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Saturday, May 2

Citywide Rummage Sale Day
NEC Girls Fast Pitch Softball Tournament at Redfield
10:00 a.m.: Deuel
11:30 a.m.: Milbank
Finals at 2:30 or 4:00
Baseball at Redfield
12:30pm - Rapid City Central vs Groton Area
3:00pm - Rapid City Central vs Redfield Area
4:30pm - Redfield Area vs Groton Area



Sunday, May 3

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship, 9 a.m. (Senior Sunday/Faith Forever Scholarships Awarded).

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:45 a.m.

United Methodist: Worship with communion 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.; Cody Swanson Piano Recital, 3 p.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

Annie, the Musical, 4 p.m., GHS Gym

Groton Daily Independent
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1440

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

War Powers Showdown

Yesterday marked 60 days since President Donald Trump notified Congress of military action in Iran—a deadline many lawmakers and legal experts say requires him to either end the operation or secure explicit congressional approval.

The War Powers Resolution—which says Congress must approve hostilities that continue beyond 60 days—was enacted in the aftermath of the Vietnam War to reaffirm the legislative branch's exclusive constitutional power to declare war (watch 101). While Trump could seek one 30-day extension to withdraw forces, he has not done so. Instead, his administration argues the ongoing ceasefire pauses or stops the 60-day clock. Republicans have largely deferred to Trump; Congress went into recess Thursday after Senate Republicans rejected a Democrat-led effort to force the withdrawal of US forces from Iran for the sixth time.

Presidents have largely sidestepped the War Powers Act since its passage over five decades ago, including Bill Clinton during a 78-day bombing campaign in Kosovo and Barack Obama during a 222-day UN and NATO operation in Libya.

Jury convicts ex-Florida congressman of secretly lobbying for Venezuela.

Former US Representative David Rivera (R, FL-25) faces roughly 10 years in prison after being convicted of conspiracy and five other crimes yesterday. Rivera, who served in Congress from 2011 to 2013, was covertly hired by Venezuela's state-run oil company for \$50M to convince the first Trump administration to ease sanctions. The five-week trial included testimony against Rivera from Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who had been a longtime friend.

Mexico City is quickly sinking, according to NASA satellite imagery.

Mexico's capital city is sinking by nearly 10 inches every year—a shift so dramatic it's visible from space. NASA says the city has subsided more than 39 feet in less than a century. The city was built on an ancient lake bed, and decades of intensive groundwater pumping to supply its roughly 22 million residents have caused the underlying aquifer to collapse.

Pentagon inks AI deals with several tech giants.

OpenAI, Google, Nvidia, Microsoft, and Amazon are among the top AI firms whose systems the US military will now use for classified work. The Pentagon yesterday touted the deals as a step toward making the military an "AI-first fighting force." Anthropic, which the government labeled a supply chain risk earlier this year over reservations about AI use in warfare, was notably excluded from the list.

Worldwide May Day protests call for higher wages, better working conditions.

Activists held rallies yesterday in cities on every continent except Antarctica to call for better working conditions and higher wages as incomes largely stagnate and the cost of living rises. Many demonstrations in the US and elsewhere also condemned the war in Iran, which has driven up oil prices and, in turn, fueled inflation.

Also known as International Workers' Day, May 1 is a public holiday in over 160 countries.

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Oscars organization tackles eligibility rules for films that use AI.

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences yesterday released new rules for the 2027 Academy Awards, requiring humans to be at the center of creative processes. Only performances by humans will be considered for acting awards, and only human-authored scripts can receive screenplay awards. Separately, the rules expand eligibility for international films as membership has become more diverse.

Trump threatens EU with higher tariffs on cars and trucks.

President Donald Trump yesterday said he will raise tariffs on cars and trucks from the European Union from 15% to 25% next week. He is accusing the EU of not complying with a trade deal negotiated in July that incentivizes European automakers—such as Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz, and BMW—to move production to the US. The levies will not apply to European cars made in the US.

Humankind(ness)

Dear readers— In honor of Mother's Day, we're pausing our usual act of kindness stories this month to share a sampling of submissions about mothers.

"My mother modeled the idea of celebrating everyday joys. Anything that could be close to construed as a holiday was an occasion for a card from her with a tiny little note in her tiny little handwriting. Her ability to observe and celebrate the little moments in life brought great joy and was a wonderful model of creating happiness for those around her, which fed her own joy and contentment with life. My memory of her caring and kindness will forever be with me."

— Martha A.B. in Edmore, Michigan

"My mother was heading to GW Hospital to give birth. She had blood dripping down her legs, and yet stopped to braid my hair. She sat on the edge of the tub in her bathroom and patiently did my hair with love and patience. I have never forgotten her act of selflessness."

— Nancy K. in Vero Beach, Florida

"In 1959, my parents married. My mother was only 16 and was prohibited from attending high school and obtaining a diploma. Fast-forward 20 years, when I was graduating in 1980, she valiantly completed her GED diploma so we could attend nursing school together. As we were retiring from our 30-year nursing careers, my daughter (and her future husband) graduated from the same nursing school! Three generations of nursing service—all from the grit and determination of my mother."

— Tarri V. in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

"One thing I've learned about being a mom is that it's more about presence than anything else. It's not about doing things right or better. It's not about knowing all the answers. It's not about wishing we could have bought our kids all the cool stuff, or wishing we'd done things differently. It's about showing up as we are today, in this moment, and being with our kids fully. It's not about wanting to change anything; it's just about being 'here' now."

— Lora P. in Seattle, Washington

Humankind(ness) is a reader-built corner of joy. So, what act(s) of kindness did you experience this week? [Tell us here.](#)

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A colorful illustration of an ice cream truck. The truck is white with a pink stripe and a pink awning. It has a sign on top that says "Ice cream" in white text on a pink background. Above the truck, the words "ICE CREAM" are written in large, pink, bubbly letters, with "605 Scoops" written in yellow cursive over them. Two large ice cream cones are on either side of the truck. The background is light blue with colorful confetti. Below the truck, there is a white box with black text, and below that, a light blue box with black text.

ICE CREAM
605 Scoops

Ice cream

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Howard Wood Dakota Relays in Sioux Falls. 4x800m relay. Jayden Schwan (top left), Jace Johnson (bottom left), Ethan Kroll (top right), and Riley Schellenberger (bottom right). (Photos

by Bruce Babcock)

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Keegen Tracy powering out of the blocks in lane 2 in semi finals of 100m dash. He placed 12th in the semifinals with a time of 11.08. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)



Groton Area placed 7th in the Girls A 4x200m relay. McKenna Tietz, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, and Makenna Krause. (Photos by Bruce Babcock)



Rylee Dunker placed 12th in the finals of the Javelin with a throw of 95-03.

Ninth-Inning Spurt Lead Groton Area Tigers Past W.I.N. Baseball

By GameChanger Media

Groton Area Tigers Varsity scored nine runs in the ninth inning, which helped them defeat W.I.N. Baseball 14-5 on Wednesday at Northville. an error scored one run, Jordan Schwan tripled, scoring two runs, Case Reints drew a walk, scoring one run, Tristin McGannon drew a walk, scoring one run, Alex Abeln singled, scoring one run, Gavin Englund drew a walk, scoring one run, Nick Groeblichhoff was struck by a pitch, driving in a run, and Schwan drew a walk, scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity opened the scoring in the first after Englund doubled, scoring one run.

W.I.N. Baseball took the lead in the bottom of the third inning after , and Lincoln Kroll singled, each scoring one run.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity jumped back into the lead in the top of the fourth inning after Groton Area Tigers Varsity scored on a wild pitch, and Karsten Fliehs singled to the left side of the infield, each scoring one run.

W.I.N. Baseball took the lead in the bottom of the fourth. Chays Mansfield homered to left field, scoring three runs, to give W.I.N. Baseball the advantage, 5-3.

TC Schuster grounded into a fielder's choice, which helped Groton Area Tigers Varsity tie the game at five in the top of the seventh.

Englund earned the win for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The pitcher allowed two hits and zero runs over three and one-third innings, striking out six and walking none. Quinn Huetl took the loss for W.I.N. Baseball. The righty went two-thirds of an inning, surrendering six runs (three earned) on two hits, striking out one and walking two. Jarrett Erdmann started the game for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The pitcher gave up five hits and five runs over five and two-thirds innings, striking out 13 and walking three. Logan Fischbach stepped on the bump first for W.I.N. Baseball. The starting pitcher allowed four hits and three runs (two earned) over four innings, striking out six and walking two.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity accumulated 11 hits in the game. Lincoln Krause and Abeln were a force together in the lineup, as they each collected three hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity while hitting back-to-back. Schwan led Groton Area Tigers Varsity with three runs batted in. The left fielder went 1-for-5 on the day. Englund collected two hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity in four at bats. Groton Area Tigers Varsity had patience at the plate, collecting eight walks for the game. McGannon and Groeblichhoff led the team with two free passes each.

Kroll and Alec Mikkelson each collected two hits for W.I.N. Baseball. Mansfield led W.I.N. Baseball with three runs batted in. The catcher went 1-for-3 on the day.

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Northeast Conference Softball Tournament

Saturday, May 2nd, 2026

Location: Redfield Softball/Baseball Complex; 225 W. 14th Ave.

Admission: Adults-\$10 Students-\$5 (NEC Passes Accepted)

Pool A

North Diamond

#1-Deuel
#4-Groton Area
#5-Milbank

Pool B

South Diamond

#2-Redfield
#3-Clark-Willow Lake
#6-Sisseton

*Times are approximate. We will roll ahead when/if possible.

10:00 Deuel (H) vs. Groton Area (V)
11:30 Groton Area (H) vs. Milbank (V)
1:00 Milbank (V) vs. Deuel (H)

2:30 Pool A #2 vs. Pool B #2
4:00 Pool A #1 vs. Pool B #1 (Championship)

10:00 Redfield (H) vs. Clark-Willow Lake (V)
11:30 Clark-Willow Lake (H) vs. Sisseton (V)
1:00 Redfield (H) vs. Sisseton (V)

2:30 Pool B #3 vs. Pool A #3

Games will be 5 innings; 15-run rule after 3rd inning. Pool Play HIGHER SEED will be the HOME TEAM.

Placing Games—HOME TEAM determined by Coin Toss.

FOLLOW THE
GROTON AREA
FAST PITCH SOFTBALL TEAM
AT THE
NEC TOURNAMENT
AT REDFIELD
SATURDAY, MAY 2

DEUEL	10:00
MILBANK	11:30
FINAL GAME	TO BE DETERMINED

GROTON GAMES WILL BE
BROADCAST LIVE
ON
GDILIVE.COM

The graphic features a softball player in a Groton uniform swinging a bat, a softball, and the Groton logo.

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SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota governor pledges parole reform days after Sioux Falls officer is shot

BY: JOHN HULT

South Dakota will hire more parole officers, expand monitoring to nights and weekends, and make it easier to send people on parole back to prison, Gov. Larry Rhoden announced this week.

Five parole officers will be assigned to an enhanced compliance unit, Rhoden announced in a Thursday news release, and five new officers will be hired to backfill those positions.

The Department of Corrections will also “enhance the severity of sanctions” for people on parole who commit certain misdemeanor offenses, including driving under the influence, or simple assault and weapons violations. The Board of Pardons and Paroles, meanwhile, will “process revocations” more quickly and hold revocation hearings more frequently.

Some changes are just starting, but adjustments to revocation policy began a week ago, the release said, and the state has “nearly doubled” the number of revocations since.

Shooting sparks criticism and action

Law enforcement has criticized the state’s parole policies for years, before Rhoden’s term in office began in 2025.

The governor’s announcement came in the wake of a shooting, the second in as many years to injure a Sioux Falls police officer. The officer in Sioux Falls was ambushed and shot on Monday by someone on state-supervised parole, according to the Minnehaha County Sheriff’s Office, which is leading the investigation. The officer is in stable condition.

The man accused of shooting the officer was sentenced to 10 years in prison in 2022, with three years suspended, for drug possession and grand theft. He was released in late 2024, and police issued an “attempt to locate” order for him in the run-up to his encounter with police earlier this week. He’s now charged with attempted murder of a law enforcement officer and aggravated assault, among other charges.

Thirteen months ago, another person on parole allegedly shot and wounded another officer in Sioux Falls before leading law enforcement on a multi-county pursuit that ended with still more shots fired at state troopers. The man was convicted of attempted murder of a law enforcement officer in Union County last month; his case in Sioux Falls is pending.

On Tuesday, Minnehaha County Sheriff Mike Milstead told reporters at a news conference that he was angry about continued violence and a spate of criminal incidents linked to people on parole. It’s an issue he and other Sioux Falls law enforcement leaders have addressed repeatedly in recent years, as state officials wrestled with debates on new prisons, rehabilitation and repeat offense rates.

The 400-bed jail in Sioux Falls held 112 people who are on parole on Tuesday, Milstead said. Nine have been charged with murder or manslaughter, and dozens have been charged for offenses like rape, aggravated assault, robbery, firearms offenses or abuse of a minor.

Only eight were being held on parole violations and not new charges.

Milstead said he felt like “a broken record” about “people on parole committing violent acts in our community.”

Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken voiced similar frustration in a Facebook post Tuesday, noting that Sioux Falls police arrested 80 people on parole in March.

Rhoden addressed the issue on Thursday during an event in Sioux Falls. He said conversations began in Deadwood last week during an impromptu meeting with law enforcement officers and had been ongoing

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daily ever since.

"We've heard feedback from some of the law enforcement that they were very pleased with the outcome," Rhoden said. "To this point, we're not finished.

We're on the front end of getting a handle a bit on this and providing some real solutions."

Once the state hires the five new officers, the prison system will have 59 parole officers and four parole supervisors, according to the Department of Corrections. On average, each agent will have 56 cases, which is 12 fewer than the 10-year high of 68 per agent in 2020.

The average number of people on parole in South Dakota has grown by around 1,000 in the past 10 years, an increase of 45%. The number of parole officers, counting the five new positions announced this week, has grown by 19, an increase of 48%.

West River work already in motion

Some movement on the issue had happened by the time the officer was wounded in Sioux Falls.

A few hours before Rhoden announced the parole changes, the Rapid City Police Department and Pennington County Sheriff's Office announced the initial results of an interagency parole task force launched two weeks ago to address concerns on the western side of South Dakota.

The task force, which also includes state and federal law enforcement, is focused on "identifying and apprehending parole absconders, parolees with active warrants, and parolees who have been involved in recent criminal activity."

The group's work has led to the arrest of 40 people so far on a variety of "parole violations, new offenses and outstanding warrants," the joint news release said. Eighteen of the people arrested since April 15 were on parole, and local law enforcement not directly connected to the task force arrested another 17 in that time frame, according to the news release.

The man accused of shooting the officer in Sioux Falls and a woman who was with him and who is also on parole, had been on the radar of state law enforcement since April 20, the day police say they were involved in a stabbing at a Rapid City apartment.

Questions on sanctions, parole policy remain

The state already has had a team in place to address parole concerns since January of 2023. The Department of Corrections began to form the Absconder Apprehension Unit, which includes representatives from Sioux Falls and Rapid City, in mid-2022 in response to a record number of people on parole ducking supervision.

When the group began its work, 470 were classified as absconders. That term applies when someone loses and avoids contact with a parole officer. The DOC lists absconders on its website under its "most wanted" section.

Of the 3,800 people on parole as of this week, 115 are classified as absconders. Last fall, the Department of Corrections announced that the number of absconders had fallen below 100.

The Department of Corrections' sanctioning policies have evolved over time, with some of the more significant changes coming in 2013. Lawmakers that year passed a reform package that leans on community supervision and substance use treatment, but critics like former Speaker of the state House of Representatives Steve Haugaard have argued the state never funded the programs to make it work.

Milstead said many in law enforcement point to the reform package as the starting point for the parole system struggles. It put more pressure on counties to deal with criminal justice issues, he said, and the state hasn't stepped up with enough support to match the need.

This year, he noted, after voting to fund a new men's prison during a special session in September, lawmakers defeated a bill that would have put \$2.7 million toward a leadership program that teaches inmates skills for success outside prison.

"Government just has a terrible record of not following up on providing what they thought was going to happen," Milstead said.

Changes in accountability 'almost an overnight thing'

The sheriff said he appreciates Rhoden's actions this week, particularly his decision to add five more parole officers than the state had in its budget for the current fiscal year.

On Thursday, he said, more than 40 people had been booked into his jail on parole holds — meaning they aren't charged with new crimes — in the past 48 hours. Typically, fewer than 10 people are jailed in Sioux Falls on parole holds at any given time.

"It's been almost an overnight thing," Milstead said.

But he also said that the changes are "a start" to a conversation that lawmakers need to continue — and be ready to back up their promises with resources.

"The start of a solution coming in the same week a parolee attempted to murder a police officer?" Milstead said. "I guess I'm glad it's happening. I wish it would have happened earlier."

South Dakota Searchlight's Joshua Haiar contributed to this report

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Nine Native American tribes sue US Forest Service over approval of drilling at sacred site

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

Nine Native American tribes have filed a lawsuit against the US Forest Service over its approval of a graphite drilling project near Pe' Sla, a site in the Black Hills that holds cultural and spiritual significance for Native Americans.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Santee Sioux Tribe, Sisseton-Whapeton Oyate, Spirit Lake Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Yankton Sioux Tribe — also known as the Oceti Sakowin, or Seven Council Fires of the Great Sioux Nation — are all plaintiffs in the lawsuit.

The lawsuit challenges the decision to allow Rapid City-based Pete Lien and Sons to allow exploratory drilling for a potential graphite mine. Graphite is used in electric vehicle batteries, lubricants, pencils and other products.

The drilling is planned near Pe' Sla, also known as Reynolds Prairie, which is owned and used by the tribes for prayer, ceremony and cultural activities.

The lawsuit says the US Forest Service improperly used a process known as a "categorical exclusion" to bypass environmental and cultural reviews. The tribes never ceded the land in the Black Hills to the United States, Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out said in a press release.

