sweeping for underwater explosives could take months despite a tenuous ceasefire between the United States and Iran in the weeklong war, experts say. Any future claims that the U.S. cleared the waterway where 20% of the world's oil typically passes might fail to convince commercial freighters and their insurers that it is finally safe.

"You don't even have to have laid mines — you just have to make people believe that you've laid mines," said Emma Salisbury, a scholar at the Foreign Policy Research Institute's National Security Program.

"And even if the U.S. sweeps the strait and says everything's clear, all the Iranians have to do is say, 'Well, actually, you haven't found them all yet,'" said Salisbury, who is also a fellow at the Royal Navy Strategic Studies Centre. "There's only so much the U.S. can do to give that confidence back to commercial shipping."

Seeking out mines is one of the latest tactics announced by the Trump administration to get traffic moving again through the strait as rising energy prices and wider economic effects pose a political risk. The U.S. also has blockaded Iran's ports and seized ships tied to Tehran, but the president said Saturday he had instructed his envoys not to travel to Pakistan for the latest ceasefire talks after Iran's top diplomat left Islamabad.

Hegseth doesn't deny that mine-clearing could take 6 months

Pentagon officials told lawmakers it would likely take six months to clear the mines that Iran has set in the strait, according to a person familiar with the situation who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the sensitive information. The information was delivered during a classified briefing at the House Armed Services Committee on Tuesday.

When asked about the estimate, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth told reporters Friday that the military would not speculate on a timeline, but he did not deny it.

"Allegedly that was something that was said," Hegseth said at a Pentagon news conference. "But we feel confident in our ability, in the correct period of time, to clear any mines that we identify."

Trump said he has ordered the Navy to attack any boat laying mines in the strait.

"Additionally, our mine 'sweepers' are clearing the Strait right now," the president said on social media



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Thursday. "I am hereby ordering that activity to continue, but at a tripled up level!"

Adm. Brad Cooper, the top U.S. commander in the Middle East, recently told reporters that the military would be working to clear mines from the strait. He did not offer details.

There is no indication that the U.S. military is using warships, its most visible mine-clearing assets, in the strait now.

But the Navy also has divers and small teams of explosive ordnance disposal technicians in the region that are capable of clearing mines. They are a less obvious target than a large warship.

Experts also say some mine-clearing equipment could be moved off ships and deployed from land.

It's easier for Iran to lay mines than it is to find them, expert says

It is unclear whether a single mine has been deployed. Iran has mentioned only the "likelihood" of mines in the strait's prewar routes.

Estimates of Iran's mine stockpiles are in the low thousands, said Salisbury, of the Foreign Policy Research Institute. Most of its underwater explosives are believed to be older Soviet models. Some of its newer ones may be from China or made domestically.

"Minelaying is a lot easier than minesweeping, so you can literally push these things off the back of a speedboat," Salisbury said, though she noted the U.S. could likely see that.

Iran also has small submarines that can lay mines and are much harder to detect, Salisbury added. She said she has not seen indications that they have been destroyed in the war.

If Iran has set mines in the strait, they are not the spiky balls floating on the surface seen in the movies, Salisbury said. The explosives are likely sitting on the seabed or moored to it by a cable and floating under the surface. They can be triggered by the water pressure changing when a ship passes or by the sound of its engine.

How the US can sweep for mines in the strait

The U.S. Navy now has two littoral combat ships in the Middle East that are capable of sweeping for mines, said a defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive military movements.

Two U.S. Avenger-class minesweepers based in Japan also have departed for the Middle East but were in the Pacific Ocean as of Friday, the official said.

Steven Wills, a retired lieutenant commander who served on an Avenger-class ship, said the Navy is likely looking for sea explosives in order to create a safe channel through the strait. Minesweeping is a slower process that usually occurs after a conflict.

"Minehunting is walking through your yard pulling individual weeds and dandelions so that you can walk safely from one side to the other. Minesweeping is more like mowing the grass," said Wills, an expert at the Center for Maritime Strategy at the Navy League of the United States.

Scott Savitz, a researcher with the RAND Corp. who focuses on naval operations and mine clearing, said the Navy does not necessarily have to remove every last mine.

