

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Daily Independent
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Tuesday, May 5

Senior Menu: Hot turkey combination, mashed potatoes with gravy, corn, fruit.

School Breakfast: Breakfast sliders.

School Lunch: Tater tot hot dish, mixed vegetables.

St. John's Lutheran: Ladies Aid LWML, 1:30 p.m.

United Methodist: Bible Study, 10 a.m.

City Council meeting, 7 p.m.

High School Baseball at Groton vs. Clark Area Varsity at 6:30 p.m. followed by JV.

Valley Queen Track Meet at Milbank, 1:30 p.m.

Biogirls, 3:45 p.m., Elementary Gym

JVT Practice, 5:30 p.m. and 7 p.m., Arena

Wednesday, May 6

Senior Menu: Kielbasa with mac and cheese, California blend, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Omelets.

School Lunch: Chicken alfredo, cooked broccoli.

Groton Chamber meeting, noon, City Hall

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

United Methodist: Community Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Yard cleanup, 10:30 a.m.

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

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

JVT Practice, 6 p.m., Arena

Thursday, May 7

National Day of Prayer

Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato, green beans, fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Biscuits.

School Lunch: Sloppy joes, square tots.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

Girls Golf at Lee Park, Aberdeen, 10 a.m.

Middle School Track Meet at Hamlin, 3 p.m.

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

Girls Fastpitch Softball in Groton vs. Florence/Henry, varsity DH at 4 p.m.

Pickleball, 6 p.m., Elementary Gym

JVT Practice, 7 p.m., Arena

Friday, May 8

Senior Menu: Chicken strips, tater tots, carrots, fruit.

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza.

School Lunch: Chicken ala king, biscuit.

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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.

Strait Showdown Escalates

The US reportedly sank six Iranian military speedboats yesterday, while its ally, the United Arab Emirates, accused Iran of a drone attack, putting the four-week ceasefire between the US and Iran under strain.

The speedboats were allegedly targeting US Navy ships that were aiding commercial vessels as part of a mission President Donald Trump announced Sunday to help guide stranded ships through the Strait of Hormuz. Iran claims it struck an American warship, but the US denies this and says it successfully transited two American-flagged commercial ships through the strait. Meanwhile, the UAE said Iran launched four drones, hitting a key facility used to avoid shipping some oil through the strait. As of this writing, it is unclear whether an explosion aboard a South Korean-operated ship off the UAE was caused by Iranian fire.

Roughly 20,000 sailors have been stuck in the Persian Gulf for weeks, unable to cross the Strait of Hormuz.

Who Bids on the Bidding Site?

GameStop made an unsolicited \$56B offer Sunday to acquire eBay, a bid to create a combined company capable of rivaling Amazon. EBay said yesterday its board will review the offer, which is nearly 20% above its \$46B closing valuation Friday.

GameStop, valued at nearly \$12B, is pursuing a company nearly four times its size. To fill the gap, the largely brick-and-mortar company is offering 50% cash and 50% GameStop shares, and says it has secured a commitment of up to \$20B from TD Bank in debt financing. CEO Ryan Cohen maintains the combined company could leverage GameStop's roughly 1,600 stores to fulfill eBay orders, largely focused on collectibles. Cohen also hopes to push eBay toward live commerce, involving real-time video streams of sales.

GameStop's stock gained popularity in 2021, when Keith Gill, known online as "Roaring Kitty," inspired investors to send the company's shares up over 1,600% in days.

Pulitzer Prize Winners

The 2026 Pulitzer Prize winners were announced yesterday, honoring last year's distinguished work in journalism and the arts.

The Washington Post received the Gold Medal for Public Service for its coverage of the Trump administration's overhaul of federal agencies. Reuters won for documenting the expansion of executive power (national reporting); The New York Times for exposing conflicts of interest tied to the presidency (investigative reporting); and The Associated Press for its global probe into Silicon Valley-built surveillance tools now deployed by the US Border Patrol (international reporting).

Other winners include "Pablo Torre Finds Out" for its investigation into how the Los Angeles Clippers allegedly skirted the NBA's salary cap (audio reporting); Texas Monthly's Aaron Parsley for a first-person account of survival and loss after deadly Central Texas floods (feature writing); and Daniel Kraus for "Angel Down" (fiction).

The awards are named after Joseph Pulitzer, one of the founders of modern journalism, who left \$2M to Columbia University upon his death in 1911 to establish its journalism school and the prize. Winners receive \$15K.

Sports, Entertainment, & Culture

Met Gala attendees interpret dress code "Fashion Is Art," an ode to the Met's new exhibit showcasing artistic representations of the dressed body spanning roughly 5,000 years.

Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni settle legal battle stemming from the 2024 film "It Ends With Us" two weeks before trial.

Britney Spears pleads guilty to reckless driving, avoids DUI charge and jail.

Dolly Parton cancels Las Vegas residency due to an unspecified medical condition.

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John Sterling, radio voice of the New York Yankees for over three decades and five World Series titles, dies at age 87.

Science & Technology

Three passengers dead, others presumed ill after suspected hantavirus outbreak among roughly 150-person cruise; ship has been refused permission to dock.

Small, icy object beyond Pluto appears to have an atmosphere, suggesting distant worlds in our solar system may be more complex than previously thought.

Researchers pioneer method for turning a single protein into two new proteins with completely different functions, offering potentially simpler ways to improve both medicines and manufacturing processes.

Business & Markets

US stock markets close lower (S&P 500 -0.4%, Dow -1.1%, Nasdaq -0.2%) as investors worry Iran conflict could intensify again.

Tech giant Palantir reports 85% year-over-year growth in Q1—the fastest sales expansion since at least

2020, fueled by strong US military demand.

Pinterest shares rise after reporting 18% year-over-year Q1 revenue growth.

Anthropic partners with Goldman Sachs, Blackstone, and other Wall Street firms to launch \$1.5B AI venture targeting private-equity-owned companies.

Politics & World Affairs

Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) signs redistricted congressional map into law; could see up to four House seats going to Republicans.

Track mid-decade redistricting map, with expected political impact.

Supreme Court restores access to mail-order abortion drug mifepristone, reversing a federal appeals court decision.

Driver plows into crowd in the eastern German city of Leipzig, killing at least two people and wounding 20 others; the driver was a 33-year-old German man whose motive is unclear as of this writing.

Tiger Tracks of Faith
DAILY INSPIRATION FOR HEARTS OF FAITH

Today is
MAY 5, 2026
FRESH START. FAITH STRONG.
GOD'S GRACE Carries Us!

No matter what yesterday held, God gives us a new beginning every morning. Let's walk in His grace and make today count for His glory!

BUT THOSE WHO TRUST IN THE LORD WILL FIND NEW STRENGTH. THEY WILL SOAR HIGH ON WINGS LIKE EAGLES. THEY WILL RUN AND NOT GROW WEARY. THEY WILL WALK AND NOT FAINT.
ISAIAH 40:31

THIS IS THE DAY THE LORD HAS MADE; LET US REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN IT.
PSALM 118:24

DON'T JUST HOPE FOR A GOOD DAY—TRUST GOD FOR A GREAT ONE!

NEW DAY. NEW MERCIES. NEW BLESSINGS. LET'S WALK BOLDLY IN HIS PLAN!

TODAY'S PLAN
✓ PRAY
✓ FOCUS
✓ OBEY
✓ TRUST

GRATEFUL FOR:
♥ FAMILY
♥ FRIENDS
♥ GOD'S LOVE

GOD IS GOOD

FAITH FUEL

FAITH OVER FEAR

GOD'S WORD. OUR GUIDE. EVERY DAY.

 GOD IS OUR LIGHT. He brightens our path. PSALM 119:105	 GOD IS OUR REFUGE. He is our safe place. PSALM 46:1	 GOD IS OUR LOVE. His love never fails. 1 JOHN 4:16	 GOD IS OUR STRENGTH. He sustains us each day. ISAIAH 41:10	 GOD IS OUR HOPE. He gives us hope that never fades. ROMANS 15:13
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START TODAY WITH FAITH. LIVE TODAY WITH PURPOSE. FINISH TODAY WITH PEACE.

♥ MAY GOD BLESS YOUR TUESDAY AND GUIDE YOUR EVERY STEP! ♥

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Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

May 5, 2026 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY
CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Approval of Groton Golf Course Addition Plat
4. Approval of Erickson Second Addition Plat
5. Funding Request from Area IV Senior Nutrition
6. Wastewater Project Update – IMEG Corp.
7. Department Reports
8. Project Rural Practice Funding Request
9. Review and Approval of Estimate from Aberdeen Clean-All for City Hall Duct Cleaning
10. 2025 Annual Report
11. Minutes
12. Bills
13. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
14. Groton Airport Hangar Leases
15. Forgive Resident's Outstanding Invoice from 2017
16. Adjournment

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BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA

GENERAL MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2026, 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS

COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Opportunity for Public Comment
 - ❖ *Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes or at Boards Discretion. Presentations will be limited to 3 minutes.*
4. Approve Surplus List from Sheriff's Department
5. Approve Surplus List from Auditor's Office
6. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of Meeting Minutes of April 28, 2026:
 - i. General Meeting
 - ii. Consolidated Board of Equalization
 - b. Claims/Payroll
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Travel Requests
 - e. Lease Agreements
7. Other Business
8. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
9. Adjourn

You can join the Brown County Commission Meeting via **your computer, tablet, or smartphone** at <https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311) - Access Code: **601-168-909** #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at [Commission Meetings | Brown County](#)

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Water worries: Billions needed to keep South Dakota taps flowing

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

Compared to several states to the west, South Dakota is not even in the conversation of places in danger of experiencing a water crisis.

Arizona, New Mexico, California and Colorado are increasingly in panic mode trying to find reliable sources of drinking water to quench the thirst of growing populations and future generations.

Over its 137 years of statehood, South Dakota has relied on rivers and reservoirs but mostly on underground aquifers to provide high-quality fresh water in quantities sufficient to accommodate slow but steady population, agricultural and industrial growth.

But that comfort level is quickly evaporating, and signs of ongoing or potential water shortages are popping up in all corners of the state. Among them:

The WEB Water system in Aberdeen has declared several portions of its service area as "moratoriums" in which no further water taps can be added until system capacity increases.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recently announced that ongoing drought has lowered Missouri River water levels, potentially affecting barge traffic, hydro-electric generation and recreational activities.

Facing declining water levels in the Big Sioux Aquifer, the Minnehaha County Water Corp. in Dell Rapids has turned away potential high water use industrial employers to maintain service to existing residential and municipal customers.

A 2025 federal geological survey showed that some of the "sub-aquifers" that provide fresh water to

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northern Black Hills communities are not recharging as fast as they are being depleted.

Due to low water levels in Pactola Reservoir and a forecast of continued drought, Rapid City officials in April enacted summer water use restrictions two months earlier than usual.

Looking 40 years into the future

While those impacts are not seen as harbingers of an immediate or near-term crisis in the state, they are generating concern over what could happen if South Dakota waits too long to begin finding future reliable sources of water.

"Statewide, water managers are seeing this and realizing we need to start making plans now for 40 or 50 years into the future," said Shane Phillips, executive director of the WEB system that provides 6 million gallons of water a day to nearly 40,000 people and hundreds of farms and businesses in north-central South Dakota. "If you wait until the need is there, you're already way behind."

In response, local, regional and state water officials are pushing forward with water projects that will surely cost billions of dollars and increasingly tap into one of the world's greatest sources of fresh water and the longest river in the U.S. – the mighty Missouri River.

"There's a tsunami of water projects underway or under discussion in South Dakota right now," said Troy Larson, executive director of the Lewis & Clark Regional Water System, a massive South Dakota-based provider of water to much of the state's southeastern quadrant and parts of Iowa and Minnesota.

To grasp the scope of the proposals, News Watch reviewed documents and conducted interviews to gain an understanding of ongoing or planned major water projects in the state. The four largest:

Lewis & Clark has nearly completed its \$711 million "base system" that serves 20 communities, including Sioux Falls, with 44 millions of gallons per day (MGD). An expansion to 60 MGD is underway, with a second expansion to 155 MGD planned after that, all with a price tag of unknown billions of dollars.

WEB water and its new WINS cooperative serving Aberdeen and communities to the east has made \$20 million in improvements since 2016. The system is spending \$82 million to expand its treatment plant and add a new 50-inch pipeline upgrade.

Western Dakota Regional Water System representatives recently testified before Congress to seek approval of a feasibility study for a 165-mile, 71-inch pipeline from the Missouri River to Rapid City and more than 50 communities and systems in the Black Hills region. If approved, the project is estimated to cost at least \$3 billion and take decades to construct.

The Dakota Mainstem Regional Water System Inc. is also seeking congressional approval of a feasibility study on an ambitious project to pump Missouri River water to almost the entirety of East River South Dakota and parts of Minnesota and Iowa. The project could include a 96-inch main pipeline and a price tag of up to \$10 billion.

"Experts have shown us that we're straining our aquifers in South Dakota, and we need to act now so our future generations don't have to react," said Kristen Conzet, director of the Western Dakota system. "The cheapest time to do any of this is now if not yesterday."

Larson said the need for water is being driven mainly by population growth and a long-range drought in many areas of the state.

Other water managers said the state needs to be prepared to sustain existing industries such as agriculture production and ethanol and be ready to accommodate new businesses including data centers or other employers that may locate in South Dakota in the future.

Major water projects are paid for through a variety of sources. In a typical example, the \$711 million Lewis & Clark base system was funded at 80% from the federal government, 10% from the three states serviced and 10% from customers, Larson said.

A shift to regional systems and the Mighty Mo

For generations, and currently in many regions, South Dakota homes, farms and municipalities mostly tapped into underground aquifers with individual wells to obtain fresh water.

But as the state has grown, and water pipeline and treatment technologies have evolved, the state has moved to a model known as "regional water systems" in which a main provider of water taps a river or

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reservoir and installs underground pipes for distribution.

The origin of the model dates back about 50 years to a heated battle that took place over how to obtain water from the Missouri River in the north-central part of the state and what to use it for.

The proposed Oahe Irrigation Project was a federal government effort to build a series of canals to provide Missouri River water to agricultural producers in a 190,000-acre area in Brown and Spink counties. But it faced opposition – largely from landowners who opposed the forced taking of their land – and caused heated division among residents, farmers, and local, state and federal officials.

After extensive lobbying of federal officials, and gaining control over a regional water board, opponents halted the project and its federal funding in 1978.

Roger Schuller, a third-generation farmer from Claremont, was a vocal opponent of the irrigation canals and has since become a historian of South Dakota water projects.

"We were trading a billion-dollar project for a lot less expensive project that would service thousands of people instead of a smaller amount of recipients who farmed," Schuller, 82, told News Watch. "It changed the direction of water development in South Dakota."

As the irrigation effort was unraveling, the WEB rural water system was taking shape as its replacement. The pipeline system, which carries fresh water to a wide swath of northeastern South Dakota, remains in operation and is now undergoing a large expansion.

"The WEB project, to my mind, was the start of the rural water revolution as we see it now in this state," said Schuller, adding that the project fueled both population growth and the development of the ethanol industry in the region. "Water is the key for human consumption and for any industry you want. But you can expect controversy to arise around almost any water project."

Internal, external race for water system capacity

From a broad perspective, South Dakota is in a race to obtain more Missouri River water on two separate fronts.

First off, the state needs to make investments now and begin building pipeline infrastructure because major systems can take 30 to 50 years to complete, said Kurt Pfeifle, 66, executive director of the Dakota Mainstem project.

"I probably won't be around when this project gets built," said Pfeifle, 66, who formerly was head of South Dakota Association of Rural Water Systems. "If you're going to do these big things, you need to start now because it's not going to get done quickly or be any cheaper than it is now."

But the state is also eager to build new water systems in order to get ahead of other states that could potentially try to tap into the Missouri River as a source for desperately needed water.

The threat of Colorado or New Mexico possibly building a pipeline to the Missouri is a topic that South Dakota water managers approach with caution because they don't want to legitimize a concept with a low likelihood of becoming reality.

But at the same time, it's one they must confront.

While no firm proposals are being considered, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation did consider a proposal in 2012 backed by several Western states to tap the Missouri River. The idea never took hold, but it called for an \$11 billion, 670-mile pipeline to provide water to 1.2 million customers in seven arid states that rely on the faltering Colorado River for water.

Phillips, director of WEB Water, said he has heard estimates that if the city of Denver implemented an additional 1% sales tax, the city could quickly afford to build a pipeline to the Missouri River. If other states tap the Missouri, it could reduce water availability for states that already rely on the river, including South Dakota.

"We have one of the greatest water resources in the world, the Missouri River, running right through our state. And if we don't think of ways to utilize it properly, the concern is that other states will figure out a way," Phillips said. "It's a cautionary tale and a reminder that we need to plan for the future now."

Libby Cole Has Lots Of Hits But Groton Area Tigers Varsity Softball Fall To Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones

By GameChanger Media

Libby Cole collected three hits in four at bats, but Groton Area Tigers Varsity Softball lost to Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones 23-12 on Monday at Home. Cole doubled in the first inning, singled in the second inning, and singled in the fourth inning.

Despite the loss, Groton Area Tigers Varsity Softball did collect 14 hits in the high-scoring affair. Unfortunately, Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones had 21 hits on the way to victory.

Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones jumped out to the lead in the top of the first inning after Macy Ingraham singled, scoring one run, Ella Sass singled, scoring one run, Zoe Nichols singled, scoring one run, Johanna Vandersnick grounded out, scoring one run, Yeleiney Ramirez singled, scoring two runs, Jordyn Repp singled, scoring one run, Ingraham singled, scoring one run, Kadee Frankfurth doubled, scoring one run, and Sass doubled, scoring two runs.

Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones extended their early lead with two runs in the top of the second thanks to RBI singles by Ingraham and Frankfurth.

A walk by Kelsey Hofer, a walk by Ingraham, and a single by Frankfurth helped Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones extend their early lead in the third.

Frankfurth earned the win for Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones. The starting pitcher surrendered 14 hits and 12 runs over five innings, striking out four and walking eight. Kinsley Rowen took the loss for Groton Area Tigers Varsity Softball. The righty went four and one-third innings, allowing 20 runs on 18 hits, striking out three and walking nine.

Groton Area Tigers Varsity Softball collected 14 hits in the game. Talli Wright, Abby Fjeldheim, Jaedyn Penning, and Rylie Rose each collected multiple hits for Groton Area Tigers Varsity Softball. Jerica Locke paced Groton Area Tigers Varsity Softball with four walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, tallying eight walks for the game. Rowen, Cole, and Locke each stole multiple bases for Groton Area Tigers Varsity Softball. Groton Area Tigers Varsity Softball ran wild on the base paths, accumulating nine stolen bases for the game.

Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones tallied 21 hits in the game. Ingraham went 4-for-4 at the plate and led the team with six runs batted in. Frankfurth went 5-for-5 at the plate to lead Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones in hits. Sass, Ramirez, and Nichols each collected multiple hits for Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones. Hofer paced Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones with four walks. Overall, the team had patience at the plate, tallying 14 walks for the game. Ramirez, Vandersnick, Ingraham, Hofer, Frankfurth, and Repp each stole multiple bases for Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones. Clark/Willow Lake Varsity Cyclones ran wild on the base paths, accumulating 18 stolen bases for the game.

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Groton Area middle schoolers shine at Sisseton meet

SISSETON — The Groton Area middle school track teams turned in a strong all-around performance Monday in Sisseton, highlighted by a team championship in the 8th grade boys division and a runner-up finish from the 7th grade girls.

The Groton Area 8th grade boys captured the team title with 131 points, outpacing host Sisseton's 112. The Tigers piled up points with dominant efforts on the track, sweeping multiple relays and earning several individual wins. The 7th grade boys placed fourth with 29 points in a meet won by Sisseton.

Leading the way for Groton's 8th grade boys was Ryder Schwan, who sprinted to victories in both the 100 meters (12.72) and 200 meters (26.62). He also anchored the winning sprint medley relay team alongside Ivan Schwan, Trey Tietz and Liam Lord, finishing in 2:00.54.

The Kucker brothers also delivered standout performances. Kyson Kucker won both the 400 meters (58.71) and 800 meters (2:29.24), while Keegan Kucker took second in the 400 (1:02.03). The duo teamed with Trayce Schelle and Ryder Schwan to win the 4x100 relay in 50.96, and later joined forces with Trey Tietz and Liam Lord to claim the 4x400 relay title (4:20.38). Groton also added a win in the 4x200 relay behind Keegan Kucker, Liam Johnson, Wyatt Morehouse and Ivan Schwan (1:56.97).

Additional top finishes came from Trayce Schelle, who placed third in the 200 (29.22) and cleared 4 feet, 10 inches for second in the high jump. Liam Johnson led the field events with a winning toss of 33-8 in the shot put and added a fifth-place finish in the discus (89-0).

In the 7th grade boys division, Ivan Schwan was a double winner, taking the 100 meters (13.49) and 200 meters (28.37). Quinton Flores added a third-place finish in the 400 meters (1:08.60) and later placed third in the 800 meters against 8th grade competition (2:47.30).

On the girls side, the Groton Area 7th grade team placed second with 114 points, while the 8th grade girls finished third with 48 points.

The 7th grade girls were especially strong on the track, sweeping all three relays. The quartet of Brynley Dunker, Mya Moody, Zoe Olson and Charli Jacobsen won the 4x100 relay (1:02.96), while Dunker, Jacobsen, Olson and Moody also captured the 4x200 (2:12.87). In the 4x400 relay, Taylor Fliehs, Dunker, Rowan Hanson and Andi Iverson finished first in 5:10.68.

Individually, Zoe Olson led a 1-2 Groton finish in the 200 meters, winning in 34.22, just ahead of Shealee Gilchrist (34.25). Taylor Fliehs claimed the 400 meters (1:12.76) and placed second in the 800 (2:53.70). Charli Jacobsen dominated the hurdles, winning both the 100-meter hurdles (19.31) and 200-meter hurdles (37.21), while Addison Steffes placed second in the 100 hurdles and third in the 200 hurdles.

For the 8th grade girls, Rowan Patterson and Kinley Sandness went 1-2 in the 100 meters with times of 14.37 and 14.56, respectively. That duo also teamed with Andi Iverson and Libby Johnson to win both the 4x100 relay (58.61) and 4x200 relay (2:02.91). The same group added another victory in the sprint medley relay, finishing in 2:14.11.