"The Black Hills remain the spiritual center of the Great Sioux Nation, and they are not for sale, lease, or exploitation by energy companies," Star Comes Out said. "This lawsuit represents a united tribal response to protect a sacred site from those who continue to desecrate our ancestral lands."

The tribes argue the drilling activities "will harm the land and natural and cultural resources in the Black Hills," and will especially harm Pe' Sla by "disrupting and interfering with sacred ceremonies and practice there," according to the press release.

The lawsuit alleges a categorical exclusion was improper because the project includes drilling, road work and other activity near Pe' Sla, which goes beyond what a categorical exclusion allows. The plaintiffs also argue that Pe' Sla's religious and cultural importance should have triggered a fuller review, rather than the abbreviated process.

The Forest Service told South Dakota Searchlight it "does not comment on the specifics of the case or on issues that are part of ongoing legal proceedings."

Pete Lien & Sons did not immediately respond to requests for comment, and neither entity has filed a response to the tribes' complaint, which was filed on Thursday in U.S. District Court for the District of South Dakota.

The tribes' legal action is the second federal lawsuit to challenge the graphite project. The first was filed earlier this month by the Rapid City-based advocacy organizations NDN Collective and the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance.

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Taylor Gunhammer, an Oglala Lakota advocate who works with both groups, said in a press release last year on the groups' opposition to the project that "drilling at Pe' Sla would be like drilling under the Vatican or at a sacred site in Jerusalem."

In response to that press release, a representative of Pete Lien and Sons told Searchlight the company was reviewing the plan's potential impact on sites of cultural and historical significance in the proposed project area.

A hearing in the NDN Collective case against the Forest Service is scheduled for Monday afternoon at the federal courthouse in Rapid City. No dates have been set in the separate lawsuit filed Thursday by the tribes.

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

New requirement for combined state, local elections brings dizzying array of ballot variations

Most school boards, cities holding elections in June rather than November

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

A new South Dakota law intended to make voting easier is doing the opposite for some of the people running elections.

The new law requires cities and schools to hold their elections with the statewide primary in June or the general election in November, rather than on separate dates. Lawmakers hope the change will increase turnout, but it has some county auditors producing a staggering number of ballot variations in the interest of voter convenience.

Minnehaha County Auditor Leah Anderson told South Dakota Searchlight her office is printing 324 different types of ballots, known as ballot styles, ahead of the June election. Other county auditors reported a range from a dozen to more than 100.

South Dakota's most populous county, which includes Sioux Falls, includes nine legislative districts, 10 cities and 13 school districts — many with overlapping boundaries and some with wards of their own. The county must not only prepare ballots specific to each sub-jurisdiction that has an election, but also political ballots for the closed primary held by Republicans, non-political ballots for non-Republicans, and federal-only ballots due to two law changes that took effect this year.

One law change requires newly registered voters who don't produce proof of citizenship to be registered as federal-only voters, and to receive ballots with federal races only, such as congressional races. The other law change requires some voters who are registered at P.O. boxes or mail forwarding addresses, without descriptions of where they live in South Dakota, receive federal-only ballots.

Increase in voter turnout is worth administrative headache

South Dakotans need to "do their research" before voting this year because of the combined elections, Anderson said.

"It's important for people to read their sample ballots or do their studying before they come in. For the city of Sioux Falls, there's five ballot questions. For the city of Crooks, there's one," Anderson said. "There's just so much on the ballot."

Stanley County, which has 18 ballot styles, has been combining elections with the local school district for years. This will be the first year adding city elections into the mix.

"We're a small county. It makes sense financially, but it also makes sense for our election workers," Burtch said. "Instead of multiple elections throughout the year, it's easier for them to volunteer for one or two."

While all counties, school districts and cities are required to combine elections on the same date, they

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aren't required to combine on the same ballot — though many, like Minnehaha and Stanley counties are. McCook County Auditor Geralyn Sherman called that approach a "nightmare" to "come up with umpteen different ballot styles."

Sherman's county will have separate ballots for the McCook Central School District and Montrose city elections, both using the same polling locations as the county.

"When we started to try and figure out what those combined ballots would look like, it was like 'Oh, forget it,'" Sherman said.

Fort Pierre Republican Rep. Will Mortenson introduced House Bill 1130 last year, which set the change into law. He believes the combination will lead to better voter turnout and engagement.

"Whenever there's a conflict of administrative ease and voter convenience, I try to put the voter first," Mortenson said.

Voter turnout for the Sioux Falls School Board's 2025 election was 2.33%, the lowest in over a decade. In 2024, the district's voter turnout was 7.7%, despite being combined with a city election.

Turnout in Stanley County nearly triples when school elections are combined with state races, Burtch said.

Local governments weigh voter turnout against calendar

According to a survey conducted by the Associated School Boards of South Dakota, 95% of school boards with elections are holding them in June instead of November. Two school boards are holding their elections in November, though the organization did not say which two.

Brookings School Board President Debra DeBates said the board chose June because its fiscal year begins in July and the school year begins in August.

"It seems pretty inconvenient to bring a new board member on in December or January when we're halfway through the year," DeBates said.

As for cities, a South Dakota Municipal League survey found 61% of responding cities with elections this year are holding their elections in June instead of November.

Executive Director Sara Rankin said city officials commonly chose June over November because they'd previously held elections in that month or because it fit better into their budget setting process.

The city of Brookings will hold its city council elections in November. Councilwoman Lisa Hager, who is planning to run for reelection this year, said there were benefits and pitfalls to choosing one date or the other.

Local candidates can be more prominent on what is likely to be a shorter ballot in June, but it would lead to smaller voter turnout, she said. November would mean longer ballots and less attention on local races in exchange for more voters at the polls — and South Dakota State University students being back in town.

"From our standpoint, it's about ensuring all members of our community can vote if they want to," Hager said. "Students could vote absentee in June, but we didn't think we should erect barriers for voting for anyone in the community."

Political scientists raise partisanship concerns

Some political experts worry that most elections being held in June will favor one political ideology over another.

There are no statewide Democratic primaries in June, and there is only one Democratic primary at the legislative level this year. Republicans, on the other hand, have statewide primaries for governor, U.S. representative and U.S. senator, as well as a primary in most legislative districts.

University of South Dakota Professor Julia Hellwege said people most likely to vote in primaries are "strong partisans."

"You're going to put local elections on the ballot and select an electorate, knowing that they'll be the most extreme partisans," Hellwege said. "The likelihood of electing moderate people to local school boards and city councils will decrease drastically."

Hellwege is also a member of the Vermillion City Council and is running unopposed. Vermillion has held

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combined city and June primary elections for years.

Although the combined elections were meant to get more people to the ballot box, if there aren't bigger races drawing people's attention, it'll leave a sizable group of voters and ideologies out, said Michael Card, professor emeritus of political science at the University of South Dakota.

"Vermillion has a charter amendment that I'm worried isn't going to pass because, if Clay County has more heavily Democratic representation, people might just stay home and not vote for that charter amendment," Card said, adding that a mayoral race might still entice Democrats and non-partisans to vote.

Mortenson said that no matter the party affiliation, a higher number of voters "leads to better results."

"Common sense tells us we're more susceptible to a small, fringe group electing a candidate when turnout is 4% rather than when it's 40% or 50%," Mortenson said.

Mortenson said that over time, he believes more local races will gravitate toward dates with higher voter turnout.

"Ask me in 10 years, and I believe most school and city elections will be in November," Mortenson said. "At least, that is my hope."

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

Appeals court blocks remote access to abortion medication nationwide

BY: KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS

One of the main methods of obtaining abortion medication for those living in states with bans is now blocked nationwide, after a federal appeals court decision issued Friday afternoon.

The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals blocked a U.S. Food and Drug Administration rule from 2023 that allowed mifepristone, one of two drugs used to terminate a pregnancy before 10 weeks and to treat miscarriages, to be dispensed without an in-person visit with a health provider.

In the years since, states with abortion access have increased their telemedicine offerings to prescribe the medication remotely and send it through the mail. Many of those states also enacted shield laws to prevent officials from states with abortion bans from prosecuting or investigating their providers — meaning many patients have been able to receive the medication across state lines.

The block will remain in effect as the lower court case proceeds, but the FDA could file an emergency appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court in the coming weeks.

More than 27% of all abortions were provided through telehealth appointments in the first six months of 2025, according to the Society of Family Planning, a research and advocacy group that publishes a report called #WeCount. Nearly 15,000 abortions per month were provided under shield laws during that same time frame, according to the report.

Louisiana Republican Attorney General Liz Murrill sued the FDA in October, seeking to strike down the 2023 provision, and the lower court declined to do so in early April. U.S. District Judge David C. Joseph said then that the stay was premature while the FDA completed a safety review of mifepristone, but allowed state officials the opportunity to re-file the motion after that review was complete. The state appealed that decision to the 5th Circuit.

"Every abortion facilitated by FDA's action cancels Louisiana's ban on medical abortions and undermines its policy that 'every unborn child is human being from the moment of conception and is, therefore, a legal person,'" Friday's decision said.

There were no dissenting opinions among Judge Leslie Southwick, an appointee of former Republican President George H.W. Bush, and Judges Stuart Kyle Duncan and Kurt D. Engelhardt, both appointees of

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Republican President Donald Trump.

Without access to telemedicine and the opportunity to receive the medication through the mail, people in 13 states with near-total abortion bans may have to travel to another state to get an abortion.

There is a misoprostol-only abortion pill protocol that some providers can use, but it is slightly less effective and requires a higher dosage, which can increase side effects.

"Reinstating in-person dispensing requirements would force people to travel farther, take more time off work, and absorb costs that are simply too high. For people living in states already hostile to abortion access, many of which are home to Black women and families, this is not health care," said Regina Davis-Moss, CEO of advocacy group In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda, in a statement.

Murrill said in a statement on Friday that former Democratic President Joe Biden's administration facilitated "illegal mail-order abortion pills."

"Today, that nightmare is over, thanks to the hard work of my office and our friends at Alliance Defending Freedom. I look forward to continuing to defend women and babies as this case continues," Murrill said, crediting the advocacy legal organization that helped in the case.

The court also found Friday that the 2023 rule injures Louisiana by causing it to spend Medicaid funds for emergency care for women harmed by using the drug. The state identified \$92,000 paid by Medicaid for two women who needed emergency care in 2025 from complications "caused by out-of-state mifepristone."

Numerous studies have shown mifepristone is safe to use, with very low complication rates. A combined review of 10 years' worth of studies between 2005 and 2015 found that severe outcomes requiring blood transfusion and hospitalization occurred in less than 1% of cases.

"We are alarmed by this court's decision to ignore the FDA's rigorous science and decades of safe use of mifepristone in a case pursued by extremist abortion opponents. We are reviewing the court's order in detail," said Evan Masingill, CEO of GenBioPro, one of the main manufacturers of mifepristone, in a statement. "We remain committed to taking any actions necessary to make mifepristone available and accessible to as many people as possible in the country, regardless of anti-abortion special interests trying to undermine patients' access."

Stateline reporter Kelcie Moseley-Morris can be reached at kmoseley@stateline.org.

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

Kelcie Moseley-Morris covers reproductive rights for Stateline. Based in Idaho, she has covered the effects of abortion bans nationwide, as well as reproductive health issues.

Democrats renew calls for US Supreme Court overhaul after voting rights decision

BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN

After the U.S. Supreme Court severely weakened the federal Voting Rights Act in an April 29 decision, a furious U.S. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries condemned what he called an "illegitimate" conservative majority on the court.

"This isn't even the Roberts Court," Jeffries said, referring to Chief Justice John Roberts. "It's the Trump Court."

Democrats are renewing their calls to overhaul the Supreme Court in the wake of the court's decision, which empowers states to gerrymander congressional maps in ways that will break apart districts where a majority of residents are Black, Hispanic or belong to other minority groups.

The momentous opinion overturned the reasoning behind decades of court cases that relied on the 1965 Voting Rights Act, a law born of efforts to stamp out Jim Crow voting laws in the South, to protect these majority-minority districts.

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For years, critics of the court, where conservatives enjoy a 6-3 majority, have pushed for changes. Those efforts often center on expanding the size of the court to dilute the influence of the majority or imposing term limits on the justices, though other ideas, like narrowing the kinds of cases the court can consider, have also been discussed.

But the April 29 decision seems to be the last straw for some Democrats and progressives, though they are unlikely to be able to force any of the changes on their wishlist — at least for a long time.

After rulings in recent years that ended the federal right to an abortion and handed President Donald Trump sweeping immunity from criminal prosecution while in office, they are fed up with a court they view as unmoored from the law and ruling based on politics.

"We cannot protect voting rights, civil rights or the environment as long as we have a Supreme Court majority that is captured by MAGA authoritarians," Doug Lindner, senior director of judiciary and democracy at the League of Conservation Voters, an environmental advocacy group, told reporters on Thursday. "We need to take back our Supreme Court."

Any effort to impose significant changes at the court will encounter stiff Republican opposition. GOP lawmakers have praised the court's latest decision and some see long-serving Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito as conservative icons. Unless Democrats win 60 seats in the Senate or eliminate the filibuster, Congress is highly unlikely to pass a major overhaul.

Republicans have denounced past proposals to change the court. After President Joe Biden proposed 18-year terms for justices and other changes in July 2024, U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson said the plan "would tilt the balance of power and erode not only the rule of law, but the American people's faith in our system of justice."

No action under Biden

Supreme Court reform has long percolated as an issue among Democrats and progressives, but picked up steam during the 2020 presidential primary campaign.

The court's ideological makeup had already moved toward conservatives after Justice Anthony Kennedy, often a swing vote on key decisions, retired in 2018 and was replaced by Justice Brett Kavanaugh, a conservative. Republicans then cemented a firm 6-3 majority on the court in the fall of 2020 after Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a liberal, died and was replaced by conservative Justice Amy Coney Barrett.

Campaigning for president, then-candidate Biden voiced support for a presidential commission that would study court reform. After winning election, Biden named a blue ribbon panel of law professors, former judges and other lawyers, which issued a final report in December 2021.

The commission's report stopped short of endorsing structural changes. It took no position on expanding the size of the court from nine members, citing "profound disagreement" among commission members over the idea. The commission also adopted no stance on term limits for justices.

The report was essentially put on a shelf — Biden made no serious effort to advance a court overhaul, though he later proposed some reforms after ending his campaign for reelection.

Public opinion dropping

Americans' view of the Supreme Court has been falling. An August 2025 Pew Research Center survey found 48% of Americans hold a favorable view of the court, a 22-percentage point drop from August 2020.

A survey released in September 2025 by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania found 69% support for term limits but only 31% support for expanding the size of the court.

Eric J. Segall, a law professor at Georgia State University and the executive director of the Emmet J. Bondurant Center for Constitutional Law, Practice and Democracy, said past courts would have been responsive to the prospect of legislation, but the current court isn't swayed by public opinion.

In some cases the court tries to preserve its legitimacy by giving the other side a win, Segall said, but in general the court's decisions since 2018, when Kennedy retired, can be explained by viewing the court as a subset of the Republican Party.

"This court is defined by the Republican Party," he said.

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Segall has called for dividing the court evenly between conservative and liberal appointees. An evenly-split court would encourage greater compromise among the justices, he contends. He also supports expanding the court and term limits if possible. But he bluntly predicted court reform wouldn't happen in his lifetime.

"If Democrats have the power to do it, they won't do it," Segall said.

Action unlikely, at least in short term

Jeffries, who will likely become U.S. House speaker if Democrats retake the chamber in the November midterm elections, said this week that "everything was on the table" in terms of the Supreme Court.

"In the new Congress, we're going to have to do something about this Supreme Court," Jeffries told the MeidasTouch Network.

Rep. John Rose, a Tennessee Republican, said on social media that Jeffries' comments show that Democrats are preparing to "nuke the filibuster and pack the Supreme Court the second they're back in power."

Trump and some Republicans in Congress, convinced Democrats will end the filibuster to pass priorities like Supreme Court reform, want Republicans to end the filibuster first and enact a host of conservative priorities before the party potentially loses control of the Senate following the November elections.

But even if Democrats end the filibuster, the party faces a steep climb to changing the court unless it retakes control of Congress and the White House. That means any major overhaul almost certainly wouldn't become law until at least 2029.

Trump's response

Trump has had a turbulent relationship with the court but would be virtually certain to veto legislation remaking it while he remains in office.

While the justices have protected Trump and future presidents from criminal prosecution for actions taken as part of their presidential duties, they struck down his sweeping worldwide tariffs as illegal, dealing a major blow to one of his signature policies. They also refused to hear legal challenges that sought to overturn Trump's 2020 election loss.

Still, Trump scoffed on Thursday at Democratic hopes to remake the court in the future. He accused the party of wanting 21 justices on the court (Democratic-sponsored plans in recent years have called for 13 or 15 justices). He also called Jeffries' comments a "dangerous statement."

"Hakeem Jeffries said the Supreme Court is illegitimate," Trump said Thursday. "That's a rough statement."

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

Trump's new conditions on DEI, immigration could cut off states' wildfire funding

BY: ALEX BROWN

A new effort to force states to affirm the Trump administration's views on DEI, transgender athletes and immigration when signing contracts with the U.S. Forest Service is threatening millions of dollars in wildfire grant funding and fire reduction projects on federal lands.

Some liberal states can't sign the documents because the policies clash with state law, forestry experts say.

Already, at least one state is reporting that the new rules have stalled work to reduce wildfire risk and assist with projects on national forest lands. Other states say the requirements are so vague that they don't know how to follow them. And some timber industry leaders believe the standoff could cut into their revenues.

"We're kind of at an impasse," said Washington State Forester George Geissler. "It's already starting to

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slow down or shut down work.”

The update to the requirements governing federal partnerships comes even as many Western states brace for a brutal wildfire season, following a winter that brought record high temperatures and a paltry snowpack.

On Dec. 31, Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins with little fanfare issued new general terms and conditions governing partnerships for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Spelled out in dozens of pages of fine print are new restrictions that require partner organizations to pledge compliance with President Donald Trump’s executive orders.

The new conditions apply to all USDA agencies, but the department hasn’t yet said whether it will enforce them for food assistance programs.