"There's still areas that have not been cleared from World War II — and in some cases, World War I — just because it is so resource intensive and it takes a lot of time," he said.

Teams on the Navy's littoral combat ships can deploy remotely operated, uncrewed vehicles that use sonar and other technology to find mines, Wills said. They also carry charges to destroy the explosives.

U.S. Navy ships may also have explosive ordnance disposal teams, including divers, that can hunt for and destroy mines, Wills said. Helicopters can search for mines using lasers.

Shipping companies are weighing the risks

Eventually, shipping companies will be willing to take some risks to travel through the strait "particularly given how lucrative it is," Savitz said.

Under Iran's approval procedure for vessels wanting to transit the strait, ships must take a different route than before the war — to the north, near Iran's coastline.

Insurers are adding a clause that requires ship owners to contact Iranian authorities to ensure safe passage, said Dylan Mortimer, U.K. marine war leader for insurance broker Marsh.

That certification does not mention mines specifically and is intended to protect against the entire spec-

trum of threats, including missile and drone attacks or seizures, Mortimer said.

But mines do, at the very least, play a psychological role, a phenomenon Mortimer called the "specter of threat."

"That plays in the Iranians' favor, because whether there are mines there or not, people think there's mines there and they will operate accordingly," Mortimer said.

Those fears could mean it takes longer to restore confidence that the strait is safe even after the war.

## **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."

Charles and Queen Camilla will begin their four-day trip on Monday, when they will have tea with the president and first lady Melania Trump, then tour the White House beehive in a nod to the king's focus on conservation. The formal arrival ceremony will take place on Tuesday, with a 21-gun salute, brass bands playing the national anthems of both countries and a contingent of U.S. service members passing in review. The ceremonies will be followed by a meeting between Trump and Charles.

Behind the scenes

But beneath the pomp and pageantry will be 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 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

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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."

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## **Russia and Ukraine exchange attacks, killing and wounding dozens, as Zelenskyy calls for more talks**

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 46, 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.

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. He said that 46 people were wounded in total.

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.

Leonid Pasechnik, the Russia-installed governor in Ukraine's Luhansk region — of which Russia earlier this month said it had taken full control, a claim denied by Ukraine — said Saturday that three people were killed in an overnight Ukrainian drone strike on a village. Ukraine did not comment on the attack, and the claim could not be independently verified by The Associated Press.

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, as well as on a farm some 30 kilometers (18.5 miles) from 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."

## **A bank robber's cellphone gave him away. Now the Supreme Court is hearing his case**

By MARK SHERMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Okello Chatrue's cellphone gave him away.

Chatrue made off with \$195,000 from the bank he robbed in suburban Richmond, Virginia, and eluded the police until they turned to a powerful technological tool that erected a virtual fence and allowed them collect the location history of cellphone users near the crime scene.

The geofence warrant police served on Google found that Chatrue's cellphone was among a handful of devices in the vicinity of the bank around the time it was robbed.

Now the Supreme Court will decide whether geofence warrants violate the Fourth Amendment's ban on unreasonable searches. It's the latest high court case that forces the justices to wrestle with how a constitutional provision ratified in 1791 applies to technology the nation's founders could not have contemplated in their wildest dreams.

Chatrue's appeal is one of two cases being argued Monday. The other is an effort by Bayer to have the court block thousands of state lawsuits alleging the global agrochemical manufacturer failed to warn people that its popular Roundup weedkiller could cause cancer.

Geofence warrants turn the usual way of pursuing suspects on its head. Typically, police identify a suspect and then obtain a warrant to search a home or a phone.

With geofence warrants, police do not have a suspect, only a location where a crime took place. They work in reverse to identify people who were in the area.

Prosecutors credit the warrants with helping crack cold cases and other crimes where surveillance cameras did not reveal suspects' faces or license plates.

Civil libertarians say that geofences amount to fishing expeditions that subject many innocent people to searches of private records merely because their cellphones happened to be in the vicinity of a crime. A Supreme Court ruling in favor of the technique could "unleash a much broader wave of similar reverse searches," law professors who study digital surveillance wrote the court.

Investigators used geofence warrants to identify supporters of President Donald Trump who attacked the Capitol in the riot on Jan. 6, 2021, as well as in the search for the person who planted pipe bombs outside the Democratic and Republican party headquarters the night before.

