

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 1 of 67

[1- Upcoming Events](#)
[2- 1440 News Headlines](#)
[4- Tigers Capture Three Relay Titles at Al Sahli Invitational](#)
[5- Weber Landscaping Greenhouse Ad](#)
[6- Beams extended for scoreboard](#)
[7- GFP Commission Holds May Meeting](#)
[7- Doris Strom's 101st Birthday Ad](#)
[8- Clutch Hitting Groton Area Tigers Varsity Take On Madison Bulldogs Varsity](#)
[9 -SD SearchLight: South Dakota's southern Black Hills mountain goats face an uncertain future](#)
[13- SD SearchLight: Company withdraws from controversial Black Hills exploratory drilling project](#)
[14- SD SearchLight: South Dakota Xcel customers will pay higher electric rates after utilities commission settlement](#)
[15- SD SearchLight: Big changes arrive July 1 for student borrowers, including in loan repayments](#)
[17- SD SearchLight: Unpacking the fight over telehealth access to abortion medication](#)
[21- Weather Pages](#)
[25- Daily Devotional](#)
[26- Subscription Form](#)
[27- Lottery Numbers](#)
[28- News from the Associated Press](#)

Saturday, May 9

Pickleball, 9:30 a.m., Elementary Gym
High School Baseball at Milroy, Minn., vs. Madison/Chester DH at noon.

Sunday, May 10

Mother's Day
Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.
St. John's Lutheran: Worship at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m. (Grad recognition at St. John's).
United Methodist: Worship at Conde, 8:15 a.m.; at Groton, 9:30 a.m.; at Britton, 11:15 a.m.; Groton Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 10:30 a.m.
Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

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First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship 10:30 a.m.

Monday, May 11

Girls Golf @ Groton Invitational, 10 a.m., Olive Grove Golf Course
NEC Middle School Track Meet at Groton, Noon
Girls Softball hosts Sioux Valley, Varsity at 4 p.m. followed by JV
Pickleball, 5:30 p.m., Elementary Gym
JVT Practice, 7 p.m., Arena
Senior citizens meet, 1 p.m., Groton Community Center
Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.
High School Baseball: WIN at Groton, Varsity at 6 p.m. followed by JV

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 2 of 67

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.

UFO Files Unsealed

The Pentagon yesterday released "never-before-seen" files on unidentified flying objects, or UFOs. The database includes FBI case files dating to the 1940s, Apollo mission footage, and roughly two dozen videos recorded between 2020 and 2026.

The military formally began gathering information on UFOs in 1947 after a wave of supposed flying saucer sightings. The effort ended in 1969 with no significant discoveries. Then, in 2017, media outlets reported that the Defense Department spent roughly \$22M annually from late 2008 through 2011 on a secret program investigating alleged encounters between unknown objects and the military. The revelation fueled calls to declassify related documents, with former President Joe Biden signing a law compelling agencies to release UFO records, and President Donald Trump ordering yesterday's release.

The Trump administration gave no analysis of the files, saying Americans can draw their own conclusions. Experts say the files are unlikely to reveal aliens.

Virginia Supreme Court strikes down voter-approved redistricting plan.

Democrats hoped to win as many as four additional US House seats after Virginia voters approved a new congressional map last month. But yesterday, the state's high court ruled the referendum results were meaningless, saying the Democrat-led legislature violated procedure by putting the revised map on the ballot. The Virginia effort is part of a nationwide redistricting battle between Democrats and Republicans.

Four people convicted of conspiracy in 2021 assassination of Haitian president.

A federal jury yesterday found four men tied to a Miami-based security firm guilty of plotting to kill Haitian President Jovenel Moïse in 2021. Prosecutors allege the men intended to cash in on future contracts with a new Haitian government; defense lawyers say the men thought they were providing security for Haitian officials to arrest Moïse, who was highly unpopular at the time. The men face up to life in prison; six others have already pleaded guilty, with all but one receiving a life sentence.

Uber-backed Lime files for IPO.

The electric bike and scooter rental company yesterday filed for an initial public offering on the Nasdaq composite index. Founded in 2017 and led by a former Uber executive, Lime reported 29.1% revenue growth to \$886.7M last year and positive free cash flow for the third consecutive year. It is currently operating in 230 cities across 29 countries.

US adds 115,000 jobs in April, and unemployment rate is steady at 4.3%.

The new report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed the economy added more than double the 55,000 jobs economists had expected last month. The unemployment rate aligned with expectations. Overall, experts say the report signals a resilient labor market amid the Iran war and rising oil prices.

Evidence of possible human remains found in Kristin Smart case.

Authorities said yesterday that soil tests indicated the possible presence of human remains at a property belonging to the mother of the man convicted in the 1996 killing of California college student Kristin Smart. She was declared legally dead in 2002, but her remains were never found. In 2022, fellow student Paul Flores was convicted of first-degree murder. Authorities say his mother is a person of interest.

The podcast series "Your Own Backyard" is credited with helping lead to the 2022 murder conviction.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 3 of 67

Dinosaurs likely cared for their young much like birds do today.

Dental fossils of a duck-billed herbivorous dinosaur suggest parents likely fed their young softer, higher-protein food than they ate themselves—a behavior common in birds that raise nest-bound chicks. It likely helped young dinosaurs grow particularly fast in their first year of life. The study suggests high levels of parental care originated in dinosaurs and endured throughout evolutionary history.

Humankind(ness)

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

"My mother has watched me walk through fire more times than any parent should have to. Through addiction and the long road to sobriety, through a cancer diagnosis that shook me, through raising two special needs boys while pursuing graduate school, she never wavered. She never flinched. She just kept showing up, cheering louder than anyone in the room, loving me before I knew how to love myself. She didn't just believe I could do hard things. She made me believe it, too. Everything I am becoming, I owe, in large part, to her steady, relentless faith in me."

— Ashley P. in Canfield, Ohio

"At 5 feet, 2 inches tall, my mother looked up at everyone, but never backed down from anybody. The fifth child of a traveling salesman, survivor of the Great Depression, Bette was tough. When I struggled to write with my right hand, she boldly confronted my teacher and principal (both men), 'If the boy wants to use his left hand, let him.' Bette dispensed decades of counseling as a 'beautician' with honest compassion. My senior year of high school she encouraged me, her last baby, to follow my dreams, 'Go explore the world and love your life.' Truly, the greatest woman I've ever known."

— Wendell L. in Ventura, California

"One of my childhood memories of my mother's love and patience was of me getting angry with my mother and throwing every insult and 'I would leave this family when I could' at her, only to be calmly replied to with 'And I'll love you anyways.' I remember it stopping my argument so hard that I could not reply, due largely to the fact I could not deny it was true. She feels that for all nine of her children."

— Stephen K. in Provo, Utah

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 4 of 67

Tigers Capture Three Relay Titles at Al Sahli Invitational

Groton Area turned in several standout performances Friday at the Al Sahli Invitational held at Swisher Field in Aberdeen, highlighted by a pair of relay championships and another dominant hurdle performance from junior McKenna Tietz.

The Tigers claimed titles in both the boys and girls sprint medley relays, while the Groton boys also added a first-place finish in the 4x200-meter relay. Individually, Keegen Tracy continued his strong sprint season with a third-place finish in the boys 100 meters, while Jayden Schwan delivered top-five finishes in both distance races.

Tracy crossed the line in 11.11 seconds in the 100-meter dash to place third overall in a loaded field. Ryder Schwan added a 19th-place finish in 11.71, followed closely by Lincoln Krause in 21st at 11.74 and J.J. Muller in 23rd at 11.79.

Groton's relay teams again proved to be one of the strengths of the boys squad. The Tigers captured the 4x200-meter relay title as Lincoln Krause, Jordan Schwan, Ethan Kroll and Tracy combined for a winning time of 1:35.74. Groton also won the sprint medley relay with Ryder Schwan, Muller, Jace Johnson and Riley Shellenberger posting a first-place time of 4:00.73.

The Tigers added a sixth-place finish in the 4x100 relay as Krause, Jordan Schwan, Ryder Schwan and Tracy finished in 46.26.

Jayden Schwan paced Groton in the distance events, taking fifth in the 800 meters with a time of 2:09.02 before placing second in the 1600 meters in 4:51.18. Riley Shellenberger also cracked the top 15 in the 1600, finishing 14th in 5:06.77.

Other Groton performances in the boys division included Wesley Borg taking 30th in the 400 meters in 1:04.84, while Jordan Schwan placed 39th in the discus with a throw of 91 feet. Fernando Nava added a mark of 11 feet, 4.5 inches in the long jump.

On the girls side, Tietz once again led the way for Groton. The standout hurdler captured the 300-meter hurdles title with a winning time of 46.44 seconds. Emerlee Jones followed with a seventh-place finish in 54.31, while Teagan Hanten was eighth in 57.78 and Ella Kettner ninth in 57.97, giving Groton four placers in the event.

Groton also had three athletes place in the top 11 of the 100-meter hurdles as Kettner finished eighth in 18.90, Jones was ninth in 19.14 and Hanten took 11th in 19.75.

The Lady Tigers' sprint medley relay team of Makenna Krause, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy and Ryelle Gilbert earned first place in 4:31.64. Groton also turned in strong finishes in the sprint relays, placing third in the 4x200 relay at 1:49.60 and fourth in the 4x100 relay in 52.76 with the same quartet of Tietz, Traphagen, Kella Tracy and Krause.