The agency, in a news release announcing the changes, framed the new terms as an effort to streamline regulations, protect national security and “eliminate radical left ideology.”

The Department of Agriculture and the Forest Service did not grant Stateline interview requests.

At the Forest Service, which is housed within USDA, the new policy applies to a wide range of grants and contracts aimed at reducing wildfire risk, restoring forest health and boosting timber production.

Forestry veterans say the new conditions have created an impasse with some Democratic-led states.

“It is significantly disruptive,” said Robert Bonnie, who served as undersecretary of agriculture for natural resources and environment during the Obama administration. “It’s clearly targeted at Democratic states and Democratic partners.”

A coalition of 20 states and the District of Columbia filed a lawsuit in March, claiming that the restrictions are unlawful. The lawsuit has largely focused on federal food assistance programs provided by the agency, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Women, Infants, and Children Nutrition Program.

In an April court filing, Rollins said the new conditions had not yet been applied to food assistance programs, and that the agency had not made a “final decision” to cut off nutrition funding for states that don’t comply.

Forest Service programs

But the policy is already having an impact on some programs managed by the Forest Service.

Washington state has been unable to issue the latest round of Community Wildfire Defense Grants, a federal program that helps neighborhoods and towns reduce fuels and fortify homes in wildfire-prone areas.

Geissler, the state forester, said roughly 10 communities in Washington were set to receive large grants under the program, but the federal funding has been held up by the state’s refusal to sign the new terms and conditions.

“This is another example of the federal administration cutting off its nose to spite its face,” said David Perk, coordinator of the Washington State Lands Working Group, a coalition that weighs in on state forestry policies. “To add the additional layer of denying wildfire funding, that’s insult to injury.”

The stalemate also threatens work that the U.S. Forest Service increasingly relies on states and other partners to do in national forests. The agency has leaned heavily on tools, such as the Good Neighbor Authority, that enable state agencies to carry out wildfire mitigation, restoration and timber projects on federal lands. Many observers believe the recently announced Forest Service reorganization signals that states will play an even bigger role in the years ahead.

But now those partnerships are in jeopardy. According to Geissler, Washington state can’t sign new Good Neighbor Authority agreements due to the new conditions.

“We’re trying to sign off on agreements for another chunk of work, and we can’t get it signed,” he said. “If you are looking for work to be done by the state on federal lands, we’re not doing it. If we’re not able to sign, both sides lose.”

Washington state has spent millions of dollars on projects to reduce wildfire risk and improve forest health on national forest lands. With the new ideology requirements, the feds are essentially turning away free help, said Bonnie, the former natural resources official. That’s especially damaging, he noted, because

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Trump's cuts to the Forest Service's workforce and budget have further diminished what the agency can accomplish on its own.

The Trump administration is "damaging their own constituents," he said. "There are a lot of conservative voters in rural Washington who want to see partnerships that reduce the probability of extreme wildfire. This will stop that. It makes absolutely no sense."

Washington state is still working on Forest Service projects signed under previous agreements. But without new agreements, work on the ground could stall in six to eight months, Geissler said.

State responses

Nearly 20 state forestry officials contacted by Stateline did not respond or declined interview requests, citing the ongoing litigation and the need to maintain a working relationship with the Forest Service.

But one timber industry leader said Oregon was facing similar disruptions that prevented the state from signing new agreements with the Forest Service.

"This will lead to reduced revenues for (state forestry agencies)," Nick Smith, public affairs director with the American Forest Resource Council, a timber industry group, said in an email to Stateline. "As partners, our industry will be impacted if it disrupts or cancels current or future timber sales under these contracts."

While most state forestry officials have been unwilling to publicly comment about the situation, several have filed legal declarations in support of the multistate lawsuit challenging the new terms and conditions.

Scott Bowen, director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, wrote in a declaration that his agency has more than \$87 million from active grants with the Forest Service. Those grants cover wildfire response, forest health, invasive species, urban tree canopy and revegetation, among other issues.

"If these funds were withheld, DNR would have to shut down critical capabilities to assist rural communities with fire preparedness and response," Bowen wrote.

Bowen added that the Forest Service has already said one program, a grant to protect environmentally important forests from being converted to a nonforest use, will be subject to the new terms and conditions.

In the lawsuit, many state officials said that the new compliance requirements are so vague that they're nearly impossible to follow. Several of the legal declarations note that the new conditions do not explain what it means to "promote gender ideology," a practice the Department of Agriculture now seeks to ban.

Many states also objected to the agency's requirement that no one in the country illegally obtain "taxpayer-funded benefits." Josh Kurtz, secretary of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, noted in a declaration that it would be impossible to confirm that grants to reduce wildfire risk, expand urban tree canopy and improve forest health do not benefit Marylanders who lack legal immigration status.

Kevin Hood, executive director of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics, a nonprofit that advocates for public employees, said the new terms are aimed at directing a greater share of federal funding to Trump's political allies.

"You're going to see a bifurcation where you'll have red states getting grants and blue states won't," he said.

'More questions than answers'

In March, the National Association of State Foresters sent a letter to Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz expressing concerns about the new terms and conditions. Jason Hartman, the group's president and the state forester of Kansas, described a chaotic situation.

"To date, the (Forest Service) has not provided adequate guidance or interpretation of the new (terms and conditions)," he wrote. "National-level meetings between State Foresters and the Forest Service have resulted in more questions than answers. State Foresters around the country have been given differing instructions and interpretations in different geographic locations."

Hartman noted at least one instance in which a timber sale totaling 80 million board feet was held up by the new conditions. (That's enough to build roughly 5,000 homes.) He asked the Forest Service to delay the effective date of the new conditions until the agency could provide more clarity.

He also outlined another set of issues causing problems for states. One major complication, he said, is

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the requirement that states receive federal approval before issuing any subawards or contracts. That has created a massive bureaucratic hassle, he wrote, in "direct conflict" with the Forest Service's reliance on state partnerships to cut red tape.

The new terms also require environmental reviews for projects to be completed before partnership agreements can be signed. But Hartman noted that states often assist in those very environmental reviews, which they won't be able to do if they can't sign the agreements first.

Wyoming State Forester Kelly Norris also noted that issue in an email to Stateline, saying she expected the Forest Service to update the environmental review section soon.

Stateline reporter Alex Brown can be reached at abrown@stateline.org.

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

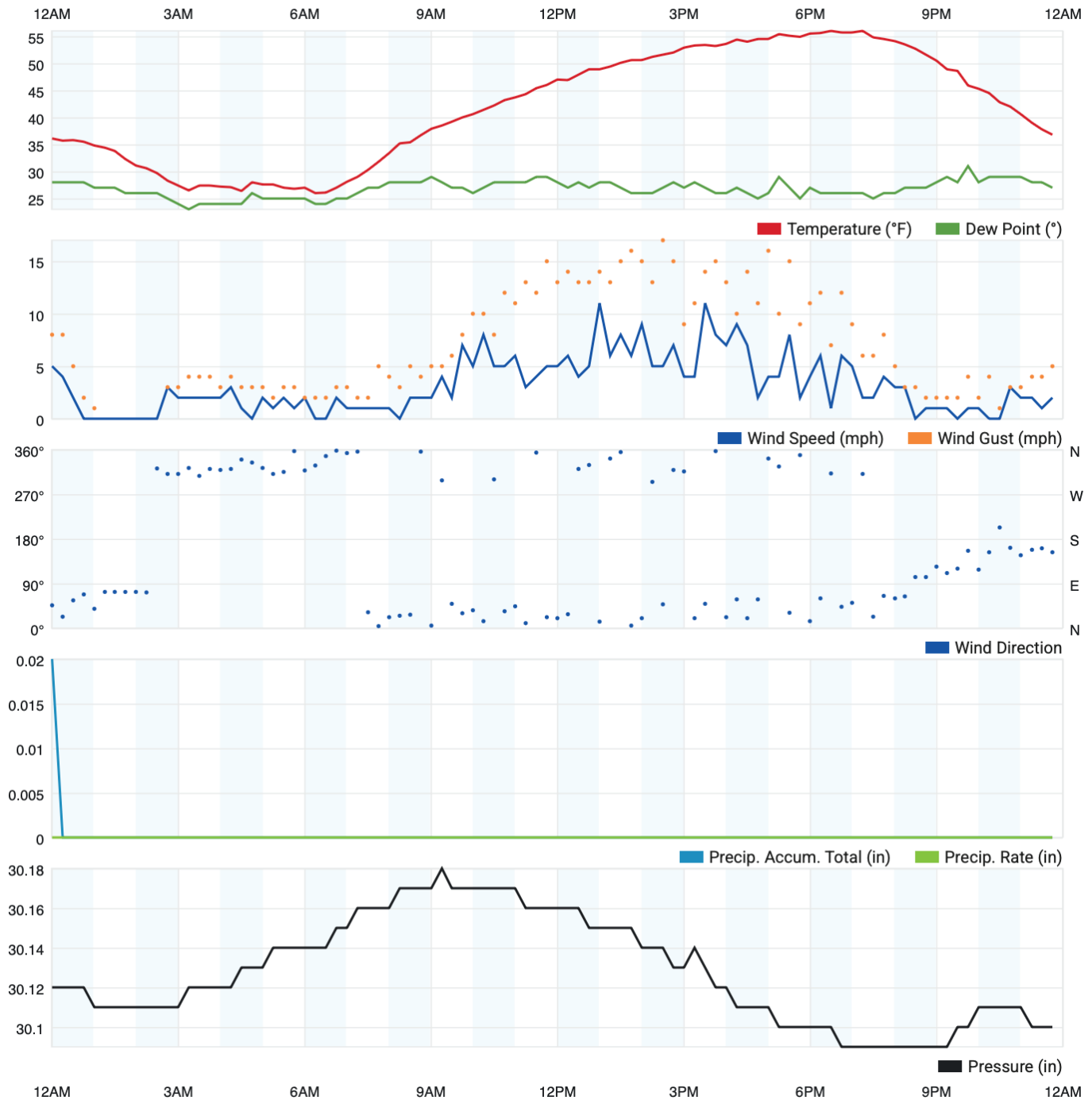
Based in Seattle, Alex Brown covers environmental issues for Stateline. Prior to joining Stateline, Brown wrote for The Chronicle in Lewis County, Washington state.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

May 1, 2026



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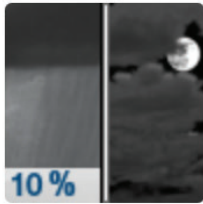
Today



High: 70 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 39 °F

Slight Chance
Showers then
Mostly Cloudy

Sunday



High: 68 °F

Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 46 °F

Increasing
Clouds

Monday



High: 61 °F

Mostly Cloudy
then Slight
Chance
Showers and
Breezy

Today

May 2nd, 2026



Highs 65 to 75°

Some light showers possible (15-20%) later this afternoon into early evening, mainly across northern SD into western MN.

Sunday



62 to 71°

Monday



57 to 68°

- Cooler temps next week.
- Gusty northwest winds Monday of 30-40 mph.
- 20% chance for showers Monday.

 **NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE**
OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION



Breezy southwest winds today will draw warmer air back into the region as temperatures are expected to climb back above normal. A cold front will swing through by tonight potentially touching off some sprinkles or a couple of showers mainly across northern SD into western MN. Slightly cooler temps will round out the weekend on Sunday with another chance for light precip on Monday as temps cool even further as northwest winds crank up and become rather gusty.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 56 °F at 6:33 PM

Low Temp: 26 °F at 6:24 AM

Wind: 18 mph at 11:37 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 90 in 1955

Record Low: 20 in 1909

Average High: 65

Average Low: 38

Average Precip in May.: .22

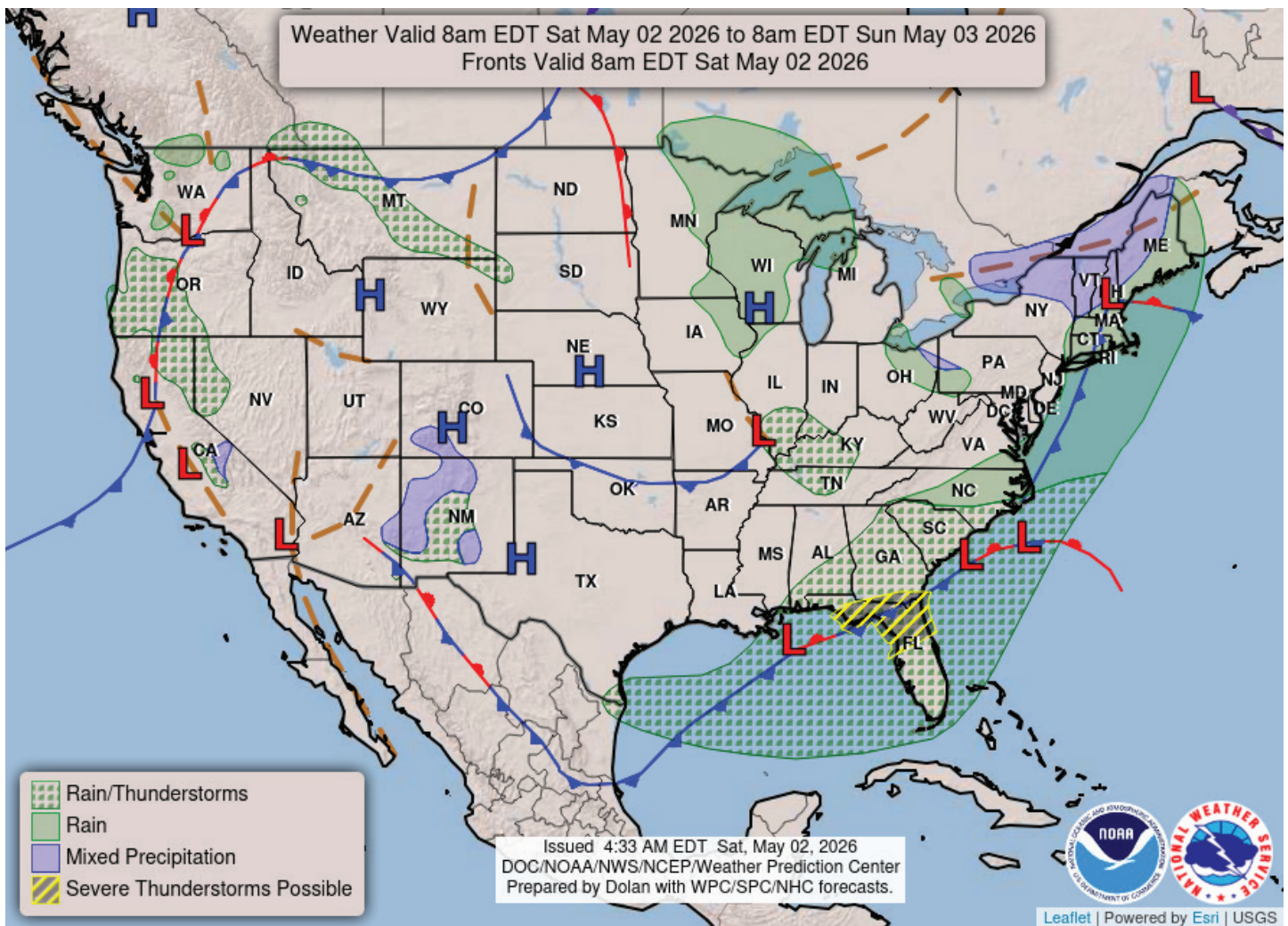
Precip to date in May.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 4.19

Precip Year to Date: 3.12

Sunset Tonight: 8:39 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:17 am



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Today in Weather History

May 2nd, 1984: High winds picked up a trailer home northwest of the Pierre Airport and hurled it through the air, smashing it to the ground 50 yards away. The upper sections of a home were damaged by the airborne trailer. Several branches and shed roofs were also damaged nearby.

May 2nd, 2008: A two-day blizzard dropped two to four feet of snow across the northern Black Hills, Harding, and Butte counties. Six to 14 inches of snow fell along the eastern foothills and western Perkins and Meade counties.

1899 — A storm buried Havre, MT, under 24.8 inches of snow, an all-time record for that location. The water equivalent of 2.48 inches was a record 24 hour total for the month of May. (The Weather Channel)

1920 — A swarm of tornadoes in Rogers, Mayes and Cherokee Counties in Oklahoma killed 64 persons. (David Ludlum)

1929 — Virginia's worst tornado disaster occurred. Six tornadoes, two of which were west of the Blue Mountains, killed 22 people. Twelve children and a teacher were killed at Rye Cove, in Scott County. Four schools were destroyed by the storms. (The Weather Channel)

1983 — Severe thunderstorms spawned twenty tornadoes across Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York State. The tornadoes caused five deaths. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Thunderstorms in the Lower Mississippi Valley produced golf ball size hail in northern Louisiana, and wind gusts to 77 mph at Lake Providence LA. Thunderstorms in Arkansas produced 4.20 inches of rain at Arkadelphia and 4.00 inches at Bismarck. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — A powerful storm produced snow and high winds in the Central Rockies and the Central High Plains Region. Snowfall totals in Colorado ranged up to 12 inches at Strasburg, and winds in southeastern Colorado gusted to 87 mph at Lamar. Snow and high winds created blizzard conditions in eastern Colorado and southeastern Wyoming. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Thunderstorms developing to the north of a warm front produced severe weather in Oklahoma and Texas. There were 93 reports of severe weather. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Beattie, and baseball size hail was reported at Ranger and Breckenridge. Juneau AK reported a record high temperature of 72 degrees while Honolulu equalled their record low for the month of May with a reading of 60 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — Fourteen cities in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina reported record high temperatures for the date as readings soared into the 90s. Tampa FL reported a record high of 97 degrees, and Fort Stewart GA was the hot spot in the nation with a reading of 100 degrees.

1990 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather from northeastern Texas to western Arkansas during the evening and early nighttime hours. Thunderstorms spawned a tornado which injured thirteen persons at Paris TX, and produced baseball size hail at Rio Vista TX. Thunderstorm rains of four to seven inches caused flash flooding in west central Arkansas, southern and eastern Oklahoma, and northern Texas. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Daily Devotion

Developing a Godly Lifestyle

**Following Christ is a journey of transformation,
where He reshapes our thinking to match His.**

Romans 12:2: 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Today's verse outlines the commitment and steps necessary in developing a godly lifestyle. Paul was teaching believers not to be conformed to the patterns of the world.