Police also credit these warrants with helping identify suspects in killings in several states, including California, Georgia and North Carolina.

An academic group that works to bridge gaps between the police and communities wrote that the court should avoid an all-or-nothing approach in Chatrue's case.

The Trump administration's position would allow police to use geofence warrants and similar tools "with no judicial supervision or constitutional safeguards," according to the Policing Project at the New York University School of Law. Chatrue's lawyers want the court to rule out any use of geofence warrants at all, impeding "legitimate law enforcement activities," the group wrote.

In Chatrue's case, the geofence warrant invigorated an investigation that had stalled. After determining that Chatrue was near the Call Federal Credit Union in Midlothian around the time it was robbed in May 2019, police obtained a search warrant for his home. They found nearly \$100,000 in cash, including bills wrapped in bands signed by the bank teller.

He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to nearly 12 years in prison. Chatrue's lawyers argued on appeal that none of the evidence should have been used against him.



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They challenged the warrant as a violation of his privacy because it allowed authorities to gather the location history of people near the bank without having any evidence they had anything to do with the robbery. Prosecutors argued that Chatrie had no expectation of privacy because he voluntarily opted into Google's location history.

A federal judge agreed that the search violated Chatrie's rights, but allowed the evidence to be used because the officer who applied for the warrant reasonably believed he was acting properly.

The federal appeals court in Richmond upheld the conviction in a fractured ruling. In a separate case, the federal appeals court in New Orleans ruled that geofence warrants "are general warrants categorically prohibited by the Fourth Amendment."

In the Supreme Court's last case on digital-age searches, in 2018, the court divided 5-4 in favor of a defendant whose movements were tracked by authorities for nearly four months, without a warrant, through the review of cellphone tower data.

An issue in that case that also appears in Chatrie's is whether the defendant had an expectation of privacy that would trigger Fourth Amendment protections.

The Supreme Court has previously ruled that information shared with third parties cannot be considered private.

But Chief Justice John Roberts wrote in his majority opinion about the extraordinary computing power of cellphones, describing "seismic shifts in digital technology" and "the exhaustive chronicle of location information casually collected by wireless carriers today."

## **Tick season seems to be off to a fast start, and some experts worry about future illnesses**

By MIKE STOBBE AP Medical Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Tick season seems to be off to a fast start, with an unusually high number of bites already reported across the country.

Some U.S. doctors are worried about the potential for a bad year for tick-borne diseases.

"If you have a lot of exposures, there will probably be more cases of tick-related infections," said Dr. Alina Filozov, an infectious disease doctor at Middlesex Hospital in Middletown, Connecticut.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued an early advisory to the public this week to guard against ticks.

Tick bites typically spike in May, but "the data are telling us now is the time to take action," said Alison Hinckley, a CDC Lyme disease expert. "Ticks are out and people are getting bitten."

ER visits for tick bites are running high

Current data is very limited, but the early signs are not good.

The CDC's tracking system shows that weekly rates of ER visits for tick bites are the highest for this time of year since 2017. That's true in all regions of the country, except the south-central United States.

About 85% of U.S. hospital emergency departments send data to the surveillance system, but it doesn't capture people who didn't go to a hospital.

It will take months for systematic tick sampling by researchers to chart changes in tick populations. And because not every bite results in an infection, it will also take time for medical experts to know whether there's an actual surge in Lyme disease or other illnesses.

Ticks cause disease, including a meat allergy

Ticks are small, eight-legged bloodsucking parasites — arachnids, not insects — that feed on animals and sometimes people.

Tick populations vary throughout the year, and their numbers depend on a few factors. Climate change is widely believed to be having an effect: Ticks like warm, humid weather, and more can be seen after a mild winter. The more deer and mice available for them to feed on may also factor.

Some ticks are infected with germs that can cause serious diseases, including Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and alpha-gal syndrome, a red meat allergy. Lyme disease is the most common,

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with an estimated 476,000 people treated for it each year, according to the CDC. Infections are commonly treated with antibiotics.