Gilbert added an individual third-place finish in the 1600 meters with a time of 5:40.94. Krause narrowly missed the finals in the 100 meters, placing ninth in 13.00 seconds, while Raquel Tracy finished 29th in the 100 and added a 21st-place finish in the 200.

Ashlynn Warrington led Groton in the 400 meters with a 14th-place finish in 1:05.68, while Suri Jetto competed in both the 400 and 800 meters.

In the field events, Rylee Dunker recorded a sixth-place finish in the javelin with a throw of 99 feet, 9 inches. Avery Crank placed 11th in the javelin and 18th in the discus. Emerlee Jones cleared 4 feet, 5 inches in the high jump, while Hanten competed in both the long jump and triple jump for the Tigers.

Boy's Division

100 Meters: 3. Keegen Tracy, 11.11; 19. Ryder Schwan, 11.71; 21. Lincoln Krause, 11.74; 23. JJ Muller, 11.79; 59. Tate Johnson, 13.22; 63. Wesley Borg, 13.52; 64. Sam Crank, 13.56; 67. Fernando Nava, 14.48.

200 Meters: 25. JJ Muller, 25.06; 60. Tate Johnson, 27.79; 65. Wesley Borg, 28.32; 67. Sam Crank, 28.85.

400 Meters: 30. Wesley Borg, 1:04.84.

800 Meters: 5. Jayden Schwan, 2:09.02.

1600 Meters: 2. Jayden Schwan, 4:51.18; 14. Riley Shellenberger, 5:06.77.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 5 of 67

4x100 Relay: 6. Groton: (Lincoln Krause, Jordan Schwan, Ryder Schwan, Keegen Tracy), 46.26.

4x200 Relay: 1. Groton: (Lincoln Krause, Jordan Schwan, Ethan Kroll, Keegen Tracy), 1:35.74.

SMR 1600m - [200-200-400-800]: 1. Groton: (Ryder Schwan, JJ Muller, Jace Johnson, Riley Shel-
lenberger), 4:00.73.

Discus - 1.6kg 39. Jordan Schwan, 91' 0".

Long Jump 35. Fernando Nava, 11' 4.5".

Girl's Division

100 Meters: 9. Makenna Krause, 13.00; 29. Raquel Tracy, 13.84.

200 Meters: 21. Raquel Tracy, 28.76.

400 Meters: 14. Ashlynn Warrington, 1:05.68; 25. Suri Jetto, 1:18.37.

800 Meters: 22. Suri Jetto, 3:08.90.

1600 Meters: 3. Ryelle Gilbert, 5:40.94.

100m Hurdles - 33" / 0.838m: 8. Ella Kettner, 18.90; 9. Emerlee Jones, 19.14; 11. Teagan Hanten, 19.75.

300m Hurdles - 30" / 0.762m: 1. McKenna Tietz, 46.44; 7. Emerlee Jones, 54.31; 8. Teagan Hanten, 57.78; 9. Ella Kettner, 57.97.

4x100 Relay: 4. Groton: (McKenna Tietz, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, Makenna Krause), 52.76.

4x200 Relay: 3. Groton: (McKenna Tietz, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, Makenna Krause), 1:49.60.

SMR 1600m - [200-200-400-800]: 1. Groton: (Makenna Krause, Taryn Traphagen, Kella Tracy, Ryelle Gilbert), 4:31.64.

Discus - 1kg 18. Avery Crank, 92' 5".

Javelin - 600g 6. Rylee Dunker, 99' 9"; 11. Avery Crank, 85' 1".

High Jump 12. Emerlee Jones, 4' 5".

Long Jump 37. Teagan Hanten, 12' 8".

Triple Jump 23. Teagan Hanten, 27' 2".

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Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 6 of 67



This is the second time the beams had to be lengthened since the beams were installed. They had to be lengthened when the first scoreboard was installed and now had to be raised up for the new scoreboard. Schwan Welding was on hand to do the welding being assisted by Branden Abeln.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 7 of 67

GFP Commission Holds May Meeting

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) Commission held their May meeting at the Custer State Park Event Barn May 7-8.

FINALIZATIONS

Black Hills Firearm Elk Season

The Commission voted to align dates for both antlerless elk and any elk tags in Unit H4 of the Black Hills elk firearm season. The antlerless elk hunting in Unit H4 will begin on October 1, to align with any elk hunting, with the intent of increasing cow elk harvest. This finalization originated from a petition brought at the April Commission meeting.

Deer License Allocation

The Commission finalized license adjustments for the 2026 deer hunting season. These adjustments include changing archery and muzzleloader deer licenses from "any deer" to "any buck deer" license types.

East River Deer tags were reduced by 700 for 12 hunting units. West River Deer tags were reduced by 700 for three hunting units.

PROPOSALS

Apprentice, Mentored, and Youth Deer Hunting Seasons

The Commission proposed to close nine counties in southeast South Dakota for apprentice, mentor, and youth deer hunting. The goal of this closure is to reduce antlerless deer harvest, and to increase deer herd population growth. Among these nine units, the female deer harvest from these seasons was 255 in 2025 and accounted for the majority of the total female deer harvest.

This change, in conjunction with firearm license reductions in 12 units, is aimed to further increase population growth rates and limit overall harvest. Eligible youth, mentor, and apprentice hunters would still be able to hunt other units open across the state.

Public Comments Being Accepted

To hear the discussion on these topics, audio from the meeting is available through South Dakota Public Broadcasting and will soon be available on the GFP website as part of the meeting archive.

To see these topics in their entirety, visit gfp.sd.gov/commission/information.

To be included in the public record and to be considered by the Commission, comments must include a full name and city of residence and be submitted by 11:59 p.m. CDT on June 7.

The next GFP Commission meeting will be held in Madison June 11-12.

HELP
Doris Strom
CELEBRATE HER
101st
BIRTHDAY

ON MAY 13.

COME GROTON
AVANTARA
for cake at 2pm

OR SEND HER
A CARD AT
Doris Strom, Avantara
1106 N 2nd St #103
Groton, SD 57445

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 8 of 67

Clutch Hitting Groton Area Tigers Varsity Take On Madison Bulldogs Varsity

Groton Area Tigers Varsity will need to continue their clutch hitting when they take on Madison Bulldogs Varsity on Saturday at Milroy at noon. Groton Area Tigers Varsity has had the knack for the big hits this season as they've driven in 28 batters with two outs. Case Reints leads the team with four 2-out RBIs.

Last Time Out:

Groton Area Tigers Varsity fell to Clark Area Dinosaurs 2-1 at Groton.

Player Highlights:

TC Schuster has played 80 and two-thirds innings at shortstop. Schuster rises to the moment with a 0.333 average with runners in scoring position. The right-handed hitter has driven in nine runs, including three with two outs.

Alex Abeln hits and pitches for Groton Area Tigers Varsity. Abeln primarily plays third base on the field. Abeln is on a 4-game hitting streak. The third baseman has hit 0.368 during the streak. Abeln rises to the moment with a 0.312 average with runners in scoring position. The infielder has driven in five runs, including two with two outs. Abeln has induced 13 groundballs on 33 balls in play this season.

About Groton Area Tigers Varsity:

Groton Area Tigers Varsity has a record of 4-8 this season. Nick Groeblichhoff's 0.991 OPS leads Groton Area Tigers Varsity. The left-handed hitter has a 0.521 OBP and a 0.471 slugging percentage this season. Karsten Fliehs leads Groton Area Tigers Varsity with 97 total fielding chances this season. Fliehs's primary position is catcher.

About Madison Bulldogs Varsity:

Madison Bulldogs Varsity will look to add to their 13-game winning streak. They are 15-1 overall this season. JD Prorok's 1.500 OPS leads Madison Bulldogs Varsity. The first baseman has a 0.707 OBP and a 0.793 slugging percentage this season. Prorok leads Madison Bulldogs Varsity with 27 innings pitched. The starting pitcher has a 0.00 ERA this season. Tregg McGillivray leads Madison Bulldogs Varsity with 117 total fielding chances this season. McGillivray's primary position is catcher.



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

South Dakota's southern Black Hills mountain goats face an uncertain future

For more than 100 years, locals and visitors have enjoyed watching the animals; now, one population could be at risk of disappearing from areas around Mount Rushmore, Needles Highway and Black Elk Peak

BY: NICOLE SCHLABACH

Daniel Milks, the founder and lead guide at My XO Adventures, has introduced many visitors in South Dakota's Black Hills to mountain goats.

"It's an eye-opener, and a jaw-dropper," he said. "I've had adults just lose their minds when they see a mountain goat."

Some wildlife photographers enjoy seeing the goats more than the bison on his tours. "They look like something out of a children's storybook," Milks said, "like little magical creatures from a fairytale land."

He sometimes asks his clients what they loved best about a tour. "And if they saw the mountain goats," he said, "I guarantee you it will be in their top three."

But mountain goats in the southern Black Hills haven't been doing so well in recent years. If the goats disappear from the area, it would be hard to estimate the impact on Milks and his business.

It probably wouldn't affect the number of tours he books. But "would it affect the way we feel as guides going through the Hills? Yes, big time," Milks said. "Would it decrease the experience of a guest in South Dakota, and leave less of a good impression? Absolutely."

To keep track of the goats, South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks counts the animals observed by helicopter at the same rock outcroppings roughly every other year. This helps officials estimate their population size, while using other variables including radio collar data.

The department counted 29 goats in the southern Black Hills in 2024 — a continuation of a downward slide since a peak of 106 in 2016. The low numbers led to the cancellation of the mountain goat hunting season for 2026, the fourth year in a row.