Boy's Division

Boys 7th Grade Team Points: 1. Sisseton 201, 2. Wilmot 60, 3. Browns Valley 36, 4. Groton Area 29, 5. Tri-State 18, 6. Hankinson 1.

Boys 8th Grade Team Points: 1. Groton Area 131, 2. Sisseton 112, 3. Tri-State 64, 4. Hankinson 49, 5. Tiospa Zina 38, 6. Browns Valley 10.

100 Meters 7th Grade: 1. Ivan Schwan, 13.49; 5. Quinton Flores, 14.53; 17. Weston Kettner, 20.00; 18. Titan Johnson, 20.32.

100 Meters 8th Grade: 1. Ryder Schwan, 12.72; 7. Trayce Schelle, 13.85; 8. Trey Tietz, 14.03; 9. Liam Lord, 14.13; 15. Wyatt Morehouse, 15.82.

200 Meters 7th Grade: 1. Ivan Schwan, 28.37; 10. Titan Johnson, 43.91; 11. Weston Kettner, 46.57.

200 Meters 8th Grade: 1. Ryder Schwan, 26.62; 3. Trayce Schelle, 29.22; 10. Wyatt Morehouse, 33.63.

400 Meters 7th Grade: 3. Quinton Flores, 1:08.60.

400 Meters 8th Grade: 1. Kyson Kucker, 58.71; 2. Keegan Kucker, 1:02.03; 5. Trey Tietz, 1:04.13.

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800 Meters 8th Grade: 1. Kyson Kucker, 2:29.24; 3. Quinton Flores, 2:47.30.

4x100 Relay 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Keegan Kucker, Kyson Kucker, Trayce Schelle, Ryder Schwan), 50.96; 3. Groton: (Gavin Hanten, Liam Johnson, Wyatt Morehouse, Bentley Harms), 1:00.07.

4x200 Relay 8th Grade:

1. Groton: (Keegan Kucker, Liam Johnson, Wyatt Morehouse, Ivan Schwan), 1:56.97.

4x400 Relay 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Keegan Kucker, Trey Tietz, Liam Lord, Kyson Kucker), 4:20.38.

SMR 800m - [100-100-200-400] 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Ryder Schwan, Ivan Schwan, Trey Tietz, Liam Lord), 2:00.54.

Shot Put - 8lb 8th Grade: 1. Liam Johnson, 33' 8"; 8. Bentley Harms, 23' 6"; 9. Gavin Hanten, 22' 11".

Discus - 1kg 8th Grade:

5. Liam Johnson, 89' 0"; 9. Bentley Harms, 76' 2"; 12. Gavin Hanten, 70' 9".

High Jump 8th Grade:

2. Trayce Schelle, J 4' 10".

Long Jump 7th Grade:

10. Weston Kettner, 8' 0.5"; 11. Titan Johnson, 6' 0".

Girl's Division

Girls 7th Grade Team Points: 1. Sisseton 156, 2. Groton Area 114, 3. Browns Valley 76, 4. Tri-State 55, 5. Wilmot 39.

Girls 8th Grade Team Points: 1. Sisseton 238, 2. Wilmot 91, 3. Groton Area 48, 4. Tiospa Zina 24, 5. Tri-State 8.

100 Meters 7th Grade: 4. Shealee Gilchrist, 16.10; 9. Harley Furman, 17.14; 11. Gracie Borg, 17.25; 17. Hadley Heilman, 17.85; 22. Lennox Locke, 22.52.

100 Meters 8th Grade: 1. Rowan Patterson, 14.37; 2. Kinley Sandness, 14.56

200 Meters 7th Grade: 1. Zoe Olson, 34.22; 2. Shealee Gilchrist, 34.25; 8. Gracie Borg, 36.72; 10. Harley Furman, 36.92; 12. Lennox Locke, 37.50.

400 Meters 7th Grade: 1. Taylor Fliehs, 1:12.76; 5. Rowan Hanson, 1:24.63.

800 Meters 7th Grade: 2. Taylor Fliehs, 2:53.70.

100m Hurdles - 30" / 0.762m 7th Grade: 1. Charli Jacobsen, 19.31; 2. Addison Steffes, 21.44; 6. Hallie Perkins, 24.36.

200m Hurdles - 30" / 0.762m 7th Grade: 1. Charli Jacobsen, 37.21; 3. Addison Steffes, 38.96; 4. Hallie Perkins, 48.08.

4x100 Relay 7th Grade: 1. Groton: (Brynlee Dunker, Mya Moody, Zoe Olson, Charli Jacobsen), 1:02.96.

4x100 Relay 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Kinley Sandness, Andi Iverson, Rowan Patterson, Libby Johnson), 58.61.

4x200 Relay 7th Grade: 1. Groton: (Brynlee Dunker, Charli Jacobsen, Zoe Olson, Mya Moody), 2:12.87.

4x200 Relay 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Libby Johnson, Andi Iverson, Rowan Patterson, Kinley Sandness), 2:02.91.

4x400 Relay 7th Grade: 1. Groton: (Taylor Fliehs, Brynlee Dunker, Rowan Hanson, Andi Iverson), 5:10.68.

SMR 800m - [100-100-200-400] 8th Grade: 1. Groton: (Rowan Patterson, Libby Johnson, Kinley Sandness, Andi Iverson), 2:14.11.

Shot Put - 6lb 7th Grade: 12. Lillian Davis, 19' 4"; 14. Hadley Heilman, 18' 7".

Shot Put - 6lb 8th Grade: 11. Andi Gauer, 18' 4".

Discus - 1kg 7th Grade: 7. Lillian Davis, 45' 7".

Discus - 1kg 8th Grade: 8. Andi Gauer, 47' 4".

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The graphic features a central illustration of a pink and white ice cream truck with a red and white striped awning. Above the truck is a pink sign that says "Ice Cream" with a small ice cream cone icon. The background is light blue with colorful confetti. The words "ICE CREAM" are written in large, bubbly pink letters, with "605 Scoops" written in yellow cursive over them. Two large ice cream cones with yellow, pink, and blue scoops are on either side of the truck. Below the truck, the text "WEBER LANDSCAPING GREENHOUSE" is in a white box, and the event details are in a light blue box.

ICE CREAM
605 Scoops

Ice Cream

**WEBER LANDSCAPING
GREENHOUSE**

**MAY 5TH | TUESDAY | 3-7PM
620 WEST THIRD AVE
GROTON
FLOWERS & ICE CREAM!!**



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

US Supreme Court decision on rulemaking won't reopen SD death penalty case, appeals court says

BY: JOHN HULT

A U.S. Supreme Court decision on bureaucratic overreach doesn't give South Dakota's lone death row inmate another chance to argue for a new trial or sentence, according to a ruling from the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals released on Monday.

Briley Piper, 46, was sentenced to death by a judge for the murder of Chester Allan Poage. Piper, Elijah Page and Darrell Hoadley tortured and killed Poage in 2000 near Spearfish. Page was executed in 2007; Hoadley remains in prison with a life sentence.

South Dakota has had as many as five people on death row since the punishment was reinstituted after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled it constitutional in 1976 in the case of Gregg vs. Georgia. Page was the first person executed in the state after that ruling, and four other men have been put to death since.

Piper successfully argued to have his death sentence from a judge reviewed by a jury, which again sentenced him to death in 2011.

Piper has since lost appeals at the state Supreme Court and in U.S. District Court. Last year, he again appealed to federal court to argue that his sentence ought to be thrown out.

He relied in part on the U.S. Supreme Court's Loper Bright decision. That opinion gave judges greater authority to challenge bureaucratic regulatory decisions. The landmark decision upended a four-decade precedent that courts should defer to federal agencies' interpretation of laws such as the Clean Air Act or Clean Water Act.

Piper's attorneys said Loper Bright also gave federal judges more leeway in reviewing state court decisions in death penalty cases. Federal law limits how deeply federal judges can delve into questions of constitutional rights in death row cases after state courts address them, but Piper's lawyers — along with lawyers for a handful of other death row inmates around the U.S. — have argued that state courts are akin to bureaucratic rulemakers and that their rulings should be fully open to scrutiny.

U.S. District Judge Roberto Lange rejected that argument in Piper's case in March 2025, a month after his lawyers raised it. Piper appealed to the 8th U.S. Circuit.

In its Monday ruling, the appeals court ruled against Piper's Loper Bright claim.

"Every court to address this claim disagrees" with the position argued by Piper's attorneys, the ruling says, listing nine separate death penalty cases where similar arguments were made.

The 8th Circuit also rejected five other assertions from Piper, including that his 2001 guilty plea wasn't voluntary and that his defense lawyers failed to consider the possibility that Piper suffers from fetal alcohol spectrum disorder — his lawyers did explore the issue, the appeals court found.

Piper could appeal the 8th Circuit's decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. His attorneys did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley, whose office represents the state in Piper's appeal, applauded the decision in a Monday statement.

"Briley Piper has never accepted responsibility for his actions and has consistently tried to shift blame onto others for his sentence," Jackley wrote. "The 8th Circuit's rejection of his appeal marks an important step toward final justice for Chester Poage and his family."

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.

Education board strips Common Core math in favor of 'simplified' standards

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER

The South Dakota Board of Education Standards unanimously approved revisions to the state's math standards Monday in Rapid City, even as a math teacher flagged some problems state officials acknowledged they'll have to fix.

The board, the state Department of Education and math educators throughout the state have gone back and forth over the last six months on the standards. The department accepted more than 50 changes to the original proposal over that timeframe.

Crystal McMachen, a middle school math teacher in Rapid City, told board members she worried the standards were oversimplified and rushed, leading to errors in the final product. She flagged three errors at the meeting, including duplicated standards, inconsistent wording and misalignment between grade levels.

"If I found these errors in an hour on a Saturday — and this was on a Saturday — I can't believe these have been combed through," McMachen said. "So, I'm really urging you not to adopt these standards. They are not ready, and South Dakota is better than this."

South Dakota Department of Education Secretary Joe Graves told the board the current standards, which were copied from the national Common Core standards, are "unnecessarily complex" in some areas. The new standards don't oversimplify the standards, he said.

"It simply changes the language so that it is heard and understood by more people," Graves said.

A 20-person revision committee reviewed the original proposal after it was developed by a statewide advisory group last year. The proposal pulls from other states' standards across the nation, and from the Archimedes standards, which were written by an assistant professor at Hillsdale College. The private Christian college in Michigan was also involved in South Dakota's revised social studies standards, approved in 2023 and implemented this school year.

Sharon Vestal, a mathematics professor at South Dakota State University and president of the South Dakota Council of Teachers of Mathematics, attended every standards hearing held across the state for the new math standards. She said the standards fundamentally "prioritize procedures over concepts" and make mathematics "less precise" in the quest to make the standards easier for parents and elementary educators to understand.

"Mathematics is a language. It is universal, structured and exact," Vestal said. "Like any language, it has vocabulary, grammar and syntax. When that structure is removed, meaning is lost."

Earlier in the standards revision process, Graves told board members South Dakota students "lack significant progress" on math testing since the COVID-19 pandemic, which he attributed to the current standards. About 44% of students were proficient or above on the state test annually over the last five years, he said.

Math standards alone won't raise test scores, said Shannon Malone, the department's director of learning and instruction, while introducing the latest version of the standards.

"It's clear that we also need all our educators to increase efforts and attention to mathematics," Malone said. "Achievement requires excellent instruction in the classroom, parental support, professional development at all levels, solid instructional materials, school and district support."

Malone added that a "more simplified set of standards and robust set of supports" could help South Dakota students "realize their true potential in math."

The department accepted more than 80% of the actionable changes recommended by opponents throughout the process.

Board President Steve Perkins acknowledged that the adopted standards would need minor corrections, but wanted to approve the standards so the state Department of Education would "move forward" with implementation.

Graves told the board that the department can bring back errors that "are not content changes" to be fixed at a later date. Addressing McMachen's concerns about the misalignment would be a "substantive change," Graves said.

"We can look at those and come back to you at a later time, but at this point we'd like to get the stan-

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dards approved," Graves said.

The exchange was evidence of a rushed process, Vestal told South Dakota Searchlight after the meeting. "I suspect there are a lot of issues within the standards," Vestal said. "I'm pretty sure there are more than the ones Crystal pointed out today. I want to make sure if we're using these standards for multiple years that they're done right."

Vestal said the misalignment between concepts taught at different grade levels will "cause a lot of problems" within districts. As a university instructor, she plans to keep an eye on whether incoming students will be prepared for college-level courses.

"Mathematics is just too important to not do it right," Vestal said.

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.

Communities receive share of \$200,000 in tourism grants from state

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

Forty South Dakota communities will receive a share of \$200,000 from a Tourism Advertising Promotion grant program.

Gov. Larry Rhoden announced the awards Monday during a National Travel and Tourism Week visit to Mount Rushmore National Memorial.

"Our goal is to keep visitors in our state longer. That way they spend more dollars and they benefit our economy," Rhoden said. "These grants will help our communities tell their stories, attract visitors and grow their local economies."

The grant program provides marketing funds for tourism events such as festivals, concerts, rodeos and powwows. Grants range from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

Award recipients include:

Storybook Land Festival, Aberdeen; Harvest Stroll Fall Festival, Aberdeen; Christmas in Arlington, Arlington; Salute To Ellsworth, Box Elder; Northern Fort Playhouse, Britton; Anderson Plaza Summer Performance Series, Brookings; Balloons Over Brookings, Brookings; Celebrate Canton 160th: Honoring the Past, Shaping the Future, Canton; America's 250th Celebration Week: Chamberlain Oacoma, Chamberlain; Crystal Springs Rodeo, Clear Lake; Custer Restaurant Week, Custer; St. Patrick's Weekend Celebration, Deadwood; Homestake Volksmarch, Deadwood; Big STEM Day, Ellsworth AFB; Wild West Days, Wheels and Wings, Faulkton; Boots & Roots: 4th in Fort Pierre, Fort Pierre; Jesse James Days, Garretson; Rooted: A Prairie Arts Weekend, Geddes; Light Up Hill City, Hill City; The Natural History Museum of the Black Hills Grand Opening, Hill City; Badlands Astronomy Festival, Interior; Neutrino Day, Lead; City of Lead 150th Anniversary Celebration, Lead; Harvest Festival, Lennox; Palace City Pre-Sturgis Party, Mitchell; Mobridge Indian Relay Races, Mobridge; Turner County Fair, Parker; Back Forty Adventure Farm and Sunflower Experience, Pierpont; HWY 1804 Pick-Your-Own Pumpkin Patch, Pierre; Pollock, SD 125th Celebration, Pollock; Raymond Redwing Day, Raymond; Redfield's Harvest Fest, Redfield; 150th Annual Rosebud Sioux Tribal Fair & Rodeo- Battle of Little Big Horn Victory Commemoration, Rosebud;; Wings, Wheels and Meals, Spearfish; Black Hills Mountain Bike Classic, Sturgis; Tabor Czech Days, Tabor; An Evening with Rachel Barton Pine, Stradivari, and Stainer, Vermillion; 2nd Annual Harvest Bash, Webster; Ribfest, Wessington Springs; Kickoff to Christmas in Yankton, Yankton.

Funds for the grants come from the Department of Tourism's budget, funded by the 1.5% tourism promotion tax. The tax applies year-round to businesses including hotels, campgrounds, visitor attractions, vehicle rentals and spectator events, and applies during the summer tourist season to some additional visitor-intensive businesses.

US Supreme Court issues temporary stay preserving nationwide abortion drug access

BY: KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS

The U.S. Supreme Court issued a temporary stay on an appeals court ruling from Friday that was blocking remote access to an abortion drug, restoring access until at least May 11.

The administrative stay, issued by Justice Samuel Alito, pauses Friday's decision by the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals. That ruling blocked a 2023 rule adopted by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration allowing mifepristone, one of two drugs used to terminate a pregnancy before 10 weeks and to treat miscarriages, to be prescribed without an in-person visit with a health care provider and also allowed it to be mailed to recipients in states with abortion bans.

"The administrative stay is temporary, and I am confident life and law will win in the end," said Louisiana Republican Attorney General Liz Murrill in a statement.

Thirteen states have near-total abortion bans, including Louisiana. Murrill sued the FDA in October, saying the rule undermines the state's laws and causes financial harm because the state paid \$92,000 in Medicaid bills for two women who needed emergency care in 2025 from complications related to mifepristone.

In the years since the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision allowing states to regulate abortion access, telehealth prescriptions of abortion medication have become increasingly popular, with more than 27% of all abortions provided that way in 2025, according to data from the Society of Family Planning.

"While this is a positive short-term development, no one can rest easy when our ability to get this safe, effective medication for abortion and miscarriage care still hangs in the balance," said Julia Kaye, senior staff attorney for the Reproductive Freedom Project at the American Civil Liberties Union, in a statement. "The Supreme Court needs to put an end to this baseless attack on our reproductive freedom, once and for all."

The case could follow a similar pattern to one that played out in 2023, after U.S. District Court Judge Matthew Kacsmaryk of Texas issued a ruling that would have revoked access to the abortion drug mifepristone altogether.

The U.S. Supreme Court intervened shortly after that ruling and kept mifepristone available while the case proceeded in the 5th Circuit appeals court, which eventually decided that more restrictions were warranted, but not pulling the drug's approval. The Supreme Court officially took the case several months later, and unanimously ruled in June 2024 that the plaintiffs suing the FDA did not have standing, keeping access to mifepristone intact.

Responses from the attorneys in the latest case are expected to be filed with the Supreme Court by Thursday, according to Alito's order.

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.

Federal agencies haven't started on Trump order restricting voting by mail, DOJ says

BY: JONATHAN SHORMAN

Federal agencies say they have yet to take steps to implement President Donald Trump's executive order restricting voting by mail, as the Department of Justice fights a Democrat-led lawsuit against it.

The Justice Department late Friday filed documents asking a federal judge to dismiss the lawsuit and to not block the executive order on a preliminary basis because the order hasn't been implemented. The filings marked the Trump administration's first effort to defend the order in court.

The March 31 order directs the creation of state citizenship lists and restricts how ballots can be sent

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through the mail, instructions that Democrats and election experts have called unconstitutional and illegal. It comes as Trump has seized on the specter of noncitizen voting, an extremely rare phenomenon, to demand sweeping voting restrictions.

In its Friday filing, the Justice Department sought to persuade Judge Carl J. Nichols in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia that a legal challenge is premature.

"If and when the Executive Branch takes some action to implement the Executive Order" then a lawsuit can be brought, Stephen Pezzi, a senior trial counsel in the Justice Department's Civil Division, wrote in a court filing.

Nichols has scheduled a hearing for May 14.

No action taken, officials tell court

The DOJ's argument relies on statements by key federal officials that the agencies affected by the order — the Department of Homeland Security, the Social Security Administration and the U.S. Postal Service — are still deliberating over how to carry out Trump's directive. In declarations filed in court on Friday, officials at all three agencies say final decisions haven't been made.

"As the Postal Service is still in the deliberation phase of determining how to implement the Executive Order, we have not yet published a proposed rule, nor have we reached any final decisions about the substance of a proposed rule," Steven Monteith, the Postal Service's chief customer and marketing officer, wrote.

The executive order directs the postmaster general, who leads the Postal Service, to propose a rule that would block states from sending ballots through the mail except to voters on lists provided by the state to the Postal Service.

The order also instructs Homeland Security to compile lists of voting-age U.S. citizens in each state with the help of the Social Security Administration. Democrats allege the Trump administration is building an unauthorized national voter list, despite the U.S. Constitution giving states the responsibility of running federal elections.

Michael Mayhew, deputy associate director of the Immigration Records and Identity Services Directorate within U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, wrote in a declaration that the agency "has not yet begun preparation" of state citizenship lists. USCIS is a subsidiary of Homeland Security.

At the Social Security Administration, Jessica Burns MacBride, head of program policy and data exchange, wrote that the agency hasn't made any final decisions "about its role" in implementing the executive order.

Focus on Postal Service

The order's opponents are especially watching the Postal Service's response, since it is an independent corporation overseen by its Board of Governors — not the White House.

Democrats and experts on postal law say Trump has no authority to order the postmaster general to take any action. The Board of Governors hires and fires the postmaster general, and board members serve seven-year terms, helping insulate them from political pressure.

Last month, 37 Democratic U.S. senators signed a letter to Postmaster General David Steiner and the Board of Governors urging the Postal Service to not implement the executive order. The senators pointed out the president has no authority to regulate federal elections or the Postal Service.

"Like the President, the Postal Service has no authority to regulate the manner of voting in federal elections, nor who is eligible to vote by mail in such elections," the letter says.

The Postal Service is a named defendant in the lawsuit filed by Democratic groups and leaders in Congress.

The Justice Department, which is representing the Postal Service, sidestepped questions about the president's authority in Friday's court filing. It called arguments about Trump's authority over the Postal Service an "abstract legal question" that can't be resolved before the agency takes action.

Still, Monteith appeared to nod to concerns within the Postal Service over the order's legality while avoiding specifics.

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"I am aware that deliberations are currently ongoing within the Postal Service regarding the implementation of the Executive Order," Monteith wrote, adding that the deliberations include "legal considerations" regarding the order.

Unitary executive theory

The executive order faces at least five lawsuits, including a challenge brought by a coalition of Democratic state attorneys general led by California's Rob Bonta. The Justice Department has not yet filed court documents defending the order in that case.

For their part, Republican attorneys general — led by Catherine Hanaway of Missouri — are defending the executive order. Their position, if adopted by courts, would give Trump sweeping control over the Postal Service.

In a May 1 court filing, the GOP attorneys general argue those challenging the executive order are unlikely to succeed in showing that Trump cannot direct the Postal Service to propose a rule. They say that federal law doesn't specifically prohibit the president from ordering the postmaster general to put forward rules on mail ballots — and it's unconstitutional if it does.

"The Constitution vests the entirety of the executive power in the President," The Republican coalition says, articulating a view commonly called the unitary executive theory: the idea that Congress cannot constitutionally create agencies that exist outside of White House control.

The Republican states involved also include Alabama, Florida, Indiana, Kansas, Louisiana, Montana, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina, South Dakota and Texas.

Democrats and many constitutional law experts reject the unitary executive theory, though it has gained support among Trump-aligned Republicans as the White House seeks greater control over independent agencies.

If the U.S. Supreme Court eventually greenlights Trump's efforts to control the Postal Service and other independent agencies, it would mark a "tremendous" change in how the federal government operates, James Campbell Jr., an attorney in the Washington, D.C., area who consults on postal law, said in an interview last month.