So far this year, most ticks seen in the Northeast have been large adult ticks. But in the weeks ahead, juvenile nymphs will become more common. The emergence of nymphs, along with more people spending time outdoors, are among the reasons tick bites tend to be highest in May. Worse, tiny nymphs attached to people are harder to see — and often are there longer — leading to an increased risk of infections, experts say.

A notorious hot spot is seeing a tick surge

Connecticut has a connection to tick-borne disease — Lyme disease is named after a town there. And earlier this month, the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station reported that residents were already submitting an average of 30 ticks per day for testing.

State officials also said an unusually high percentage of the submitted ticks — 40% — tested positive for the bacteria that cause Lyme disease.

Several factors have been helping tick populations expand, including unusually high numbers of mice in the last two years, said Scott Williams, a tick researcher at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.

All we have so far is an early snapshot, said Megan Linske, a wildlife biologist with the same agency. She expects the problem to continue to worsen, with more ticks spreading over more areas.

How to prevent tick bites

Experts advise that if you go outdoors, note any wooded areas and grassy properties that start bleeding into wooded areas. Ticks tend to perch on ankle-level vegetation with their upper legs outstretched, waiting to latch on to an unsuspecting dog or human.

Try to walk in the middle of paths. Wear light-colored clothing treated with the insecticide permethrin. And use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered insect repellents.

If you do find a tick, remove it immediately. It's not necessary to go to a doctor unless you think the tick has been on you for days or if you develop a rash or other symptoms, experts said.

## **Today in History: April 26, the Chernobyl nuclear plant disaster**

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Sunday, April 26, the 116th day of 2026. There are 249 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On April 26, 1986, in the worst nuclear disaster in history, an explosion and fire at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant in Ukraine caused radioactive fallout to begin spewing into the atmosphere. Dozens of people were killed in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, while the long-term death toll from radiation poisoning is believed to number in the thousands.

Also on this date:

In 1607, English colonists went ashore at present-day Cape Henry, Virginia, on an expedition to establish the first permanent English settlement in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1865, John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of President Abraham Lincoln, was surrounded by federal troops near Port Royal, Virginia, and killed.

In 1913, Mary Phagan, a 13-year-old worker at a Georgia pencil factory, was strangled; Leo Frank, the factory superintendent, was convicted of her murder and sentenced to death. (Frank's death sentence was commuted, but he was lynched by an antisemitic mob in 1915.)

In 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, German aircraft bombed the Basque village of Guernica, killing hundreds and devastating the village (the bombing would inspire Pablo Picasso's mural "Guernica").

In 1964, the African nations of Tanganyika and Zanzibar merged to form what is now known as Tanzania.

In 1977, the legendary nightclub Studio 54 had its opening night in New York.

In 1994, voting began in South Africa's first all-race elections, which resulted in victory for the African National Congress and the inauguration of Nelson Mandela as president.

In 2000, Vermont Gov. Howard Dean signed the nation's first bill allowing same-sex couples to form

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civil unions.

In 2012, former Liberian President Charles Taylor became the first head of state since World War II to be convicted by an international war crimes court as he was found guilty of aiding and abetting war crimes and crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, and the use of child soldiers. (Taylor was sentenced to 50 years in prison.)

In 2018, comedian Bill Cosby was convicted of drugging and molesting Temple University employee Andrea Constand at Cosby's suburban Philadelphia mansion in 2004. (Cosby was later sentenced to three to 10 years in prison, but Pennsylvania's highest court threw out the conviction and released him from prison in June 2021, ruling that the prosecutor in the case was bound by his predecessor's agreement not to charge Cosby.)

Today's Birthdays: Actor-comedian Carol Burnett is 93. Composer-producer Giorgio Moroder is 86. Olympic swimming gold medalist Donna de Varona is 79. Actor Giancarlo Esposito is 68. Actor Joan Chen is 65. Actor Jet Li is 63. Actor-comedian Kevin James is 61. Former U.S. Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey is 60. Actor Marianne Jean-Baptiste is 59. First lady Melania Trump is 56. Singer Tionne "T-Boz" Watkins (TLC) is 56. Country musician Jay DeMarcus (Rascal Flatts) is 55. Actor Tom Welling is 49. Actor Pablo Schreiber is 48. Actor Jordana Brewster is 46. Actor Channing Tatum is 46. New York Yankees outfielder Aaron Judge is 34.