Mountain goats run through the Needles Eye Tunnel, a popular place for visitors to see mountain goats in South Dakota's Custer State Park. In recent years, tour guides have reported fewer sightings in the area. (Photo by Nicole Schlabach/for South Dakota Searchlight)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 10 of 67

"That is not good. That is definitely indicating we are in a big-time decline," said Chad Lehman, senior wildlife biologist at the GF&P. "If they persist on that decline, that trajectory, my estimate would be that they would be gone in the core area by 2030."

The core area extends over 150 square miles from Custer to Mount Rushmore and north of Keystone.

Meanwhile, an isolated population in Spearfish Canyon, in the northern Black Hills, has been growing ever since a nanny left the southern Black Hills herd around 2014. Last year, there were up to 25 goats in the canyon, as reported to the GF&P by Spearfish residents.

If the Spearfish population continues to do well, Lehman said, the GF&P could potentially reinvigorate the southern Black Hills population with younger goats from the canyon.

"At least we have a secondary population that is keeping us from going completely extinct in the Black Hills," he said.

Yet the long-term outlook is uncertain for animals in a place they may not be built to thrive in.

Challenging environment in the southern Black Hills

In the 1920s, six goats from Alberta, Canada, escaped from a zoo in Custer State Park. Accustomed to mountainous regions, they headed straight for the area around Black Elk Peak. By the 1950s, the population had grown to more than 300, and by the late 1960s, hunting seasons were underway.

The rest of their history is defined by periods of decline and recovery. Based on these fluctuations, the GF&P has both moved goats from the southern Black Hills to other western states and added goats from other states to the population.

The recent dip marks roughly the third time the population has declined.

There is no research on the recent numbers, but a 2006-2018 study led by the GF&P theorized that the goats' survival was connected to the pine forest in the southern Black Hills.

"It's important to note that survival was heavily tied to the vegetation up there. If you have a lot of vegetation, it seemed like their survival rates declined," Lehman said.

The forested Black Hills are different from many other mountain ranges where goats live, explained Greg Van Den Berg, the treasurer of the Rocky Mountain Goat Alliance, a conservation nonprofit.

Mountain goats thrive in exposed, alpine environments with grassy foraging areas where it's easier to see predators approaching. When the goats sense danger, they quickly escape onto steep terrain.

The Black Hills have less visibility. "The elevation is not super high. We have a lot of cliffs, for example in the Black Elk Wilderness, but a lot of those trees are right up against that mountainous area," Van Den Berg said.

Because mountain lions rely on stealth, they can use trees to stalk and attack. Mountain lion predation was the leading cause of death identified for radio-collared goats during the GF&P study.

Spearfish Canyon has more open areas leading to cliffs, Van Den Berg added, which might contribute to their growth in that area.

Although wildlife managers can't change the geography of the southern Black Hills to help mountain goats avoid predators, there are ways to create more open areas.

Natural and other ways to help the goats

The goats' survival in the southern Black Hills improved when a pine beetle epidemic, which peaked in 2012, killed many of the trees in their range.

"From about 2012 to 2018 we saw a huge resurgence in mountain goat survival," Lehman said. "The beetle essentially came in and cleaned out a lot of the trees around those precipitous terrain spires."

Over the last couple of years, pine beetle activity has increased a little bit. "It's hard to say. If they do come back, that could potentially have a big impact on the goats," Lehman said.

Forest and wildlife managers could also pursue human-made solutions.

The GF&P's 2024-2028 Mountain Goat Management Plansays "prescribed burning and timber management in these landscapes can enhance mountain goat habitat." The plan's first objective is to "maintain,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 11 of 67

manage, and protect existing mountain goat habitat.”

But those habitat interventions haven’t begun. The next steps are dependent on collaborations with the U.S. Forest Service, which manages much of the land in the Black Hills.

“Hopefully we can continue to collaborate and work with our U.S. Forest Service partners in that area to try and provide more openings for them, especially around the granite outcroppings,” Lehman said.

South Dakota Searchlight did not receive a response to questions sent to the Forest Service.

Because of the difficult terrain, the habitat work could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. The funding would likely need to come from multiple sources, including the Forest Service, the GF&P, and outside sources such as nonprofit organizations.

Adding mountain goats from other states is another option. But that is expensive, too, and those goats might face the same challenges upon arrival.

“I would not encourage us to bring goats in if we’re going to have a problem with our current landscape and vegetation,” Lehman said. “I would prefer to maybe do some habitat manipulations first.”

Even if everything else were in place, timber management is not permitted in a substantial portion of the goats’ habitat: the federally designated Black Elk Wilderness. In that area, “you’re relying on Mother Nature to either provide mountain pine beetles or wildfires,” Lehman said.

Look, but don’t approach

A mountain goat lowered her head and snorted at Greta Alms, a travel blogger from Minnesota, during her visit to Mount Rushmore in 2014. It was probably a nanny protecting her kid, Alms guessed.

She wasn’t expecting to see goats during her trip, but the encounter ended up defining her visit. “My goal was the sunrise. It turned into a way cooler experience. It ended up being about the mountain goats,” she said.

Mountain goat tourism in the Black Hills started more than a century ago. A February 1924 issue of the Kadoka Press described one of the first times that captive goats were viewed by visitors. The goats, along with bison, elk and other animals, were placed in enclosures next to a highway through Custer State Park.

“This summer every one will have the chance to see at least a few specimen of the rare animals from his car as he passes on the beautiful highway,” the Press reported.

One hundred and two years later, Les Heiserman regularly takes photos of the Spearfish Canyon goats, usually right from the road where he can see and listen to visitors’ reactions. “People will say, ‘I was just in Yellowstone, and I didn’t see this much wildlife. We’ll talk about this all the way home.’”

But visitors might like the goats a little too much. “People don’t want to keep their distance,” he said. “They think they’re animal lovers, and so they want to feed them banana chips, or trail mix, whatever they have in their car. They get the goats used to people, and that’s no good.”

In a rare incident, a mountain goat approached and fatally gored a hiker in Washington in 2010. Eleven years later, a mountain goat revealed the species’ strength by killing an attacking grizzly bear in Canada.

“They can’t look at humans as food sources because then they’ll start approaching people. They’re still wild animals with big horns,” Heiserman said, explaining that the goats get closer to the road and are easier to view in South Dakota than many other alpine places where they live.

Heiserman wants to see educational signage in Spearfish Canyon that explains how to behave around the goats.

“We’re lucky to have them here,” he said. “If people can leave them alone, hopefully they’ll stay here, there won’t be any problems, and they’ll continue to amaze us.”

In mid-April, a dead mountain goat was reported near Bridal Veil Falls in Spearfish Canyon. The GF&P believes it probably fell from a cliff or was hit by a car. Before officials could remove the goat, someone illegally cut the head off the body.

John Esposti, co-owner of GeoFunTrek Tours, said he often sees the goats in Spearfish Canyon, but he has noticed a decline while leading tours in the southern Black Hills. He doesn’t mention the goats to clients, because he doesn’t want to create an expectation that could lead to disappointment.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 12 of 67

If the goats disappear, he said, "there would be one less pleasant surprise along the trip."

Does it matter that the goats aren't native?

People disagree about how important it is to invest in keeping the goats around.

"One person may think, well, they're not native, so why are we managing for them?" Lehman said. "Another person who sees them as being on the landscape for more than 100 years as a naturalized species might consider them to be really important."

His personal opinion is that the GF&P should continue to manage them. "We've had them here for over 100 years, the public really enjoys seeing them," he said, adding "they're an iconic species of the upper elevations of the Black Hills."

Van Den Berg said the Rocky Mountain Goat Alliance doesn't exclude non-native mountain goats from its conservation work. He is glad to hear support within the GF&P for that approach. "Most of the biologists I've talked to, they really feel strongly that they've been here. They don't necessarily view them as an outsider."

William Severud, a wildlife biologist and assistant professor at South Dakota State University, shared a different personal philosophy. "For me, it seems like trying to manage as close to pre-European contact would be ideal," he said, acknowledging that South Dakota won't have populations of grizzly bears or wolves anytime soon, even though both are native to the state.

It would be interesting from a research standpoint, he said, to let the situation play out and see what happens. "But I understand they are popular, and there is interest in keeping them around."

South Dakota isn't the only state where mountain goats are facing challenges.

Different states, different approaches

Most native mountain goats are in the mountainous regions of Alaska and British Columbia. They were introduced to many western states in the 1900s for hunting and wildlife viewing. Since then, both native and non-native populations have experienced mixed success.

Brought to the state in the 1940s, Colorado now has more than 1,000 mountain goats, and more than 100 are hunted each year to manage the population.

Grand Teton National Park has culled almost all of its non-native goats to protect its native bighorn sheep from a bacterial disease they pass to each other. The disease is a risk in the Black Hills, but the populations rarely cross into each others' territory, Lehman said.

After ecosystem damage and the fatal goring of a hiker in Washington, officials culled or translocated hundreds of non-native goats from Olympic National Park to the Cascade Range where they are a native species.

However, most goats brought to the Cascade Range did not survive long. A study found a link with climate changes, including a rapid spring snowmelt contributing to drier summer foraging conditions.

In Glacier National Park, a study found the native population has declined 45% since 2008, with scientists finding that climate variables, including decreased precipitation, correlated with the decline.

Van Den Berg wonders if climate changes might also affect the goats in the Black Hills. "I don't have anything to back that up, but I would believe that not having that typical summer, fall, winter, spring maybe plays into it," he said.