"What you're basically talking about is redesigning the U.S. government," Campbell said.

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.

Gas prices jump again as Trump turns to new plan for Strait of Hormuz

BY: ASHLEY MURRAY

WASHINGTON — Americans saw prices at the pump sharply rise in recent days as the nationwide average cost for a gallon of regular gas shot up 38 cents over the past week, according to GasBuddy.

The motor club AAA clocked the average price of regular gas at \$4.46 per gallon and diesel at \$5.64, as Iran and the U.S. remain at a stalemate over opening the Strait of Hormuz, where one-fifth of the world's petroleum passed through prior to the war.

"Gasoline prices rose in every state over the last week, with some of the most significant and fastest increases concentrated in the Great Lakes, where states like Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois saw sharp spikes, while Wisconsin experienced more modest gains," Patrick De Haan, head of petroleum analysis at GasBuddy, said in a statement Monday.

"At the same time, diesel prices surged to new records in parts of the region, with some areas touching the \$6-per-gallon mark," he added.

De Haan said refinery outages drove prices up, but other factors like Middle East oil output and President

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Donald Trump's plan to free oil tankers stuck in the Persian Gulf could help.

"However, with so many moving pieces, the outlook remains highly fluid, and while some localized relief may emerge, broader price volatility is likely to persist in the near term," he said.

Trump's approval ratings, particularly on everyday costs, are sinking. About two-thirds of Americans disapprove of Trump's handling of the cost of living, and 66% disapprove of the president's handling of the Iran war, according to a Washington Post/ABC News/Ipsos poll published Sunday.

Trump's overall disapproval of 62% was the highest the survey recorded since he first took office in 2017. The nationwide average for a gallon of regular gas was \$4.10 one month ago. Last year at this time, it was \$3.16, according to AAA.

Brent crude oil, the international standard, jumped to \$114.90 a barrel Monday, the second-highest price jump since Russia attacked Ukraine in 2022.

During a small business summit at the White House on Monday, Trump said the war "is working out very nicely."

"They thought that energy would be at \$300 right, \$300 a barrel. And it's like at 100 and I think going down," Trump said, incorrectly describing the current trend in prices. "And I see it going down very substantially when this is over."

Navy escorts through strait

Trump on Sunday announced "Project Freedom," an operation to guide cargo ships and oil tankers through the strait with the guidance of the U.S. Navy.

The "humanitarian gesture," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform, is "merely meant to free up people, companies, and Countries that have done absolutely nothing wrong — They are victims of circumstance."

Some 20,000 merchant ship crew members have been stranded in the Persian Gulf during the ongoing war, according to United Nations estimates at the end of March.

Trump threatened that Iran would "be dealt with forcefully" if they interfered with the operation.

As of Monday, U.S. Central Command said two U.S.-flagged merchant ships had been escorted through the strait. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps disputed the claim as "baseless and completely false," according to a statement reported by Iranian state media.

"Any other maritime movements that contradict the stated principles of the IRGC Navy will face serious risks, and any violating vessels will be forcefully stopped," the statement read.

War continues

The IRGC also claimed to have hit two U.S. military vessels in the strait Monday, a claim categorically denied by U.S. Central Command.

U.S. Central Command's Admiral Brad Cooper told reporters on a press call Monday that the IRGC launched multiple cruise missiles and drones at merchant ships that "we are protecting."

"We have defeated each and every one of those threats through the clinical application of defensive munitions," he told reporters.

U.S. Apache and Seahawk helicopters sank six small Iranian boats Monday, according to Cooper.

The United Arab Emirates defense ministry reported Monday it was intercepting Iranian missiles and drones over various parts of the country. Iran's air strikes on its U.S. ally neighbors have largely quieted in recent weeks.

U.K. Maritime Trade Organization, which reports on security conditions, has kept the strait's regional threat level as "critical."

Trump said Saturday he was reviewing a new deal from Iran to end the war. Talks have failed since the U.S. and Iran announced a tenuous ceasefire on April 7.

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

Supreme Court voting rights ruling set to reshape local power from statehouses to school boards

South Dakota Democratic leader predicts negative consequences for Native American voters

BY: ANNA CLAIRE VOLLERS

The U.S. Supreme Court's new decision gutting a key provision of the federal Voting Rights Act clears the way for state officials to drastically reshape not only Congress but also state legislatures, county commissions, city councils and even local school boards.

The ruling, released last week in a case called *Louisiana v. Callais*, dismantled some of the final guardrails protecting the electoral power of Black, Hispanic and other racial minority voters that had been enshrined in the Voting Rights Act, a landmark 1965 federal civil rights law that bars racial discrimination in voting access.

The 6-3 decision all but nullifies a provision called Section 2 that required states to draw electoral maps to give racial minority voters the opportunity to elect their chosen candidates.

And while intense national attention on the case's fallout has focused on the U.S. House as the 2026 midterm congressional elections loom, the new ruling also applies to state legislative districts and maps for county or municipal elections.

Those localized changes are just hovering further down the road.

"While everyone has been focusing on what this means for the power in Congress, there's a whole other sector of power that it changes," said Davante Lewis, an elected member of the Louisiana Public Service Commission and one of the litigants in a case that pushed Louisiana to create the congressional maps that were eventually struck down in the *Callais* ruling.

"This is a decision on who gets to serve on a school board, who gets to serve on a city council, who gets representation in the judiciary," Lewis said.

Electoral maps are typically redrawn every 10 years after a census, but the Trump administration has encouraged Republican-led states to redraw districts to favor the GOP, a controversial move that has prompted some Democratic-led states to retaliate with gerrymandering of their own.

"But after 2030, I think we're definitely going to see the impact of the *Callais* decision at the state level," said Travis Crum, a law professor at Washington University in St. Louis whose research focuses on voting rights, race and federalism.

Effects across the South

Critics of the ruling say it will fundamentally dilute the voting and governing power of Black and other minority citizens up and down the ballot, particularly in the South. There, many of the seats held by Black elected officials are in so-called opportunity districts that were created after the Voting Rights Act to allow Black and other minority voters to elect their preferred candidates.

"On the congressional level, we're in this race to the bottom of redistricting, but when it comes to the state legislative level, we'll have to wait and see," Crum said.

In 10 state legislatures across the South, Republicans could gain more than 190 seats currently held by Democrats, most of them Black representatives in majority-minority districts, according to an analysis released in December by voting rights groups Fair Fight Action and Black Voters Matter Fund. At the federal level, one analysis from *The New York Times* found that Democrats stand to lose a dozen U.S. House seats across the South.

In the hours after the Supreme Court ruling, Republicans across the nation began calling for maps to be redrawn, particularly in states where courts had forced them to create districts where Black or other racial minorities made up the majority of residents.

"These lines should all be colorblind. You should never be basing a decision on race," said Arizona Republican state Sen. Warren Petersen, who's president of the state Senate and running for attorney general.

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He told Stateline he believes both congressional and state legislative maps should be redrawn in Arizona — even if it takes litigation.

Mississippi Republican Gov. Tate Reeves called a special legislative session set for later this month, when he wants lawmakers to draw new election maps for Mississippi state Supreme Court districts. A federal judge in Mississippi will have to quickly decide whether to adopt a new map for some special elections scheduled for November.

Democrats, too, took action. In Illinois, lawmakers backtracked on a proposed constitutional amendment that would have directed lawmakers to consider race in drawing district lines, a provision taken directly from the Voting Rights Act. Instead, Illinois Senate President Don Harmon, a Democrat, told Capitol News Illinois that lawmakers want to learn more about the ruling before putting such an amendment on a ballot for voters to decide, to prevent unintended consequences that could undermine voting rights.

In many states, Republicans are focusing first on congressional redistricting. Louisiana Republican Gov. Jeff Landry postponed his state's U.S. House primaries even though absentee voting has already begun. In Alabama, Republican Gov. Kay Ivey called a special state legislative session aiming to move the state's May 19 primary in at least a handful of districts. Prominent Georgia Republicans were also calling for their state's political maps to be redrawn, though GOP Gov. Brian Kemp said in a statement that it's too late to do that this year.

And in North Dakota, the ruling leaves a tribal redistricting case in limbo. Tribes had used Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act to sue the state over a legislative district map the North Dakota legislature approved in 2021.

Gerrymandering for partisan advantage is legal at the federal level, though some states do have their own laws restricting or prohibiting it. In Florida, Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis is arguing the Supreme Court ruling invalidates voter-approved amendments that prevent the state from gerrymandering districts based on race or political party.

For most states, though, state officials can redraw maps explicitly to favor Republican voters, for example, so long as they don't state their intention to disadvantage voters based on race.

'Ripple like wildfire'

Critics of last week's Callais ruling also worry it will rapidly erode the pipeline that has made it possible for Black and other minority candidates to get elected to office.

"Now, state legislatures can draw maps where they are picking their voters instead of their voters picking them," said Lewis, the Louisiana commissioner. "They can dilute the power of Black and brown people serving in the state legislature, which means there's fewer people to fight a congressional map" that pulls voting power away from minority communities.

He worries that if Black Democratic state lawmakers oppose their white Republican colleagues in legislatures with GOP majorities, those colleagues could redraw maps to eliminate the Black lawmakers' seats, claiming they're doing it only for partisan reasons.

The diluting of minority voting power, he said, "is going to ripple like wildfire."

At the most local level, city councils and county boards typically draw those voting maps, but the ruling could be used to apply to them as well, said Crum, the law professor.

Arizona is one of a handful of states where an independent commission, rather than the state legislature, determines both congressional and legislative districts. Outside of a court order, it can't convene before the turn of the decade.

Petersen, the Arizona state senator, said he's prepared to litigate if the state's redistricting commission doesn't take action to redraw districts that he said are unconstitutionally drawn. He doesn't expect new maps before 2028, though.

"We've heard complaints from constituents that they don't like the way their district was drawn," he said. "We have some people here in Arizona that represent completely far-flung areas.

"I do think you'll get a better outcome on some of these legislative districts" by removing race-based

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districting, he said.

Lawmakers in some states have tried to guard against the loss of federal protections by introducing their own state-level voting rights bills. Ten states have their own versions of the federal Voting Rights Act, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, Virginia and Washington.

Lawmakers in at least 10 other states have introduced such bills this year alone: Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and Vermont.

The new Supreme Court ruling doesn't render those laws unconstitutional, said Crum.

"But people who are seeking to undermine those state Voting Rights Acts are certainly going to rely on some of the themes" of the recent ruling, Crum said. "You might see them try and replicate some of the moves the court made."

SD Democrat predicts impacts for Native Americans FROM SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

A leader in South Dakota's Democratic Party said the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Louisiana v. Calais* could have negative consequences for Native American voters in South Dakota.

State Senate Minority Leader Liz Larson said Native Americans voters "have faced gerrymandered maps designed to dilute their voices."

"This ruling forces our minority communities to rely on legislative goodwill instead of established law," Larson said in a news release. "We have seen this one-party legislature fail those communities time and again."

Larson said South Dakota Democrats "will use every available tool to safeguard free and fair elections for every South Dakotan."

"The right to vote is not partisan," Larson said. "It is the foundation of everything else."

Editor's note: This story has been updated to correct that Maryland has a state-level voting rights law, which was enacted last week.

Stateline reporter Anna Claire Vollers can be reached at avollers@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.

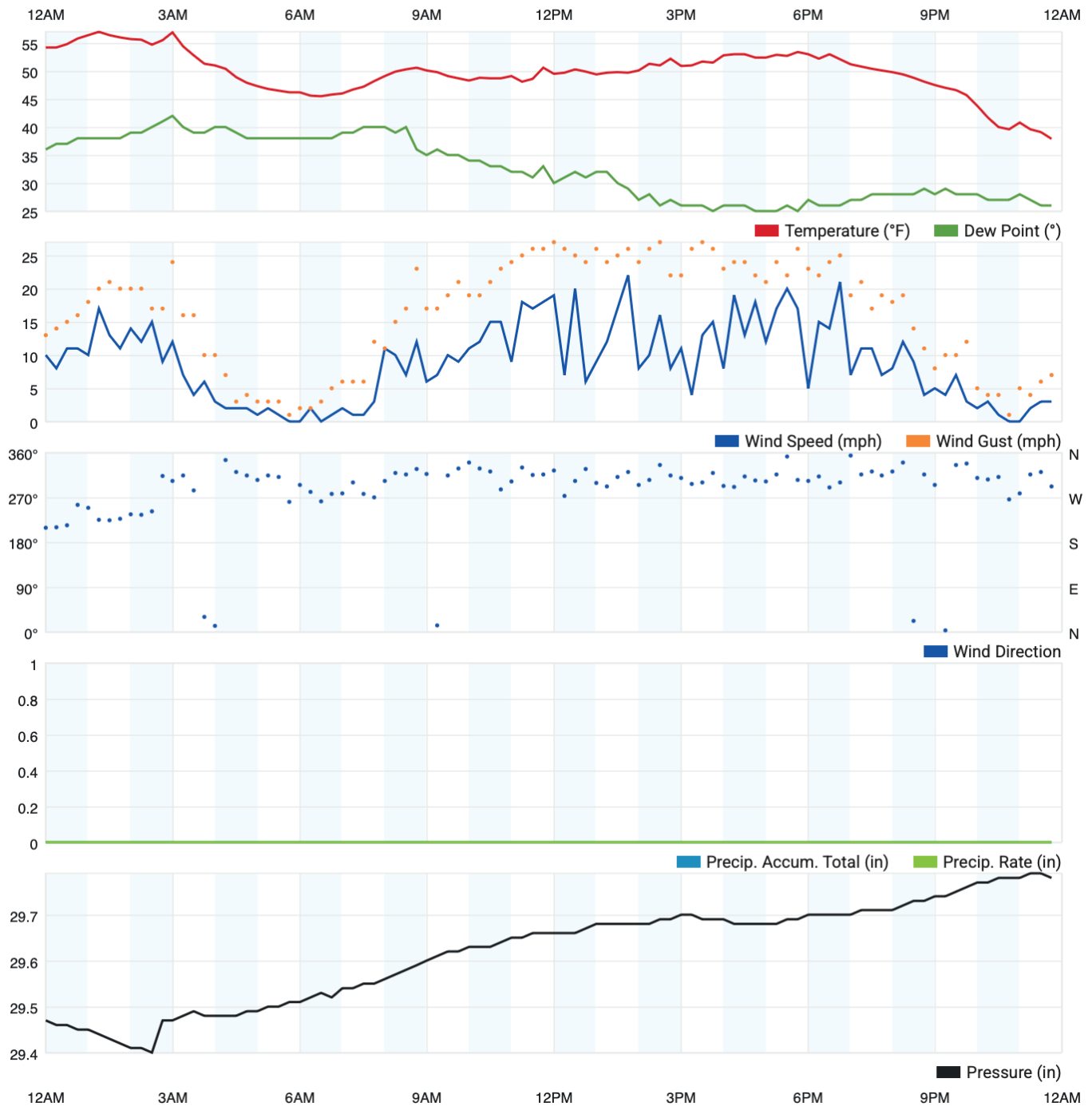
Anna Claire Vollers covers health care for Stateline. She is based in Huntsville, Alabama.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

May 4, 2026



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Today



High: 50 °F

Increasing
Clouds

Tonight



Low: 27 °F

Decreasing
Clouds

Wednesday



High: 52 °F

Mostly Sunny

Wednesday
Night



Low: 30 °F

Mostly Cloudy

Thursday



High: 65 °F

Sunny



Mid Week Forecast

Today



Highs: 44 - 53°F

Lows: 25 - 31°F

Wednesday



Highs: 47 - 56°F

Lows: 28 - 34°F

High pressure centered off well to our northwest will continue to generate northwesterly winds helping to maintain below normal temperatures today and Wednesday. Gusty winds up to 25-30 mph will be possible by midday through this afternoon. Skies will start off clear to partly cloudy but will quickly fill with plenty of cloud cover that will persist through the end of the day. Clouds break up some tonight as temperatures fall into the 20s by Wednesday morning. High temperatures the next couple days will be 15 to 20 degrees below normal for early May. Dry conditions will persist the next couple days with little if any moisture expected through the end of the week.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 57 °F at 1:09 AM

Low Temp: 39 °F at 11:29 PM

Wind: 29 mph at 11:05 AM

Precip: : 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 92 in 2000

Record Low: 24 in 1968

Average High: 66

Average Low: 39

Average Precip in May.: .44

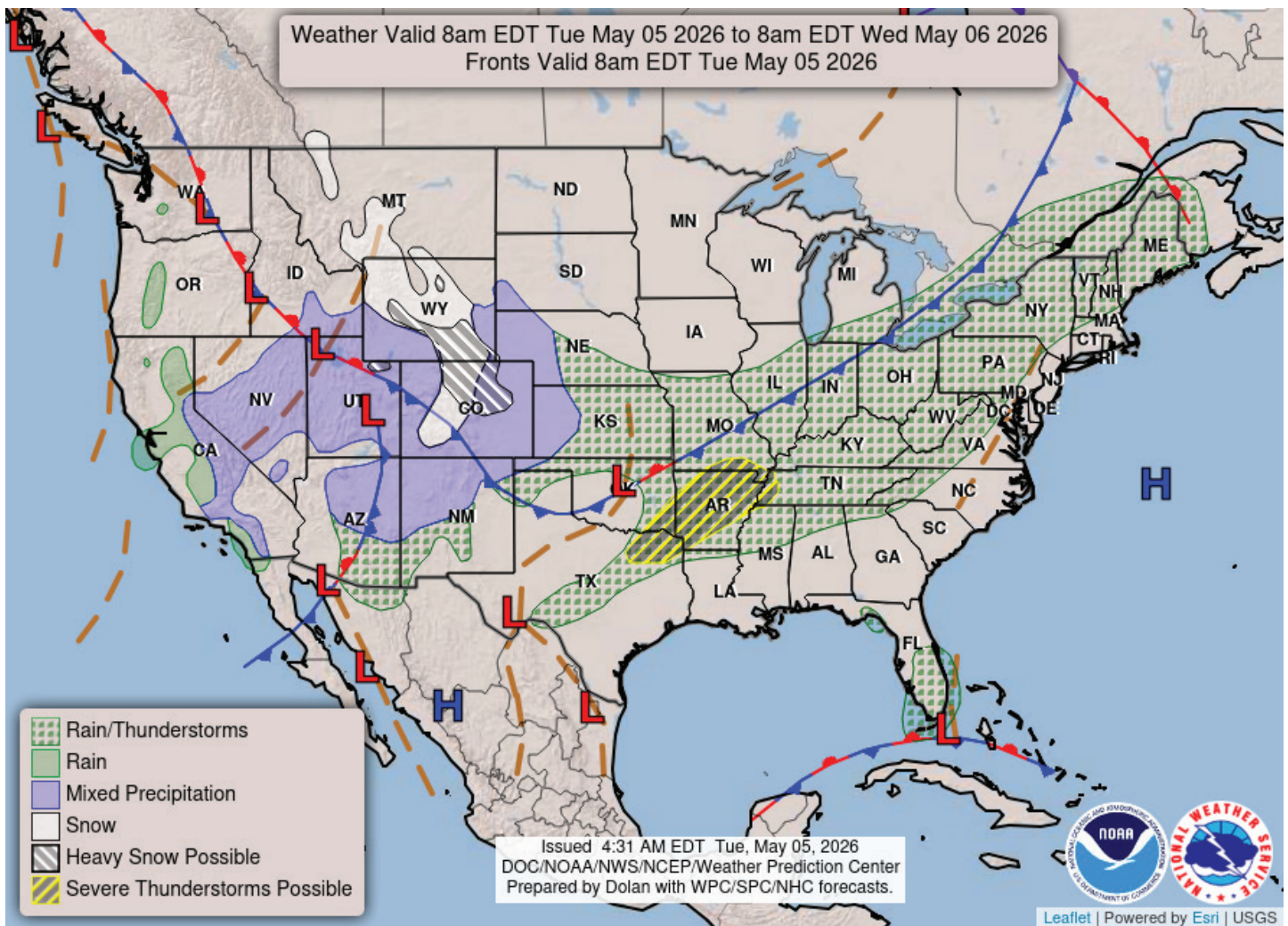
Precip to date in May.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 4.51

Precip Year to Date: 3.12

Sunset Tonight: 8:43 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:16 am



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Today in Weather History

May 5th, 1964: A two-state, F3 tornado moved northeast from 4 miles WNW of Herreid to the south of Streeter, North Dakota, a distance of about 55 miles. The blacktop was ripped for 400 yards on Highway 10, five miles north of Herreid, South Dakota. Two barns were destroyed northeast of Hague, North Dakota, with a dozen cattle killed on one farm. The F3 damage occurred at one farm about midway between Wishek and Hogue. Other barns were destroyed south of Burnstad.

May 5th, 1986: A tight pressure gradient produced winds over 60 mph in west central Minnesota. City officials in Browns Valley estimated a quarter of the city suffered damage. The grandstand's roof was blown off and landed a quarter of a block away. Seventy-five homes and six businesses sustained roof damage. In nearby Dumont, Minnesota, the wind ripped a large grain bin off its foundation and tore open the top of another.

May 5th, 2007: A north-to-south frontal boundary, powerful low-level winds, and abundant gulf moisture resulted in training thunderstorms across parts of central and northeast South Dakota. The training thunderstorms produced torrential rains from 3 to over 10 inches, resulting in widespread flash flooding across Brown, Buffalo, Hand, Spink, Clark, Day, Marshall, and Roberts Counties. The counties of Brown, Buffalo, Clark, Day, Marshall, and Spink were declared disaster areas by President Bush. The Governor also declared a state of emergency for the flooded counties, with Senator John Thune and Representative Stephanie Herseth surveying the flood damage. Eight local, state, and FEMA damage assessment teams came to Brown and other counties.

The flooding affected dozens of cities, with several hundred homes, businesses, and countless roads affected, damaged, or destroyed. Aberdeen received the most extensive damage, especially on the north side of Aberdeen. Seventy-five percent of the homes in Aberdeen received some water in their basements. Basement water levels ranged from a few inches to very deep water all the way up to the first floor of homes. Many homes had the basement walls collapse. The overwhelming load on the drainage systems caused sewage to back up into many homes across the region. Also, many vehicles stalled on the roads, and the flooding damaged many others. Power outages also occurred across the area. Many families were displaced from their homes, and many were living in emergency shelters. Countless homes were condemned across the region, and many were considered unlivable. Thousands of acres of crops were also flooded and damaged with many seeds, and large quantities of fertilizer washed away.