We're always being influenced by people, some of whom are not following God's ways. Our society tells us to put self first, take what we want, and promote our own interests above others'. In contrast, Scripture says that our heavenly Father will provide what we truly need (Philippians 4:19), we are to deny ourselves and follow Jesus (Luke 9:23), and the humble—not the proud—shall receive honor (James 4:10).

At the same time, Paul urged us to pursue godly transformation of our mind, to set our thoughts on things above (Colossians 3:2), and to focus on what is true, right, pure, and lovely (Philippians 4:8). Adopting a Christian worldview requires making adjustments in how we look at life, until our thoughts line up with Scripture. We must also protect our mind with biblical truth and surround ourselves with mature believers who can warn us when we start to stray.

Ask yourself, Am I focusing on what is important to the Lord? Let the Holy Spirit empower you to make the changes necessary to be more like Christ.

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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MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

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\$1,000,000/year

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Secs

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MEGA MILLIONS

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NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$195,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

PREVIOUS RESULTS

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.29.26

6 19 24 30 48 4

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$23,850,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 29 Mins 47
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.29.26

11 14 20 24 30

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$74,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 44 Mins 47
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.29.26

7 52 56 67 69 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 13 Mins 47
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

04.29.26

3 19 35 51 67 15

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$20,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 17 Hrs 13 Mins 46
Secs

PREVIOUS RESULTS

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Confusion emerges over new South Dakota voter ID requirements

By ALEXANDER RIFAAT/South Dakota News Watch South Dakota News Watch

County auditors in South Dakota are, in certain cases, deciding how to implement new voter ID rules on their own due to uncertainty over guidelines issued by the state's secretary of state, as early and absentee voting for the primary election is well underway.

Senate Bill 175, passed in the 2026 legislative session, requires new voters to provide proof of citizenship as part of the registration process. The bill was enacted with an emergency clause, which allows the regulations to take effect for the upcoming primary ballot on June 2.

The secretary of state's website outlines various documents first-time registrants can provide as a photocopy to show proof of citizenship, such as a passport or birth certificate. But confusion has emerged as to whether eligible South Dakota driver's licenses, which identify a person's citizenship status, can also be provided as a photocopy or have to be shown in person.

Since July of last year, as a result of Senate Bill 75 from the 2025 legislative session, driver's licenses in South Dakota are now issued with an indication of a person's U.S. citizenship status. The secretary of state's website lists driver's licenses as an acceptable form of proof but does not explicitly state whether they need to be physically shown at an auditor's office or if a photocopy is sufficient.

Amy Scott-Stoltz, president of the League of Women Voters of South Dakota, a nonpartisan advocacy group, said that county auditors in charge of voter registration are having difficulty ensuring a uniform system across the state.

"They're trying to follow the secretary of state's guidelines, but the vagueness has led to certain issues," Scott-Stoltz told News Watch. "Do they need to present this stuff in person? Can they accept it by mail? Different auditors interpret that differently."

Hughes County Finance Officer Thomas Oliva, who acts as that county's auditor, said his office is requiring new voters to show the physical driver's license.

"The main reasoning behind that is because it's the back of the license. There's no other identifying information on the back we can tie back to that person, so we felt it's in the best interest to see the physical card," Oliva told News Watch.

Haakon County Auditor Stacy Pinney said she has not run into any issues yet with voter registration but also will require new applicants to physically show the driver's license.

"I'm going to make it a policy in my office that I want to see the actual card. If I have to verify it, I want to see the real deal," Pinney told News Watch.

Meanwhile, Harding County Auditor Kathy Glines said her office will accept a photocopy of the driver's license.

"They would have to send a front and back," Glines told News Watch.

"I hope they would call before sending it by mail," she added, referring to the limited hours the office is open.

Need for clarity

In addition to questions over how to process new voter applications using driver's licenses, Oliva said the secretary of state's office has also created confusion in its communication with prospective voters who are missing the required citizenship documentation.

Oliva said voters who are deemed not to have provided proof of citizenship are sent a letter that indicates they are a "Federal Only" voter, which means, since the new voting law applies to South Dakota elections, they can only vote in statewide federal elections for U.S. president, U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives races.

"I do not necessarily agree with this approach and believe the individual should instead be notified and marked as incomplete or invalid until the required documentation is received," Oliva said. "While the

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letter does inform the voter of their status, it does not provide a clear explanation as to why they were designated as such."

Oliva highlighted the letter generated by the voter registration system only indicates a person is ineligible due to situations such as the use of a commercial mail receiving agency, mail forwarding service or post office box without sufficient residential description.

"While that explanation is accurate in those scenarios, it does not address the separate issue of missing citizenship documentation, which can also result in Federal Only status. This omission may lead to confusion for voters," Oliva said.

In order to provide more clarity, Oliva created a letter addressed for those deemed to be a Federal Only voter based on a lack of proof of citizenship outlining their options.

In a copy of the letter provided to News Watch, Oliva's office specifies the new voter was classified as Federal Only due to the lack of citizenship documentation and provides examples of eligible forms of documents they can submit to change their status.

As early and absentee voting for the primary election gets underway, Scott-Stoltz hopes officials in Pierre can provide more certainty on the registration process for new voters.

"We're hoping for more clarification from the secretary's office before the primary and are looking forward to working with the election board," she said.

The secretary of state's office didn't respond to a request for comment by News Watch.

Ballots delivered; no extra documentation needed to vote

After early and absentee balloting in some counties were delayed in part due to the short time frame the secretary of state's office had in validating eligible candidates, primary voting does appear to be back on track across the state.

News Watch reached out to all 66 county auditors, with 30 so far confirming they have received their absentee primary ballots.

Oliva said the challenges so far have been manageable and that a key focus for his team will be to also emphasize to voters who are already registered that they do not need to present new documents.

"We have received questions and concerns from individuals who believe they must bring additional documentation to the polls in order to vote. This is not the case, and it is important to correct these misconceptions and provide clear, factual information," Oliva said.

Oliva said it's unfortunate not every county is executing the new voting requirements the same but concedes "it's entirely up to that auditor's office."

As for Glines, she said her county is doing the best it can to abide by the secretary of state's guidelines.

"We are all feeling our way through it," Glines said.

Jackley releases explanation on Amendment J

Concerns over the new registration rules come as state Attorney General Marty Jackley issued a draft explanation on an upcoming ballot measure tied to the U.S. citizenship requirement for voting in elections.

Amendment J, which will be on the ballot this November, would amend the South Dakota Constitution to add people who are not U.S. citizens to the list of individuals disqualified from voting.

Proponents of the measure argue it will provide greater clarity as to who can vote since, while non-U.S. citizens are already barred from voting in federal elections and registering to vote in South Dakota, there is no language in the state constitution that explicitly prohibits them from voting in state or local races.

Under state law, the attorney general is required to issue a draft explanation of the measure, which essentially acts as a preview of how the question will appear on the ballot.

The public has until end of day on May 8 to submit written comment on the attorney general's explanation. A final draft is due to the secretary of state's office on May 19 for approval. The finalized explanation will then accompany the ballot question in the fall.

This story was originally published by South Dakota News Watch and distributed through a partnership with The Associated Press.

US warns shipping firms they could face sanctions over paying Iranian tolls in the Strait of Hormuz

By ADAM SCHRECK Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United States is warning shipping companies that they could face sanctions for making payments to Iran to safely pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

The alert posted Friday by the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control adds another layer of pressure in the standoff between the U.S. and Iran over control of the Strait of Hormuz.

About a fifth of the world's trade in oil and natural gas typically passes through the strait at the mouth of the Persian Gulf in peacetime.

Iran effectively closed the strait to normal traffic by attacking and threatening to attack ships after the U.S. and Israel launched a war on Feb. 28. It later began offering some ships safe passage by detouring them through alternate routes closer to its shoreline, charging fees at times for the service.

That "tollbooth" effort is the focus of the U.S. sanctions warning.

The payment demands could include transfers not only in cash but also "digital assets, offsets, informal swaps, or other in-kind payments," including charitable donations and payments at Iranian embassies, OFAC said.

"OFAC is issuing this alert to warn U.S. and non-U.S. persons about the sanctions risks of making these payments to, or soliciting guarantees from, the Iranian regime for safe passage. These risks exist regardless of payment method," it said.

The U.S. responded to Iran's closure of the strait with a naval blockade of its own on April 13, preventing any Iranian tankers from leaving and depriving Iran of oil revenue it needs to shore up its ailing economy.

The U.S. Central Command said 45 commercial ships have been told to turn around since the blockade began.

Trump rejects Iranian proposal

The warning came as U.S. President Donald Trump swiftly rejected Iran's latest proposal to end the war between the countries.

"They want to make a deal, I'm not satisfied with it, so we'll see what happens," Trump said Friday at the White House. He didn't elaborate on what he saw as its shortcomings but expressed frustration with the Iranian leadership.

"It's a very disjointed leadership," Trump said. "They all want to make a deal, but they're all messed up."

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported Iran handed over its plan to mediators in Pakistan on Thursday night.

The shaky three-week ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran appears to be holding, though both countries have traded accusations of violations. The standoff is increasingly putting pressure on the global economy, driving up prices and leading to shortages of fuel and other products tied to the oil industry.

Negotiations continued by phone after Trump called off his envoys' trip to Pakistan last week, the president said. Trump this week floated a new plan to reopen the critical passageway used by America's Gulf allies to export their oil and gas.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has briefed many of his regional counterparts on the country's initiatives to end the war, according to his social media. He also held talks Friday with European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas, who is in contact with the EU's Gulf partners.

Iran hangs two men convicted of spying for Israel

Iran on Saturday said it hanged two men convicted of spying for Israel.

The Iranian judiciary's news outlet, Mizanonline, identified the men as Yaghoub Karimpour and Nasser Bekrzadeh. It said they were hanged after the country's Supreme Court upheld earlier death sentences.

The news outlet said Karimpour was accused of sending "sensitive information" to an officer in Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, while Bekrzadeh was alleged to have sent details about government and religious leaders as well as information about Natanz. The central Iranian city is home to a nuclear enrichment facility bombed by Israel and the U.S. last year.

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Iran has hanged more than a dozen people over alleged espionage and terrorist activities in recent weeks. China's U.N. envoy urges Iran to lift restrictions

Fu Cong, the Chinese ambassador to the United Nations, said Friday that maintaining the ceasefire is "the most urgent issue," as well as bringing together the sides to resume good faith negotiations "to make sure that the ground is laid for reopening of Hormuz."

Foreign Minister Wang Yi "has been on the phone almost constantly" with representatives from all sides, Fu said, adding that China supports Pakistan's efforts to mediate between the parties.

Fu stressed the root cause of the tremendous suffering in Iran and neighboring countries and the growing turmoil in the global economy, especially in developing countries, "is the illegitimate war by the U.S. and Israel."

Redistricting battle intensifies in states after US Supreme Court ruling on Voting Rights Act

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

A Supreme Court decision striking down a majority Black congressional district in Louisiana has amplified an already intense national redistricting battle by providing Republican officials in several states new grounds to redraw voting districts.

In Alabama, Republican Gov. Kay Ivey announced Friday that she is calling a special legislative session to begin Monday in hopes that the Supreme Court allows the state to change its U.S. House map ahead of the November midterm elections. In Tennessee, Republican Gov. Bill Lee also announced a special session for the GOP-controlled Legislature to break up the state's one Democratic-held House district, centered on the majority-Black city of Memphis.

Louisiana already has suspended its May 16 congressional primary to allow time for lawmakers to approve new U.S. House districts, though that is being challenged in court. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump is pressuring other states such as Tennessee to also redistrict ahead of the midterm elections that will determine whether Republicans maintain control of the closely divided House.

Trump urged Texas Republicans last year to redraw U.S. House districts to give the party an advantage. Democrats in California responded by doing the same. Then other states joined the battle. Lawmakers, commissions or courts have adopted new House districts in eight states.

That total could grow following the Supreme Court's decision that significantly weakened a provision in the federal Voting Rights Act.

Here's a look at how some states are responding to the Supreme Court ruling:

Louisiana

Current House map: two Democrats, four Republicans

Early in-person voting was to begin Saturday for Louisiana's primaries. But Republican Gov. Jeff Landry moved quickly Thursday to postpone the congressional primary while allowing elections for other offices to go forward.

A federal lawsuit filed later Thursday, on behalf of a Democratic congressional candidate and voter, asked a court to block Landry's order and allow the House primary to occur as originally scheduled. Two more lawsuits asserting that the congressional primary should go forward were filed Friday in state court on behalf of voters who already had cast absentee ballots and several civil rights organizations.

Among other things, the lawsuits contend that Landry lacked authority to suspend the primary and that thousands of absentee ballots already have been mailed to people, with a substantial number filled out and returned.

District court judges in Baton Rouge late Friday denied requests in two of those cases to temporarily block Landry's executive order.

Separately, a three-judge federal court panel that heard the case that was appealed to the Supreme Court also issued an order Thursday suspending Louisiana's congressional primary.

Republican state House and Senate leaders said they are prepared to pass new U.S. House districts —

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and set a new primary election date — before their legislative session ends in a month.

Alabama

Current House map: two Democrats, five Republicans

The state's primaries are set for May 19. But Alabama officials on Thursday filed an emergency motion with the Supreme Court seeking an expedited review of a pending appeal in a redistricting case that could affect the election.

A federal court in 2023 ordered the creation of a new near majority-Black district in Alabama, resulting in the election of a second Black representative to the U.S. House. Alabama is under a court order to use the new map until after the next census in 2030.

An appeal pending before the Supreme Court argues that the map is an illegal racial gerrymander, a claim similar to that made in Louisiana.

The state is seeking to lift an injunction blocking the use of a 2023 map drawn by the Republican-controlled Legislature that did not include the new district. The state is making a similar request for two state Senate districts impacted by a separate redistricting case.

Ivey said the special legislative session will focus on a contingency plan to have special primary elections in case the Supreme Court acts quickly enough to allow Alabama's previously drawn districts to be used this year.

Florida

Current House map: eight Democrats, 20 Republicans

Hours after the Supreme Court's decision, Florida's Republican-led Legislature approved new U.S. House districts that could help the GOP win up to four additional seats in November.

Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis called a special legislative session without knowing when the Supreme Court would issue its opinion in the Louisiana case. But DeSantis expressed confidence that the court would rule as it did. Among other things, the new map reshapes a southeastern Florida district that DeSantis said was created to help elect a Black representative in an attempt to comply with the federal Voting Rights Act.

A Florida constitutional amendment approved by voters in 2010 prohibits districts from being drawn to deny or diminish the ability of racial or language minorities to elect the representatives of their choice. DeSantis said he considers that amendment a violation of the U.S. Constitution. That question is expected to be decided by the courts.

Tennessee

Lee announced the special session in a statement late Friday afternoon, saying, "We owe it to Tennesseans to ensure our congressional districts accurately reflect the will of Tennessee voters."

That came after a pressure campaign by Trump and other Republicans to reconfigure the state's 9th Congressional District. Republicans have always been checkmated by the Voting Rights Act in their desire to spread the district's Democratic voters around neighboring conservative districts and make it winnable, but the law may no longer be an impediment.

The candidate qualifying period ended in March, and the primary election is scheduled for Aug. 6. Democrats noted that in 2022 the state supreme court checked additional redistricting because it was too close to an election. They argued that the court is their best hope this time around too.

"We cannot keep doing things like this and calling ourselves a democracy, Democratic State Sen. Ramesh Akbari said at a news conference outside the Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, which includes the structure of the motel where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968.

Mississippi

Current House map: one Democrat, three Republicans

Mississippi held its U.S. House primaries in March. But the Supreme Court's decision could affect elections for other offices.

Republican Gov. Tate Reeves announced previously that he would call a special legislative session to redraw voting districts for the state Supreme Court that would begin 21 days after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the Louisiana case. That would put the special session's start at around May 20.

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A federal judge last year ordered Mississippi to redraw its Supreme Court voting districts after finding that they violated the Voting Rights Act by diluting the power of Black voters. Mississippi lawmakers had been waiting on a decision in the Louisiana case before moving forward, but their legislative session ended in April.

Reeves said in his proclamation that the Supreme Court's decision would provide guidance to lawmakers on whether "race-conscious redistricting" violates the U.S. Constitution.

Georgia

Current House map: five Democrats, nine Republicans

Early in-person voting began April 27 and continues for the next few weeks ahead of Georgia's primary elections on May 19.

Republican Gov. Brian Kemp said it's too late for Georgia officials to try to change congressional districts for this year's elections, because voting already is underway. But he said the rationale in the Supreme Court's decision "requires Georgia to adopt new electoral maps before the 2028 election cycle."

Trump says a Spirit bailout still is possible as doubts about the airline's survival mount

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and RIO YAMAT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Friday that his administration delivered a "final proposal" to Spirit Airlines while continuing to weigh a taxpayer-funded takeover that might keep the budget carrier from going under during mired in bankruptcy proceedings for the second time in less than two years.

The president did not provide details but said an announcement could come later Friday or Saturday.

"We're looking at it. If we could do it, we'll do it. But only if it's a good deal," he said earlier Friday, speaking to reporters before departing the White House for Florida.

The possibility of a bailout first emerged publicly last week, when Trump floated the idea of the U.S. government offering Spirit a financial lifeline to help keep it from going out of business. Separately, a lawyer for the airline told a U.S. Bankruptcy Court that Spirit was in advanced talks with the government about a financing package.

The president suggested the government would be able to resell the airline known for its bright yellow planes and "no frills" service for a profit once oil prices driven up by the Iran war come down.

Lawmakers from both parties and some Trump administration officials have criticized using taxpayer funds to keep the ultra-low cost airline afloat. Speculation around Spirit's future has grown with every day that passes without a resolution and its operating expenses and debts mount.