More broadly, he notices that habitat changes, whether due to recreation, development or weather shifts, are affecting goats across the United States. Because mountain goats are slow to breed, they are slow to recover from any threat.

The GF&P will count the goats in the southern Black Hills again in June. The data will inform revisions to the Mountain Goat Management Plan, which will be brought before the GF&P Commission for approval in 2028.

Nicole is a freelance science and nature writer based in Rapid City. She is endlessly curious about the natural spaces and communities of the Black Hills region.

Company withdraws from controversial Black Hills exploratory drilling project

BY: SETH TUPPER

A company that's being sued for exploratory drilling near a culturally significant site in South Dakota's Black Hills is withdrawing from the project, according to a letter shared with project opponents.

The opponents include the Black Hills Clean Water Alliance, which posted a copy of the letter and a statement Friday on social media.

"This is a testament to the people, organizations, and tribal governments who showed unified action, determination, and courage in the face of what seemed to be overwhelming odds," the alliance said.

The letter from Pete Lien & Sons to the U.S. Forest Service references the Rapid City-based company's project near Pe' Sla, also known as Reynolds Prairie, which is a high mountain meadow in the central Black Hills.

Pe' Sla is one of several Black Hills sites that corresponds with celestial features in traditional Lakota spirituality. Lakota people use the area, some of which is tribally owned, for prayer, ceremonies and cultural activities.

After receiving approval from the Forest Service, Pete Lien & Sons has been drilling holes near Pe' Sla in search of graphite, which is used in electric vehicle batteries, lubricants, pencils and other products.

Two lawsuits against the project filed by a coalition of nonprofits and nine Native American tribes led to a hearing Monday in Rapid City, where a federal judge granted a temporary restraining order against the drilling. Meanwhile, opponents had formed a protest encampment at the project site.

In recently filed court documents, lawyers for the Forest Service said the project was already "halfway complete." But the restraining order put the future of the project in doubt. The judge presiding over the lawsuits is scheduled to consider a longer-lasting injunction against the project later this month.

The company's Thursday letter to the Forest Service asks for the project's plan of operations and decision memo to be withdrawn. The letter says the company will conduct reclamation — restoration of the project area to a natural state — when it's legally permitted by the judge who granted the restraining order. The company "does not intend" to file another plan of operations for exploratory drilling at the site, the letter says.

NDN Collective, a Rapid City-based nonprofit that advocates for Indigenous rights, is among the lawsuit plaintiffs.



Pe' Sla, or Reynolds Prairie, is a high-elevation Black Hills meadow of sacred importance to Lakota people. A company that was conducting exploratory drilling in the area has withdrawn from the project. (Photo by Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

"From the land defenders who occupied two active drill pads for a week, to fighting in the courts through multiple lawsuits and a temporary restraining order, today's win is multi-faceted and offers a blueprint for future land defense fights," NDN said Friday in a press release.

Future fights include one scheduled for the week of May 18. The state Board of Minerals and Environment is scheduled to conduct a hearing in Hot Springs on a proposal to conduct exploratory drilling for uranium in the southern Black Hills.

That project would be near Craven Canyon, where the rock walls are carved with Native American petroglyphs believed to be thousands of years old.

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

South Dakota Xcel customers will pay higher electric rates after utilities commission settlement

BY: MEGHAN O'BRIEN

PIERRE — A panel of South Dakota regulators approved an electric rate increase Friday for Xcel Energy customers and allowed eight entities to intervene in a pending Black Hills Energy rate case.

Xcel initially sought an increase last June that would have raised the average bill for its residential customers by 19%, equating to about \$21 per month. That would have raised \$43.6 million in additional annual revenue. The company has about 107,000 customers in South Dakota, mostly in the Sioux Falls area.

The Public Utilities Commission approved a settlement that will increase the average residential customer's monthly bill by 12%, equating to \$13.48 per month, resulting in an annual revenue increase of \$25.6 million for Xcel.

The higher increase was in effect on an interim basis while the rate case proceeded. Customers will receive refunds with interest for the difference between the higher interim rates and the rates approved in the settlement Friday. The average residential customer's interim refund will be about \$43, according to a customer notice.

The company told commissioners that it needs the increase to help pay for its "significant investments in its distribution system in South Dakota," including generation facilities, its transmission system and the replacement of aging technology. Inflation has also impacted the company's business costs, Xcel said.

Commissioners also approved the intervention of eight entities in a Black Hills Energy rate increase case: Dakota Panel, Fischer Furniture, Forest Products Distributors, GCC Dacotah, Monument Health Rapid City Hospital, Pete Lien & Sons, the South Dakota Science and Technology Authority, and Spearfish Forest Products.

Those entities are now official parties in the proceedings related to Black Hills Energy's rate increase. The utility company is seeking an increase that would raise the typical residential customer's bill by 25%, which would add \$25.13 to the typical customer's monthly bill.



A sign displays the names of South Dakota's three elected public utilities commissioners outside of their Pierre office in January 2023. (Joshua Haiar/South Dakota Searchlight)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 15 of 67

The Xcel and Black Hills cases come on the heels of the commission's approval in March of a rate increase by Otter Tail Power, which raised its typical residential customer's monthly bill by \$8.97, an increase of about 8%.

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

Big changes arrive July 1 for student borrowers, including in loan repayments

BY: SHAUNEEN MIRANDA

WASHINGTON — The federal student loan system is set to see a dramatic overhaul beginning this summer, and critics warn it likely will make loans more expensive and difficult to obtain for borrowers — driving them to private lenders or altering their plans for higher education.

Among the major changes are new loan limits for graduate and professional students, a restructured repayment system where new borrowers will have only two plans to choose from and the elimination of a key loan program for graduate and professional students that allowed for unlimited borrowing.

The provisions — most of which will take effect July 1 — stem from congressional Republicans' mega tax and spending cut bill that President Donald Trump signed into law last year.

The U.S. Department of Education finalized regulations, published May 1, that implement sweeping changes outlined in the GOP's "big, beautiful" law. The department received more than 80,000 public comments before the rule was finalized.

Under Secretary of Education Nicholas Kent said that "at a high level," the reforms center on "lowering the cost of college, simplifying student loan repayment and restoring accountability to the federal student lending system," during an April 30 call with reporters regarding the new regulations.

The average federal student loan debt balance stands at \$39,547, according to the Education Data Initiative.

As July 1 approaches, here's a closer look at some of the biggest changes coming to the federal student loan system:



The U.S. Department of Education on Feb. 20, 2026. (Photo by Shauneen Miranda/States Newsroom)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 16 of 67

Elimination of Grad PLUS

The Grad PLUS program, which allowed for graduate and professional students to borrow up to the full cost of attendance, will soon be eliminated under the package and unavailable for new borrowers.

"If you are currently borrowing Grad PLUS loans, so you borrowed Grad PLUS loans before July 1, you will be allowed to continue using Grad PLUS until you finish your program, or until three years have expired, basically whichever is sooner," said Preston Cooper, senior fellow in higher education policy at the American Enterprise Institute, a right-leaning think tank.

"Current students are grandfathered in — it will only be new graduate students, as of this fall, after July 1, who will be subject to the new loan limits," Cooper said.

New borrowing caps

The package also sets forth new annual and aggregate loan limits for graduate and professional students, along with parents who take out federal student loans for dependent undergraduate students.

Graduate student loans will be capped at \$20,500 annually, with a \$100,000 aggregate limit.

Parent PLUS borrowers will have an annual cap of \$20,000 and an aggregate cap of \$65,000 per dependent.

Professional student loans will have a \$50,000 annual limit and an aggregate cap of \$200,000.

The programs that fall within the department's "professional" category and are subject to that larger loan cap include: pharmacy, dentistry, veterinary medicine, chiropractic, law, medicine, optometry, osteopathic medicine, podiatry, theology and clinical psychology.

The department clarified in a fact sheet on the finalized regulations that the "professional" student classifications "do not express a value judgment about the importance of any occupation or field" but instead serve a "loan-administration function."

The agency has received immense pushback from groups representing people in fields that do not fall under the department's definition and will thus be subject to lower annual and lifetime borrowing caps.

Incoming repayment options

In another major shift, the regulations replace prior repayment options with two new plans — the Repayment Assistance Plan, or RAP, and the Tiered Standard plan — both of which will launch July 1.

RAP is an income-based repayment plan that "waives unpaid interest for borrowers who make on-time payments that do not fully cover accruing interest," per the department's fact sheet.

Balances under the plan will also "decline with each on-time payment, as unpaid interest is fully waived and the Department then reduces principal by an amount equal to the borrower's payment, up to \$50," per the agency.

The Tiered Standard plan offers fixed monthly payments, ranging from a 10-year to 25-year period, depending on the outstanding principal balance of the borrower.

'A lot more expensive'

"The upshot is that loan repayment is going to get a lot more expensive for almost everyone, and for some people, it's going to get significantly more expensive, and the transition is also going to be difficult for a lot of people to manage," Michele Zampini, associate vice president for federal policy and advocacy at the Institute for College Access & Success, told States Newsroom.

Zampini, whose organization aims to advance affordability, accountability and equity in higher education, said she thinks "there will be a lot of students who will have to turn to the private loan market, who otherwise would have been able to cover their costs through the (Grad PLUS) program."

Victoria Jackson, assistant director of higher education policy at the nonprofit policy and advocacy group EdTrust, said that with the new loan limits and "drastic cuts to aid availability" in the regulations, "you would really hope that it would come with other, more affordable and better forms of financial aid."