Rainfall amounts from this historic event included 3.65 inches in Miller, 3.82 inches in Britton, 4 inches in Eden, 4.47 inches in Andover, 4.90 inches in Webster, 5.68 inches west of Britton, 5.7 inches in Garden City, and 5.82 inches in Conde. Locations with six or more inches of rain included 6 inches in Langford, 6.33 inches in Gann Valley, 6.72 inches in Clark, 7.41 inches in Ashton, 7.49 inches in Stratford, 7.55 inches near Mellette, 7.97 inches in Aberdeen, 8.02 inches in Redfield, 8.73 inches in Columbia, and 8.74 inches in Groton. Groton's 8.74 inches of rainfall set a new 24-hour state rainfall record. Adding in the rainfall for the previous day, Aberdeen received a total of 9.00 inches; Columbia received a total of 10.19 inches; Groton received an astonishing two-day total rainfall of 10.74 inches.

1917 — The same storm which a day earlier produced eight inches of snow in the Texas panhandle, produced a foot of snow at Denver CO, their heaviest snow of record for the month of May. (David Ludlum)

1930 — The temperature at College Park, VA, soared from 43 degrees to 93 degrees to begin an exceptional heat wave. (Sandra and TI Richard Sanders - 1987)

1987 — Unseasonably hot weather prevailed in the western U.S. A dozen cities in California reported record high temperatures for the date. Afternoon highs of 93 degrees at San Francisco, 98 degrees at San Jose, 100 degrees at Sacramento, and 101 degrees at Redding, were the warmest of record for so early in the season. The high of 94 degrees at Medford OR was also the warmest of record for so early in the season. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 — Parts of the western U.S. were in the midst of a blistering May heat wave. The reading of 100 degrees in Downtown Sacramento CA was their earliest of record. Sacramento CA established daily record highs on nine of eleven days between the 4th and the 14th. (The Weather Channel)



Choosing Love

The most powerful witness we can offer in any circumstance is to love others the way God loves us.

Matthew 5:38-48: 38 "You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.'

39 "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

41 "Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.'

44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

There's much about the kingdom of heaven that doesn't make sense to our earthly way of thinking. For example, today's passage says, "Whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also" (v. 39). Does anyone honestly want to do that? And while we know that God loves us, we're also aware that there's nothing we can do to earn or deserve His love. However, we are called to extend that love to others.

There's a lot of talk about rights these days, but instead of focusing on ourselves, why not follow the Lord's example (Philippians 2:6-8) and lay down our rights? Then we can join Him in a cause greater than our own interests. God is pleased when we show His love to those around us—including those who do us wrong. After all, Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you ... For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matt. 5:44-46).

Before assuming that Jesus' capacity for forgiveness and love is out of reach for human beings, remember that the Holy Spirit dwells in believers, helping us do what seems impossible. As a result, God's love works through us. It's a wonderful calling to show others the boundless care and compassion of the Lord.

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

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WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.04.26

8 17 22 34 39 5

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

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 19 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.01.26

16 21 27 41 61 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$195,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 16 Hrs 4 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.04.26

9 10 12 50 52 3

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$24,710,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 19 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.02.26

6 11 21 22 34

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$79,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 15 Hrs 34 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.04.26

20 32 35 51 60 7

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 3 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
05.04.26

30 36 42 60 63 13

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$30,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 1 Days 16 Hrs 3 Mins 23 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Indigenous people honor and raise awareness for relatives who are missing or have been killed

By SAVANNAH PETERS and NANCY MARIE SPEARS Associated Press/The Imprint

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — Across the country, Indigenous people are gathering this week to honor loved ones who are missing or have been killed and to call for better data collection, law enforcement response and reforms to make their communities safer.

From U.S. state capitols and tribal community spaces to the streets of major cities, hundreds of marches, rallies, talking circles, self-defense classes and candlelight vigils are planned for the week of May 5, which is observed as a national day of awareness for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples movement.

The day reflects both the collective grief and the resilience of Indigenous communities, where the federal government has a legal responsibility to ensure public safety. All too often, resources to prevent and respond to violence are in short supply.

Many events call for participants to wear red, a color that has become synonymous with honoring Indigenous victims of violence in the U.S. and Canada.

A hidden crisis

Native Americans face disproportionate rates of violence in the U.S., a crisis that advocates say is rooted in the systematic removal of Native people from their land and the federal government's efforts to rid them of their cultures.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Native Americans and Alaska Natives are more than twice as likely than the general population to be victims of a violent crime, and Native women are twice as likely to be victims of homicide. At the end of 2025, the FBI's National Crime Information Center recorded just under 1,500 active federal cases involving missing Native Americans.

Experts say that's likely an undercount because of jurisdictional confusion, racial misclassification and inconsistent data collection.

Abigail Echo-Hawk, director of the Urban Indian Health Institute, said that there's been progress in accounting for the true scope of the crisis but that law enforcement resources have been slow to follow.

"Don't look at the numbers and feel sorry for us," Echo-Hawk said, a citizen of the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma. "Look at the numbers and say, 'How do we ensure that this doesn't continue?'"

Federal action

In 2020, President Donald Trump signed Savanna's Act and the Not Invisible Act into law, both aimed at solving and preventing cases of violent crime in Indian Country with improved data collection and law enforcement reforms.

But implementation of those laws has been slow and erratic. Under the Biden administration in 2022, a federal commission to study the crisis convened two years behind schedule. Its extensive recommendations — ranging from expanding authority for tribal law enforcement to improving communication with the victims' families — were made public in 2023.

The recommendations were removed from government websites last year amid the Trump administration's purge of initiatives it associates with diversity, equity and inclusion.

Federally recognized tribes are sovereign nations within the U.S.

Meanwhile, Trump's Department of Justice has continued its Operation Not Forgotten initiative, surging dozens of FBI agents, analysts and other personnel to field offices near tribal lands on a rotating, temporary basis. According to the FBI, those assignments have yielded more than 200 arrests and convictions in homicide, domestic abuse and sexual assault cases since 2023.

Michael Henderson, director of public safety for the Navajo Nation, said there are "pros and cons" to a bigger FBI footprint in Indian Country. Federal officers can bring fresh eyes and high-tech forensic tools to cold cases. But Henderson said many of these agents arrive with little experience working in Indigenous

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communities or investigating violent crime.

"More manpower from the FBI on reservations, that's not a good solution in my mind," Henderson said, adding that federal funds could be better spent staffing and funding tribal police departments.

Families advocate for their relatives

At a Sunday prayer walk in Colorado Springs, Colorado, marchers chanted, "No more stolen lives on stolen land" and carried signs with the photos and stories of dozens of Indigenous people who have been killed or have disappeared.

Among the marchers was Denise Porambo. Her daughter, Destiny Jeriann Whiteman, was killed last August where she lived on the Ute Mountain Ute reservation in southwest Colorado. She was 24 and had an infant son.

"It hurts every day," Porambo said after the march, her voice breaking.

In the absence of a nationwide strategy for handling these cases, advocates in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples movement say that burden often falls to family members.

Grace Bulltail's 18-year-old niece, Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, was found dead several days after she disappeared from her home on the Crow Reservation in Montana in August 2019. Her family remembers her as a kindhearted person and a tenacious high school athlete. They organize marches, vigils and courthouse demonstrations to raise awareness about the case and tirelessly pester law enforcement for action and answers.

No arrests have been made, and the cause of death was ruled inconclusive. Stops Pretty Places' grandmother is organizing a demonstration Tuesday at a courthouse bordering the Crow Reservation.

"We have had to advocate for ourselves and for Kaysera every step of the way," Bulltail said. ____ Spears reported from Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Tribes sue to halt exploratory drilling in Black Hills near sacred ceremonial site

By SARAH RAZA Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Nine Native American tribes in South Dakota, North Dakota and Nebraska are suing the federal government in a bid to stop exploratory drilling for graphite near a sacred site in the Black Hills.

A small group of opponents has been demonstrating at the drilling location and at the mining company's headquarters in what they call a land defense effort since they learned ground was broken on the drilling project in late April.

The tribes filed their federal lawsuit Thursday in South Dakota against the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Department of Agriculture, alleging the agencies violated federal law by greenlighting a project near a site called Pe'Sla, a meadow in the central Black Hills used for tribal ceremonies, prayer and youth camps year-round. Buffalo regularly graze at the site, the suit said, adding the project poses a threat to wildlife.

Graphite has many industrial uses, including in batteries, lubricants, certain auto parts and in blast furnaces, according to website of the European Carbon and Graphite Association.

Land rights in the Black Hills

The project is the latest point of tension between tribes and mining interests in the lush pine and spruce-covered Black Hills, which encompass over 1.2 million acres (485,000 hectares), rising from the Great Plains in southwest South Dakota and extending into Wyoming.

The region is a yearly destination for millions of tourists boasting such attractions as Mount Rushmore and wildlife-filled state parks. Yet for even longer, it has been sacred to Sioux tribes who call the area He Sapa and consider it "the heart of everything that is," according to the complaint.

Some of the landscape was altered by an 1870s gold rush that displaced Native Americans. And more recently, a new crop of miners driven by rising gold prices have sought to return to the landscape.

The 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie granted the Sioux Nations rights to the Black Hills, but the U.S. broke the treaty after gold was discovered. Though the Supreme Court ruled the Sioux were owed compensa-

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tion, they have not accepted it and consider it unceded territory.

Impacts on Pe'Sla

The complaint said the project by Rapid City-based mining company Pete Lien & Sons would impact the use of Pe'Sla for traditional, cultural and religious purposes by the tribes, and that the Forest Service did not consult with the tribes before approving the project.

Tribes bought parts of Pe'Sla in 2012, 2015 and 2018, and an agreement between the tribes and the Forest Service established a two-mile (three kilometer) buffer zone on public lands around the site, according to the complaint.

Because Pe'Sla was not included as an affected area and no environmental review was conducted, the approval violates the National Historic Preservation Act and National Environmental Policy Act, the lawsuit alleges.

Pete Lien & Sons, which supplies materials like limestone, sand and gravel, did not return phone or email requests for comment Thursday, Sunday and Monday.

Oglala Sioux Tribe President Frank Star Comes Out said in a statement that the lawsuit is "a historic demonstration of unity" between the nine tribes. The tribes are separate, distinct federally recognized tribes sharing cultural and linguistic roots, but each with its own government and land base.

"We as Lakota people have been coming and praying and holding ceremony at these places for over 2,000 years," said Wizipan Garriott, president of Indigenous advocacy group NDN Collective and a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe. "And so us being here is a continuation of countless generations before us. And it's important that these sacred places be protected for future generations to come."

Groups sue over the project

The Forest Service granted a permit to the project in February without an environmental review because the agency said it qualified for a categorical exclusion by having a duration of less than a year and not posing impacts to environmental and cultural sites.

But tribal opponents disagree that those requirements were met and said drilling projects are often a first step leading to future mines.

Besides the lawsuit from the tribes, NDN Collective and other environmental groups have also sued to stop the project.

Some of the drilling pads are in the buffer zone around the site, according to NDN Collective. The project calls for the company to drill up to 18 holes down some 1,000 feet (300 meters) to collect samples.

On Thursday, opponents demonstrated with signs reading "Protect Pe'Sla" and "Sacred ground not mining bound" near two drilling pads to block access. NDN Collective said the Forest Service told them drilling was paused for the rest of the day and the contractors were sent home.

The Forest Service said it had no comment on the project because it is the subject of active litigation.

The NDN Collective said it will continue actions at the sites as needed to protect Pe'Sla.

"As Lakota, we pray as long as we need to," Garriott said.

US attempt to open Strait of Hormuz tests fragile Iran war ceasefire

By ADAM SCHRECK and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The Iran war risked reigniting after the U.S. tried to force open the Strait of Hormuz for commercial shipping, though a ceasefire seemed to be holding Tuesday even after the United Arab Emirates said Iran fired missiles and drones at it.

It is unclear what will follow after an American attempt to end Iran's stranglehold on the strait by creating an "enhanced security area." A prominent Iranian official accused the U.S. of undermining regional security with the effort and warned that Iran will respond.

The U.S. military said two American-flagged merchant ships successfully transited the strait on Monday, and that it fired on Iranian forces, sinking six small boats that were targeting vessels. It remained to be seen if any more ships would cross on Tuesday.

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Ship tracking data showed a Panamanian-flagged crude oil tanker heading toward the center of the strait Tuesday morning after leaving an anchorage in the Persian Gulf, though it was unclear if it would try to pass through. The tanker had a stated destination of Singapore, according to the MarineTraffic ship tracking site.

Iran's effective closure of the strait, through which about a fifth of the world's trade in oil and natural gas typically passes, along with fertilizer and other petroleum-derived products, has sent fuel prices skyrocketing, rattled the global economy, and proved a major strategic advantage in negotiations to end the war. Breaking that chokehold would ease global economic concerns and deny Tehran a major source of leverage.

But such efforts also risk reigniting the full-scale fighting that erupted when the U.S. and Israel first attacked Iran on Feb. 28, prompting it to close the strait.

Iran accuses US of ceasefire violation

Iran has said the new U.S. effort is a violation of the fragile ceasefire that has held for more than three weeks.

In a post on X Tuesday, Iran's powerful parliamentary speaker and chief negotiator, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, accused Washington of undermining shipping security in the Strait of Hormuz.

Qalibaf warned that a "new equation" in the strait is taking shape. He signaled that Tehran has yet to fully respond to the U.S. attempt to reopen the waterway, saying: "We know full well that the continuation of the status quo is intolerable for America; while we have not even begun yet."

Trump vows to reopen the strait

U.S. President Donald Trump on Sunday warned that Iranian efforts to halt passage through the strait "will, unfortunately, have to be dealt with forcefully." He said the U.S. effort to reopen the strait, dubbed "Project Freedom," was intended to aid stranded seafarers on hundreds of ships stuck in the Persian Gulf since the war began.

The U.S.-led Joint Maritime Information Center advised ships on Monday to cross the strait in Oman's waters, saying it had set up an "enhanced security area."

The UAE bore the brunt of Iran's retaliation

The United Arab Emirates' Defense Ministry said its air defenses had engaged 15 missiles and four drones fired by Iran. Authorities in the eastern emirate of Fujairah said one drone sparked a fire at a key oil facility, wounding three Indian nationals. The British military reported two cargo vessels ablaze off the UAE.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday condemned the attacks, saying the targeting of civilians and infrastructure was "unacceptable." In a statement on X, Modi said India stands in "firm solidarity" with the UAE, and stressed the need for safe and uninterrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, saying it "is vital for enduring regional peace, stability and global energy security."

Tehran did not confirm or deny the attacks but early on Tuesday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on X that both the U.S. and the UAE "should be wary of being dragged back into quagmire."

Pakistan, which has been mediating between the U.S. and Iran, and Saudi Arabia both condemned the strikes against the UAE.

Saudi's condemnation, in a statement from its foreign ministry, came despite increasingly strained relations between Saudi and the UAE.

Strait of Hormuz closure has far-reaching consequences

The disruption of the waterway has squeezed countries in Europe and Asia that depend on Persian Gulf oil and gas, raising prices far beyond the region.

The U.S. has meanwhile enforced a naval blockade on Iranian ports since April 13, telling at least 49 commercial ships to turn back, according to Central Command. It's also warned shipping companies they could face sanctions if they pay Iran for transit of the strait.

The blockade has deprived Tehran of oil revenue it needs to shore up its ailing economy. U.S. officials have expressed hope the blockade will force Iran to make concessions in talks on its disputed nuclear program and other longstanding issues.

Negotiations make little progress

Iran's latest proposal for ending the war calls for the U.S. to lift sanctions, end the blockade, withdraw forces from the region, and cease all hostilities including Israel's operations in Lebanon, according to the semiofficial Nour News and Tasnim agencies, which have close ties to Iran's security apparatus.

Iranian officials said they were reviewing the U.S. response. Tehran has claimed its proposal does not include its nuclear program and enriched uranium, long a driving force in tensions with the U.S. and Israel.

Iran wants other issues resolved within 30 days and aims to end the war rather than extend the cease-fire. Trump expressed doubt over the weekend that the proposal would lead to a deal.

Zelenskyy slams Russia's 'utter cynicism' as strikes kill 5 in Ukraine before brief truce takes hold

By HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian drone and missile strikes targeting Ukraine's power grid during the night killed at least five people and wounded 39 others, Ukrainian authorities said Tuesday.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy rebuked Moscow for what he said was its "utter cynicism" in launching the attacks after Russia announced a unilateral truce over two days later this week while it marks the 81st anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.

"Russia could cease fire at any moment, and this would stop the war and our responses," Zelenskyy said in a post on X. "Peace is needed, and real steps are needed to achieve it. Ukraine will act in kind."

The truce proposal follows a familiar pattern of Russia declaring short unilateral ceasefires during the war timed to various holidays — most recently Orthodox Easter — that don't produce any tangible results amid deep mistrust between Moscow and Kyiv more than four years after Russia launched an all-out invasion of its neighbor.

The Russian Defense Ministry declared a unilateral ceasefire in Ukraine for Friday and Saturday, but said that it would strike back at the country if it tries to disrupt the festivities on Victory Day, which Russia marks annually on May 9.

Zelenskyy replied that Ukraine would observe a truce beginning at 12 a.m. on Wednesday and would respond in kind to Russia's actions from that moment on. He didn't put an end date on the truce.

Russian forces fired 11 Iskander-M ballistic missiles and 164 strike drones at Ukraine overnight from Monday to Tuesday, including a jet-powered Shahed drone variant, the Ukrainian Air Force said.

Air defense units stopped 149 drones and one missile, but others got through, it said. Two ballistic missiles failed to reach their targets, the air force said without elaborating.

Russia has repeatedly hammered Ukraine's energy infrastructure during the war, which began on Feb. 24, 2022. It hit natural gas production facilities in Ukraine's central Poltava and northeastern Kharkiv regions, state energy company Naftogaz Group said.

Since the start of the year, Naftogaz facilities have come under attack 107 times, the company said.

Zelenskyy said that the Poltava attack was "especially vile," because Russia launched a second missile at the same target when emergency rescuers were working at the scene.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said that Russia's main targets were energy facilities, oil and gas infrastructure, railways and industrial sites, although the attacks also damaged homes, businesses and the transportation network.

Russia's ceasefire proposals "remain only statements," Svyrydenko said.

Ukraine also kept up the pace of its long-range attacks on Russian rear areas, apparently aiming at more oil facilities.

Russia's Defense Ministry said that its forces destroyed 289 Ukrainian drones overnight in 18 Russian regions. Drones were also intercepted over the occupied Crimean Peninsula, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, and over the Azov Sea, it said.

A Ukrainian drone attack wounded three people in the city of Cheboksary, located east of Moscow and more than 900 kilometers (560 miles) from the Ukrainian border, the regional health ministry said.

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Ukrainian drones also attacked the Kirishi oil refinery in the Leningrad region close to St. Petersburg, sparking a blaze in the town's industrial zone, local Gov. Alexander Drozdenko said.

Drozdenko said on social media that 29 Ukrainian drones had been shot down during the attack. No casualties were reported.

World shares mixed and oil prices retreat after the latest flare in Iran tensions

By CHAN HO-HIM AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — World shares were mixed Tuesday, following losses on Wall Street after U.S. stocks retreated from record highs.

Oil prices fell back after rising earlier on escalating tensions in the war between the U.S. and Iran.

U.S. futures edged more than 0.2% higher.

In early European trading, Britain's FTSE 100 fell 0.8% to 10,280.87. France's CAC 40 was up 0.6% to 8,026.89, while Germany's DAX gained 1% to 24,232.45.

Asian regional trading was thin, with markets in Japan, South Korea and mainland China closed for holidays.

Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.8% to 25,898.61, while Taiwan's Taiex gained 0.2%.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 lost 0.2% to 8,680.50 after the central bank raised its benchmark interest rate to 4.35%, saying conflict in the Middle East had sharply increased fuel and commodity prices that were already adding to inflation. The cash rate hike on Tuesday was the Reserve Bank of Australia's third quarter percentage point rise this year.

The bank said Australia's inflation for the year through March was 4.6%. The bank manipulates interest rates to steer inflation toward a target band of 2% to 3%.

India's Sensex lost 0.4%.

The fragile ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran was tested Monday after the U.S. military said it had sank six Iranian small boats targeting civilian ships, while two U.S.-flagged ships successfully passed through the Strait of Hormuz.

The key waterway for oil and gas transport remains largely closed despite repeated demands from the U.S. for Iran to reopen the strait and as the United States imposed a sea blockade on Iranian ports. U.S. President Donald Trump's "Project Freedom" plan under which the United States would help guide stranded ships through the Strait of Hormuz began on Monday.

Brent crude, the international standard, fell \$2.30 to \$112.14 per barrel. It surged above \$114 a barrel on Monday, gaining nearly 6%. Before the war began in late February, it was trading near \$70.

Benchmark U.S. crude slipped \$3.08 to \$103.34 per barrel.

Talks on a permanent end to war have stalled. Tensions escalated when the United Arab Emirates, a U.S. ally, said it came under attack from Iran for the first time since the ceasefire last month.

"We are seeing the first signs of the ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran breaking down amid a re-escalation in the Persian Gulf," ING Bank analysts Warren Patterson and Ewa Manthey wrote in a note Tuesday.

"Continuation of 'Project Freedom' risks further escalation," they wrote. "Any relief from stranded vessels making their way through the Strait will be temporary, with very few inbound vessels moving into the Persian Gulf."

On Monday, Wall Street closed lower with the benchmark S&P 500 slipping 0.4% from its latest record heights to 7,200.75. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 1.1% to 48,941.90, while the technology-heavy Nasdaq composite dropped 0.2% to 25,067.80.

Shares of GameStop sank 10.1% after it said it wants to acquire eBay, which has a market value that's roughly four times of GameStop's.

The U.S. dollar rose to 157.46 Japanese yen from 157.25 yen. The euro was trading at \$1.1686, down from \$1.1689.

An explosion at a fireworks plant in China kills at least 26 people and injures dozens of others

By E. EDUARDO CASTILLO and KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — An explosion at a fireworks plant in a central Chinese province killed at least 26 people and injured 61 others, state media reported Tuesday, prompting the halting of all firework manufacturing near the site.