A spokesperson for Spirit, headquartered in Dania Beach, Florida, declined to comment on ongoing discussions Friday and said "Spirit is operating as usual."

Although travelers still could book flights on the airline's website Friday evening, customers flooded Spirit's X account with questions about upcoming flights and demands for refunds. Some U.S. airlines say they would step in to support Spirit customers if the airline goes under.

American Airlines said in a statement that it was capping main cabin fares for flights on Spirit routes where American also offers nonstop service. Budget carrier Frontier said in an X post that it was "ready to support customers who may be impacted if Spirit Airlines ceases operations."

Trump framed the possible federal intervention as an effort to preserve jobs but stressed that any deal must benefit the government.

"If we can help them, we will," he said. "But we have to come first."

The size and terms of the deal have not been shared publicly. The Wall Street Journal and Bloomberg, citing unnamed sources, both reported an amount of \$500 million that would give the government an option to acquire a sizable stake in the airline.

Supporters of a rescue — including labor unions representing Spirit's pilots, flight attendants and ramp workers — say a collapse would put thousands of Americans out of work and hurt consumers by reducing airline competition and increasing airfares. About 17,000 jobs could be impacted, according to Spirit

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lawyer Marshall Huebner.

Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, said Friday in a post on X that if Trump wanted to help the airline, "it's in his hands."

"Everyday Americans will hurt," Nelson wrote, including consumers and the employees who stand to lose their jobs if Spirit shuts down.

Miami resident Caleb Euzebe, 27, who works at an insurance company, said he flies Spirit "all the time" and compared the carrier to "that reliable car that you have. It always gets you from point A to point B safely."

Euzebe, who was at Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport after his Spirit flight to Houston was canceled Friday, said he supported the government stepping in if it meant saving jobs.

Spirit's employees have to "put food on the table, keep the lights on for their homes," he said. "So if that means that bailing them out keeps these people working, I support 100%."

Spirit has struggled financially since the COVID-19 pandemic, weighed down by rising operating costs and growing debt. By the time it filed for Chapter 11 protection in November 2024, Spirit had lost more than \$2.5 billion since the start of 2020.

The budget carrier sought bankruptcy protection again in August 2025, when it reported having \$8.1 billion in debts and \$8.6 billion in assets, according to court filings.

Shortly before, its parent company revealed in a quarterly report that it had "substantial doubt" about Spirit's ability to stay in business over the next year, citing "adverse market conditions" — including weak leisure domestic travel demand and ongoing "uncertainties in its business operations."

The company, Spirit Aviation Holdings Inc., struck a more optimistic tone earlier this year, saying in February it had reached a preliminary deal with creditors and expected to exit Chapter 11 in late spring or early summer. It pitched a "new Spirit," — smaller and leaner, but still focused on low fares while adding more premium seating options.

Instead, the war that started days later when the U.S. and Israel launched strikes on Iran intensified the airline's cash flow problems. Rising jet fuel costs tied to the war added pressure across the industry, and Spirit's creditors last month expressed doubts about whether it could continue operating, raising the possibility of the airline being forced to sell off assets and shut down.

Gianfranco Finizio, a bankruptcy expert and partner at law firm Lowenstein Sandler, said Spirit's situation reflected an unusually turbulent stretch for the airline, shaped in part by shifting signals from Washington.

He cited the Biden administration's successful 2023 lawsuit to block Spirit's merger with JetBlue, followed by mixed messages from the Trump administration about a potential rescue.

"The thought of there even being a bailout is unusual. It's not something that happens in every day bankruptcy practice," said Finizio, who is not involved in the airline's Chapter 11 proceedings.

"It's been a tumultuous couple of years and certainly a tumultuous couple of weeks for Spirit," he said.

Budget-conscious and leisure travelers would likely feel Spirit's absence the most — especially where the airline has a big footprint, such as Las Vegas and the Florida cities of Fort Lauderdale and Orlando.

The carrier flew about 1.7 million domestic passengers in February, roughly half a million fewer than it did during the same month a year earlier, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium. It has also sharply reduced its capacity, with about half as many seats available this month than in May 2024.

US to withdraw 5,000 troops from Germany in next 6-12 months, fulfilling Trump's threat

By BEN FINLEY and AAMER MADHANI Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States will withdraw about 5,000 troops from Germany in the next six to 12 months, the Pentagon said Friday, fulfilling President Donald Trump's threat as he clashes with the German leader over the U.S. war with Iran.

Trump had threatened to withdraw some troops from the NATO ally earlier this week after Chancellor Friedrich Merz said the U.S. was being "humiliated" by the Iranian leadership and criticized Washington's lack of strategy in the war.

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Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said in a statement that the "decision follows a thorough review of the Department's force posture in Europe and is in recognition of theater requirements and conditions on the ground."

Germany hosts several U.S. military facilities, including the headquarters of its European and Africa commands, Ramstein Air Base and a medical center in Landstuhl, where casualties from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were treated. U.S. nuclear missiles are also stationed in the country.

The number of troops leaving Germany would be 14% of the 36,000 American service members stationed there.

News of the troop withdrawal drew swift pushback from Democrats in Congress as well as a hawkish Washington think tank. They said the move will benefit Russian President Vladimir Putin and weaken U.S. security interests.

The withdrawal "suggests American commitments to our allies are dependent on the president's mood," said Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

"The president should immediately cease this reckless action before he causes irreversible consequences for our alliances and long-term national security," Reed said.

Bradley Bowman, a scholar at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said the U.S. military's presence in Germany and elsewhere in Europe "not only strengthens deterrence against additional Kremlin aggression but also facilitates the projection of American military power into the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Africa."

Trump ignored questions from reporters about the withdrawal on Friday as he boarded Air Force One in Ocala, Florida, following a rally to tout his economic agenda.

Trump made a similar threat in his first term, saying he would pull about 9,500 of the roughly 34,500 U.S. troops who were then stationed in Germany, but he didn't start the process and Democratic President Joe Biden formally stopped the planned withdrawal soon after taking office in 2021.

The mercurial U.S. leader has mused for years about reducing the American military presence in Germany, and has railed against NATO for its refusal to assist Washington in the war, which began on Feb. 28 with U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran.

Trump wrote Wednesday on social media that the U.S. was reviewing possible troop reductions in Germany, with a "determination" to be made soon. On Thursday, he was still thinking about Merz, posting that the German leader should "spend more time on ending the war with Russia/Ukraine" and "fixing his broken Country" than concerning himself with Iran.

American allies in NATO have braced for a U.S. troop withdrawal since Trump took office, with Washington warning that Europe would have to look after its own security, including that of Ukraine, in the future.

Depending on operations, exercises and troop rotations, around 80,000-100,000 U.S. personnel are usually stationed in Europe. NATO allies have expected for more than a year that the U.S. troops deployed after Russia launched its all-out war on Ukraine in February 2022 would be first to leave.

Ed Arnold, an expert in European security at the Royal United Services Institute, or RUSI, in London, said Europe is more concerned about issues like a U.S. redeployment of Patriot missile systems and ammunition from Germany to the Middle East.

In October, the U.S. confirmed that it would reduce its troop presence on NATO's borders with Ukraine. The move to cut 1,500-3,000 troops came on short notice and unsettled NATO ally Romania, where the military organization runs an air base.

US military reaches deals with 7 tech companies to use their AI on classified systems

By BEN FINLEY and MATT O'BRIEN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon said Friday that it has reached deals with seven tech companies to use their artificial intelligence in its classified computer networks, allowing the military to tap into AI-powered capabilities to help it fight wars.

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Google, Microsoft, Amazon Web Services, Nvidia, OpenAI, Reflection and SpaceX will provide their resources to help "augment warfighter decision-making in complex operational environments," the Defense Department said.

Notably absent from the list is AI company Anthropic, after its public dispute and legal fight with the Trump administration over the ethics and safety of AI usage in war.

The Defense Department has been rapidly accelerating its use of AI in recent years. The technology can help the military reduce the time it takes to identify and strike targets on the battlefield, while aiding in the organization of weapons maintenance and supply lines, according to a report in March from the Brennan Center for Justice.

But AI has already raised concerns that its use could invade Americans' privacy or allow machines to choose targets on the battlefield. One of the companies contracting with the Pentagon said its agreement required human oversight in certain situations.

Concerns about military use of AI arose during Israel's war against militants in Gaza and Lebanon, with U.S. tech giants quietly empowering Israel to track targets. But the number of civilians killed also soared, fueling fears that these tools contributed to the deaths of innocent people.

Questions about military use of AI still being worked out

The Pentagon's latest contracts come at a time of anxiety about the potential for over-reliance on the technology on the battlefield, said Helen Toner, interim executive director at Georgetown University's Center for Security and Emerging Technology.

"A lot of modern warfare is based on people sitting in command centers behind monitors, making complicated decisions about confusing, fast-moving situations," said Toner, a former board member of OpenAI. "AI systems can be helpful in terms of summarizing information or looking at surveillance feeds and trying to identify potential targets."

But questions about the appropriate levels of human involvement, risk and training are still being worked out, she said.

"How do you roll out these tools rapidly for them to be effective and provide strategic advantage?" Toner asked, "While also recognizing that you need to train the operators and make sure they know how to use them and don't over trust them?"

Such concerns were raised by Anthropic. The tech company said it wanted assurances in its contract that the military would not use its technology in fully autonomous weapons and the surveillance of Americans. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said the company must allow for any uses the Pentagon deemed lawful.

Anthropic sued after President Donald Trump, a Republican, tried to stop all federal agencies from using the company's chatbot Claude and Hegseth sought to label the company a supply chain risk, a designation meant to protect against sabotage of national security systems by foreign adversaries.

OpenAI had announced a deal with the Pentagon in March to effectively replace Anthropic with ChatGPT in classified environments. OpenAI confirmed in a statement Friday that it was the same agreement it announced in early March.

"As we said when we first announced our agreement several months ago, we believe the people defending the United States should have the best tools in the world," the company said.

One company's agreement with the Pentagon included language that said there should be human oversight over any missions in which the AI systems act autonomously or semiautonomously, according to a person familiar with the agreement who was not authorized to speak about it publicly. The language also said the AI tools must be used in ways that are consistent with constitutional rights and civil liberties.

Those resemble sticking points for Anthropic, though OpenAI has previously said that it secured similar assurances when it made its own deal with the Pentagon.

The Pentagon's point of view

Emil Michael, the Pentagon's chief technology officer, told CNBC on Friday that it would have been irresponsible to rely on only one company, an acknowledgment of the friction with Anthropic.

"And when we learned that one partner didn't really want to work with us in the way we wanted to work

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with them, we went out and made sure that we had multiple different providers," Michael said.

Some of the companies, including Amazon and Microsoft, have long worked with the military in classified environments, and it was not immediately clear if the new agreements significantly altered their government partnerships. Others, such as chipmaker Nvidia and the startup Reflection, are new to such work. Both companies make open-source AI models, which Michael has described as a priority to provide an "American alternative" to China's rapid development of AI systems in which some key components are publicly accessible for others to build upon.

The Pentagon said Friday that military personnel are already using its AI capabilities through its official platform, GenAI.mil.

"Warfighters, civilians and contractors are putting these capabilities to practical use right now, cutting many tasks from months to days," the Pentagon said, adding that the military's growing AI capabilities will "give warfighters the tools they need to act with confidence and safeguard the nation against any threat."

In many cases, the military uses artificial intelligence the same way civilians do: to take on rote tasks that would take humans hours or days to complete, said Toner, of Georgetown University.

AI can be used to better predict when a helicopter needs maintenance or figure out how to efficiently move large amounts of troops and gear, she said. It can also help determine whether vehicles on a drone's surveillance feeds are civilian or military.

But people shouldn't become overly dependent on it.

"There's a phenomenon called automation bias, where people can be prone to assume that machines work better than they actually do," Toner said.

Florida sheriff identifies body found in Tampa Bay as 2nd missing student from Bangladesh

By MIKE SCHNEIDER Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — A body found in Tampa Bay has been identified as the second missing University of South Florida doctoral student from Bangladesh, a sheriff said Friday. He described their killings as "a monstrous crime" and said a motive was still unknown.

Nahida Bristy's remains were found Sunday in a garbage bag discovered by a kayaker whose fishing line got snagged, said Hillsborough County Sheriff Chad Chronister. The positive identification on the badly decomposed body was eventually made using DNA and dental records, he said.

The body of her friend, fellow USF doctoral student Zamil Limon, was in another garbage bag found two days before that on a bridge over the bay. Limon's roommate, Hisham Saleh Abugharbieh, 26, was taken into custody the same day has been jailed since then, facing two charges of first-degree murder.

Detectives are still working to determine a motive. "I hope we find that out," the sheriff said.

Chronister said the suspect showed no emotion when investigators presented him with details of the killings.

"He was nonreactive," Chronister said. "He was callous and showed no emotion when we showed him the information we had."

The two students were murdered around the same time and place, though more investigation is needed before detectives can decide that conclusively, the sheriff said.

The students' disappearances on April 16 started off as separate missing persons' cases for the campus police and the sheriff's office, involving two responsible individuals for whom missing appointments was very uncharacteristic. But investigators soon realized they were connected, the sheriff said.

Detectives first went to the apartment Limon shared with Abugharbieh and a third roommate. The other roommate was cooperative while Abugharbieh gave elusive and inconsistent answers, the sheriff said. He also had a bandaged finger and a cut on his arm that should have been stitched up. It was enough to make him a 'person of interest,' but not to merit an arrest.

They went to interview the roommate again, alone this time, and he told them Abugharbieh had used a large cart to move things out of his room to a trash compactor overnight on April 16 and 17.

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The first break in the case came when investigators searched the trash compactor and found Limon's glasses, his student ID card, his wallet and his blood-covered clothes. The discovery gave law enforcement enough evidence to get a search warrant for the apartment itself and the suspect's electronic devices, Chronister said.

A search of the apartment showed large traces of blood in the kitchen, leading down the hall and to inside Abugharbieh's room. A blood-detecting spray even revealed blood in the shape of a human body curled up in the fetal position, next to Abugharbieh's bed, the sheriff said.

Traces of blood were also found on the floorboards of Abugharbieh's car, Chronister said. Tests would later reveal it was Bristy's.

Investigators believe the bodies were moved to the car in a cart, under the cover of darkness, he said.

Using the GPS of the suspect's car and surveillance video from a fire station, investigators determined that Abugharbieh drove over to Clearwater and across the Tampa Bay bridge, leading investigators to start an extensive search along his route.

Chronister said content on Abugharbieh's phone had been erased, but a forensic examination revealed disturbing searches in the days before Bristy and Limon went missing. The searches included phrases like, "Can a knife penetrate a skull?" and "Can a neighbor hear a gunshot?"

The suspect had also purchased Lysol wipes and heavy duty contractor-grade trash bags and other equipment before April 16, he said.

"This was calculating. That's what makes this so premeditated," Chronister said.

The sheriff said the victims' relatives have been notified.

Limon was studying geography, environmental science and policy, and Bristy was studying chemical engineering. Abugharbieh had dropped out of the university. Students, staff and faculty held a vigil on campus for the students Friday afternoon. Hundreds of people attended the outdoor service, where enlarged photos of Limon and Bristy were displayed under a tall oak tree with a standing spray of white roses between them.

Reached by email earlier this week, Jennifer Spradley, an attorney in the public defender's office in Tampa, said the office wouldn't comment on Abugharbieh's case.

Apple leads Wall Street to more records as oil prices pull back

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market set more records Friday after Apple, Estee Lauder and others joined the list of companies delivering fatter profits for the start of the year than analysts expected. Easing oil prices also helped steady the stock markets around the world that were still open on the May Day holiday.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.3% to its latest all-time high and closed out a fifth straight winning week. That's its longest such streak since 2024. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 152 points, or 0.3%, and the Nasdaq composite added 0.9% to its own record.

Apple led the way after the iPhone seller reported stronger profit and revenue for the latest quarter than analysts expected. Because it's one of Wall Street's biggest stocks in terms of overall size, Apple's rally of 3.3% was by far the strongest force lifting the S&P 500.

Stock prices generally follow the path of corporate profits over the long term, and U.S. companies have been blowing past expectations for earnings in the first three months of 2026. That's even with the war with Iran and high oil prices souring confidence for many U.S. households.

A little more than a quarter of the companies in the S&P 500 have reported already, and 84% of them have topped analysts' estimates, according to FactSet. The index is on track to deliver roughly 15% growth in profit from a year earlier.

Estee Lauder's stock climbed 3.4% after reporting better earnings than expected, thanks in part to strength in China, and it raised some of its upcoming financial forecasts. Sandisk jumped 8.3% after the maker of storage for computers blew past analysts' expectations for profit thanks in part to voracious

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demand from data centers.

Colgate-Palmolive added 2.2% after likewise delivering bigger results than expected, though CEO Noel Wallace said it expects "volatile macroeconomic conditions and slower category growth to continue in 2026."

The main uncertainty for the global economy is where oil prices are heading because of the Iran war. Oil prices spurted higher early this week on worries that the war will keep the Strait of Hormuz closed for a long time. That would in turn keep oil tankers pent up in the Persian Gulf instead of delivering crude to customers worldwide.

But such moves have been quick to reverse throughout the war, as hopes rise and fall for a reopening of the strait. On Friday, the price for a barrel of Brent crude, the international standard, fell 2% to settle at \$108.17. Brent was selling for a little more than \$70 per barrel before the war began.

That rise since the end of February helped the two biggest U.S. oil companies report stronger profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. But stock prices nevertheless fell for both Exxon Mobil, 1%, and Chevron, 1.4%, as oil prices regressed Friday and each reported drops in net income from a year earlier.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 21.11 points to 7,230.12. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped 152.87 to 49,499.27, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 222.13 to 25,114.44.

The fall in oil prices helped Treasury yields ease in the bond market. So did a report in the morning that said growth for U.S. manufacturing was a touch softer last month than economists expected.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.38% from 4.40% late Thursday. Such dips can make mortgages and other loans for U.S. households and businesses cheaper, and they also tend to give upward pushes to prices for stocks and all kinds of other investments.