"And what they've done is just created this vacuum that right now can really only be filled with private

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 17 of 67

loans, which are costlier and riskier for students, or students are just not going to go," Jackson said.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration continues its efforts to eliminate the Department of Education, including through a series of interagency agreements that transfer several of its responsibilities to other departments.

Under the most recent agreement, the Treasury Department will take over Education's responsibility for collecting on defaulted federal student loan debt — the first step in a multiphase process toward Treasury taking on Education's entire, roughly \$1.7 trillion federal student loan portfolio.

Transition to new system

Zampini noted that, when it comes to the incoming student loan regulations, she does not have confidence in the Education Department's "ability at this moment to successfully manage the transition without a lot of issues, as far as servicing and as far as account tracking and plan enrollment and things like that."

Jackson, of EdTrust, said that "by weakening the federal financial aid system, I think there's a weakening of our higher education system and making it more difficult for low-income students, students of color and other marginalized students to access graduate education."

She added that "people who complete those degrees tend to have more financial security in the future — they earn more over their lifetimes and, on markers of financial success and opportunity, do better."

"I think this is one prong of a plan of undermining our overall higher education system."

Shauneen Miranda is a reporter for States Newsroom's Washington bureau. An alumna of the University of Maryland, she previously covered breaking news for Axios.

Unpacking the fight over telehealth access to abortion medication

A Supreme Court hold on a ruling that will determine remote access to an abortion drug expires on Monday

BY: KELCIE MOSELEY-MORRIS AND SOFIA RESNICK

Advocates and opponents of abortion access say they're wondering what happens next in a critical telehealth medication case that created chaos and confusion over the past week after an appeals court blocked nationwide access to the drug and, days later, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito issued a temporary stay.

Alito's stay preserves telehealth access until May 11. But it's unclear what happens next for patients and providers.

The Supreme Court on Monday temporarily blocked the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals' Friday ruling to suspend a federal rule allowing telehealth prescriptions of the drug mifepristone while the lawsuit *Louisiana v. U.S. Food and Drug Administration* unfolds. Abortion providers are determined to continue providing the service, though potentially without mifepristone, the drug at the center for the case, which has had a high record of safety and efficacy since 2000.

Anti-abortion advocates have pushed to reverse the 2023 policy, enacted under former Democratic President Joe Biden, that allowed the FDA to drop its requirement that a patient see a provider in person before the medication can be prescribed. One similar national case already failed unanimously before the Supreme Court, but anti-abortion advocates are hoping this time around, with a more tailored approach, they will be successful.

Abortion-rights advocates say they're prepared for whatever might happen in the courts, with contingency plans and a message that abortion will still be available even if the particular medication — mifepristone — is not.

Has the abortion pill been banned?

No. Mifepristone is still a legally approved FDA drug commonly used to terminate a pregnancy before 10 weeks' gestation and is used off-label to treat miscarriages.

Is telehealth abortion still legal?

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 18 of 67

Yes, for now. Under the U.S. Supreme Court's administrative stay that expires on May 11, it is still legal to obtain abortion medication through telemedicine under the FDA's regulations. Mifepristone is commonly used with a second drug, misoprostol, in medication abortions. The case doesn't include misoprostol.

Who would be affected if telehealth access is struck down?

According to the Society of Family Planning's #WeCount report, 27% of all abortions in the first six months of 2025 were obtained through telehealth, adding up to more than 162,000 cases.

Mifepristone is also used for patients experiencing a miscarriage; those patients also would have to visit a provider in person.

The ruling would apply nationwide, meaning that health providers couldn't prescribe mifepristone without an in-person visit with the patient, even in states with abortion access.

What are the arguments on each side in Louisiana v. FDA?

Louisiana says the Biden-era policy undermines a state law banning abortion, and that the federal rule-making process allowing telehealth prescriptions was flawed.

The Food and Drug Administration says the state doesn't have standing to sue, but also notes that it's taking more time to review the drug's safety.

Two mifepristone drugmakers, meanwhile, have intervened on the FDA's side.

What could happen next?

The Supreme Court has many options available moving forward, but a few options are most likely, said Katie Keith, founding director of the Center for Health Policy and the Law at the Georgetown University Law Center. The justices could extend the stay when it expires May 11, or the court could make a longer-term ruling.

That could mean sending it back to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, with or without upholding the initial ruling blocking the 2023 provision while the appeals case proceeds. Or justices could decide to take up the case and bypass the rest of the 5th Circuit appeal.

If it did that, the manufacturer defendants Danco Laboratories and GenBioPro have asked for an expedited process with a decision by June. That seems unlikely, Keith said, but the court has conducted expedited



Mifepristone, one of two drugs approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to terminate a pregnancy before 10 weeks' gestation, can be dispensed without an in-person visit to a healthcare provider under FDA regulations. Whether that provision will remain is the subject of a battle that may play out before the U.S. Supreme Court in the coming weeks. (Photo illustration by Natalie Behring/Getty Images)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 19 of 67

cases related to abortion before, such as the *Moyle v. United States* case in 2024 related to the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act.

What will providers do if they can't use the combination of mifepristone and misoprostol?

Brittany Fonteno, president and CEO of the National Abortion Federation, said providers have been preparing since 2023 for the possibility of losing access to mifepristone. There have long been plans to switch to a misoprostol-only protocol, which is the main method of pregnancy termination across much of the world, she said.

"A lot of providers had created these policies and just needed to dust them off," Fonteno said.

Dr. Angel Foster, co-founder of the Massachusetts Medication Abortion Access Project, which provides telehealth abortions to patients in all 50 states, said she and her team spent the weekend scrambling to contact patients waiting on medication abortion pills they had ordered before the ruling, and implementing a contingency plan that many abortion providers have been planning for since the lawsuits against mifepristone began in 2023.

That contingency involves pivoting from the FDA-approved mifepristone-misoprostol regimen to a misoprostol-only regimen.

Early Monday, Foster said her team was getting ready to ship misoprostol-only packages to patients at 2 p.m., but after the Supreme Court stayed the appeals court's ruling on Monday morning, she said they were able to switch back to the mifepristone-misoprostol regimen.

Foster also said her organization was inundated with requests for pills that people could stockpile — people who didn't need an abortion but were worried about losing access to the pills. Normally that's a small fraction of the requests they receive, she said, but on Tuesday, they sent out more than had been sent in the entire month of April.

"Over the last two days, we've had a huge increase in the number of people from Louisiana requesting pills, especially pills for future use," Foster said.

What are the pros and cons of the misoprostol-only regimen?

Dr. Maya Bass, a family physician in New Jersey who also provides abortions in Delaware, said misoprostol-only regimens are still safe and highly effective, but that the regimen has a lower efficacy rate than the combination of the two drugs and comes with potentially more side effects and risks.

Misoprostol-only regimens vary between 85% and 90% effective, while the combination is between 93% and 99% effective. The effective rates are lower as the gestational age increases.

The combination works well, Bass said, because mifepristone stops the hormone that allows the pregnancy to continue and signals to the body that the pregnancy is over. The misoprostol then helps soften the cervix and prompts the uterus to contract and expel the pregnancy tissue.

Without that hormonal signal, Bass said, a higher dose of misoprostol is needed to empty the uterus. The usual side effects of nausea, diarrhea, chills and sometimes fevers can be more severe because of the higher dosage. And it may lead to more people needing to seek in-person follow-up care to fully remove all of the pregnancy tissue, which can cause infection if it stays in the uterus.

"A lot of the people who are using telehealth for their medication abortion are not necessarily in places where they can safely access that care," Bass said. "So it is concerning that we might be relying more on a regimen that means that many more people needing to seek care."

What are the details of the legal arguments?

Louisiana officials, including Republican Attorney General Liz Murrill, argue that the state is harmed by the 2023 telehealth policy because it undermines a state law banning abortion at all stages of pregnancy, with few exceptions that don't include rape or incest. The state also challenged the Food and Drug Administration's process in deciding to eliminate the in-person dispensing requirement, saying it was based on flawed or nonexistent data.

The state also said the rule has resulted in \$92,000 in Medicaid bills from two women who went to the emergency room because of complications related to mifepristone in 2025. And the state says the rule

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 20 of 67

harmed the other plaintiff in the case, Louisiana resident Rosalie Markezich, who said her ex-boyfriend ordered the medication online and pressured her into taking it. That wouldn't have been possible if the medication had to be dispensed through an in-person visit, the state argues.

"The priority of safety supersedes the priority of access, and that is what ultimately, I believe, needs to be looked at directly," Sarah Zagorski, senior director of public relations at Americans United for Life, told Stateline on Wednesday. The anti-abortion organization submitted a brief supporting Louisiana's case to the U.S. Supreme Court this week.

The FDA's response has been to try to dismiss the claims in part on the grounds that Louisiana doesn't have standing to sue, but agency officials have also said they are in the middle of conducting a safety review of mifepristone and need more time.

GenBioPro and Danco Laboratories, two of the manufacturers of mifepristone, intervened as defendants in the case, which can happen when the party that is sued may not be willing to fully defend the case for various reasons.

The two companies argue that Louisiana does not have proper standing to sue because the state does not prescribe or use mifepristone and is an "unregulated party" as it relates to the 2023 telehealth provision. They also noted that the FDA reviewed 15 studies evaluating medication abortion outcomes for more than 55,000 patients before approving the rule, "all of which supported the safety and effectiveness of dispensing mifepristone by mail, courier, or through pharmacies."

How does this compare to the 2023 case Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. FDA?