The blast occurred at a fireworks plant in the city of Changsha in Hunan province on Monday afternoon, China's official news agency Xinhua said.

State media China Daily said that the plant was operated by the Huasheng Fireworks Manufacturing and Display Co. in the Changsha-administered, county-level city of Liuyang, a prominent fireworks powerhouse in the country.

Changsha mayor Chen Bozhang said at a media briefing that a search and rescue operation at the scene largely has been completed, but verification of the casualties and identification of the victims was still underway.

Chen said that the local government expressed condolences for the victims and apologized to society, including the families and injured people.

"We feel extremely pained and deeply remorseful," he said.

Ding Weiming, the Changsha Emergency Management Bureau's party secretary, said that the site had a large amount of products or semifinished products catching fire, causing continuous, sporadic blasts.

Large quantities of gunpowder stored in the warehouse area also threatened the safety of rescue teams, while the collapse of walls, columns and the roof in the factory area created ruins, with people trapped and routes blocked, he said.

All fireworks and firecracker manufacturers in Liuyang have been ordered to halt production, local media reported said.

Aerial footage from state broadcaster CCTV on Tuesday showed white smoke billowing in certain areas of the site, with facilities collapsed or damaged.

Hundreds of rescuers were deployed to the scene and residents in danger zones were evacuated by authorities, citing high risks from two black powder warehouses near the explosion site, the Xinhua report said.

Authorities were investigating the cause of the blast and police have detained the person in charge of the company, Xinhua said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping urged "all-out efforts" to search for people who are still unaccounted for and to save the injured. He called on authorities to investigate the cause swiftly and pursue serious accountability, the report said. Xi also ordered effective risk screening and hazard control in key industries and the strengthening of public safety management.

To prevent other accidents during the operation, rescuers adopted measures such as spraying and humidification to eliminate potential hazards.

They also deployed several robots to help with the search and rescue operation.

Liuyang has a long history of fireworks production. The Guinness World Records organization said that the first accurately documented firework, the Chinese firecracker, was attributed to Li Tian, a monk who lived near Liuyang during China's Tang dynasty dating to around 618 to 907 C.E.

Li discovered that putting gunpowder in enclosed hollow bamboo stems created loud explosions and bound crackers together to create the traditional new year firecrackers to drive out evil spirits, Guinness said.

In February, China reported two deadly explosions at fireworks shops around the Lunar New Year period.

Armenia hosts a historic European Union summit as the country charts a course away from Russia

By ELISE MORTON and MARK CARLSON Associated Press

YEREVAN, Armenia (AP) — Armenia hosts its first bilateral summit with the European Union on Tuesday, a landmark diplomatic moment for the Caucasus Mountains nation that has formally declared its ambition to join the bloc and is cautiously loosening its ties with longtime ally Russia.

The EU-Armenia summit in Yerevan follows the eighth gathering of the European Political Community, or EPC, which brought dozens of European leaders to the Armenian capital on Monday to address European defense issues and the Iran war.

Meanwhile, Tuesday's bilateral meeting saw Armenia and the EU sign a connectivity partnership to strengthen economic ties and deepen security cooperation.

The two events underscore how Armenia is seeking to turn westward and shed Russia's influence. Armenia's relations with Moscow, its longtime sponsor and ally, have grown increasingly strained since 2023, when neighboring Azerbaijan fully reclaimed the Karabakh region and ended the decadeslong rule by ethnic Armenian separatists.

Armenian authorities accused Russian peacekeepers who were deployed to the region of failing to stop Azerbaijan's onslaught. Moscow, busy with the war in Ukraine, rejected the accusations, arguing that its troops didn't have a mandate to intervene.

The war was "a belated demonstration that Russia is dangerously unreliable as a partner," Richard Giragosian, director of the Regional Studies Center in Yerevan, told The Associated Press.

Pursuing ties with Europe

Since then, the government of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has pursued closer ties with the West, a move welcomed by the 27-nation EU.

The opening ceremony of the EU-Armenia summit on Tuesday saw European Council President António Costa walk the red carpet side by side with Pashinyan and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, while a military band played in front of Armenian and EU flags.

In her opening statement, von der Leyen said that Europe was ready to aid Armenia in becoming a regional hub for global trade routes, including the building of physical infrastructure.

"We're ready to invest in the local energy production and the energy links across the Black Sea, and we are ready to connect your booming digital scene to Europe's digital market and turn Armenia's position at the heart of this region into a motor of growth," she said.

The new EU-Armenia connectivity partnership will focus on strengthening transportation, energy and digital links. Meanwhile, EU investments in Armenia are expected to reach 2.5 billion euros (\$2.9 billion) under its global gateway infrastructure program, both sides said in a joint statement.

"Today's EU-Armenia summit sends a clear signal of the EU's firm commitment to deepen our relations with Armenia, and to strengthen cooperation across many new areas," Costa said. "Bringing Armenia and its people closer to the European Union."

Symbolic moves

The EU, rather than the United States, has stepped into the vacuum left by Russia, Giragosian said.

"EU engagement is much more prudent and much more productive than the U.S. becoming involved, simply because European engagement is less provocative to Russia over the longer term," he said.

In 2025, Armenia's parliament passed a law formally declaring the country's intention to seek EU membership.

However, Giragosian described Tuesday's summit as "a focus on deepening the preexisting relationship" rather than a step toward candidacy, referencing the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement that has governed EU-Armenia ties since fully taking effect in 2021.

"The symbolic significance is much greater as a message to Russia," he said.

Armenia has also taken other symbolic steps. It joined the International Criminal Court in 2023, a move that Moscow condemned as an "unfriendly step." The court has issued an arrest warrant for Russian Presi-

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dent Vladimir Putin, accusing him of personal responsibility for the abductions of children from Ukraine. Armenia also froze its participation in the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization in 2024. However, Armenia remains a member of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union, or EEU, a single market allowing the free movement of goods, capital and labor. The organization also includes Belarus, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan — and Putin has made the trade-offs plain.

Speaking at talks with Pashinyan in Moscow earlier this year, Putin warned that Armenia couldn't simultaneously belong to both the EEU and the EU, noting that Yerevan currently receives Russian natural gas at prices far below European market rates. Pashinyan acknowledged the incompatibility, but said that Armenia could, for now, combine EEU membership with deepening EU cooperation.

Pashinyan, who has been in office since 2018 and faces a parliamentary election in June, stands to benefit politically from the international profile of the European meetings. Giragosian said that Pashinyan's government is likely to be reelected largely by default, with the opposition unable to offer a credible alternative program.

But Giragosian warned against framing Armenia's foreign policy as purely a pivot from Russia to the West. "Armenia is also pivoting beyond the black and white zero-sum game paradigm," he said, pointing to significant diplomatic investment in Asia, including with Japan, South Korea and China. "This is not about replacing Russia with the West. This is much more innovative, much more sophisticated."

Heightened tensions

The summit also comes at a moment of diplomatic strains between Azerbaijan and the EU. Azerbaijan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the EU ambassador last week to protest a European Parliament resolution demanding the release of Armenian prisoners of war and criticizing the treatment of Armenians in Karabakh. Lawmakers in Azerbaijan subsequently voted to suspend all cooperation with the European Parliament.

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, who addressed the EPC conference via video link, accused the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly for the Council of Europe, or PACE, of "double standards" for placing sanctions on Azerbaijan's delegation.

There were also protests outside the EPC summit venue, which was surrounded by tight security. Demonstrators held photos of Armenian prisoners being held in Azerbaijan.

Opposition leader Aram Sargsyan, head of the Democratic Party of Armenia, told the Armenian Press Agency that the European officials were voicing support for Pashinyan before the election and have "forgotten about the Armenians in prison in Azerbaijan."

US tries to force open the Strait of Hormuz as the UAE comes under attack in a test of Iran truce

By ADAM SCHRECK, BEN FINLEY and SAM METZ Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The U.S. military said it fired on Iranian forces and sank six small boats targeting civilian ships as it moved to reopen the Strait of Hormuz on Monday. The United Arab Emirates, a key American ally, said it had come under attack from Iran for the first time since a fragile ceasefire took hold in early April.

The U.S. military said two American-flagged merchant ships had successfully transited the strait on Monday as part of a new initiative.

The UAE Defense Ministry said its air defenses had engaged 15 missiles and four drones fired by Iran. Authorities in the eastern emirate of Fujairah said one drone sparked a fire at a key oil facility, wounding three Indian nationals. The British military reported two cargo vessels ablaze off the UAE.

Tehran did not outright confirm or deny the attacks but early on Tuesday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on X that both the U.S. and the UAE "should be wary of being dragged back into quagmire."

In similarly vague terms, Iranian state television earlier quoted an anonymous military official as saying Tehran had had "no plan" to target the UAE or one of its oil fields.

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"The incident resulted from U.S. military adventurism to create an illegal passage," the official said about the oil facility attack, apparently referring to U.S. President Donald Trump 's latest efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a critical waterway for global energy.

Breaking Iran's chokehold on the strait would ease global economic concerns and deny Iran a major source of leverage. But such efforts also risk reigniting the full-scale fighting that erupted when the U.S. and Israel first attacked Iran on Feb. 28, prompting it to close the strait.

Shipping companies, and their insurers, are unlikely to take such a risk, given that Iran has fired on ships in the waterway and vowed to keep doing so. Iran has said the new U.S. effort is a violation of the fragile ceasefire that has held for more than three weeks.

US says it has reopened a lane through the strait

Iran's effective closure of the strait, which runs between Iran and Oman, has caused a spike in worldwide fuel prices and rattled the global economy. The U.S.-led Joint Maritime Information Center had advised ships Monday to cross the strait in Oman's waters, saying it had set up an "enhanced security area."

Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of U.S. Central Command, told reporters that American forces have successfully opened a passage through the strait that is free of Iranian mines. He said Iran launched multiple cruise missiles, drones and small boats at civilian ships under the U.S. military's protection.

U.S. military helicopters sank six of the small boats, Cooper said, adding that "each and every" threat had been defeated.

"The U.S. commanders who are on the scene have all the authority necessary to defend their unit and to defend commercial shipping -- as we saw and demonstrated earlier today," Cooper said.

Trump had warned Sunday that Iranian efforts to halt passage through the strait "will, unfortunately, have to be dealt with forcefully."

He described "Project Freedom" in humanitarian terms, designed to aid stranded seafarers on hundreds of ships that have been stuck in the Persian Gulf since the war began.

Missile alerts in the UAE for the first time since ceasefire

The UAE condemned what it called "renewed treacherous Iranian aggression" and called for an immediate halt to the attacks.

Four missile alerts were issued Monday urging UAE residents to find shelter — the first such alerts since the ceasefire began nearly a month ago. Commercial planes bound for the UAE — home to the global travel hubs of Dubai and Abu Dhabi — turned around midair.

The extent of the attack on Fujairah was unclear, but it is the terminus of a pipeline the UAE has used to avoid shipping some of its oil through the strait. The emirate on the Gulf of Oman is home to extensive oil storage facilities and is the UAE's main sea access outside the strait.

"These attacks represent a dangerous escalation and an unacceptable violation," the UAE's Foreign Ministry said in a statement on X.

In Oman, authorities said a residential building near the strait "was targeted," resulting in two foreign workers wounded, four vehicles damaged and nearby windows shattered. The report carried by state-run media did not provide further details.

Iran seeks to maintain its grip on the strait

Iran's military command has warned that ships passing through the strait must coordinate with them.

"We warn that any foreign military force — especially the aggressive U.S. military — that intends to approach or enter the Strait of Hormuz will be targeted," Maj. Gen. Ali Abdollahi told state broadcaster IRIB.

South Korea said Tuesday that a fire on a South Korean-operated vessel in the Strait of Hormuz has been fully extinguished and that none of the 24 crewmembers were hurt.

Officials earlier said an explosion and fire broke out Monday evening on the Panama-flagged ship operated by South Korean shipping company HMM and that the cause was not immediately known. The vessel had been anchored near the United Arab Emirates in the Strait of Hormuz, and the fire affected its left-side engine.

Trump said in a social media post that Iran had "taken some shots" at vessels including a South Korean cargo ship, without elaborating. South Korean officials have not yet commented on Trump's call for Seoul

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to "join the mission" in the strait.

The UAE has accused Iran of targeting a tanker linked to its main oil company with two drones as it navigated the strait. It did not say when the attack occurred. No injuries were reported.

The disruption of the waterway has squeezed countries in Europe and Asia that depend on Persian Gulf oil and gas, raising prices far beyond the region.

The U.S. has warned shipping companies they could face sanctions for paying Iran for transit of the strait.

The U.S. has meanwhile enforced a naval blockade on Iranian ports since April 13, telling at least 49 commercial ships to turn back, according to Central Command.

The blockade has deprived Tehran of oil revenue it needs to shore up its ailing economy. U.S. officials have expressed hope that the blockade will force Iran to make concessions in talks on its disputed nuclear program and other longstanding issues.

Little progress seen in negotiations

Iran's latest proposal for ending the war calls for the U.S. lifting sanctions, ending the blockade, withdrawing forces from the region and ceasing all hostilities, including Israel's operations in Lebanon, according to the semiofficial Nour News and Tasnim agencies, which have close ties to Iran's security apparatus.

Iranian officials said they were reviewing the U.S. response, though Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei told reporters Monday that changing demands made diplomacy difficult. He did not give details.

Iran has claimed its proposal does not include issues related to its nuclear program and enriched uranium — long a driving force in tensions with the U.S. and Israel.

Iran wants other issues resolved within 30 days and aims to end the war rather than extend the ceasefire. Trump expressed doubt over the weekend that the proposal would lead to a deal.

Restaurants celebrate authentic Mexican culture and history this Cinco de Mayo

By FERNANDA FIGUEROA Associated Press

Nayomie Mendoza has become accustomed to how Cinco de Mayo is celebrated in the U.S.: the platters of tacos, the pitchers of margaritas and the jubilant sounds of mariachi bands.

She is among a number of Mexican American business owners who've become more vocal about also honoring Mexican history and the significance of the holiday, as a way to combat anti-immigrant sentiments amid heightened immigration enforcement efforts that have targeted Latino communities.

Mendoza, owner of Cuernavaca's Grill in Los Angeles, said she prefers a celebration that reflects "everything that as a community we're enduring today." So, Mendoza will host Cinco de Mayo festivities at her restaurant that, along with traditional mariachi and Mexican cuisine, will include a nod to Mexican perseverance over the French in the Battle of Puebla over 160 years ago.

"Just looking at how much they did with very little resources," she said. "It just showed resilience. So, on Cinco de Mayo we always make it a testament of our resilience."

Restaurants owners aren't the first Latino community leaders to reclaim Cinco de Mayo in the U.S. — moving away from a flattening of Mexican culture toward highlighting history and community. This year, the celebrations are noticeably embracing traditional Mexican culture and focused on preservation, said Sehila Mota Casper, director of Latinos in Heritage Conservation.

"These are just incredible moments of educating and knowledge sharing," Mota Casper said. "The more we educate, the more knowledge we share, the better a community and people we become."

Restaurants emphasize authenticity over tequila shots

Hispanic-owned firms accounted for 8.4% of 5.9 million U.S. employers in 2024, according to the Census Bureau's annual survey of businesses. They also were approximately 18% of all restaurant businesses in the United States last month, according to the National Restaurant Association, which uses census data.

U.S. revelers hoping to crowd restaurants and toss back shots of tequila may find more wholesome and intentionally planned offerings, said Raul Luis, who owns the Birrieria Challo Mexican Restaurant, with loca-

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tions in Los Angeles and Fort Worth, Texas. On Cinco de Mayo, he wants his customers to eat and drink the types of "guisados" — traditional Mexican braises or stews served as taco filling — that one would eat when invited into a Mexican family's home.

Well-made, traditional cooking will keep customers coming back, even if they aren't Hispanic, Luis said. "It's the ultimate opportunity for restaurants to take advantage of that moment and bring them in and entice them to authentic Mexican food," Luis said.

What Cinco de Mayo celebrates

Cinco de Mayo marks the anniversary of the 1862 victory by Mexican troops over invading French forces at the Battle of Puebla. The triumph over much larger French troops who were better-equipped was an enormous emotional boost for Mexican soldiers led by Gen. Ignacio Zaragoza.

In Mexico, historical reenactments are held annually in the central city of Puebla to commemorate the victory. Participants dress as Mexican and French troops and as Zacapoxtlas — the Indigenous and farmer contingent that helped Mexican troops win.

In the U.S., May 5 is seen as a day to celebrate Mexican American culture, stretching back to the 1800s in California. Festivities typically include parades, street food, block parties, mariachi competitions and baile.

Folklórico, or folkloric ballet, features whirling dancers in bright, ruffled dresses and their hair tied with shiny ribbons.

The day often is mistaken for Mexican Independence Day, which is on Sept. 16.

Latino activists and scholars say that disconnect in the U.S. is bolstered by the hazy history of Cinco de Mayo and marketing that plays on stereotypes that include fake, droopy mustaches and gigantic, colorful sombreros.

A testament to Mexican resilience

Since returning to the White House in 2025, President Donald Trump has continued to label Mexican immigrants as criminals and gang members, and Latino communities have been a target of his hard-line immigration tactics. Memes shared from official White House social media accounts perpetuate negative stereotypes about Latinos, while a federally led English-only initiative and ban on diversity, equity and inclusion programs all seem to target communities of color.

All together, it's generated a great deal of fear in Latino communities.

Mendoza, the Los Angeles restaurant owner, said it's also been a hard time for the restaurant industry because of rising costs. But in spite of it all, Cuernavaca's Grill will be celebrating its 20th anniversary this year.

As part of the restaurant's Cinco de Mayo festivities, she'll invite customers to contribute to a food and toy drive meant to support those who are struggling in the current climate.

"This is a testament of our resilience," Mendoza said. "It's a testament of our hard work. It is pride to our community and everything that we've accomplished."

US military strike on alleged drug boat kills 2 in the Caribbean

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

The Trump administration's campaign of blowing up alleged drug-trafficking vessels in Latin American waters has persisted since early September and killed at least 188 people in total. Other strikes have taken place in the eastern Pacific Ocean.

Despite the Iran war, the series of strikes have ramped up again in recent weeks, showing that the administration's aggressive measures to stop what it calls "narcoterrorism" in the Western Hemisphere are not letting up. The military has not provided evidence that any of the vessels were carrying drugs.

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

In the latest attack Monday, U.S. Southern Command repeated previous statements by saying it had

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targeted the alleged drug traffickers along known smuggling routes. It posted a video on X showing a boat moving along the water before a massive explosion engulfs the vessel in flames.

President Donald Trump has said the U.S. is in "armed conflict" with cartels in Latin America and has justified the attacks as a necessary escalation to stem the flow of drugs into the United States and fatal overdoses claiming American lives. But his administration has offered little evidence to support its claims of killing "narcoterrorists."

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

Trump's retribution? What to watch in Tuesday's elections in Indiana, Ohio and Michigan

By JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

President Donald Trump's campaign to politically punish Republicans who stand in his way moves through Indiana on Tuesday, when seven state senators face Trump-backed primary challengers.

In neighboring Ohio, primaries for U.S. Senate and governor will lock in the candidates for two major races with national implications.

And in Michigan, voters in a bellwether district will fill a vacancy in the state Senate, a race with implications for the balance of power in a battleground state.

Here's what to watch for.

How strong is Trump's grip on the Republican Party?

Trump is taking aim at seven Republican state senators in Indiana who opposed his plan to redraw congressional district boundaries to help the party gain seats in the U.S. House.

Groups allied with the president have spent millions on advertising, an extraordinary flood of cash and attention into races that are typically low profile.

The races are a test of Trump's enduring grip over his party as Republicans grow increasingly anxious about the midterm elections in November.

The results will signal to Republicans everywhere about how big a price they'll pay with their voters if they distance themselves from Trump even as his popularity fades. And it will show the president whether he can still credibly threaten consequences for Republicans who cross him.

The Trump-targeted state senators all represent districts he carried in 2024, mostly by 20 percentage points or more.

The key races to watch are districts 1, 11, 19, 21, 23, 38 and 41.

Ohio races get started in earnest

The state's primary is the wind up to the big show. Although Ohio has become increasingly conservative, Democrats believe their path back to a U.S. Senate majority runs through the state.

They're putting their hopes behind former Sen. Sherrod Brown, who lost Ohio's other Senate seat to Bernie Moreno in 2024.

He's expected to face off with Republican Sen. Jon Husted, who was appointed last year to fill the vacancy created when JD Vance became vice president.

The race is a special election to fill the last two years of Vance's term.

In the campaign for governor, Republican Vivek Ramaswamy has parlayed his national name recognition, tech industry connections and alliance with Trump into a record fundraising haul. He's largely ignoring Republican rival Casey Putsch, focusing his rallies and television ads on the general election.

An engineer and vehicle designer who calls himself "The Car Guy," Putsch has attracted fans with provocative YouTube videos that troll Ramaswamy and criticize national Republicans over their handling of the Epstein files, positions on energy-guzzling data centers and support for Israel.

Amy Acton, Ohio's former public health director, is running unopposed for the Democratic nomination. She played a key role in the state's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Will Democrats sweep another special election?

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The special election for a state Senate seat in central Michigan carries outsized importance.

It's another test of enthusiasm in a series of special elections that have swung almost universally toward Democrats since Trump returned to the White House. It also could affect the balance of power in the Michigan State Capitol. A Democratic victory would give the party a firm majority in the state Senate, while a Republican win would deadlock the chamber in a 19-19 tie.

The district is closely matched. Democrat Kamala Harris beat Trump there by less than 1 point in the 2024 presidential election.

The seat has been vacant for more than a year, since Democrat Kristen McDonald Rivet resigned to take a seat in Congress.

Democrats are showing surprising strength in special elections and off-year contests across the country, winning races in unexpected places and significantly narrowing the gap, even when they fall short.

There's no guarantee the trend will continue through the midterms, when turnout will be much higher, but it has nonetheless energized Democrats and spooked Republicans worried about keeping their congressional majorities.

Trump's influence tested in Indiana Republican state Senate primaries

By SCOTT BAUER Associated Press

Indiana's primary will test President Donald Trump's enduring power over the Republican Party as he tries to dislodge state senators who refused to go along with his call to redraw the state's congressional map.

Twenty-one Republican senators voted against redistricting in December, including eight running for reelection this year. Trump has endorsed primary challengers against seven, and the president's allies have spent millions of dollars on races that rarely get much attention from Washington.