Many stock markets worldwide were closed for May Day. Among the indexes still trading, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 rose 0.4%, and London's FTSE 100 slipped 0.1%.

Ukraine says a strike hit Russian Black Sea oil terminal in Tuapse

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian forces struck an oil terminal in the Russian Black Sea city of Tuapse, Ukraine's General Staff said on Friday, marking the fourth attack targeting the region's oil infrastructure in just over two weeks.

Explosions and a fire were recorded at the terminal, the statement from the General Staff said. Local officials in Russia said a Ukrainian drone attack sparked the blaze and that no casualties were reported.

The facility had been hit previously on April 16, April 20 and April 28. Regional governor Veniamin Kontrat'yev said a fire at the city's oil refinery had also been extinguished Thursday, less than 24 hours before the latest strike.

Meanwhile, Russian attacks continued to strike Ukraine.

Russia attacked the western Ukrainian city of Ternopil with over 50 drones on Friday, Mayor Serhii Nadal said.

Hits were recorded in industrial facilities and infrastructure, he said. At least 10 people were wounded, he added, while some neighborhoods remain without electricity as a result of the mass attack.

Two multi-story residential buildings and port infrastructure in Odesa were damaged after Russian forces launched another overnight drone attack on the southern region, local authorities said.

As a result of the strikes, an apartment in a 16-story building was destroyed and the roof caught fire. In another high-rise residential building, a fire engulfed the 12th floor, according to Ukraine's Emergency Service.

In a post on Telegram, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said at least five people were wounded in the region. He said damage from overnight attacks was also recorded in the central city of Kryvyi Rih and the northeastern Kharkiv region, where railway infrastructure was hit.

"Russia continues to attack our energy infrastructure, critical infrastructure, and civilian objects. Tonight, there were 210 drone strikes, and about 140 of them were "Shahed" drones," Zelenskyy wrote.

Trump's new pick for surgeon general has both praised and

cringed at his administration

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Dr. Nicole Saphier is President Donald Trump's latest pick for the vacant role of U.S. surgeon general, a nomination that ended the embattled campaign of his previous candidate, Dr. Casey Means, after it became clear she didn't have the votes to advance out of a Senate committee.

Saphier, a radiologist and former Fox News Channel contributor, has promoted several aspects of Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s Make America Healthy Again agenda, including removing food additives, cutting ultraprocessed foods from diets and encouraging exercise.

But she has been a more vocal advocate for vaccination than Kennedy, and at times she has criticized the Trump administration's handling of health issues as "embarrassing."

If confirmed as the nation's doctor, Saphier would be empowered to issue advisories that warn of public health threats. Surgeons general also have used the office to advocate on vaccination issues — though the office doesn't create vaccine policy.

Means, a Stanford University-educated physician and MAHA influencer who didn't complete her surgical residency in Oregon and has an inactive medical license, faced grueling questioning from senators of both major political parties over her experience and stance on vaccination. She told The Associated Press her failed nomination was the result of a "yearlong smear campaign."

Saphier is a mom, radiologist and former Fox News contributor

Trump's new surgeon general pick is the director of breast imaging at Memorial Sloan Kettering Monmouth, according to her profile on the institution's website. She has a medical degree from Ross University School of Medicine in Barbados, along with fellowships at the Mayo Clinic, according to her profile.

She has earned the approval of institutions including the American College of Radiology, whose president, Dr. Dana Smetherman, on Thursday called her a "tireless advocate for women's health." Kennedy said in a social media post that her experience with breast cancer patients and early detection will help the Republican administration take on the chronic disease epidemic.

Saphier was also a longtime Fox News Channel contributor until this week — one of several of the channel's personalities Trump has brought into his administration. Trump's first surgeon general pick, Dr. Janette Nesheiwat, was also a contributor at the network, but her nomination fell apart last year after questions arose about her academic credentials.

An author and podcaster with her own show, "Wellness Unmasked with Dr. Nicole Saphier," Saphier frequently comments on the Trump administration's approach to health, often positively. She also used the phrase "Make America Healthy Again" years before Kennedy popularized it. It was the title of a 2020 book she wrote that criticized the government's handling of healthcare and the Affordable Care Act.

Saphier also has dipped into the wellness product industry, creating a line of herbal supplements called Drop Rx, according to her LinkedIn profile.

A mom of three boys, Saphier has often said she is thankful she decided to keep her first son after becoming unexpectedly pregnant at age 17. She has advocated for more resources for mothers who make the same choice.

Advocating for vaccination while criticizing COVID-era mandates

Like Means, Saphier has questioned some aspects of the U.S. childhood vaccine schedule, including the universal birth dose of the hepatitis B vaccine, a longtime recommendation that the Trump administration has been trying to weaken.

She also has aligned with Kennedy's disdain toward COVID-19 vaccination requirements in schools, saying on her podcast in September that they were "a complete disaster" and one of the reasons for declining trust in vaccination.

Saphier says she supports immunization while arguing patients should be free to make their own medical decisions. In March, she praised acting U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Dr. Jay Bhattacharya for posting a message encouraging Americans to get vaccinated against measles.

"The more vaccine confusion we create, the more preventable disease we will see," she said in Septem-

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ber, urging the administration to get itself in order "because it's really upsetting."

She's called the health department's mistakes 'embarrassing'

While being supportive of the Trump administration at large, Saphier has publicly cringed at some of its health mishaps. Last summer, she decried its long-anticipated first attempt at a MAHA report, which cited some studies that didn't exist.

"There were a lot of flaws in this report," she said on her podcast. "In fact, it was pretty embarrassing."

She said Kennedy's firing of his first CDC director, Susan Monarez, after less than a month on the job was "a mess."

"When we keep hearing radical transparency and we're going to regain trust, I can tell you these shenanigans are taking us farther away from that mission," Saphier said on her podcast.

In an email to the AP last year, Saphier said Trump's advice to pregnant women not to take Tylenol, which promoted unproven ties between the medication and autism, was overly simplistic. She said equally important, and missing from Trump's message, was the fact that untreated fever or severe pain can also pose serious risks to mothers and babies.

After Means' confirmation hearings earlier this year, Saphier said on her podcast that she expected Means would do a good job as surgeon general but wished she were "a little bit less involved with MAHA."

"I'd really like to see a little bit more reaching across the aisle when it comes to public health," Saphier said. "That doesn't mean it has to be some Democratic nominee for surgeon general, maybe just someone a little less aligned with the MAHA movement who, I don't know, finished their residency and has an active medical license."

At least a few prominent MAHA influencers have suggested Saphier is no ally. Turning Point USA podcaster and anti-pesticide campaigner Alex Clark said in a post on Friday that Saphier "gets an F when it comes to all things MAHA."

Trump says he's 'not satisfied' with Iran's proposal to end the war

By TOQA EZZIDIN, MUNIR AHMED and COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — U.S. President Donald Trump rejected Iran's latest proposal to end the war between the countries, saying Friday he still was not satisfied while blaming Iran's "fractured" leadership.

Trump turned back the latest proposal almost as soon as it was delivered. Iran's state-run IRNA news agency reported that Iran handed over its plan to mediators in Pakistan on Thursday night.

"They want to make a deal, I'm not satisfied with it, so we'll see what happens," Trump told reporters Friday at the White House, without elaborating on what he saw as its shortcomings.

The shaky three-week ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran appears to still be holding though both countries have traded accusations of violations.

While the ceasefire has largely halted fighting in Iran, the U.S. and Iran are locked in a standoff over the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's traded oil and gas passes in peacetime. A U.S. Navy blockade stopping Iran's tankers from getting out to sea has Iran's economy reeling. The world economy is also under pressure as Iran maintains its chokehold on the strait.

Negotiations have continued by phone after Trump called off his envoys' trip to Pakistan last week, the president said. Trump this week floated a new plan to reopen the critical passageway used by America's Gulf allies to export their oil and gas.

On Friday, Trump expressed frustration with Iran's leadership, describing it as fractured.

"It's a very disjointed leadership," Trump said. "They all want to make a deal, but they're all messed up."

Discussing a briefing he had Thursday with Adm. Brad Cooper, head of U.S. Central Command, the president said the U.S. has just two options in Iran.

"I mean, do we want to go and just blast the hell out of them and finish them forever? Or do we want to try and make a deal? I mean, those are the options," Trump said.

Trump said he believes Iran's leadership has made some progress toward unifying around a resolution.

"They've made strides, but I'm not sure if they ever get there," he said. "There's tremendous discord,

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they're having a tremendous problem getting along with each other in Iran."

Iran's top diplomat sought support for plan

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi held a flurry of calls on Friday with many of his regional counterparts, including from Turkey, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Azerbaijan, to brief them on his country's latest initiatives to end the war, according to his social media.

European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas also spoke over the phone Friday with Araghchi. They discussed ongoing diplomatic efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and long-term security arrangements, Kallas' office said in a statement. Kallas also has been in contact with the EU's Gulf partners.

Pakistani officials have said efforts were continuing to ease tensions between Iran and the U.S.

Pakistan's former ambassador to Washington, Masood Khan, said the continued exchange of proposals indicates that the U.S. and Iran remain engaged in seeking a diplomatic midpoint.

The proposals also come after leaders of the two countries had exchanged some of their harshest threats, Khan said, fueling fears that military hostilities could resume at any moment.

Imprisoned Iranian Nobel laureate moved to hospital

Iran's imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi was urgently transferred from prison to a hospital in northwestern Iran after a "catastrophic deterioration" of her health, her foundation said Friday.

The Narges Mohammadi Foundation said she had two episodes of complete loss of consciousness and a severe cardiac crisis. She was believed to have suffered a heart attack in late March, according to her lawyers who visited her a few days after the incident.

The hospital transfer comes "after 140 days of systematic medical neglect," since her arrest, the foundation said.

Mohammadi, 53, a rights lawyer who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2023 while in prison, was arrested in December and sentenced to seven more years in prison.

Explosion of leftover bombs killed 14 in Iran

An explosion of leftover bombs from strikes during the war against Iran killed 14 Revolutionary Guard members, IRNA and other Iranian media reported Friday.

A report by the Nournews website, believed to be close to Iran's security, said the explosion happened near the northern city of Zanjan, which is northwest of Tehran.

It was the largest number of Revolutionary Guard members reported to be killed since the ceasefire began on April 7. The report said the ammunition included cluster bombs and air mines dropped during the fighting.

Since the war began on Feb. 28, at least 3,375 people have been killed in Iran, and more than 2,600 people in Lebanon, where new fighting between Israel and the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah broke out two days after the war started, according to authorities.

Additionally, 24 people have died in Israel and more than 20 in Gulf Arab states. Seventeen Israeli soldiers in Lebanon and 13 U.S. service members throughout the region have been killed.

Trump says he'll place 25% tariff on autos from the EU, accusing it of not complying with trade deal

By JOSH BOAK Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said on Friday that he will increase the tariffs charged on cars and trucks from the European Union next week to 25%, a move that could jolt the world economy at a fragile moment.

Trump said in a social media post that the EU "is not complying with our fully agreed to Trade Deal," though he did not flesh out his objections in the post.

Asked by reporters on Friday about the increase in import taxes as he departed the White House for Florida, Trump said the EU was not "as usual" adhering to last year's trade framework, without detailing the source of the tension. He added that he believed the shift to higher tariffs "forces them to move their factory production much faster" to the U.S.

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Trump and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen had agreed to the trade deal last July. It set a tariff ceiling of 15% on most goods, though the Supreme Court this year ruled against the legal authority that Trump had used to charge that tax. This left Trump looking for substitute authorities, and his administration has imposed a 10% tax while investigating trade imbalances and national security issues to put in new tariffs to make up for lost revenues.

Tariffs could hit a global economy already hurt by the Iran war

The tariffs hit at a moment when the Iran war has crushed the world economy with expectations of slower growth and higher inflation, as oil and natural gas prices have risen due to the effective closure of the critical Strait of Hormuz after strikes by the U.S. and Israel began at the end of February.

At the same time, Trump faces political pressure in the U.S. going into November's midterm elections because of rising levels of inflation. Trump, a Republican, returned to the White House last year on the explicit promise that he could quickly tame prices that jumped in the aftermath of the government's response to the coronavirus pandemic, but higher energy costs pushed annual inflation in March to 3.3%, which was higher than what he had inherited.

Just 30% of U.S. adults approved of Trump's handling of the economy, according to the latest poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Europe wants last year's trade deal to hold

The European Parliament has been moving slowly on finalizing last year's trade agreement but was expected to finish work on the deal next month. The EU said in a statement that it was implementing its "commitments in line with standard legislative practice" and should the U.S. "take measures inconsistent with" that agreement "we will keep our options open to protect EU interests."

Trump administration officials have not responded to questions about the tariff increase and why Trump said the agreement had been violated. But Trump has had a testy relationship with Europe, having threatened earlier this year to take control of Greenland and later blasting NATO allies for not providing more support to the U.S. for the Iran war.

Bernd Lange, chair of the European Parliament trade committee, posted on social media that Trump's tariff hike on autos was "unacceptable" and that the Trump administration "keeps breaking its commitments," including on import taxes for steel and aluminum products.

Jennifer Safavian, CEO of Autos Drive America, which represents the American operations of foreign auto manufacturers, said the tariff increase "would threaten the progress that has already been made to open EU markets and grow the U.S. auto industry."

Both the U.S. and the EU had previously confirmed their commitment to preserving the trade framework, known as the Turnberry Agreement, which was named after Trump's golf course in Scotland.

Trump's tariff plans were already upended by the Supreme Court

The status of the 2025 deal was first cast into doubt after the Supreme Court this year ruled that the president lacked the legal authority to declare an economic emergency and charge tariffs on goods from the members of the EU and other states.

The Trump administration has opened up trade investigations under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 to replace the tariffs struck down by the court. One of the investigations is looking into whether those trading partners have been lax in cracking down on forced labor. And the other is pursuing allegations that they've overproduced goods, driving down prices and putting American manufacturers at a disadvantage.

The alternative tariffs being explored by the Trump administration could ultimately put the agreement with the EU in risk of violation, though European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maroš Šefčovič told reporters last week that the relationship with the U.S. had become more positive over the past year.

To raise tariff rates, Scott Lincicome of the libertarian Cato Institute's Center for Trade Policy Studies said, the president would likely use Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962, which allows for duties on national security grounds.

Trump imposed 25% Section 232 tariffs on foreign autos in March 2025, but those tariffs were then lowered as part of the trade framework with the EU.

Lincicome also said Trump's threats are "just another example of why these trade deals are vaporware. They all rely on handshakes and winks and hopes that Trump doesn't get mad about something."

The EU had said it expected the bilateral deal would save European automakers about 500 million to 600 million euros (\$585 million to \$700 million) a month.

The value of EU-U.S. trade in goods and services amounted to 1.7 trillion euros (\$2 trillion) in 2024, or an average of 4.6 billion euros a day, according to EU statistics agency Eurostat.

Restless Democrats challenge party establishment while trying to loosen Trump's grip on Washington

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Politics Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Maine just sent a blunt message to the Democratic Party's national leaders.

Democratic Gov. Janet Mills was forced to abandon her U.S. Senate campaign on Thursday, unable to generate sufficient fundraising or enthusiasm to compete against Graham Platner, an oyster farmer who has never served in elected office. The announcement marked a stinging defeat for Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer, who recruited Mills to lead the party's decades-long quest to defeat Republican Sen. Susan Collins.

The swift defenestration of a two-term governor by a political neophyte highlighted a stark reality that has begun to take hold at a pivotal moment — Democratic voters are rejecting their party's establishment and embracing new risks, even as their confidence grows that a blue wave is coming in November's midterm elections.

Sometimes Democrats seem almost as angry at their own party's aging and entrenched leadership as they are at President Donald Trump.

"Rank-and-file Democrats don't want the Democratic Party as we know it," said Ezra Levin, co-founder of the Democratic resistance group Indivisible. "Rank-and-file Democrats want fighters."

Local Indivisible chapters, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, who's an independent but caucuses with Democrats, and other leaders from the party's progressive wing had already lined up behind Platner, who is now almost certain to be the Democratic nominee in one of the party's best Senate pickup opportunities in the nation.

Platner on Friday insisted he would continue to speak out against his party's leadership, including Schumer, although he acknowledged that the two spoke privately the night before.

"The fact that we've been able to do all of this without the help of the establishment, it puts us in such an amazing position," Platner said on MS NOW's "Morning Joe." "My criticisms of the party leadership, my criticisms of the party, they have not changed, and I've been very vocal about that since the beginning. But we will absolutely take the help that we can get."

Republicans, meanwhile, are giddy — and some moderate Democratic strategists are worried — that the anti-establishment shift may undermine the party's effort to claw back control of Congress in November.

"Chuck Schumer has officially lost the first battle in his proxy war with Bernie Sanders," said Bernadette Breslin, spokesperson for the Senate Republicans' campaign arm. "As Sanders hits the campaign trail to prop up progressives in messy Democrat primaries in Michigan and Minnesota, Schumer's chances of getting his preferred candidates through look grim."

The backlash is bigger than Maine

Maine is far from alone.

Prominent anti-establishment clashes are playing out in high-profile Senate races across Michigan, Minnesota and Iowa, along with House races in several states.

Sanders, a self-described democratic socialist, continues to promote Platner and other critics of the Democratic Party's national leadership. The Vermont senator will campaign this weekend in Detroit with Michigan Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed, who is running in a three-way Senate primary against Rep. Haley Stevens and state Sen. Mallory McMorrow.

"There's a desire to turn the page on the old guard," Sanders' political adviser Faiz Shakir said. "It's not

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even just the Democratic electorate. There's a populist mood in this country. You'd have to be blind not to see it."

Indeed, McMorrow is actively working to remind voters that she would not support Schumer as Democrats' Senate leader if given the chance.

"Frankly, I was the first person in this country to say no," McMorrow said in a video she posted Thursday on social media. "It is a different moment. This is no longer a Republican Party we're dealing with, it is a MAGA party that has been taken over by Trump loyalists. ... You need to respond in a very different way."