Both lawsuits were designed to restrict access to mifepristone. The plaintiffs in the Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine case included a group of anti-abortion doctors who said they would be harmed by having to care for people who took mifepristone. They also argued that the FDA's approval of the drug was improper.

The 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals was involved in that case as well, and determined that the FDA should roll back its decision to ease restrictions on the drug, including the 2023 telehealth rule. But the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously decided in June 2024 that the Alliance plaintiffs didn't have proper standing and sent it back to the lower court.

After that ruling, the attorneys general of Missouri, Idaho and Kansas stepped in as plaintiffs, and the case was transferred to Missouri's U.S. district court, where it's still pending.

The Louisiana case is more limited because it would strike down one provision of mifepristone regulation, noted Jenna Hudson, senior counsel at the Center for Reproductive Rights. The Alliance plaintiffs sought to revoke the drug's approval altogether.

Stateline reporters Kelcie Moseley-Morris can be reached at kmoseley@stateline.org and Sofia Resnick can be reached at sresnick@stateline.org.

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

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.

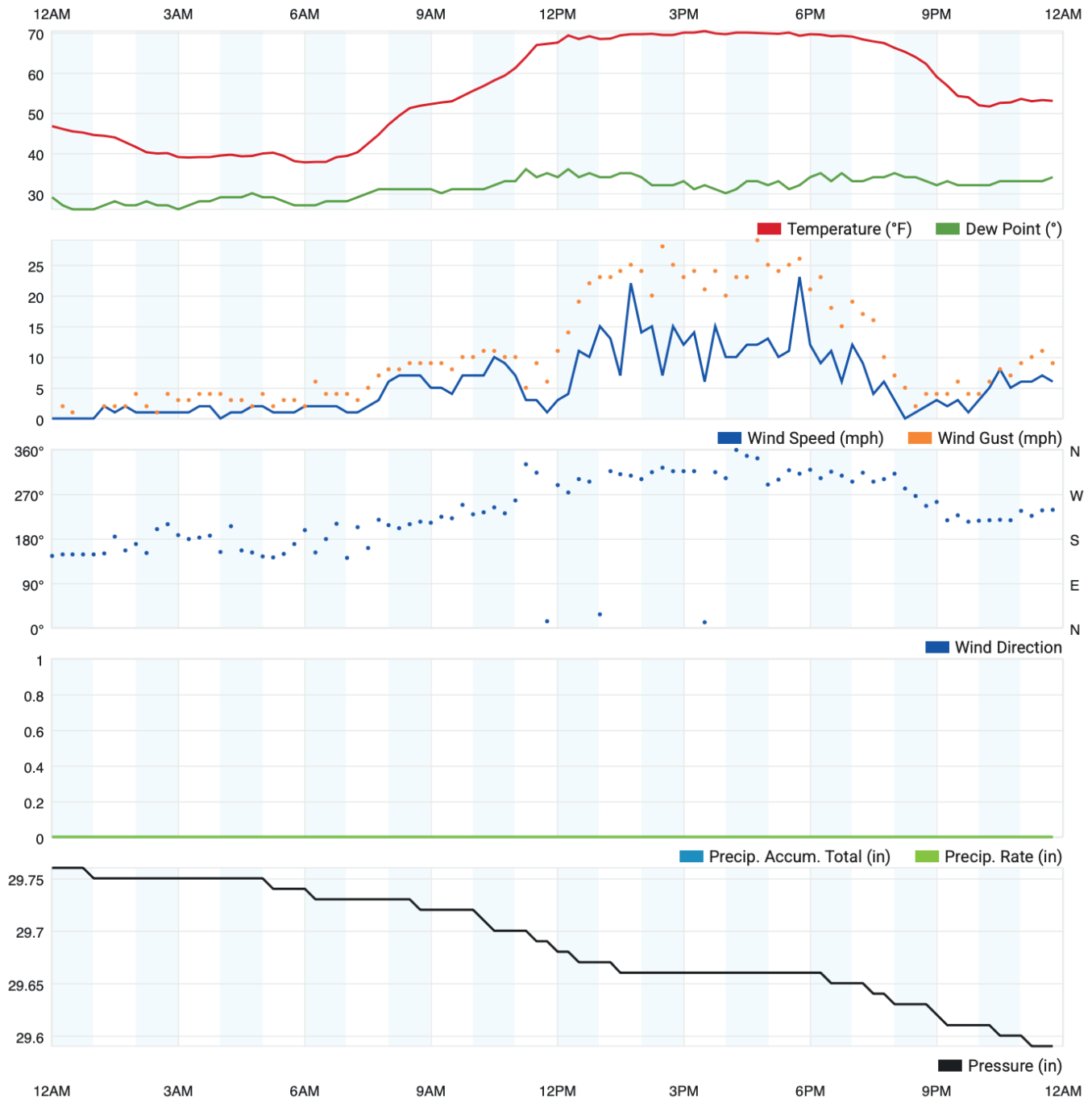
Sofia Resnick covers reproductive rights for Stateline. She has been a journalist for 20 years, covering reproductive health policy and politics for more than a decade, specializing in stories about how the religious right has manipulated science to change policy and tracking the long tail of the fall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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 21 of 67

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

May 8, 2026



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 22 of 67

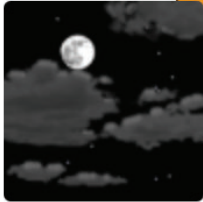
Today



High: 62 °F

Mostly Sunny

Tonight



Low: 33 °F

Partly Cloudy
then Frost



Sunday



High: 62 °F

Frost then
Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 33 °F

Mostly Clear
then Areas
Frost

Monday



High: 75 °F

Mostly Sunny
then Mostly
Sunny and
Breezy



Frost Advisory Early Sunday

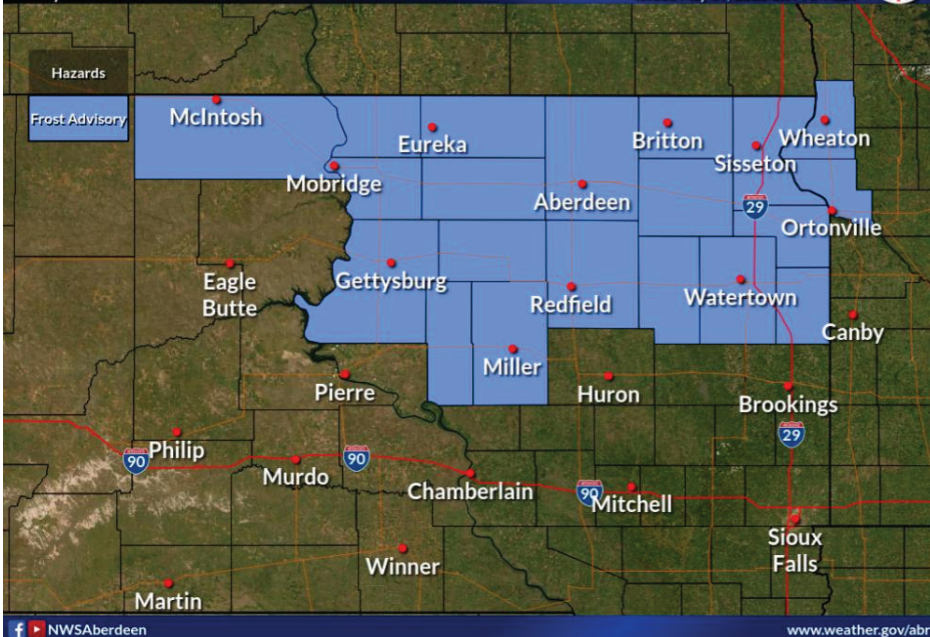
May 9, 2026
2:23 AM CDT

Early Season Frost Advisory

Sunday 3 AM to 9 AM

Weather Forecast Office
Aberdeen, SD

Issued May 09, 2026 1:57 AM CDT



Minimum Temperature (°F) Forecast

	5/9 Sat 9pm	5/10 Sun 12am	5/10 Sun 3am	5/10 Sun 6am	5/10 Sun 9am
Aberdeen	44	37	34	33	42
Britton	42	37	34	33	40
Brookings	44	39	36	34	44
Chamberlain	50	44	42	40	50
Clark	44	39	36	35	43
Eagle Butte	47	43	40	38	46
Ellendale	42	37	34	33	41
Eureka	43	38	34	33	41
Gettysburg	45	40	37	35	44
Huron	46	39	37	35	44
Kennebec	48	44	40	38	47
McIntosh	46	41	37	36	44
Milbank	44	38	36	35	42
Miller	46	41	38	37	46
Mobridge	47	42	38	35	44
Murdo	49	45	42	41	48
Pierre	50	45	41	39	47
Redfield	45	39	35	34	43
Sisseton	43	39	36	35	41
Watertown	43	38	35	33	42
Webster	43	39	36	35	42
Wheaton	43	38	36	34	41

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

Low temperatures early Sunday morning will range between 33 and 36 degrees in the counties in the frost advisory. Cover any sensitive outdoor plants or flowers to prevent harm from the frost.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 23 of 67

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 71 °F at 3:05 PM

Low Temp: 37 °F at 6:06 AM

Wind: 29 mph at 4:40 PM

Precip: : 0.00 (this morning: .03)