It's become a costly and unprecedented intraparty battle that has exacerbated tensions among Republicans ahead of the November midterm elections that will determine control of Congress.

Indiana Lt. Gov. Micah Beckwith said the primary is about how far the party will go to get an edge over Democrats — a contest between “the Republicans who tend to want to avoid the fight and the Republicans who feel like we need to fight.”

“So the only question is, ‘Will you fight or will you get trampled by the other side?’” said Beckwith, who is supporting the Trump-backed challengers.

Indiana rejected Trump on redistricting

Trump began leaning on Republican-led states last year to redraw their congressional maps to make it easier for his party to hold its thin majority in the U.S. House. Although redistricting is normally done once a decade, after a new census, Trump wanted to abandon tradition to gain a political edge.

Texas was the first to follow through, and the White House pressured Indiana to go along too. Vice President JD Vance met with state politicians in Washington and Indianapolis, and Trump weighed in by conference call.

However, Indiana senators rebuffed the effort, one of the president's first significant political defeats of his second term.

The redistricting fight divided Republicans in Indiana, a state Trump won three times by no less than 16 points. Republican Gov. Mike Braun, U.S. Sen. Jim Banks and organizations such as Turning Point Action have worked alongside Trump to unseat the incumbents.

Jim Bopp, a prominent Indiana attorney who leads a political action committee aligned with Braun, predicted that Trump's support will carry the day for the challengers.

“Republican voters overwhelmingly support Trump, and when they find out Trump has endorsed a particular Senate candidate, they swing their support behind them,” he said.

Indiana opposition came from constituents, former governor

Opposition to the effort came from anti-Trump Republicans and those wary of the president reaching

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so deeply into state decision-making. Former Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels, who had stepped away from politics after leaving the governorship in 2015, reemerged to help raise money for targeted incumbents.

The senators who broke with Trump said they were listening to constituents who were overwhelmingly against his redistricting plan. Some said they didn't like Trump's aggressive tone in pushing the plan.

"We hate to be told what to do," said Mike Murphy, a former Republican state representative. "We're very independent-thinking people. So when Donald Trump and his goons come in and try to tell us that we need to redistrict to help his political future, that's the worst thing you can do."

He said Trump and those spending big money to take out the incumbents don't understand Indiana politics.

"There's just so many misjudgments on people's part because they tend to fly at the 50,000-foot level, and they don't go to the barbecues and the church fish fries and the things that make Indiana politics," Murphy said.

Bopp, who supports the Trump-backed challengers, said the primary is a chance for Indiana Republicans to express how important it is to redraw the congressional lines there.

"It's not a matter of Trump's power," Bopp said. "It's about Republican primary voters who support his agenda and don't want a Democratic House that will be hugely destructive to the Trump presidency and the country."

Vance gets a chance to woo Iowa GOP voters ahead of 2028 in a campaign stop with congressman

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and HANNAH FINGERHUT Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Vice President JD Vance will visit Iowa on Tuesday, marking his first visit since taking office to the state where Republicans in less than two years will cast the first votes to pick their party's next presidential nominee.

Vance, who is seen as one of the GOP's strongest potential candidates for president in 2028, is making the trip to campaign on behalf of Republican Rep. Zach Nunn, who faces a competitive race to keep his Des Moines-area seat in the November midterms.

But the visit offers Vance an opportunity to test his reception before Iowa's voters, whose leadoff caucuses give them an outsized role in determining the next presidential nominee. Campaigning for a local congressman in his role as the sitting vice president gives him an opening chance to make an impression on Iowa Republicans, seasoned evaluators of those who seek the nation's highest office before the campaign begins in earnest.

Vance's appearance comes days after Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, who is also considered a possible 2028 candidate, spoke to a group of evangelical Christians who are influential in Iowa's GOP contest.

Des Moines-based Jimmy Centers, a Republican political consultant, said the 2028 contest is "light-years away," but said the Republicans who hear Vance speak on Tuesday will be evaluating how he might measure up in an election for the White House.

"I certainly think, as of right now, Vice President Vance would probably be a straw-poll winner of Iowa Republicans for 2028. But I don't think anyone is saying, 'We won't consider anybody else,'" Centers said.

Vance visit comes as higher prices for gas, fertilizer hit Iowans

Vance, who has not said whether he will run for the presidency in 2028, is scheduled to appear with Nunn at a manufacturing facility in Des Moines. His office did not comment on the trip's impact on Vance's political future.

The vice president's visit follows a trip President Donald Trump made in January to tout the administration's tax cuts, part of a string of stops they're making this year on economic issues ahead of the midterm elections that will determine control of Congress.

But Vance's visit comes at a time when his own political prospects — and the message he's expected to deliver on the economy — have been complicated by the war in Iran.

The vice president, who has long been skeptical of foreign military interventions, has seemed a reluctant

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defender of the nine-week-old war for which Trump has struggled to find an off-ramp. Iowans, like much of the rest of the country, are grappling with higher gas prices because of the conflict. But the state's farmers are also feeling the pinch of high fertilizer costs from the war and have been hurt by the tariffs Trump has imposed.

While Iowa's farmers have steadfastly supported the president, they have been looking to the White House for assurances that the current troubles won't last.

Vance's visit to Iowa was originally scheduled for last week, but the timing shifted because the House moved to pass a sweeping farm bill that Nunn was due to vote on.

The vice president also had been slated to appear last week at an Iowa State University event with Turning Point USA, but the organization said it was not able to reschedule the event with the university until sometime in the fall.

It's 'awfully, awfully early' in the road to 2028

Kim Schmett, a longtime Iowa GOP activist, said the presidential cycle starts "deceptively slow."

Republican figures testing the waters often drop by the Westside Conservative Club, which Schmett hosts, but he said it's still too far out from the caucuses, which are typically held in January of the presidential election year.

He said Trump's Make America Great Again political movement "is very alive and going here" in Iowa, which would benefit Vance — as well as Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is also thought to be another potential candidate.

"I think there's going to be a lot of MAGA support," he said. "And Vice President Vance and Marco Rubio seem to be the recipients of where that is going at the moment."

But Schmett cautioned, "it's awfully, awfully early in the process."

On the Democratic side, at least half a dozen presidential prospects have been making visits to the states with the earliest presidential primary contests, including recent visits to Iowa by former Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Michigan U.S. Sen. Elissa Slotkin.

Meanwhile, potential Republican presidential candidates "are treading very lightly," said GOP strategist Alex Conant, who worked on Marco Rubio's 2016 presidential campaign.

"I think Republicans are going to be very reluctant to get in Trump's way until Trump gives the green light for the campaign to start," Conant said.

That means much of the groundwork to meet with donors or activists or recruit political staffers might happen slowly and subtly — for now.

After the midterms? Conant said: "It'll be irresistible."

Abortion pill rulings bring the issue back to the forefront in a midterm election year

By ALI SWENSON Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Back-to-back court rulings on abortion pill access are thrusting a contentious political issue back into the spotlight ahead of this year's midterm elections that will determine control of Congress for the second half of President Donald Trump's term.

Friday's ruling from a federal appeals court restricted mail access to mifepristone prescriptions, one of the most common abortion methods around the country, in the biggest shift to federal abortion policy since the Supreme Court's 2022 decision allowing states to enforce abortion bans.

The Supreme Court then temporarily restored broad access to the drug on Monday while it further considers the case, setting the stage for a potential decision that could have wide-ranging consequences for patients and providers.

It's too early to say whether the latest rulings will affect the outcome of races this year, when issues around affordability are expected to take top billing for voters. But advocates on both sides of the issue are hoping it will sway voters their way.

Some abortion rights groups already are strategizing ways to reach voters they think may be more mo-

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tivated to turn out for Democrats because of the possibility of further restrictions. Meanwhile, abortion opponents who say the GOP-led federal government hasn't done enough to ban the pills are warning their typically loyal Republican voters could sit out future elections, with a leading anti-abortion advocate calling it "a five-alarm crisis" for the GOP.

Democrats say the abortion issue presents an opportunity

After the overturning of Roe v. Wade in 2022, several states voted to enshrine abortion rights into their own constitutions, driving historic turnout that sometimes contributed to Democratic wins elsewhere on the ballot.

But Democratic pollster Celinda Lake believes the issue had lost some of its potency among voters, not because Democrats don't care, but because they have a sense that the "damage has been done."

Though Friday's ruling has been temporarily halted, it reminded voters that their access to abortion medication through telehealth isn't guaranteed, even in states where abortion rights are, Lake said. That created a tremendous but "horrific" opportunity to tell voters what could be at stake in this year's midterms, she said.

Mini Timmaraju, president and CEO of the abortion rights group Reproductive Freedom for All, said outreach to voters about the volatility of abortion access will be part of her group's strategy in the midterms. That includes contacting voters who supported Trump but also abortion rights in their state elections in 2024.

"The only way for us to really stop this back and forth is to have abortion access be legal in all 50 states," she said. "The only way we do that is through federal legislation, which makes the midterm elections even more urgent."

Republicans face fracturing over abortion politics

The Republican coalition, meanwhile, is contending with an increasingly agitated right flank of abortion opponents who expected Trump to fulfill his promise to be the "most pro-life president in history" but say they haven't seen it yet.

Most urgently at issue is a Food and Drug Administration safety review of mifepristone that anti-abortion groups hope will result in further restrictions, including blocking its prescribing via telehealth platforms. Anti-abortion groups have urged FDA commissioner Dr. Marty Makary to complete the review sooner, while the administration says it "is taking care to do this study properly and in the right way."

On Monday, the anti-abortion group SBA Pro-Life America further ratcheted up its messaging, calling for Makary's firing over the issue.

"This is a five-alarm crisis for the pro-life movement and for the GOP," the group's president Marjorie Dannenfelser said in a statement. "The GOP cannot win without its base and simply will not get the enthusiasm that drives turnout without leadership from the top."

Trump, whose first-term nominations set the stage for the Supreme Court that voted to overturn Roe, has taken some steps that abortion opponents have cheered, including an effort to withhold funds from Planned Parenthood and launching investigations into states that require state-regulated health insurance plans to cover abortion.

But he has also often sought to steer clear of the abortion issue, saying he thinks it should be left to the states. The president publicly supported abortion rights until he entered politics in 2015, and his wife, Melania Trump, announced her broad support for abortion rights in 2024.

Abortion opponents say they have no plans to let Trump avoid the issue for the remainder of his term. Marc Wheat, general counsel at former Vice President Mike Pence's political advocacy group Advancing American Freedom, said his group will increase pressure on the administration. That will include urging the FDA to speedily release documents about mifepristone that it owes the group through a lawsuit.

"President Trump thinks that pro-life is a loser," Wheat said. "He might see that the pro-lifers may not turn out in the numbers that he needs."

Americans largely oppose a nationwide ban on mifepristone

Even as Trump and the Republican-led Congress face mounting pressure from the right to restrict ac-

cess to medication abortion, Republicans around the country are far from united in taking that position. About two-thirds of Americans opposed nationwide bans on mifepristone, according to a KFF poll conducted late last year. Most Democrats and independents objected to such bans, while Republicans were more split.

Americans' overall opinions on abortion remain complex, with about two-thirds of U.S. adults saying abortion should be legal in all or most cases, according to AP-NORC polling. Relatively few think abortion should be illegal in all cases.

At least one abortion opponent, Americans United for Life CEO John Mize, said he is focused on incremental victories over the sweeping changes that some of his allies are calling for. While he wishes the FDA would move faster on its safety review, he recognizes that not all Americans are in the same place that he is.

"I think there is advancement being made in a positive direction," he said. "While it might not meet the pace that many in the pro-life movement want to see, I think it meets the acceptable place of where we're at culturally."

Tennessee Republicans will consider redrawing US House district covering majority-Black Memphis

By KIM CHANDLER, TRAVIS LOLLER and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — As civil rights advocates protest, Republican lawmakers in several Southern states are seizing on the opportunity afforded by a U.S. Supreme Court ruling to redraw congressional districts ahead of the November midterm elections.

The latest state to jump on the redistricting bandwagon is Tennessee, where a special legislative session is to begin Tuesday, a day after a similar session kicked off in Alabama. In Louisiana, lawmakers are making plans for new U.S. House districts after the Supreme Court last week struck down the state's current map.

The high court's ruling said Louisiana relied too heavily on race when creating a second Black-majority House district as it attempted to comply with the Voting Rights Act. The ruling significantly altered a decades-old understanding of the law and provided grounds for Republicans in various states to try to eliminate majority-Black districts that have elected Democrats.

Its impact on congressional representation, specifically for Black Americans, is threatening to undo decades of progress to ensure minority voting rights.

President Donald Trump has been encouraging more states to join in redistricting as Republicans seek to hold on to their narrow House majority in this year's elections.

Alabama special session draws protests

Several hundred people protested on Monday shortly before Alabama's special session began, including some carrying signs declaring "No new map" and "We fight back! Black Voters Matter."

Opponents of the redistricting session gathered across the street from the historic Alabama Capitol, where the Confederacy was formed in 1861 and where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. addressed a crowd of thousands after the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights march.

"Much blood, sweat and tears was shed in an effort for us to gain the right to vote," said Sheyann Webb-Christburg, who as a child participated in the 1965 Bloody Sunday voting rights march in Selma. "In 2026, there are still people who are still not exercising that right to vote, and we are still fighting today, even in an effort to keep our right to vote."

Republican Gov. Kay Ivey called legislators into a special session to consider contingency plans for special primary elections in hopes the U.S. Supreme Court will let Alabama switch congressional maps ahead of the November midterms.

A three-judge federal panel previously ordered Alabama to use a court-selected map — with a second district that has a substantial number of Black voters — until a new map is drafted after the 2030 Census. Alabama appealed that decision and has asked the court, in light of the Louisiana ruling, to let it revert to a 2023 map drawn by Republican state lawmakers. That map could give Republicans a better chance of winning at least one of the two seats currently held by Black Democratic lawmakers.

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"This is the voice of the people," Alabama House Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter said while promoting the Republican plan. "We had three judges determine how five million people were supposed to vote, and I don't think that's the way."

At a town hall held by a pro-Democratic group, Doug Jones, a former U.S. senator who is running for governor as a Democrat, said Alabama was "ground zero for voting rights, and we are going to be ground zero to make sure we retain those voting rights."

Tennessee plan targets Memphis district

Republican Gov. Bill Lee called Tennessee lawmakers into a special session to consider a plan that could break up the state's lone Democratic-held U.S. House district, centered on the majority-Black city of Memphis. The move comes after pressure from Trump.

The candidate qualifying period in Tennessee ended in March, and the primary election is scheduled for Aug. 6. Lee had said.

Clergy members concerned about plans to split Memphis' congressional district came together Monday to denounce the move.

"This latest attempt at redistricting is not just about lines on a map. It is about misrepresentation," said the Rev. Earle Fisher, a pastor at the Abyssinian Missionary Baptist Church and the founder of Up the Vote 901, referring to the Memphis area code. "It's about whether the voices of Black people in this state will be heard or hidden."

Advocates urge Louisiana voters to cast ballots

After last week's Supreme Court decision, Louisiana moved quickly to delay its May 16 congressional primary to allow time for lawmakers to approve new U.S. House districts.

Louisiana state Sen. Caleb Kleinpeter, a Republican who chairs a Senate committee tasked with redistricting, told The Associated Press that his committee plans to hold a public hearing Friday on congressional redistricting. Kleinpeter said lawmakers are still weighing their options, including bills that would eliminate one or both of the state's two majority-Black Congressional districts

Democrats and civil rights groups have filed several lawsuits challenging the suspension of the state's congressional primary, including another filed Monday in federal court. They are encouraging people in Louisiana — where early voting already is underway — to go ahead and cast votes in the congressional primaries in case courts later allow them to be counted.

A national redistricting battle expands

Legislative voting districts typically are redrawn only once a decade, after a census, to account for population changes. But 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, and then other states joined in.

Florida became the eighth state to enact new House districts ahead of the midterm elections when Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis announced on Monday he had signed a redrawn map passed by the GOP-controlled Legislature. It could help Republicans win as many as four additional House seats. The new map was immediately challenged in court as a partisan gerrymander that violates a Florida constitutional provision against drawing districts that favor one political party over another.

All told, Republicans think they could gain as many as 13 seats from new congressional districts in five states, while Democrats think they could pick up as many as 10 seats from new districts adopted in three states. The newly proposed redistricting in Southern states could add to the Republicans' tally.

Melkite Catholic bishops express concern over Israeli demolitions in southern Lebanon

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A branch of the Catholic church expressed deep concern Monday over reports that Israel was demolishing civilian and religious buildings in parts of southern Lebanon under its control, following allegations that a convent had been bulldozed.

The Council of Melkite Greek Catholic Bishops in Lebanon urged the Lebanese government and the

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United Nations to protect the property of civilians and religious institutions, citing in particular the village of Yaroun where officials said Israeli troops destroyed a Melkite convent earlier this month among other demolition. The bishops called the destruction of buildings, after residents of the area had evacuated, a "deep wound in the national and human conscience."

Israel took control of border areas in southern Lebanon in its latest war against the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah ahead of a ceasefire on April 17 and has said it aims to root out the militants and their infrastructure in the area. It has asked residents to evacuate villages for their own safety.

The Israeli military said it does not intentionally target religious institutions, but said in a statement on Saturday that while destroying Hezbollah infrastructure in Yaroun, that it had damaged a house without religious signs, and that it had prevented further damage to the building after recognizing it was linked to a church.

The Israeli military said the building in Yaroun was part of a compound that Hezbollah militants had used in the past to fire rockets toward Israel, and it released photographs of an intact building at the site.

Adib Ajaka, a Christian community leader in Yaroun, told The Associated Press that the photos posted in the Israel statement were of another building next to the convent that housed a clinic and archbishopric, and that the Israeli military had bulldozed the convent. He handed over a photograph showing rubble next to the clinic building that he said were the remains of the convent.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond Monday to questions about the convent.

Adib, as well as a municipal official from Yaroun and Gladys Sabbagh, the superior general of the Basilian Salvatorian Sisters who had used the convent, all told The Associated Press that according to news they received, the convent had been bulldozed while residents were evacuated from the area. The municipal official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

The French Catholic charity L'Oeuvre d'Orient condemned what it called the "deliberate act of destruction of a place of worship and the systematic destruction of homes in southern Lebanon aimed at preventing the return of civilian populations."

Also Monday, the U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa told reporters that a potential meeting between President Joseph Aoun and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington should not be seen as a concession or a loss for Lebanon.

Trump said last month that he would host a meeting between Aoun and Netanyahu although a date has not been set yet. There has been no official confirmation from Lebanon that Aoun will attend such a meeting with Netanyahu.

Aoun has been harshly criticized at home by Hezbollah and its allies who are opposed to direct talks with Israel.

The latest war between Israel and Hezbollah began March 2, when Hezbollah fired rockets into northern Israel, two days after the United States and Israel launched a war on the group's main backer, Iran.

Israel has since carried out hundreds of airstrikes and launched a ground invasion of southern Lebanon, capturing dozens of towns and villages along the border, while Hezbollah kept targeting Israel — especially northern communities — with missiles and drones.

Israel's military said that two of its soldiers were injured in a "close-quarters encounter with Hezbollah" in southern Lebanon on Monday, the latest clash to threaten a fragile 10-day ceasefire declared in Washington that went into effect on April 17 and was later extended by three weeks.

The Health Ministry in Lebanon said Monday that the latest Israel-Hezbollah war has killed 2,696 and wounded 8,264.

A driver plows into people in a shopping area in Germany, killing 2

BERLIN (AP) — A driver plowed into people in a busy shopping area in the center of the German city of Leipzig on Monday afternoon, leaving two people dead, authorities said.

An additional three people were seriously injured in what officials believe was a deliberate rampage, Mayor Burkhard Jung said.

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He described it as “a terrible tragedy.” An unspecified number of people sustained less serious injuries. The driver, a 33-year-old German citizen, was detained in the car. Police said he was a German-born resident of the Leipzig area.

Prosecutors said he is under investigation on suspicion of murder and attempted murder. There was no immediate word on a possible motive.

The interior minister of Saxony state, Armin Schuster, said investigators believe the man acted alone. He said that rage and “psychological instability” are often factors in such cases, but added that he wouldn’t speculate on whether that was the case here.

Police chief René Demmler said the man drove from the Augustusplatz, a major square, along the Grimmaische Strasse into the city’s central pedestrianized shopping area. He stressed that there was no longer any danger.

The driver was arrested in the vehicle and didn’t resist arrest, Demmler said.

Saxony state Gov. Michael Kretschmer expressed his condolences to the families of the victims.

“An act like this leaves us speechless — and it makes us determined,” he added, according to German news agency dpa. “We will do everything in our power to solve this case quickly and completely.”

Photos from the scene showed a car with a battered front and a shattered windshield after the incident, which happened at about 5 p.m.

Leipzig is located southwest of Berlin and has more than 630,000 inhabitants, making it one of the biggest cities in eastern Germany.

California investigates Trump administration’s deal to end an offshore wind project

By JENNIFER McDERMOTT Associated Press

California is investigating one of the Trump administration’s deals to end an offshore wind project.

Golden State Wind was a floating offshore wind project proposed off California’s central coast. The California Energy Commission said Monday it issued an administrative subpoena to Golden State Wind.

The commission said it is seeking documents and information about the company’s recent agreement with the Department of Interior to accept a payout in exchange for voluntarily abandoning its offshore wind lease.

“The Trump administration is recklessly spending billions of taxpayer dollars on backroom deals that would turn back the clock on innovation,” CEC Chair David Hochschild said in a statement. “Californians deserve immediate answers about the nature of this payout. Taxpayer dollars should be used to build a sustainable energy future, not to pay to make projects disappear.”

The Trump administration is spending nearly \$2 billion to get energy companies to walk away from U.S. offshore wind projects. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said companies were sold a product that was only viable when propped up by massive taxpayer subsidies when they bid for these offshore wind leases in 2022, under former President Joe Biden.

The Republican administration adopted this strategy after federal courts thwarted President Donald Trump’s efforts to stop offshore wind development through executive action. Three agreements have been announced.

Under the first deal, made public in March, French company TotalEnergies is getting \$1 billion — essentially a refund of its leases for offshore wind projects off North Carolina and New York — if it invests the money in fossil fuel projects instead. In the latest deals announced last week, the administration said Golden State Wind and Bluepoint Wind agreed to end their leases in exchange for reimbursements totaling nearly \$900 million, provided they invest equally in fossil fuels.