Veteran Democratic strategists like Lis Smith, who works with candidates across the country, tied the anti-establishment shift to the party's painful losses in 2024, when President Joe Biden was forced to abandon his reelection bid and Vice President Kamala Harris went on to lose to Trump.

"After 2024, voters are sick of the gerontocracy, sick of the status quo, and Chuck Schumer has completely misread that," Smith said.

Moderates push back

Privately, Schumer's allies downplay the impact of the anti-establishment backlash.

The Senate Democratic leader's preferred picks in North Carolina, Ohio and Alaska haven't faced the same challenges as Mills did in Maine. The four states represent the party's most likely path to a majority in the chamber, which has 53 Republicans, 45 Democrats and two independents who caucus with the Democrats.

Mills is the oldest of the candidates and, at 78, would have been the oldest freshman senator in history. She promised to serve one term if elected. Platner is only 41.

Schumer's team is unwilling to make any apologies for backing Mills over Platner.

"Leader Schumer's North Star is taking back the Senate," Schumer spokesperson Allison Biasotti said. "When no one thought a Senate majority was possible just a year ago, he made it a reality by recruiting great candidates across the country and laying out an agenda for lower costs and better lives for Americans."

Some in the Democratic Party's moderate wing are worried.

Matt Bennett, co-founder of the center-left group Third Way, said that Platner's emergence in Maine "without a doubt" will make it harder for Democrats to defeat Collins in November. He warns that it could be the same elsewhere if Democratic primary voters rally behind anti-establishment candidates.

"Our message is if you would like to beat Donald Trump's Republicans, you better nominate people who can win," Bennett said.

No clear favorite and plenty of contenders: The 152nd Kentucky Derby is a 20-horse puzzle

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Sports Writer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — The chaos at the start of the Kentucky Derby sometimes decides the most exciting two minutes in sports in a matter of seconds. Twenty horses bursting out of the starting gate to varying degrees of success makes it a mad dash to the turn.

Calling the race on television for NBC, Larry Collmus typically focuses on the favorite. This year presents a challenge.

"I don't know who the favorite is going to be," Collmus said. "I guess we'll find out. It's wide open this year."

Todd Pletcher-trained Renegade opened as the favorite, but it could just as easily be Brad Cox's Commandment or Further Ado or Bill Mott's Chief Wallabee by the time the field of 20 leaves the gate. The first leg of the Triple Crown is so wide open that at least a half-dozen horses have a legitimate chance to win the 152nd running of the Kentucky Derby on Saturday.

"There's a lot of different ways you could go if you were handicapping this race," said Chad Brown, the trainer of Emerging Market. "You could really make an argument at this point for maybe half the horses in the field if they ran their very, very best race and had a good trip that could win this race."

Renegade on the rail

Renegade was set as the 4-1 favorite on the morning line, but last weekend he drew the inside No. 1

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post position on the rail. No horse has won the Derby from there since Ferdinand in 1986.

"It's not the one we would have chosen," Pletcher said. "It's not ideal, but it's what we got and we'll do the best we can with it."

When Pletcher watched replays of every race since the new starting gate was introduced in 2020, he thought his horses and others on the rail were negatively affected and their chances compromised. The last horse to break from the very inside to finish in the money was Lookin At Lee in 2017.

Irad Ortiz Jr. is being counted on to navigate Renegade through the 1 1/4-mile journey around the dirt track at Churchill Downs, and while he has yet to win the Kentucky Derby, he's in his prime as one of the best jockeys in the world.

"Irad's riding in great form right now, so they just got to work it out," Pletcher said. "I think his natural running style is to kind of settle and make one run like he has been doing, so we're not looking to change that."

Cox's trio is a duo but still formidable

Cox entered three horses but is down to two after ruling out Fulleffort on Thursday because of a chip in the colt's left hind ankle. Mark Casse's Silent Tactic and Kenny McPeck's Right to Party were also scratched, putting Great White, Ocelli and Robusta into the field on the far outside.

Commandment and Further Ado each has shown the ability to finish first in this deep class of 3-year-olds. Commandment has won four in a row, including the Florida Derby, while Further Ado bounced back from a lengthy absence and won the Blue Grass Stakes.

They will now face rivals who thrived all over the country.

"There's a lot of talent, obviously, coming from different regions, whether it's California, Florida, Louisiana, New York," Cox said. "I do feel like the horses in Florida were definitely the strongest region this year."

Bob Baffert's Potente was second to So Happy in the Santa Anita Derby in Southern California, and Litmus Test comes from Oaklawn Park in Arkansas. Baffert is tied for the most Derby victories among trainers and can take sole possession of the record if one of his long shots comes through.

With Danon Bourbon and homebred Wonder Dean, Japan again has strong presence two years after Forever Young was a close third. The country is in search of its first Derby win.

No super horse?

It does not look like there is a super horse in this field who is capable of sweeping the Triple Crown like Justify in 2018 and American Pharoah in 2015.

"There's by no means an American Pharoah in here, at least up to this point, going into the race," Brown said. "Now, whoever wins this race and goes on, maybe one emerges and turns into one of the best 3-year-olds in the last few years. Who knows?"

The bigger question is whether any of them would get the chance, given the reluctance of owners and trainers to run a horse two weeks later in the Preakness Stakes, which this year takes place at Laurel Park while Pimlico Race Course is rebuilt. Two of the past four Kentucky Derby winners did not run in the Preakness, which could soon move from the third to the fourth weekend in May to attract more horses.

Man jailed after being charged with attempted murder in stabbings of Jewish men in London

LONDON (AP) — A 45-year-old man was charged Friday with attempted murder in the stabbings of two Jewish men in London, the latest in a string of attacks that have sparked fear and anger in Britain's Jewish community.

Essa Suleiman was remanded into custody after appearing in Westminster Magistrates' Court to face two counts related to the attack in Golders Green. He also faces a third count of attempted murder over an incident elsewhere in the city earlier Wednesday that left a man with minor injuries.

Police have labeled the Golders Green attack an act of terrorism.

Suleiman, a Somalia-born British citizen who lives in London, did not enter a plea. His case was transferred to the Central Criminal Court for a May 15 hearing.

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Prosecutor Emma Harraway said Suleiman attacked Ishmail Hussein, his friend of 20 years, in south London before taking a train to the north part of the city where he targeted Jews hours later.

Shloime Rand, 34, was stabbed in the chest outside a synagogue, puncturing his lung, and Norman Shine, 76, who was wearing a traditional Jewish skullcap, was stabbed in the neck at a bus stop.

"As Mr. Shine adjusted his kippah, Suleiman ran towards him and set upon him, launching a series of aggressive blows," Harraway said.

Rand was discharged from the hospital and Shine is in stable condition.

Police said Suleiman was referred in 2020 to the government's Prevent program, which tries to steer individuals away from extremism. The police force said his file was closed later the same year, and didn't disclose the reason for the referral.

The British government pledged to tackle antisemitism after the stabbings in an area in north London that is an epicenter of Britain's Jewish community. The assault followed a string of arson attacks on synagogues and other Jewish sites in London in recent weeks.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said that his government would increase security for the Jewish community and "do everything in our power to stamp this hatred out."

Britain's official terror threat level was raised from substantial to severe after Wednesday's stabbing attack. Severe is the second-highest rung on a five-point scale and means intelligence agencies consider an attack highly likely in the next six months.

The government said the change was not due solely to the Golders Green attack but also due to increased danger "from Islamist and extreme right-wing terrorist threat from individuals and small groups based in the U.K."

After major enforcement operations, the Trump administration recalibrates its immigration crackdown

By REBECCA SANTANA Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — When Homeland Security Secretary Markwayne Mullin was questioned by senators during his confirmation hearing about his vision for implementing President Donald Trump's mass deportation agenda, he said his goal was to keep his department off the front pages of the news.

To some degree, he has. Gone are the social media video clips of now-retired Border Patrol commander Greg Bovino clashing with protesters. Mullin's predecessor, Kristi Noem, made her first trip as secretary to New York City to make arrests with Immigration and Customs Enforcement. In contrast, Mullin went to North Carolina to review hurricane recovery efforts.

The Republican administration appears to be recalibrating its approach to a centerpiece policy that helped bring Trump back to the White House, moving in many ways away from aggressive, public-facing tactics toward a quieter approach to enforcement. Despite that shift, the administration insists it is not backing down from its lofty deportation goals.

"Clearly they've stepped back from the, for want of a better word, the Bovinoist tactics of before," said Mark Krikorian, the president of the Center for Immigration Studies, which advocates for immigration restrictions. "But it's not clear this means they're actually stepping back from immigration."

The Trump administration launched a series of immigration enforcement operations last year in mostly Democratic-led cities, which drove up arrests in large-scale sweeps. The crackdown sparked clashes between protesters and enforcement officers and led to the shooting deaths in Minneapolis of two U.S. citizens.

Since then, the president's hard-line anti-immigration agenda has lost popularity with voters and there have been no new high-profile city-based operations launched, raising questions about the administration's strategy.

"We're still enforcing immigration laws. We're still deporting illegals that shouldn't be here. We're still going after the worst of the worst — but we're doing it in a more quiet way," Mullin said in an interview

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April 16 with CNBC.

Immigration arrests have dropped, but deportation goals remain

ICE arrests have fallen in recent months, and the number of people in immigration detention has dropped from a high of roughly 72,000 in January to 58,000 this week, according to data obtained by The Associated Press.

But in a sign of its continued determination, ICE in budget documents says it plans to remove 1 million people this fiscal year and the next compared with roughly 442,000 people last year. The agency also has plenty of money to carry out its mission, with Congress granting the Department of Homeland Security more than \$170 billion for Trump's immigration agenda last year.

The administration aims to have enough space to detain roughly 100,000 people this fiscal year, which would more than double the average daily number held in ICE detention last year. The administration has already expanded its detention capacity with the purchase of 11 warehouses across the country.

"They are working on really building a juggernaut of a system," said Doris Meissner, who headed the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, a predecessor to ICE, during President Bill Clinton's Democratic administration and is now a senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute.

White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said there had been no change to Trump's strategy.

"President Trump's highest priority has always been the deportation of illegal alien criminals who endanger American communities," Jackson said.

ICE did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Stripping away legal protections to ramp up deportations

Advocates for immigrants are bracing for the Trump administration to turn its attention more intently to stripping away protections for migrants with temporary legal status to remain in the U.S. while their cases are being adjudicated.

In one example of this, the number of green cards approved by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services dropped by half over the course of a year under the Trump administration, according to an analysis by the Cato Institute, which supports immigration into the U.S. Humanitarian visas for refugees or people who qualified for asylum saw the biggest declines.

USCIS spokesman Zach Kahler said the drop was due to increased vetting of applicants by the administration.

The Trump administration has also pushed to strip Temporary Protected Status from hundreds of thousands of people, with a key case weighing whether it's overstepped its power to do so being heard at the Supreme Court this week.

Advocates see it as a way to send a chilling message to immigrant communities and make more people vulnerable to deportation. It also enables the department to operate without the public spectacle of workplace raids or home arrests.

ICE has also focused over the past year on creating agreements with jurisdictions around the country that allow local and state law enforcement to carry out an expanding array of immigration enforcement tasks, ranging from checking the immigration status of people in their jails to incorporating immigration checks during routine traffic stops.

These agreements, known as 287g, have grown from 135 in 20 states before Trump took office to more than 1,400 in 41 states and territories now.

Some states, most noticeably Florida and Texas, have mandated various forms of cooperation between local law enforcement and ICE.

Meissner, from MPI, said Trump's border czar, Tom Homan, is likely to prioritize further discussions about how cities and states can cooperate with ICE.

"At the end of the day, some of this may very well succeed in increasing the numbers," Meissner said.

Calls to enforce work restrictions

Conservatives who want more deportations say the only way to truly crack down on illegal immigration is to make it so difficult for the migrants to work that they'll leave on their own.

The Trump administration has already taken steps to make life harder for people in the country illegally including limiting who can live in public housing by immigration status, sharing Medicaid information with ICE and requiring people in the country illegally to register with the federal government.

Krikorian, of the Center for Immigration Studies, said the Social Security Administration could send out letters alerting employers when an employee's name doesn't match their Social Security number. Authorities could repeatedly and consistently carry out audits of I-9 forms, which companies are supposed to fill out and submit to the federal government showing that new hires are legally able to work. And they could require banks to collect citizenship information on customers.

Whatever the strategy going forward, the administration is facing heavy pressure not to back away from its goals.

"The numbers are too low," said Mike Howell, part of the Mass Deportation Coalition, which launched a playbook for how the administration can actually get to a million deportations a year by using tactics such as worksite enforcement.

"The deportation numbers are just too low," Howell said, "and they need to be much higher, and they can be much higher."

A converted church in rural Pennsylvania is becoming an incubator for Amish roots music

By MARK SCOLFORO Associated Press

McCOYSVILLE, Pa. (AP) — Conrad Fisher's musical journey has taken him from an Amish country upbringing in Pennsylvania to Nashville and back. These days the singer-songwriter has been making videos and recordings of musicians with Amish and Mennonite roots — building audiences well beyond the conservative religious communities.

Last weekend Fisher took the stage in a former Presbyterian church that he bought for a song and converted into a performance space and recording studio he calls Ragamuffin Hall, in the rural Pennsylvania community of McCoysville.

Fisher performed two sold-out concerts with Ben and Rose Stoltzfus, a married couple whose Amish background and church choir harmonies have drawn millions of YouTube clicks. It was a sort of warmup for shows they're playing together in the coming months at much larger theaters in Pennsylvania and Indiana.

"Ragamuffin Hall," Fisher said, "is supposed to be a place where those weird things that'll get you ostracized everywhere else, we're like, 'Oh, no, that's a gift. And here's how you use it.'"

Fisher's parents were both raised in Amish families but his father joined a Mennonite congregation as a young adult. Among the Mennonite churches Fisher attended as a boy, musical instruments were rarely used.

Nonetheless, his father was a fan of Johnny Cash and didn't look too closely at what was on Fisher's MP3 player. When Fisher's brother came home from a camping trip with a mix CD featuring Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, the Everly Brothers and the Beach Boys, it changed his life.

"It blew my mind, right?" Fisher, now 31, recalled. He started learning keyboards and then guitar, bass and drums before adding music production — "mostly because I was dead set on making a living with music."

"My buddies would be like, 'Hey, I wrote a song for my girlfriend. Can you do a track?' And I'm like, sure." Recording in a converted church

He moved to Tennessee as a young adult and for three years immersed himself in the songwriting industry — the Oak Ridge Boys even recorded one of his tunes. But the road life didn't suit him — particularly bar gigs.

"There's drinking and carrying on," Fisher said. "It's just not me. I'm not a prude, but I just don't enjoy that scene."

Fisher considers his wife and three children his main priority and he remains a faithful Mennonite — his pastor once asked him why he didn't just start a cabinetry business and launch a prison ministry. Yet his music production work eventually grew to the point three years ago that he could stop working as a

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carpenter.

In 2022, Fisher learned an old brick church several miles from his home was up for sale. After he laid out his vision for making it into a music incubator, they sold it to him below market value.

Musicians now regularly find their way to Ragamuffin Hall, mostly to record "clean country music" and rootsy bluegrass with a heavy dose of gospel. The acts he's recorded include an Amish man who played steel guitar with his son's band, a musician who drove for hours from Missouri and an Amish band from Ohio.

Last Saturday, he sprinkled his own songs between tunes made popular by Waylon Jennings, Alison Krauss and Don Williams. After a short set by Fisher's five-piece band, they stayed on stage to back up Ben and Rose. Fisher used an electric guitar fashioned from a beam recovered during his renovations of a church stairwell.

The overwhelmingly white matinee crowd consisted mostly of older people and included several of the musicians' family members. Downstairs, Ragamuffin Hall T-shirts were for sale alongside \$3 homemade whoopie pies, a regionally ubiquitous Pennsylvania Dutch dessert.

A paradigm shift on stage

The insular culture and unadorned lives of conservative Anabaptist people aren't often associated with music, but Amish sacred music dates back half a millennium. Their 900-page hymnal — the "Ausbund" — was composed in part by Anabaptist prisoners in 16th century Germany and is still used today.

Fisher's Amish roots and ability to speak Pennsylvania Dutch, the Old Order Amish dialect, has helped build rapport with likeminded musicians.

But Amish church music is almost always group singing only, without instruments or soloists. And the community generally discourages public performances and other "acts of pride."

"There's a lot of great talent in that community that goes undeveloped because," Fisher said — using a Pennsylvania German phrase — "that's just, 'we don't do that,' you know."

That's the sort of pushback he received in February after uploading a rollicking, live version of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" to YouTube. Fisher felt compelled to respond.

"I'm a believer, I'm a man of faith, and I'm not ashamed of that," he replied in a video message. "But I do play a lot of different kinds of music, just like, you know, if you're a shed builder you build sheds for all kinds of people, not just churches and schools."

Elam Stoltzfus, director of the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead in Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, said it was "one of the shocks of my life" to attend a charity fundraiser last year at a farm where Ben and Rose performed. (Stoltzfus is a common name among the Amish.) There were bright lights, a video screen, barbecued chicken and vendors selling T-shirts, CDs and books.

Stoltzfus, whose family left the Old Order in the mid-1960s when he was 10, said the gathering was packed with Mennonite and Amish people. They weren't dancing, but they did clap.

"I was thrilled to see this happen, because I knew this was a paradigm shift," he said. "When I was a teenager, it would never have happened."

Legions of fans on social media

Amos Raber, of Goshen, Indiana, also grew up in a "horse and buggy" Amish family and considered himself Amish until he turned 22. Nowadays, he supports his family with concert performances and revenues garnered from what he says are millions of clicks a month on YouTube, Spotify, Apple Music and Facebook.

In recent decades, Raber said, he's seen Amish youth increasingly come together with guitars to sing. But they can still run up against prohibitions on public performances.

"Most times, if you see someone who's really Amish doing that kind of thing, they're probably not going to be Amish long," Raber said. Since they began recording and performing music, Ben and Rose have left their Amish church and joined a different Christian congregation. They declined comment for this story.