Today's Info

Record High: 93 in 1992

Record Low: 21 in 1966

Average High: 68

Average Low: 41

Average Precip in May.: .98

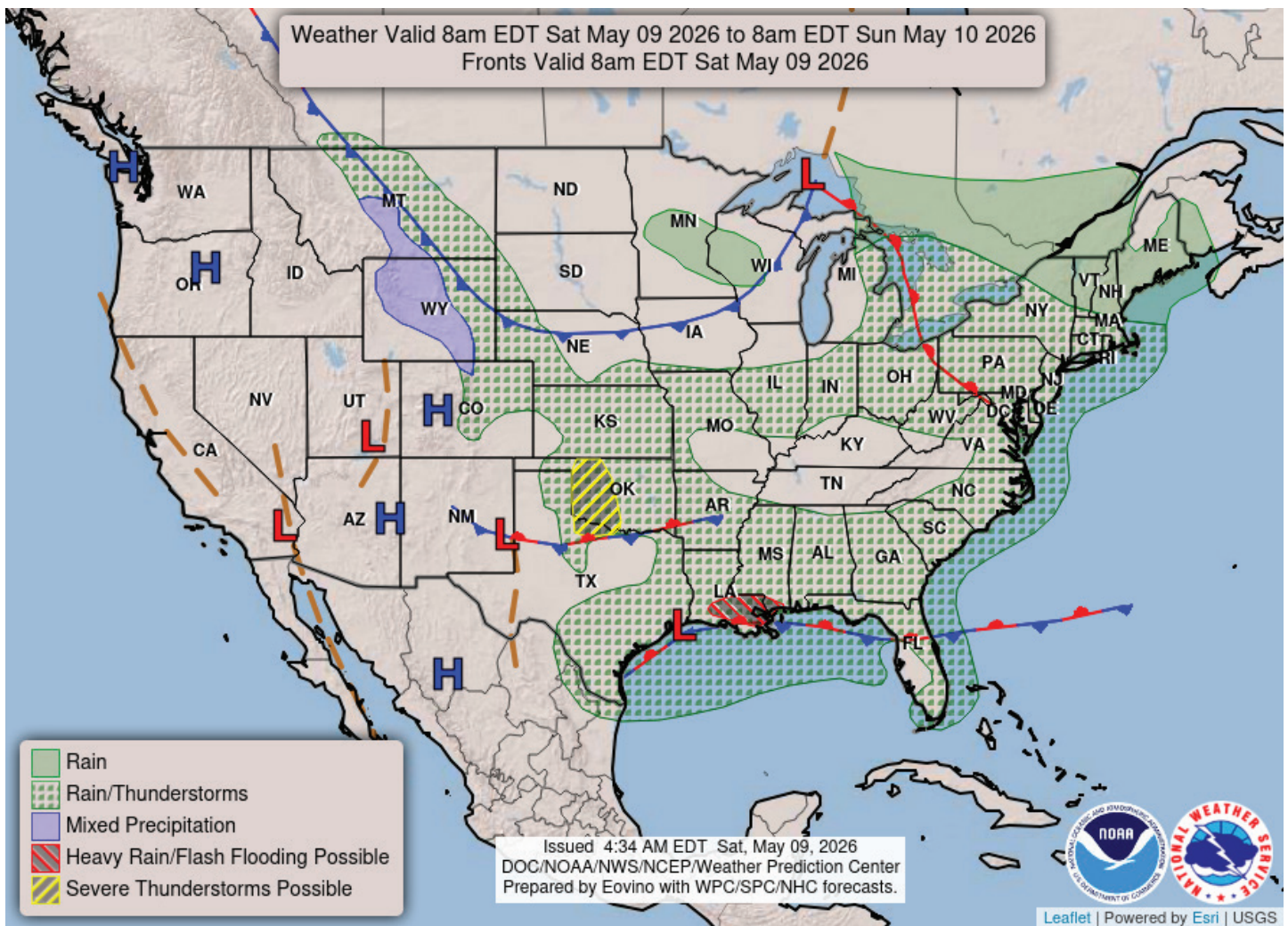
Precip to date in May.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 4.95

Precip Year to Date: 3.12

Sunset Tonight: 8:48 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:08 am



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 24 of 67

Today in Weather History

May 9th, 1999: Torrential rains of two to five inches fell in Lyman County during the late evening hours, causing flash flooding on Medicine Creek. The KOA Campgrounds near Kennebec, including the main facility, were flooded. Several roads were also flooded and damaged along Medicine Creek. The storm's total rainfall in Kennebec was 3.40 inches. Also, a weak F0 tornado touched down briefly three miles south of Reliance, with no damage reported. Winds gusting to 70 mph knocked over a 4000-bushel holding bin near Revillo.

1966 — Record snows fell in the northeastern Ohio and western Pennsylvania, including 3.1 inches at Pittsburgh PA and 5.4 inches at Youngstown OH. Snow also extended across parts of New York State, with eight inches reported in the southern Adirondacks. (The Weather Channel)

1977 — A late season snowstorm hit parts of Pennsylvania, New York State, and southern and central New England. Heavier snowfall totals included 27 inches at Slide Mountain NY and 20 inches at Norwalk CT. At Boston it was the first May snow in 107 years of records. The heavy wet snow caused extensive damage to trees and power lines. The homes of half a million persons were without power following the storm. (9th-10th) (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1985 — Lightning struck some trees about 150 yards away from a home in Alabama, and followed the driveway to the home. The charge went through the house and burned all the electrical outlets, ruined appliances, and blasted a hole in the concrete floor of the basement. (The Weather Channel)

1987 — Unseasonably warm weather spread from the Pacific Northwest to the Upper Mississippi Valley. Fifteen cities reported record high temperatures for the date. It was the fourth day of record warmth for Eugene OR and Salem OR. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 — A massive cyclone in the central U.S. produced severe thunderstorms from eastern Texas to the Upper Ohio Valley. A strong (F-3) tornado ripped through Middleboro KY causing more than 22 million dollars damage. Thunderstorms in east central Texas produced hail three and a half inches in diameter at Groesbeck, and near Fairfield. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 — Thunderstorms developing ahead of a cold front in the south central U.S. produced golf ball size hail and wind gusts to 62 mph at Mira LA, and during the morning hours drenched Stuttgart AR with five inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1990 — Thunderstorms produced severe weather in the central U.S. during the evening hours, mainly from southeastern Missouri to southwestern Indiana. Severe thunderstorms spawned four tornadoes, including two strong (F-2) tornadoes in southern Illinois. Strong thunderstorm winds gusted to 85 mph at Orient IL, and to 100 mph at West Salem. Thunderstorms drenched northeastern Illinois with up to 4.50 inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



Ending Gossip in Our Life

Turn your criticism into intercession—pray for those you're tempted to speak against.

Ephesians 4:29-32: 29 Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.

30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.

32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Spreading rumors about other people exposes little about the true nature of the person being whispered about, but it reveals quite a lot about the speaker's character. So, what should we do when we're tempted to gossip?

First, we should confess and ask the Lord to help us to turn away from opportunities to talk about others. One thing we can do is pray Psalm 141:3 daily: "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips." This will help us remain mindful of our words.

Next, we must be on guard against temptation. Believers have a responsibility to set themselves apart from gossip in order to keep their thoughts and words pleasing to God. Being in the presence of one who spreads stories can tempt us to participate. But in a situation where rumors are being shared, the best course of action is to speak out against what's being done and refuse to participate.

Finally, instead of talking about someone, it's wise to pray for him or her. Getting into this habit will help train the mind to replace sinful patterns with God-pleasing ones. The Bible teaches us to encourage and comfort each other, and prayer is a good way to obey that instruction (1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

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

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 26 of 67

The Groton Independent

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Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 27 of 67



WINNING NUMBERS

MILLIONAIRE FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.08.26

14 16 21 43 51 3

TOP PRIZE:

\$1,000,000/year

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 38 Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.08.26

37 47 49 51 58 16

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$232,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.06.26

3 6 7 18 49 10

All Star Bonus: 5x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$25,070,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 38 Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.06.26

5 6 21 25 27

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$82,000

NEXT DRAW: 14 Hrs 53 Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.06.26

4 21 36 48 69 5

TOP PRIZE:

\$10,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 22 Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:

05.06.26

18 27 51 65 68 5

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:

\$47,000,000

NEXT DRAW: 15 Hrs 22 Mins 8 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 28 of 67

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Black Hills drilling project canceled after backlash from tribes

By SARAH RAZA Associated Press

A South Dakota mining company has canceled a drilling project in the Black Hills after opposition from Native American tribes and local groups.

In a letter provided Friday by Indigenous advocacy group NDN Collective, Rapid City-based Pete Lien & Sons told the United States Forest Service on Thursday it is withdrawing its plan of operations for a graphite drilling project. It doesn't intend to file another plan for this project, the letter said.

Groups opposed the project because of its proximity to a sacred site called Pe'Sla, a meadow in the Black Hills where Sioux tribes hold ceremonies and pray throughout the year. The land is also used for buffalo grazing.

The Forest Service and Pete Lien & Sons did not immediately return requests for comment Friday afternoon.

Nine tribes in South Dakota, North Dakota and Nebraska filed a lawsuit against the Forest Service over the project alleging violations of the National Historical Preservation Act and National Environmental Protection Act for granting permits without an environmental review.

There also was a lawsuit filed by NDN Collective and environmental groups that argued the Forest Service should not have exempted the project from an environmental review because it did not meet the requirements for a categorical exclusion. In that case, a temporary restraining order granted against Pete Lien & Sons on Monday prohibited the drilling operation for two weeks.

In a statement, NDN Collective said "today's win is multi-faceted and offers a blueprint for future land defense fights."