Both Golden State and Bluepoint are co-owned by Ocean Winds, a joint venture of EDP Renewables and French energy giant Engie. Bluepoint Wind was an offshore wind project in the early stages of development off the coasts of New Jersey and New York.

When asked about the subpoena Monday, Ocean Winds said it does not comment on open or potential

litigation.

This investigation sets the stage for legal action from California to safeguard renewable energy, as well as the thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of investment the state was counting on, said Eddie Ahn, executive director of Brightline Defense, an environmental justice nonprofit working to advance offshore wind in California.

A letter from California Attorney General Rob Bonta's office to Golden State Wind says the state anticipates potential litigation involving the federal government and parties to lease buyouts impacting California's energy needs and offshore wind programs. California has invested about \$100 million to support offshore wind development in order to accelerate the state's transition to clean energy and address climate change.

Democrats in Congress are investigating, too. U.S. Reps. Jared Huffman of California, the top Democrat on the House Natural Resources Committee, and Jamie Raskin, the ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, are demanding information about TotalEnergies agreement.

Southern state Republicans look to capitalize on Supreme Court ruling weakening Voting Rights Act

By KIM CHANDLER, TRAVIS LÖLLER and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — Lawmakers in several southern states are meeting this week to consider plans that could upend their congressional primaries and redraw U.S. House districts ahead of the November elections, as Republicans move quickly to capitalize on a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that weakened a key provision of the Voting Rights Act.

A special legislative session responding to the court ruling began Monday in Alabama and is to start Tuesday in Tennessee. Louisiana lawmakers, who already are in session, also are looking at how to redraw their congressional districts. The Supreme Court on Monday essentially gave them a green light to proceed by approving a request to expedite the court's formal judgment.

Civil rights activists have countered with rallies, protests and lawsuits challenging the new redistricting efforts. Several hundred protesters gathered outside the Alabama Statehouse on Monday, carrying signs declaring "No new map" and "We fight back! Black Voters Matter."

Last week's Supreme Court decision striking down a majority-Black congressional district in Louisiana has unleashed "a wave of nefarious actions" across states that threatens to disenfranchise Black voters, Alanah Odoms, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Louisiana, said Monday.

Trump on Sunday encouraged more states to join in redistricting, saying in a social media post that Republicans could gain 20 House seats. But South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster's office on Monday said the Republican would not call a special session to redraw the state's only Democratic-occupied House seat.

The high court's ruling said Louisiana relied too heavily on race when creating a second Black majority House district as it attempted to comply with the Voting Rights Act. The ruling significantly altered a decades-old understanding of the law and provided grounds for Republicans in various states to try to eliminate majority-Black districts that have elected Democrats to Congress.

As Republicans forge ahead, U.S. House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries touted a redistricting effort in his home state of New York. But that isn't expected to result in a new map until 2028. To adopt new districts, New York lawmakers must pass a constitutional amendment twice in two years, and voters would also have to approve it.

A national redistricting battle is expanding

Legislative voting districts typically are redrawn only once a decade, after a census, to account for population changes. But 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, and then other states joined in.

On Monday, Florida became the eighth state to enact new House districts ahead of midterm elections, as Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis announced he had signed a redrawn map passed by lawmakers last week that could help Republicans win as many as four additional House seats. The new map was immediately challenged in court as a partisan gerrymander that violates a state constitutional provision against draw-

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ing districts that favor one political party over another.

All told, Republicans think they could gain as many as 13 seats from new congressional districts in five states, while Democrats think they could pick up as many as 10 seats from new districts adopted in three states. The newly proposed redistricting in southern states could add to the Republicans' tally.

After last week's Supreme Court decision, Louisiana moved quickly to delay its May 16 congressional primary to allow time for lawmakers to approve new U.S. House districts. But Republicans have yet to unveil their planned revisions to district lines.

Democrats and civil rights groups have filed several lawsuits challenging the election suspension, including another suit filed Monday in federal court. They are encouraging people in Louisiana — where early voting already is underway — to go ahead and cast votes in the congressional primaries in case courts later allow them to be counted.

Alabama plans for a potential primary change

Rather than canceling the state's May 19 primaries, Republican Gov. Kay Ivey called legislators into a special session to consider contingency plans for special primary elections in hopes the U.S. Supreme Court will let Alabama switch congressional maps ahead of the November midterms.

Federal judges previously ordered Alabama to use a court-selected map — with a second district that has a substantial number of Black voters — until a new map is drafted after the 2030 Census. Alabama appealed that decision and has asked the court, in light of the Louisiana ruling, to let it revert to a 2023 map drawn by Republican state lawmakers. That map would substantially alter the district now represented by Rep. Shomari Figures, a Black Democrat.

Redistricting opponents rallied Monday across the street from the historic Alabama Capitol, where the Confederacy was formed in 1861 and where the Rev. Martin Luther King addressed a crowd of thousands after the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights march.

"Much blood, sweat and tears was shed in an effort for us to gain the right to vote," said Sheyann Webb-Christburg, who as a child participated in the 1965 Bloody Sunday voting rights march in Selma. "In 2026, there are still people who are still not exercising that right to vote, and we are still fighting today, even in an effort to keep our right to vote."

Tennessee pushes for a new House map

In Tennessee, Republican Gov. Bill Lee announced a special session starting Tuesday for the GOP-controlled Legislature to break up the state's one Democratic-held House district, centered on the majority-Black city of Memphis.

The move comes after a pressure campaign by Trump and other Republicans to reconfigure the state's 9th Congressional District. Previous precedent in Voting Rights Act cases had prevented Republicans from spreading the district's Democratic voters among neighboring conservative districts and making it winnable. But the law may no longer be an impediment.

"We owe it to Tennesseans to ensure our congressional districts accurately reflect the will of Tennessee voters," Lee said.

Clergy members concerned about plans to split Memphis' congressional district came together Monday to denounce the move.

"This latest attempt at redistricting is not just about lines on a map, it is about misrepresentation," said the Rev. Earle Fisher, a pastor at the Abyssinian Missionary Baptist Church and the founder of Up the Vote 901, referring to the Memphis area code. "It's about whether the voices of Black people in this state will be heard or hidden."

The candidate qualifying period in Tennessee ended in March, and the primary election is scheduled for Aug. 6.

Secret Service says suspect opened fire on them and was shot in exchange near Washington Monument

WASHINGTON (AP) — A man spotted carrying a gun in the vicinity of the White House by plainclothes officers and agents was shot by law enforcement Monday after he opened fire on them near the Washington Monument, the Secret Service said.

Secret Service Deputy Director Matt Quinn said plainclothes agents spotted the man around 3:30 p.m. in the area near the White House complex and saw the imprint of the weapon on him. The agents followed him briefly and contacted the uniformed officers.

The unidentified man attempted to flee when uniformed officers with the Secret Service approached him. Quinn said the man fired at the officers, who returned fire.

The alleged gunman was transported to a local hospital. Quinn said he had no information on the suspect's condition.

Quinn said emergency personnel also transported a minor who was shot but not seriously injured. Quinn said he could not say definitively that the bystander, who also was taken to a hospital, was struck by shots from the suspect's gun. "We'll let the doctors figure that out," he said, though he noted that "investigators believe he was struck by the suspect."

Quinn said the Washington, D.C., police would investigate the officer-involved shooting.

The Secret Service encouraged people to avoid the area as emergency crews responded to the shooting not far from the White House, where President Donald Trump was holding a small business event.

The White House was briefly locked down as authorities investigated the incident. The Secret Service ushered journalists who were outside into the briefing room, and Trump continued his event without interruption.

The incident drew a large police presence, coming just over a week after a gunman tried to storm the White House Correspondents' Association dinner with guns and knives. Cole Tomas Allen has been charged in that incident, in which a Secret Service officer was shot, although he was wearing body armor and was not seriously injured.

Quinn said it was not known yet whether the Monday incident was related to Trump. "I'm not going to guess on that," Quinn said. "Whether or not it was directed to the president or not, I don't know, but we will find out."

AP, Washington Post, Reuters and Minnesota Star Tribune among Pulitzer winners for 2025 work

By JENNIFER PELTZ Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — The Washington Post won the Pulitzer Prize for public service for scrutinizing the Trump administration's sweeping, choppy overhaul of federal agencies, and The Associated Press won the award Monday for international reporting about surveillance.

In a year when several prize-winning projects zoomed in on the Trump presidency, the Post's coverage illuminated the administration's fast-moving, sometimes opaque drive to reshape the national government and what the cuts and changes meant for individual Americans.

The Miami Herald's Julie K. Brown was given a special citation for her reporting, nearly a decade ago, that drew attention to Jeffrey Epstein's abuses. The New York Times won three of the coveted prizes, the Post and Reuters each won two, and less widely known outlets ranging from The Connecticut Mirror to the podcast "Pablo Torre Finds Out" also were recognized in a challenging year for American journalism.

"This is always a day of celebration in our communities, but perhaps never more so than today as we face tremendous political and economic pressures," prize administrator Marjorie Miller said in a livestream announcement.

In the last few months, the Post cut a third of its staff, CBS News announced it would shutter its nearly century-old radio service, The AP offered buyouts to over 120 journalists and some regional newspapers

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also publicly struggled. CBS parent Paramount's acquisition of CNN has raised questions about what's next for those networks. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump continued to bash, and sometimes sue, outlets whose coverage he finds objectionable.

'Sweeping and deeply impactful reporting'

Spanning three years, thousands of pages of documents and numerous interviews, the AP project found that American companies help lay the foundations of the Chinese government's system for monitoring and policing its citizens.

"This was sweeping and deeply impactful reporting, the kind of work that highlights the unique strengths of AP's global, multiformat newsroom," executive editor Julie Pace said in an email to staffers. She is among the Pulitzer Board's new members.

Some of The Washington Post's winning work was by reporter Hannah Natanson, whose home was searched and devices were seized in what federal authorities say was an investigation into a Pentagon contractor's handling of classified documents. The Post says the seizure violated the First Amendment.

Two winning entries focused on Trump's pulverizing approach to norms and constraints. Reuters, which won for national reporting, looked at how Trump has used the federal government and his supporters' influence to expand presidential authority and target foes, the award judges noted. The Times took the investigative reporting prize for exploring the Republican president's boundary-pushing approach to the notion of conflicts of interest.

Joseph Kahn, executive editor of the Times, said its reporters have been threatened over their work. "We have not, and will not" bow to the pressure, he said in a statement.

Reuters' reporting on scam ads, AI chatbots and the social media giant Meta — which owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp — won the beat reporting prize, last given two decades ago.

Reuters' wins spotlighted "fearless, deeply reported, original work that holds powerful institutions to account," editor-in-chief Alessandra Galloni said in a statement.

Visual journalism honors included a graphic novel

The prize for breaking news went to The Minnesota Star Tribune's coverage of last year's deadly mass shooting during Mass at a Minneapolis Catholic school. Judges praised the thoroughness and compassion of the newspaper's reporting on a scene of carnage in its hometown.

"To me, it's really a moment to appreciate the power of local journalism," Kathleen Hennessey, the Star Tribune's editor and senior vice president, said in an interview. One Tribune reporter who lives in the neighborhood heard the gunshots and called 911 before running to the scene, she noted; an editor at the paper has children who attend the school.

"It feels really gratifying to be recognized, but for this newsroom, this is also just still a really painful event," Hennessey said.

The San Francisco Chronicle received the award for explanatory reporting, which means work that makes a complex topic comprehensible to everyday readers and viewers. The Chronicle's series laid out how insurers, aided by algorithmic tools, undervalued and denied rebuilding claims for fire-destroyed homes, the judges said.

In visual journalism, The Times got a breaking news photography award for depicting devastation and starvation in Gaza resulting from Israel's war in the territory. The Post won the feature photography prize, for a visual essay on a family welcoming a firstborn as the child's father grappled with terminal cancer. The award for illustrated reporting and commentary — a category that includes editorial cartoons and more — went to Bloomberg for a graphic novel about online scams that threaten "digital arrest."

In a statement, Bloomberg Editor-in-Chief John Micklethwait called it "deeply reported public service journalism, published in an inventive format."

While several prizes reflected the year's biggest news stories, others highlighted work that wasn't pushed to everyone's phones.

One of two local reporting awards went to The Connecticut Mirror and ProPublica for a series on how towing companies profited off Connecticut laws, at the expense of poor car owners; the state soon changed

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the laws. The Chicago Tribune also was honored for its coverage of the Trump administration's intense immigration crackdown in the Windy City.

A 'pioneering' live podcast investigation

Texas Monthly won the feature writing award for an editor's first-person story of flooding that killed his toddler nephew and swept his home away. Also in Texas, The Dallas Morning News' architecture critic won the criticism award; judges praised Mark Lamster's wit and expertise. The New York Times' M. Gessen won the opinion writing award for essays on authoritarianism.

The audio award went to "Pablo Torre Finds Out" for probing financial arrangements between Los Angeles Clippers superstar Kawhi Leonard and an environmental startup in which the team owner invested. The judges called the project a "pioneering and entertaining form of live podcast journalism." It's produced by Meadowlark Media and licensed by the New York Times Co.-owned sports site The Athletic.

The Pulitzer announcement — usually followed by a dinner later in the year — came little more than a week after an armed man rushed a security checkpoint and exchanged gunfire with Secret Service agents outside another big event for U.S. journalists, the White House Correspondents' Association dinner in Washington. The man is now charged with trying to assassinate Trump, who was attending the event for his first time as president.

Separately, Monday's awards also honored books, music and theater.

The prizes were established in newspaper publisher Joseph Pulitzer's will and were first awarded in 1917. Winners receive \$15,000, and the public service award carries a gold medal. Decisions are made by the Pulitzer Board, based at Columbia University in New York.

Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni have ended their 'It Ends With Us' dispute in a settlement

By MICHAEL R. SISAK and LARRY NEUMEISTER Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Actors Blake Lively and Justin Baldoni agreed Monday to end their legal feud over the acrimonious production of their 2024 film "It Ends With Us," averting a trial that threatened to further tarnish their reputations and expose the dark side of Hollywood moviemaking.

The costars turned courtroom adversaries settled the civil case two weeks before they were to go to trial in New York on Lively's claims that Baldoni conspired with publicists to preemptively destroy her reputation after she privately accused him of sexually harassing her on the movie set.

"Raising awareness, and making a meaningful impact in the lives of domestic violence survivors — and all survivors — is a goal that we stand behind," Lively and Baldoni said in a joint statement issued through their lawyers.

"It is our sincere hope that this brings closure and allows all involved to move forward constructively and in peace, including a respectful environment online."

The terms of the settlement were not disclosed.

Lively, 38, sued Baldoni, 42, and his production company, Wayfarer Studios, at the end of 2024. Weeks later, Baldoni sued Lively, accusing her, her husband — "Deadpool" actor Ryan Reynolds — and their publicist of defamation and extortion.

Baldoni, who directed the dark romantic drama and starred in it with Lively, had denied harassing her or orchestrating a smear campaign. He'd claimed the complaints about his behavior were made up by Lively as part of an effort to seize creative control of the movie.

Monday's settlement came after a federal judge in Manhattan tossed some of each actors' claims.

Last June, Judge Lewis J. Liman dismissed Baldoni's defamation and extortion lawsuit. In April, he threw out Lively's sexual harassment claims, ruling that she couldn't pursue them under federal law because she was an independent contractor rather than an employee on the movie set.

In their joint statement, the parties said they recognize that Lively's concerns "deserved to be heard" and that they "remain firmly committed to workplaces free of improprieties and unproductive environments."

The trial, now no longer necessary, had been scheduled to begin with jury selection on May 18.

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"It Ends With Us," an adaptation of Colleen Hoover's bestselling 2016 novel about a relationship devolving into domestic violence, was released in August 2024 and exceeded box office expectations despite criticism that it glorified abuse. Lively and Baldoni's fractious falling out took attention away from the film, overshadowing its message and success.

"The end product — the movie 'It Ends With Us' — is a source of pride to all of us who worked to bring it to life," Lively and Baldoni said in their statement.

Lively said in her lawsuit that during filming, Baldoni made inappropriate comments about her appearance, violated physical boundaries while filming a love scene, and pushed for nudity — against Lively's wishes — during a scene in which her character was giving birth.

Baldoni denied doing anything outside the realm of the normal creative process of making a movie.

The judge, in the decision tossing out the sexual harassment claims, acknowledged the complexity of the matter, noting that creative artists "must have some amount of space to experiment within the bounds of an agreed script without fear of being held liable for sexual harassment."

The trial was to focus on Lively's claim that Baldoni and the studio retaliated against her sexual harassment complaints by hiring publicists to turn the public against her. Her lawyers said that campaign including hiring a "digital army" to post bogus negative content about Lively on social media platforms, and feeding "manufactured content to unwitting reporters."

The lawsuit said the purpose was to "retaliate against Ms. Lively by battering her image, harming her businesses, and causing her family severe emotional harm."

Baldoni's lawyers have claimed it was Lively who was strategically manipulating Baldoni's public image, partly by leveraging help from her famous friends.

Lively appeared in the 2005 film "The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants" and the TV series "Gossip Girl" from 2007 to 2012 before starring in films including "The Town" and "The Shallows."

Baldoni starred in the TV comedy "Jane the Virgin," directed the 2019 film "Five Feet Apart" and wrote "Man Enough," a book challenging traditional notions of masculinity.

OpenAI president discloses his stake in the company is worth \$30B

By BARBARA ORTUTAY AP Technology Writer

OAKLAND, Calif. (AP) — Greg Brockman, OpenAI's president and CEO Sam Altman's top lieutenant, disclosed in court Monday that his stake in the artificial intelligence company is worth nearly \$30 billion.

Brockman, who also said he did not personally invest any money in OpenAI, was testifying Monday in the trial that centers on the company's 2015 founding as a nonprofit startup primarily funded by Elon Musk before evolving into a capitalistic venture now valued at \$852 billion.

Brockman's disclosure would put him on the Forbes list of the world's richest people, with wealth comparable to Melinda French Gates.

The civil lawsuit accuses Altman and Brockman of double-crossing Musk by straying from the San Francisco company's founding mission to be an altruistic steward of a revolutionary technology. The lawsuit alleges they shifted into a moneymaking mode behind Musk's back.

Late Sunday, OpenAI lawyers tried to admit as evidence a text message Musk sent to Brockman two days before the trial began. According to a court filing — which did not include the actual text exchange — Musk sent a message to Brockman to gauge interest in settlement.

When Brockman replied that both sides should drop their respective claims, Musk shot back, according to the filing, "By the end of this week, you and Sam will be the most hated men in America. If you insist, so it will be."

Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers, who is overseeing the trial, did not admit the text exchange as evidence.

Wall Street falls from its records and oil prices jump after fighting flares in the Middle East

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market fell from its record heights Monday, while oil prices jumped following escalations in the Middle East that may undermine the ceasefire in the war with Iran.

The S&P 500 sank 0.4%, coming off its latest all-time high. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 557 points, or 1.1%, and the Nasdaq composite slipped 0.2%.

The action was stronger in the oil market, where the price for a barrel of Brent crude leaped 5.8% to settle at \$114.44. It jolted higher after the United Arab Emirates, a U.S. ally, said it came under attack by Iran for the first time since the ceasefire took hold in early April. The attacks appeared to be in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's latest efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's closure of the strait has kept oil tankers pent up in the Persian Gulf and away from customers worldwide. That in turn has sent the price of Brent soaring from roughly \$70 per barrel before the war.

Trump said Sunday that the United States would guide ships through the strait, which could get oil flowing again and bring down its price. But prices instead climbed with uncertainty about what would happen next.

The U.S. military said Monday that two American-flagged merchant ships had successfully transited the Strait of Hormuz. It also said that it sank six small boats as it set up an "enhanced security area" for ships crossing the strait.

Even with all the uncertainty about how long the war with Iran will last, the U.S. stock market has remained remarkably resilient and has powered to record after record. Hope is still high on Wall Street that the global economy can avoid a worst-case scenario because of the war. And in the meantime, companies continue to deliver big growth in profits. That's key because stock prices tend to follow the path of corporate profits over the long term.

The strength so far this reporting season has been broad-based and not confined to just the Big Tech superstars that dominate the market. The median stock in the S&P 500 is tracking for the best growth since 2021, according to Savita Subramanian, a strategist at Bank of America.

Tyson Foods joined the list Monday of those topping analysts' expectations for both profit and revenue during the latest quarter.

It sold less beef than it did a year ago, but it did so at prices that were 11.5% higher, so its total beef revenue edged up. It also sold more chicken and pork than a year earlier, at slightly higher prices. Its stock rose 8% and helped limit Wall Street's losses.

Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings likewise delivered a better profit for the latest quarter than analysts expected. But it's feeling the effects of the war, which has not only raised pressure on fuel prices but also pushed customers to think twice about travel plans, particularly to Europe.

The cruise operator said some "execution missteps" also have bookings below where it would like, and its stock fell 8.6%.

UPS and FedEx dropped even more for some of the market's sharpest losses after Amazon announced a move that could cut into their businesses. The online giant said it's begun allowing Procter & Gamble, 3M and other big companies to use its logistics services to move inventory, fulfill orders and deliver packages directly to shoppers.

UPS dropped 10.5%, and FedEx fell 9.1%, while Amazon rose 1.4%.

GameStop slumped after it said it wants to buy eBay, a much larger company, for \$125 per share in cash and stock. Coming into the day, eBay had a total market value that was nearly quadruple GameStop's.

GameStop said it has already built a 5% stake in eBay and sees opportunities to cut \$2 billion in annual costs quickly. GameStop, whose stock briefly soared to market-shaking heights during the meme stock craze of 2021, fell 10.1%, while eBay rose 5.1%.

All told, the S&P 500 fell 29.37 points to 7,200.75. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 557.37 to 48,941.90, and the Nasdaq composite slipped 46.64 to 25,067.80.

In stock markets abroad, gains for tech stocks helped indexes jump 5.1% in South Korea and 1.2% in

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Hong Kong, while markets were closed in mainland China and Japan for holidays.

European indexes fared worse, and France's CAC 40 fell 1.7%.

In the bond market, Treasury yield jumped with the price of oil. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 4.43% from 4.39% late Friday. It was at just 3.97% before the war began, and the rise has made mortgages and other kinds of loans for U.S. households and businesses more expensive.