LeRoy Stoltzfus, a singer-songwriter living near Lancaster, was 13 when his family left the Amish church. He said changes in the Lancaster Amish settlement in recent years have made it easier for people to leave without losing contact with families and friends, a process called "shunning" that has long fascinated outsiders.

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After years of playing guitar as a church worship leader and after spending four years at a Colorado Bible college, he's now making a living as a musician, stitching together concerts with online ad revenue and recordings for a fan base that includes many Amish and formerly Amish people.

"Ever since I can remember I wanted to be a star," LeRoy Stoltzfus said. "But the older I got, I realized it wasn't about me — it was about putting out music and helping people."

'I would have laughed at you'

Justin Hiltner, a Nashville-based banjo player and songwriter who serves as managing editor of the roots music blog "The Bluegrass Situation," said after delving into the music he was impressed with its quality. He said he also got the sense that Ben and Rose and Conrad Fisher and the others are building a musical community.

"This is clearly not just insular music that's just facing other Amish folks or other Mennonite folks," Hiltner said. "Clearly it's 'broken containment' here."

Hiltner called the music -- and Fisher's videos -- "really compelling."

"To kind of an outsider, this is the performance of American essentialism, the rural American ideal, right?" said Hiltner. "I did hear a level of talent that's very clearly pushing and pulling these folks towards bringing their music to a wider audience."

Religiously conservative musicians can market their recordings through a network of bookstores across the U.S. and Canada. At one of them, Ken's Educational Joys in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, racks of CDs are sold alongside a floor-to-ceiling selection of Bibles.

Proprietor Lydell Zimmerman said his biggest music sellers are a cappella recordings, but he's noticed Ben and Rose have drawn a real following.

"I think their presence as an Amish couple singing online is what brought people's attention to them," Zimmerman said.

Ben and Rose came to Fisher's studio when Ben's brother, a friend of Fisher's from Lancaster, booked a session there.

He realized right away Ben and Rose had talent. Tapping into Fisher's production skills, they've amassed more than 30 million views for their videos on YouTube. Eventually he proposed some live shows and the couple agreed.

"I started recording when I was 14," Fisher said. "If you would have told me two years ago that what's going to put me on the map or boost my business in a big way, it's going to be an Old Order Amish couple, I would have laughed at you."

Speaker Mike Johnson once longed for a 'normal Congress,' but that seems long gone in the House

By LISA MASCARO AP Congressional Correspondent

WASHINGTON (AP) — House Speaker Mike Johnson has lamented he would like to preside over a "normal Congress," but the chamber the Republican is leading is anything but.

All-night sessions. Hours of dead zones with no action on the floor. Legislation being written on the fly, behind closed doors. Sudden votes scheduled. Spectacular failures. And, as happened this week, stunning turnarounds in which the House actually passes bills.

"Sometimes it's an ugly process, sometimes it's a long process," Johnson said after House passage of a bipartisan bill to fund much of the Department of Homeland Security, ending the longest agency shutdown in history. "But we got it done."

Republicans, who face an uphill climb this election year to keep hold of their paper-thin House majority, appear at times as if they are still learning on the job, years after having returned to power in 2022, while they are also about to ask voters in November to rehire them for another term.

This week's starts and stops — for example, five hours of delay as Johnson huddled behind closed doors to salvage his agenda, then a sudden vote tally near 11 p.m. — would typically have been the kind of situation that shocked the political and procedural senses. Now, it's just another Wednesday.

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Or two weeks ago, when a routine House Rules Committee hearing ended up becoming a midnight forum to debut a just-produced 14-page bill to revise a surveillance bill, known as the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, or FISA, before it was rushed to the floor for a 2 a.m. vote. It failed.

"House Republicans have shown again that they can't govern," said Rep. Ted Lieu of California, part of Democratic leadership.

"They routinely pass bills to the Senate that are way too extreme, then it ends up that we have all these floor session days where we're just doing nothing," he said.

House GOP's slim majority makes leader's job challenging

Johnson, who took over for the ousted Kevin McCarthy more than two years ago, is presiding over one of the slimmest House majorities in modern times, leaving him no room to spare if he's trying to pass legislation on party line votes, without Democrats.

The speaker is juggling not only President Donald Trump's priorities but also those of the various factions that make up his majority, from the conservative House Freedom Caucus to what remains of the GOP's more pragmatic conservatives.

And Johnson's own future is always in question, after Republicans chased other speakers, including McCarthy, John Boehner and Newt Gingrich, to early exits.

Last year Johnson, of Louisiana, led passage of the party's signature achievement, a big bill of tax breaks and safety net cuts, which Trump signed into law. At the time, he quipped about the difficulty of getting it over the finish line.

"I do so deeply desire to have just a normal Congress," the speaker said in July.

"But it doesn't happen anymore," he said. "Our way is to plow through and get it done."

What's ahead as House GOP tries to stay in power

Ahead of the fall elections, Johnson and other Republican lawmakers have discussed an agenda that includes the promise of another GOP-only budget package like the tax cuts bill that they could push through the House and the Senate, without Democratic votes.

Budget Chairman Jodey Arrington, R-Texas, said Thursday that he expects "the centerpiece" of that package "will be supporting our troops" with more than \$100 billion in funding for the war against Iran as well as money to replenish defense munitions and other Pentagon-related needs.

Despite the turbulent week in the House, Arrington said what they're calling budget reconciliation 3.0 should be the "next order of business."

Yet GOP lawmakers may decide it's better to skip the hard work of legislating, and the dramatic upheavals that tend to come with it, and hit the campaign trail to win over voters instead.

Rep. Richard Hudson, R-N.C., the chairman of the House GOP's campaign arm, the National Republican Congressional Committee, acknowledged that trying to pass legislation with such a tight majority "can be rough. It's ugly."

"I'd be fine with letting us go home and campaign," Hudson said. "But we've got a lot of important work still to do."

Some of Johnson's most ardent sparring partners, those most conservative Republican lawmakers, turned their blame for the messy process not on Johnson's leadership but on their own GOP allies across the Capitol in the Senate, who often dismiss the House's work.

"Yeah, sometimes, it gets a little tense," said Republican Rep. Chip Roy of Texas. "But we're still getting stuff done. We're sending it over to the Senate. So we look forward to them doing their job."

Today in History: May 2, Nelson Mandela claims election victory

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, May 2, the 122nd day of 2026. There are 243 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 2, 1994, Nelson Mandela claimed victory for the African National Congress after South Africa's first democratic elections.

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Also on this date:

In 1863, during the Civil War, Confederate Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson was accidentally wounded by his own men at Chancellorsville, Virginia; he died eight days later.

In 1927, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Buck v. Bell*, upheld 8-1 a Virginia law allowing the forced sterilization of people in order to promote the "health of the patient and the welfare of society."

In 1972, a fire at the Sunshine silver mine in Kellogg, Idaho, claimed the lives of 91 miners who succumbed to carbon monoxide poisoning.

In 1997, Tony Blair, whose Labour Party crushed John Major's long-reigning Conservatives in a national election, became Britain's youngest prime minister in 185 years, at age 43.

In 2011, al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden, who had been killed hours earlier in a raid by American forces at his Pakistan compound, was buried at sea.

In 2017, Michael Slager, a white former police officer whose killing of Walter Scott, an unarmed Black man running from a traffic stop, was captured on cellphone video, pleaded guilty to federal civil rights charges in Charleston, South Carolina. (Slager would be sentenced to 20 years in prison.)

In 2022, a draft was leaked of a Supreme Court ruling throwing out the landmark *Roe v. Wade* abortion rights ruling that had stood for a half-century. The court cautioned that the draft was not final. (The decision would be released in essentially the same form the following month.)

Today's Birthdays: Singer Engelbert Humperdinck is 90. Actor David Suchet (SOO'-shay) is 80. Singer-songwriter Larry Gatlin is 78. Rock singer Lou Gramm (Foreigner) is 76. Actor Christine Baranski is 74. Basketball Hall of Famer Jamaal Wilkes is 73. Fashion designer Donatella Versace is 71. Filmmaker Stephen Daldry is 66. Country singer Ty Herndon is 64. Actor-wrestler Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson is 54. Former soccer player David Beckham is 51. Actor Kumail Nanjiani is 48. Actor Ellie Kemper is 46. Singer Lily Allen is 41. NASCAR driver Kyle Busch is 41. Olympic figure skating gold medalist Sarah Hughes is 41. Musician Lucy Dacus is 31. Princess Charlotte of Wales is 11.

Groton Area middle school track teams turn in strong showing at Oakes meet

OAKES, N.D. — The Groton Area middle school track and field teams delivered a number of standout performances Friday at the Oakes Invitational, highlighted by a dominant effort from the 8th grade boys and a strong team finish from the 7th grade girls.

Boys Division

Groton's 8th grade boys placed fifth in the team standings with 69 points, powered by a series of event victories and strong relay performances. The Tigers were led by a big day from Kyson Kucker, who captured the 400-meter title in 55.41 seconds and added a win in the 800 meters (2:18.57). Keegan Kucker also turned in a strong showing, placing third in the 400 meters (1:00.89).

Groton's relay teams were especially impressive. The Tigers claimed first place in both the 4x200 relay (1:52.94) and the 4x400 relay (4:04.31), while also adding a runner-up finish in the 4x100 relay (50.17). Members of those relays included Trey Tietz, Trayce Schelle, Liam Lord, Wyatt Morehouse, Liam Johnson, and the Kucker brothers.

In the sprints, Trey Tietz placed fifth in the 100 meters (12.88), followed closely by Trayce Schelle in eighth (13.03) and Liam Lord in 10th (13.16). Lord also added a fifth-place finish in the 200 meters (27.74).

In field events, Schelle cleared 5-foot-0 to place fifth in the high jump. Liam Johnson led Groton in the shot put with a ninth-place throw of 33'5".

For the 7th grade boys, Groton finished in a tie for eighth place with 21 points. Ivan Schwan led the Tigers with a pair of top-three finishes, taking second in the 100 meters (12.74) and third in the 200 meters (26.91). Quinton Flores added points in the distance events, placing fifth in the 400 meters (1:06.26) and sixth in the 800 meters (2:39.27).

Girls Division

The Groton Area 7th grade girls turned in one of the top performances of the meet, finishing third in the team standings with 61 points.

Leading the way was Andi Iverson, who won the 800 meters in 2:54.60 and also ran a key leg on the winning 4x400 relay team. Taylor Fliehs placed second in the 800 meters (2:56.33) and added a ninth-place finish in the 400 meters.

Charli Jacobsen was another standout, sweeping the hurdle events with a win in the 100-meter hurdles (18.39) and a runner-up finish in the 200-meter hurdles (33.62).

Groton's relay teams were a major strength. The 4x400 relay team of Iverson, Brynlee Dunker, Avery Huber, and Fliehs captured first place in 4:51.29. The 4x200 relay squad also earned a runner-up finish (2:08.70), while the 4x100 relay team placed fifth.

In the sprints, Libby Johnson led the 7th graders with a ninth-place finish in the 100 meters (14.66), while several others contributed solid efforts across the board.

At the 8th grade level, Groton placed ninth as a team with 19 points. Kinley Sandness led the Tigers with a third-place finish in the 100 meters (14.26), while Rowan Patterson added an 11th-place finish (14.52). The 4x200 relay team placed second (2:00.54), and the 4x100 relay added a fourth-place finish.

Overall, Groton Area showed depth across both divisions, with multiple individual champions, relay victories, and strong team finishes highlighting a successful day on the track.

Boy's Division

Boys 7th Grade Team Scores: 1. Kindred MS 74, 2. Central Cass 68, 3. Richland MS 54, 4. Edgeley/Kulm 51, 5. LaMoure/Litchville-Marion 46, 6. Wyndmere-Lidgerwood 45, 7. Oakes 25, 8. Medina-Pingree-Buchanan 21, 8. Groton Area 21, 8. Carrington 21, 11. Northern Cass 16, 11. Linton-HMB 16, 13. Maple River MS 13, 14. Sargent County 12, 15. Lisbon 9, 16. Valley City 3.

Boys 8th Grade Team Scores: 1. Central Cass 101, 2. Kindred MS 94, 3. Wyndmere-Lidgerwood 82, 4. Sargent County 71, 5. Groton Area 69, 6. Valley City 24, 7. Carrington 22, 8. LaMoure/Litchville-Marion 20, 9. Richland 16, 10. Lisbon 15, 11. Northern Cass 14, 12. Oakes 12, 13. Linton-HMB 7.

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100 Meters 7th Grade: 2. Ivan Schwan, 12.74; 34. Jack Schuelke, 16.09; 37. Hank Fliehs, 17.21; 41. Weston Kettner, 18.48; 42. Titan Johnson, 18.51

100 Meters 8th Grade: 5. Trey Tietz, 12.88; 8. Trayce Schelle, 13.03; 10. Liam Lord, 13.16; 29. Wyatt Morehouse, 15.56

200 Meters 7th Grade: 3. Ivan Schwan, 26.91; 30. Titan Johnson, 41.27; 31. Weston Kettner, 41.73

200 Meters 8th Grade: 5. Liam Lord, 27.74; 17. Gavin Hanten, 33.11; 19. Wyatt Morehouse, 33.54

400 Meters 7th Grade: 5. Quinton Flores, 1:06.26

400 Meters 8th Grade: 1. Kyson Kucker, 55.41; 3. Keegan Kucker, 1:00.89

800 Meters 7th Grade: 6. Quinton Flores, 2:39.27

800 Meters 8th Grade: . Kyson Kucker, 2:18.57

4x100 Relay 8th Grade: 2. Groton: (Trayce Schelle, Keegan Kucker, Kyson Kucker, Trey Tietz), 50.17.
7. Groton: (Wyatt Morehouse, Gavin Hanten, Bentley Harms, Liam Johnson), 58.92.

4x200 Relay 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Keegan Kucker, Ivan Schwan, Wyatt Morehouse, Liam Johnson), 1:52.94.

4x400 Relay 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Trey Tietz, Kyson Kucker, Keegan Kucker, Liam Lord), 4:04.31.

Shot Put - 8lb 7th Grade:: 17. Hank Fliehs, 23' 0"; 22. Grayson Warrington, 18' 2".

Shot Put - 8lb 8th Grade: 9. Liam Johnson, 33' 5"; 23. Bentley Harms, 23' 4"; 24. Gavin Hanten, 23' 2".

Discus - 1kg 7th Grade: 23. Grayson Warrington, 47' 9"; 6. Hank Fliehs, 44' 6".

Discus - 1kg 8th Grade: 17. Bentley Harms, 79' 5"; 18. Liam Johnson, 78' 7"; 5. Gavin Hanten, 65' 1".

High Jump 8th Grade: 5. Trayce Schelle, 5' 0".

Long Jump 7th Grade: 28. Jack Schuelke, 10' 10"; 35. Weston Kettner, 8' 9"; 37. Titan Johnson, 7' 8.5".

Girl's Division:

Girls 7th Grade Team Scores: 1. Sargent County 75, 2. Central Cass 64, 3. Groton Area 61, 4. Richland 54.5, 5. LaMoure/Litchville-Marion 44, 6. Kindred MS 40, 7. Lisbon 37.5, 8. Carrington 37, 9. Linton-HMB 36, 10. Maple River MS 26, 11. Edgeley/Kulm 22, 12. Northern Cass 18, 12. Oakes 18, 14. Wyndmere-Lidgerwood 17.

Girls 7th Grade Team Scores: 1. Kindred 94, 2. Lisbon 93, 3. Wyndmere-Lidgerwood 72, 4. Northern Cass 67, 5. Central Cass 66, 6. LaMoure/Litchville-Marion 46, 7. Maple River 30, 8. Carrington 21, 9. Groton Area 19, 10. Valley City 17, 11. Linton-HMB 11, 12. Sargent County 7, 13. Edgeley/Kulm 6.

100 Meters 7th Grade: 9. Libby Johnson, 14.66; 20. Mya Moody, 15.30; 23. Shealee Gilchrist, 15.45; 33. Harley Furman, 16.01; 35. Gracie Borg, 16.14; 39. Hadley Heilman, 16.46; 46. Lennox Locke, 17.60; 47. Hallie Perkins, 18.23.

100 Meters 8th Grade: 3. Kinley Sandness, 14.26; 11. Rowan Patterson, 14.52; 200 Meters 7th Grade: 16. Shealee Gilchrist, 32.17; 19. Mya Moody, 32.54; 24. Harley Furman, 33.94; 26. Gracie Borg, 34.65; 27. Rowan Hanson, 34.73; 30. Lennox Locke, 36.06.

400 Meters 7th Grade: 9. Taylor Fliehs, 1:12.51; 17. Rowan Hanson, 1:21.47

800 Meters 7th Grade: 1. Andi Iverson, 2:54.60; 2. Taylor Fliehs, 2:56.33.

100m Hurdles - 30" / 0.762m 7th Grade: 1. Charli Jacobsen, 18.39; 6. Hallie Perkins, 24.79.

200m Hurdles - 30" / 0.762m 7th Grade: 2. Charli Jacobsen, 33.62

4x100 Relay 7th Grade: 5. Groton: (Mya Moody, Zoe Olson, Avery Huber, Brynlee Dunker), 1:00.58.

4x100 Relay 8th Grade: 4. Groton: (Andi Iverson, Rowan Patterson, Libby Johnson, Kinley Sandness), 56.58.

4x200 Relay 7th Grade: 2. Groton: (Mya Moody, Zoe Olson, Brynlee Dunker, Avery Huber), 2:08.70.

4x200 Relay 8th Grade: 2. Groton: (Rowan Patterson, Kinley Sandness, Libby Johnson, Charli Jacobsen), 2:00.54.

4x400 Relay 7th Grade: 1. Groton: (Andi Iverson, Brynlee Dunker, Avery Huber, Taylor Fliehs), 4:51.29.

Shot Put - 6lb 7th Grade: 19. Hadley Heilman, 20' 3"; 22. Lillian Davis, 18' 2".

Shot Put - 6lb 8th Grade: 28. Andi Gauer, 19' 3".

Discus - 1kg 7th Grade: 16. Lillian Davis, 48' 8".

Discus - 1kg 8th Grade: 25. Andi Gauer, 49' 5".