Britney Spears pleads guilty to lesser 'wet reckless' charge in DUI case, avoids further jail time

By ANDREW DALTON AP Entertainment Writer

VENTURA, Calif. (AP) — Britney Spears pleaded guilty through her lawyer Monday to a lesser charge that will allow her to avoid jail time after California prosecutors accused her of driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

The 44-year-old pop star, who recently completed a stint at a rehabilitation facility, didn't appear in Ventura County court. But her lawyer, Michael A. Goldstein, pleaded guilty on her behalf to what's commonly called a "wet reckless." That allowed her to be sentenced to one day in jail that the judge said she served when she was booked, one year of probation, a required DUI class and state-mandated fines.

The plea offer was standard for defendants with no DUI history, no crash or injury on the road, and a low blood-alcohol level, the county district attorney's office said. And it's especially common for defendants who have shown motivation to address their problems and seek treatment, as Spears did when she voluntarily checked in to a substance abuse treatment center last month.

"I don't think anybody's happy about pleading guilty to anything, but under the circumstances, to get this behind her, I think everybody is pleased with the result," Goldstein said after the hearing. "We appreciate the district attorney recognizing the positive steps that Britney is taking to help herself."

Goldstein said Spears returned home after recently completing her rehab stint, and that reports that she left early were "absolutely false." Asked what's next for her, he replied, "I don't know, I'm sure a lot."

During the brief hearing, Spears received summary probation, which is informal and doesn't involve mandatory meetings with a probation officer. She temporarily yielded her Fourth Amendment search and seizure rights if she is pulled over, meaning she must automatically yield to searches and sobriety tests. At Goldstein's request, the judge ruled this would not apply to her home.

District Attorney Erik Nasarenko said after the hearing that Spears had taken "full responsibility," but he emphasized that DUI is a "serious crime" and said it was essential that she follow the requirements agreed to in court, which include continued substance abuse treatment, weekly visits with a therapist and monthly visits with a psychiatrist.

"We do not want Miss Spears to reoffend," Nasarenko said.

She was charged Thursday with one misdemeanor DUI count, which meant she was not required to appear in court for her arraignment. But her representatives hadn't said whether she would appear, and the hearing drew an unusually heavy media turnout for Ventura, a seaside city of about 110,000 people roughly 70 miles (113 kilometers) northwest of downtown LA.

After her March 4 arrest, a representative called her actions inexcusable and said that ideally, the arrest would lead to overdue change in her life.

She was pulled over for driving her black BMW quickly and erratically on U.S. 101, the California Highway Patrol said. She appeared to be impaired, took a series of field sobriety tests, was arrested and was taken to jail, the CHP said.

Authorities said in the criminal complaint that Spears had alcohol and drugs in her system, but they didn't specify which drugs or list her blood alcohol content.

Spears grew to superstardom in the 1990s and 2000s with hits including "Toxic," "Gimme More" and "I'm a Slave 4 U." Most of her nine studio albums have been certified platinum, with two diamond titles: 1999's "... Baby One More Time" and 2000s "Oops! ... I Did It Again."

She became a tabloid obsession in the early 2000s and a source of intense public scrutiny as she battled

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mental illness and paparazzi fought to document the details of her private life.

In 2008, Spears was placed under a court-ordered conservatorship, run primarily by her father and his lawyers, that would control her personal and financial decisions for well over a decade. It was dissolved in 2021.

Since then, she has married, divorced, and released a bestselling memoir, "The Woman in Me."

What to know as the US tries to open the Strait of Hormuz and a ceasefire wavers

By CARA ANNA Associated Press

The ceasefire in the Iran war abruptly faced its most perilous moment Monday after the United States began trying to open the Strait of Hormuz to allow hundreds of stranded commercial ships sail out.

The United Arab Emirates said it came under attack for the first time since the early April ceasefire, and a British military monitor said two cargo vessels were ablaze off the UAE. There had been warning signs around the U.S. military-aided effort to guide ships through the strait, as Iran called it a violation of the fragile, three-week ceasefire.

Few ships had appeared to take advantage of "Project Freedom," announced Sunday by President Donald Trump, though the U.S. said two U.S.-flagged merchant ships safely transited with its help.

Caution, even skepticism, is growing among shippers, and markets, over the lack of details from Washington. Who would risk their crew and cargo to possible Iranian fire?

Here's what to know.

U.S. appears to be going it alone

Iran's grip on the crucial waterway has left hundreds of commercial ships and tens of thousands of sailors stuck since the war broke out over two months ago. The U.S. military says 87 countries are represented among the vessels.

Backed up in the strait are weeks' worth of supplies of globally needed oil, gas, fertilizer and other goods. This has been Iran's strategic advantage in the war, one that has pinched economies and dimmed the outlook for the Republican president's party in this year's midterm U.S. elections.

Oil prices rose Monday as uncertainty continued around the strait and the U.S. effort, which Trump has described as a humanitarian one to help countries that have been "neutral and innocent" in the war.

While countries in Europe and elsewhere have fretted over the strait and have been urged by Trump to help solve the issue, it was not immediately clear whether any other nation was involved Monday.

The U.S. military, which has been blockading Iranian ports for weeks, said the initiative involves guided-missile destroyers, more than 100 aircraft and 15,000 service members but did not say how they are deployed.

Trump warned that interference in the effort "will, unfortunately, have to be dealt with forcefully."

The U.S. military on Monday said it sank six small Iranian boats that were targeting civilian vessels, and said Iran launched missiles and drones at ships the U.S. was protecting.

Adm. Brad Cooper, who heads U.S. Central Command, said Iran initiated the "aggressive behavior." He declined to say whether the ceasefire was over.

Iran calls the effort part of Trump's 'delirium'

Iran effectively closed the strait by attacking some ships over the past two months, and told others not affiliated with the U.S. or Israel that they could pass if they paid a toll.

Iran's military command on Monday said ships still must coordinate with Tehran to transit the strait and warned that "any foreign military force — especially the aggressive U.S. military — that intends to approach or enter the Strait of Hormuz will be targeted," the state broadcaster reported.

Iranian news agencies claimed that Iran struck a U.S. vessel southeast of the strait, accusing it of violating "maritime security and navigation norms." The U.S. military denied it.

Concerns remain about Iranian mines in the waterway. Cooper said the U.S. military had cleared a pathway in the strait, and set up a "defensive umbrella" that includes helicopters and fighter planes to protect

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freighters leaving it.

Iran's state-run IRNA news agency has called Trump's plan to reopen the strait part of his "delirium."

Wary shippers say security situation is unchanged

The threat level around the strait remains critical, according to the U.S.-led Joint Maritime Information Center, even as it issued an advisory on the new U.S. effort.

The head of security for the Baltic and International Maritime Council, a leading shipping trade group, said no formal guidance or details about the effort had been issued to the industry.

Without Iran's consent for safe transit, "it is currently not clear whether the Iranian threat to ships can be degraded or suppressed," Jakob Larsen, BIMCO's chief safety and security officer said in a statement.

Larsen questioned whether the U.S. effort is sustainable in the long run or is envisioned as a limited operation, and said there is a "risk of hostilities breaking out again" if it goes ahead.

"There's not much clarity at this point," United Nations spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told journalists.

The Joint Maritime Information Center has advised ships to cross the strait in Oman's waters, saying the U.S. has set up an "enhanced security area." It warned that passing close to usual routes "should be considered extremely hazardous due to the presence of mines that have not been fully surveyed and mitigated."

The center urged mariners to coordinate closely with Omani authorities "due to anticipated high traffic volume" — a forecast that on Monday seemed unlikely to play out.

Iran war has put foreign workers in the Gulf at greater risk while raising the cost of going home

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL and JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — He had met his 6-year-old son only once. A few days together in a life otherwise spent apart.

For 15 years, Mohammad Abdullah Al Mamun worked in Saudi Arabia, sending money home to his family in one of the poorest areas of Bangladesh. This year, he had planned to return, build a larger house with his savings and spend time with the child he barely knew.

Then, on March 8, a missile struck his workers' camp. He suffered severe burns and later died. He was among more than two dozen foreign workers killed across the Middle East after the United States and Israel went to war with Iran in February.

Tens of millions of foreign workers have helped build the Gulf Arab states' modern, oil-fueled economies — with many not fully sharing in their prosperity. Now they face an even sharper dilemma: Keep working in the Mideast, where wages are far higher, hoping that a shaky ceasefire endures; or return to already poor countries where prices have soared because of the conflict.

Mamun's choice was made for him. He arrived home in a coffin earlier this month.

"We don't know what we will do next," said his widow, Sadia Islam Sarmin.

Millions work with little protection

Migrant workers make up a majority of the population in many Gulf Arab states. Westerners, Arabs and Indians dominate business and finance, while laborers from poor countries in Asia and Africa toil for long hours in scorching temperatures at oil facilities and construction sites — often with few protections.

The Coalition for Labor Justice for Migrants in the Gulf, an advocacy group, says few had access to bomb shelters and many were stranded by the conflict. It says attacks killed at least 24 foreign workers in the Gulf and four in Israel as Iran and allied armed groups launched waves of missile and drone strikes. Their count includes eight mariners killed at sea.

On Monday, three Indian workers were moderately injured in the United Arab Emirates when an Iranian drone sparked a fire at an oil facility. It was the first time the UAE came under attack since a fragile ceasefire took hold in early April.

"It's a very precarious situation for migrant workers," said Udaya Wagle, who studies labor and migration at Northern Arizona University.

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Though the ceasefire has mostly held, negotiations to end the war have repeatedly stalled. Iran has effectively blocked the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway for global oil and gas, and says it will only reopen it if the war ends and the U.S. lifts its blockade.

The resulting spike in the price of gas, fertilizer and other goods has hit Asian countries particularly hard. Remittances from the Gulf make up about 1% of the gross domestic product of India, 3% to 5% of the GDP in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; and nearly 10% in Nepal. Now they are more vital than ever, as household incomes are strained and governments seek foreign currency to buy oil and gas.

The Gulf economies also face a bleak outlook, with exports bottled up and key energy facilities in need of repair after missile strikes. The fighting could resume, as Iran rejects U.S. President Donald Trump's demands.

Low-wage laborers are the most vulnerable

Mamun's family awoke on March 9 to phone calls saying the 35-year-old had been hurt. Video footage shot by another worker showed him sitting in the open, badly burned and bleeding, crying out for help.

"He never imagined he would be hurt. That a missile would fall on him," said Maruf Hasain, his younger brother.

Workers like Mamun are the most vulnerable since they do the "most dirty, dangerous and difficult" jobs, said Shariful Islam Hasan of the Bangladeshi development organization BRAC.

In Qatar, a 27-year-old Bangladeshi factory worker labored through 12-hour shifts as missiles flew overhead. Shrapnel from one strike fell near his living quarters. When alarms sounded, he said, workers went to a designated room.

He earns less than \$400 monthly and sends two-thirds home. "We have no choice but to keep working," he said on condition of anonymity for fear of angering the authorities.

Qatar enacted several reforms in the run-up to hosting the 2022 World Cup, including the partial dismantling of a system that tied workers to their employers. But activists say abuses are still widespread and that workers have few avenues to pursue justice.

Ahmed al-Aliyi, a taxi driver in Qatar, has not sent money home to his family in Egypt for two months. He once earned as much as \$3,000 a month, but his income has plunged to a third of that as the war has disrupted travel. "We are the collateral damage of this war," he said.

A slowdown in key sectors like real estate and construction will hit migrant workers directly, said Hasan, of BRAC. Workers from Bangladesh and Pakistan are especially vulnerable, as they are often employed informally and without fixed contracts, he said.

Despite reforms in some countries, work permits are also often tied to a single employer and, in some cases, workers are effectively stranded, according to the labor coalition. It warned that some employers may use the conflict to withhold wages, deny leave or carry out arbitrary dismissals.

For many, going home isn't an option

When the war began, Mamun's mother, Shahida Khatun, urged him to come home.

He had been saving up since November. In his last call home, he promised his younger brother and sisters he would pay for their studies, that he would build a larger house for his parents and return for good this spring.

Now, his family is struggling to recover his wages and piece together a life without him.

"The pain of losing a child. There are no words to describe the agony," Khatun said.

For many workers, going home would mean giving up a steady income and much higher wages.

Marlene Flores, a Filipina worker in Qatar, said she felt the shudder each time a missile was intercepted. But the tax-free pay and health insurance made it feel safer — in a way — than the Philippines, which has declared a "national energy emergency."

"It's not easy for me to say," she admitted. "But I would really stay here."

Israel also has a large population of foreign workers. Filipino caregiver Jeremiah Supan continued caring for his two elderly charges despite near-daily missile alerts, sometimes dashing out for food or medicine despite the danger. He questions whether his own family could survive if he returns to the Philippines.

"I know that in the blink of an eye, one can die," he said. "But what life shall we return to?"

FACT FOCUS: Why nearly 4.3 million people are no longer receiving food stamps

By MELISSA GOLDIN Associated Press

Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins this week attributed a multimillion-person drop in the number of participants receiving food stamps through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program to the tamping down of fraud and an improved economy.

But experts discount those factors, saying the primary driver of the decrease was more likely new legislation that changed how the program runs.

Here's a closer look at the facts.

ROLLINS: "As of just a couple of days ago, we now have moved 4.3 million Americans off of the food stamp program. A lot of that is fraud. A lot of it is people taking the program that shouldn't have been. And a lot of it is just a better economy. We've had wage growth that has outpaced inflation for the first time since early 2021. This is a really big day. So people don't need food stamps."

THE FACTS: SNAP beneficiaries decreased by nearly 4.3 million from January 2025 to January 2026, according to preliminary government data released by the Agriculture Department. However, experts say new requirements mandated by a massive tax and spending cut bill Republicans pushed through Congress last summer are the primary reasons.

The bill is projected to cut \$186 billion in federal spending — 20% — from SNAP over 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office.

"What we've seen in terms of the data is that the trend in participation declines seems to be related to the program being harder to access," said Roger Figueroa, an assistant professor at Cornell University who studies food insecurity from a public health perspective.

The data says fraud is low

Fraud within the SNAP is small, according to experts — not nearly enough to account for such a significant drop.

In financial year 2023, the latest data that is available, 41,476 people were disqualified from SNAP for fraud. That includes people who erroneously reported information during the application process and people who exchanged benefits for cash or other noneligible items. Out of 42,176,946 total participants that's less than 1%.

"I don't see any evidence supporting a significant reduction in fraud as a driver of what we're seeing as far as declining SNAP participation," said Caitlin Caspi, an associate professor at the University of Connecticut who studies food insecurity.

Asked for data to support Rollins' claim about fraud's relationship to the decrease of SNAP beneficiaries, the USDA directed The Associated Press to reporting from the New York Post and the Foundation for Government Accountability on broad-based categorical eligibility. SNAP applicants in most states may be eligible for SNAP using this policy if they qualify for non-cash benefits from the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program or similar state-run efforts.

BBCE has been criticized for allowing states too much flexibility in determining who is eligible for SNAP by removing asset maximums, using a higher limit for gross income or both. The Trump administration hopes to do away with the policy, but for now it is a legal option.

Food insecurity persists despite economic gains

The U.S. economy generally performed strongly in 2025 after getting off to a bumpy start. Gross domestic product shrank for the first time in three years during the first quarter, but growth rebounded in the second half of the year. It slowed in the fourth quarter, but continued to accelerate at the start of 2026, expanding at a modest 2% pace from January through March, rebounding from a record 43-day government shutdown last year.

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But while the economy is strong, food prices are rising. They were up 3.1% in 2025 and are expected to increase 2.9% in 2026. And for many of those facing ongoing financial hardship, a strong economy typically doesn't make a difference.

"We have a persistent poverty problem in this country," said Kate Bauer, an associate professor of nutritional sciences at the University of Michigan. "And we have huge economic disparities. And most people, even in good economic times, are not able to pull their families out of poverty."

Wage growth, at 3.4%, did outpace inflation, at 3.3%, in March, though it was not the first time since 2021, as Rollins claimed. And yet in 2025 higher-income Americans benefited more than lower-income households, which struggled with weaker income gains and steep prices. Plus, hiring was sluggish and the unemployment rate ticked up.

"We're not seeing a linear kind of drop-off," said Caspi. "We are not seeing, if you look at the unemployment rates, things that might be an indicator that a strong economy was driving this change. We don't see, for example, a pattern of decline in unemployment that would match the pattern of decline in SNAP participation."

The 'Big Beautiful Bill' made massive changes to SNAP

Experts say some of the biggest drivers in the drop of SNAP participants were changes made in the 940-page "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," also known as H.R. 1. For example, it mandated that certain adults who were previously exempt from work requirements are now subject to them.

There are two types of work requirements for eligibility. General rules apply to most people age 16-59, but able-bodied adults without dependents must follow stricter guidelines — made even stricter by H.R. 1 — unless they qualify for an exemption. Participants can meet the more stringent requirements by working or participating in a work program for at least 80 hours a month. They do not need to be paid.

Previously, able-bodied adults older than 54 without dependents were exempt from the enhanced requirements. That age has been raised to 64. And the bill lowered the age of children whom a person is responsible for to qualify for an exemption from 18 to 14. Homeless people, veterans and former foster children 24 or younger are no longer exempt either.

"Families have lots of really complicated situations and you can't just say to people, in 10 days or in one month, go find 80 hours a month of work when you don't have the skills and those jobs aren't available in your community," said Bauer.

SNAP eligibility applies only to U.S. citizens and some lawful immigrants, although groups such as refugees and asylees no longer qualify because of H.R. 1.

By the numbers

In January 2025, when Trump was sworn in as president for his second term, there were approximately 42.83 million SNAP participants. That number dropped nearly 10% by January 2026, to about 38.55 million. The majority of the decline occurred in the second half of the year, after Trump signed H.R. 1 in July. There was a decrease of just 743,572 people from January 2025 to June 2025 and one of about 3.47 million from July 2025 to January 2026.

The Congressional Budget Office predicted that the bill would cause such a sharp drop, estimating in an August 2025 report that certain provisions would "reduce participation in SNAP by roughly 2.4 million people in an average month over the 2025-2034 period."

"It shouldn't be surprising that we are seeing this decline and it shouldn't be a leap in logic to think that these declines are attributable to H.R. 1," said Caspi.

Astronomers believe they've detected an atmosphere around a tiny, icy world beyond Pluto

By MARCIA DUNN AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A new study suggests that a tiny, icy world beyond Pluto harbors a thin, delicate atmosphere that may have been created by volcanic eruptions or a comet strike.

Just 300 miles (500 kilometers) or so across, this mini Pluto is thought to be the solar system's smallest

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object yet with a clearly detected global atmosphere bound by gravity, said lead researcher Ko Arimatsu of the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan.

"This is an amazing development, but it sorely needs independent verification. The implications are profound if verified," said Southwest Research Institute's Alan Stern, the lead scientist behind NASA's New Horizons mission to Pluto and beyond. He was not involved in the study.

The finding offers fresh insight into our solar system's farthest, coldest objects in a region known as the Kuiper Belt. Researchers used three telescopes in Japan to observe the object in 2024 as it passed in front of a background star, briefly dimming the starlight.

"It changes our view of small worlds in the solar system, not only beyond Neptune," Arimatsu said in an email. Finding an atmosphere around such a small object was "genuinely surprising," he added, and challenges "the conventional view that atmospheres are limited to large planets, dwarf planets and some large moons."

This so-called minor planet — formally known as (612533) 2002 XV93 — is considered a plutino, circling the sun twice in the time it takes Neptune to complete three solar orbits. At the time of the study, it was more than 3.4 billion miles (5.5 billion kilometers) away, farther than even Pluto, the only other object in the Kuiper Belt with an observed atmosphere.

This cosmic iceball's atmosphere is believed to be 5 million to 10 million times thinner than Earth's protective atmosphere, according to the study appearing Monday in the journal *Nature Astronomy*.

It's 50 to 100 times thinner than even Pluto's tenuous atmosphere. The likeliest atmospheric chemicals are methane, nitrogen or carbon monoxide, any of which could reproduce the observed dimming as the object passed before the star, according to Arimatsu.

Further observations, especially by NASA's Webb Space Telescope, could verify the makeup of the atmosphere, according to Arimatsu.

"That is why future monitoring is so important," he said. "If the atmosphere fades over the next several years, that would support an impact origin. If it persists, or varies seasonally, that would point more toward ongoing internal gas supply" from ice volcanoes.

Today in History: May 5, Alan Shepard becomes first American in space

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Tuesday, May 5, the 125th day of 2026. There are 240 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 5, 1961, astronaut Alan B. Shepard Jr. became America's first space traveler as he made a 15-minute suborbital flight aboard Mercury capsule Freedom 7.

Also on this date:

In 1821, Napoleon Bonaparte, 51, died in exile on the South Atlantic island of St. Helena.

In 1862, Mexican troops repelled French attacks on the city of Puebla de los Angeles in the Battle of Puebla, also known as the Battle of Cinco de Mayo.

In 1925, high school teacher John T. Scopes was charged in Tennessee with violating a state law that prohibited teaching the theory of evolution. (Scopes was found guilty, but his conviction was later set aside.)

In 1945, in the only fatal attack on the U.S. mainland during World War II, a Japanese balloon bomb exploded on Gearhart Mountain in Oregon, killing a pregnant woman and five children.

In 1973, Secretariat won the Kentucky Derby, the first of his Triple Crown victories, in a time of 1:59.4 — a record that still stands.

In 1981, Irish Republican Army militant Bobby Sands died at age 27 at the Maze Prison in Northern Ireland on the 66th day of a hunger strike.

In 1994, American teenager Michael Fay was caned at a Singaporean prison for vandalism, a day after his sentence was reduced from six lashes to four in response to an appeal by President Bill Clinton.

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In 2016, Lonnie Franklin Jr. was convicted of 10 counts of murder in the "Grim Sleeper" serial killings in Los Angeles that targeted poor, young Black women over two decades.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Lance Henriksen is 86. Comedian-actor Michael Palin is 83. Actor Richard E. Grant is 69. R&B singer Raheem DeVaughn is 51. Actor Vincent Kartheiser is 47. Actor Danielle Fishel is 45. Actor Henry Cavill is 43. Singer-songwriter Adele is 38. R&B singer Chris Brown is 37. Tennis player Aryna Sabalenka is 28. Olympic figure skating gold medalist Nathan Chen is 27. Tennis player Carlos Alcaraz is 23. Actor Jenna Davis is 22.