The Black Hills, named for the appearance of the pine and spruce-covered rolling hills, is home to attractions like Mount Rushmore and state parks, but it has long been the site of tension between mining interests and tribes, who consider the area unceded territory.

The 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie established that the Black Hills belong to Sioux tribes, but the U.S. government seized the land years later after the discovery of gold. The Supreme Court later ruled the tribes were owed compensation, but they have not accepted it and maintain their claim to the land.

Venice Biennale opens without a jury amid strife over Russian and Israeli participation

By COLLEEN BARRY Associated Press

VENICE, Italy (AP) — Geopolitical tensions spilled over into the Venice Biennale contemporary art exhibition, which opens its most chaotic and contested edition in memory Saturday with no Golden Lions after the jury quit in protest of Israel's and Russia's participation and loud protests outside their pavilions.

The jury limited its action to countries under investigation by the International Criminal Court for human rights abuses, but some say the U.S. should have been included. British artist Anish Kapoor cited "the politics of hate and war and all that that's been going on now for too long."

Visitors to the Giardini and Arsenale venues will vote for the best national pavilion, from 100 participants, and best participant in the main curated show, "In Minor Keys," in Eurovision style. The vote will be anonymous, and by email, the Biennale said Saturday. Winners will be announced closing day, Nov. 22.

Ahead of the opening, protesters objecting to Israel's participation clashed with police on Friday. Earlier in the week, feminist groups from Ukraine and Russia converged on the Russian Pavilion and Palestinians remembered artists killed in Gaza.

Some places to start:

Koyo Kouoh's 'In Minor Keys'

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 29 of 67

A towering red feathered sculpture with beaded embroidery greets visitors to the main curated show. Rooted in New Orleans Black Masking culture born from practices brought by enslaved Africans, the costume-like sculpture signals the show's focus on minority perspectives.

The first African woman chosen to curate the main Biennale exhibition, the late Koyo Kouoh assembled 110 artists and artistic groups under a title meant to spotlight the overlooked, and five co-curators carried on her legacy after her death a year ago.

"She was someone who thought about making spaces for everyone to shine and we see it in her exhibition, we see it with ourselves," said co-curator Marie Helene Pereira.

Britain's Lubaina Himid explores life as a newcomer

Lubaina Himid, a Turner Prize winner, explores what it is like to make a home in a new place in her exhibition titled "Predicting History: Testing Translation" for the British Pavilion, featuring brightly hued paintings of couples facing the dilemmas of newcomers.

In one, two architects are trying to decide where to build. "One of them is trying to decide, would we build a building here, that proves that we have contributed to the culture, and the other architect is saying 'No, no, no, no, no. Let's build something that we can escape in tomorrow,'" said Himid, who was born in Zanzibar and has spent more than 70 years in Great Britain.

The Vatican's Mystic Garden

The Vatican is offering spiritual respite from the world's turmoil in the Mystic Gardens of Discalced Carmelite order next to Venice's main train station.

Participants walk among the vineyards and pass a pomegranate tree and beds of herbs, wearing headphones that pick up music by the 12th-Century abbess, mystic and composer, St. Hildegard of Bingen, reinterpreted by artists such as Brian Eno and Patti Smith.

"Music also helps us delve into ourselves and understand, to use a phrase by Hildegard, the symphony that God has placed in our lives," said Rev. Ermanno Barucco, prior of the Carmelite order.

Austrian Pavilion uses effluent as an artistic medium

A naked woman hangs from a bell outside the Austrian Pavilion, a human clapper making the performance art by Florentina Holzinger one of the hottest appointments in the Giardini. Inside, a nude rider swirls around on a Jet Ski inside a tank — emblematic of Venice's relegation as an over-touristed amusement park.

A naked woman breathes through a scuba mouthpiece in another huge tank filled with water that has been flushed from nearby toilets and filtered multiple times. The presentation is called "Seaworld Venice."

Israel: a meditation on love and war

Inside Romanian-born artist Belu-Simion Fainaru's installation, water drips from suspended tubes into a pool, stopping in cycles for just 42 seconds, representing divine creative power in Jewish mysticism. Locks hung around the pavilion, like those placed by lovers on bridges around Europe, are engraved with the commandment "Love thy neighbor as thyself," in Hebrew, and the hopeful exhortation: "This too shall pass."

"I am against boycott, I'm for dialogue, and that's a political statement," said Fainaru, who called the jury's exclusion of Israel a form of discrimination.

Art as a daily practice in the Estonian Pavilion

Estonian artist Merike Estna will work throughout the Biennale on a huge wall painting inside a community center gymnasium that was once a church — the space's layered history mirroring her practice of spilling paint to build deeply textured surfaces over time. The act of daily painting represents the undervalued quotidian work of women.

Curator Natalia Sielewicz likened it to "the everyday feminism of sustaining life, of sustaining our planet."

President of Parks and Rec? Trump asserts authority over public spaces in DC

By STEVEN SLOAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A federal judge weighing the future of an expansive Washington park insisted this week she had no intention of becoming Amy Poehler, the actress who spent seven seasons memorably

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 30 of 67

playing the head of a local parks and recreation department.

But President Donald Trump might be interested in the role.

Shortly after the United States and Iran exchanged fire on Thursday, Trump made a quick jaunt to the National Mall to review the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool that he ordered repainted a color he describes as "American flag blue."

The project has been on his mind lately. During an hour-plus speech Monday to small-business owners, Trump spent about nine minutes talking about the paint job, detailing the granite floor and boasting that he whittled the renovation's cost to \$1.9 million from what he said was an initial \$350 million estimate.

Trump's next project might be East Potomac Park, home to an affordable, accessible public golf course with views of the Washington Monument.

The Republican president has talked of transforming it into a posh "U.S. Open-caliber course." Signs were posted this week warning of a disruption and preservation advocates took the government to court as debris dumped there from the White House East Wing demolition tested positive for lead.

By late Friday, the nonprofit that operates the course said it would continue managing the space until the National Park Service begins a "historic restoration."

Meanwhile, the White House told a planning agency that it would cost taxpayers at least \$7.5 million to follow through on Trump's plan to paint the granite Eisenhower Executive Office Building white.

And that was just this week in Washington's extreme makeover.

All the president's projects

Over the past year, Trump has bulldozed the East Wing to make way for a ballroom. His name was added to the facades of the U.S. Institute of Peace and the Kennedy Center, which he plans to close for a two-year renovation. His face adorns a banner at the Department of Justice's headquarters, among others. He is pushing for a triumphal arch near Arlington Cemetery and has closed parks, including Lafayette Square across from the White House, for a rehab.

Trump is guaranteeing himself a lasting imprint on a city where he won just 6.5% of the vote in 2024. He is flexing extraordinary executive power and offering fresh insight into how he spends his time, perhaps a president's most valuable asset.

As the Washington projects unfolded this week, the ceasefire in Iran was at risk of unraveling, motor club AAA said the average price of a gallon of gas surpassed \$4.50 and elections provided new evidence of Democratic enthusiasm heading into the November elections.

"It's not a zero-sum game but obviously all presidents have limited amounts of capital they can use and limited amounts of attention that they have to give," said presidential historian Julian Zelizer of Princeton University. "And he's deciding, in a moment of war, a moment of economic instability, that this is a priority."

Trump rejects such concerns.

Asked at the Reflecting Pool why he was focused on the project given the U.S. military action in Iran, he said, "Our country is about beauty, cleanliness, safety, great people. Not a filthy capital."

Political considerations for Republicans

For Republicans defending slim congressional majorities, it is not so simple. Many would prefer to talk about policy accomplishments, including tax cuts, rather than multimillion-dollar Washington construction projects.

While few directly criticize Trump, there is an acknowledgment that the party needs to confront economic realities.

"A lot of Americans are very worried about the cost of living and we need to address it," Sen. John Kennedy, R-La., said recently.

A Washington Post-ABC News-Ipsos poll conducted in late April found that 52% percent of Americans oppose Trump's planned arch. That includes about 6 in 10 independents. Some 51% of Republicans favor it.

Americans oppose the ballroom by a 2-to-1 margin, driven largely by Democrats and independents. About 2 in 10 Republicans oppose the project, according to the poll. The poll did not find a notable shift in support of the ballroom after a shooting at last month's White House Correspondents' Association Din-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 31 of 67

ner. Trump has cited that incident in his push for a secure facility, something he did not mention when he initially ordered the demolition of the East Wing.

Trump is showing no sign of backing away from any of the projects. In a sign of the GOP's loyalty to him, Republican senators added \$1 billion in White House security upgrades for the ballroom to an unrelated bill this week. Trump initially said taxpayer money would not be needed.

A dizzying pace of change in Washington

In a city where historic preservation is often sacred, the pace of change has been dizzying.

Rebecca Miller, the executive director of DC Preservation League, has spent 23 years at the organization, which sued to stop the golf course takeover and joined a coalition attempting to force the Kennedy Center to comply with preservation laws. She said her organization has worked with administrations of both parties and called the Trump moves "highly unusual."

"One of the problems that we have right now is an administration that seems to think that it can just plow ahead without any input," she said. "These assets are owned by the people of the United States. They're not anybody's personal portfolio."

White House spokeswoman Taylor Rogers said Trump is "laser-focused on lowering costs for working families, deporting illegal criminals, keeping our cities safe, beautifying our nation's capital, and protecting our national security by ensuring Iran can never possess a nuclear weapon all at the same time."

This is not the first time a White House has taken an interest in Washington's appearance.

During Lyndon Johnson's administration, first lady Lady Bird Johnson oversaw beautification efforts that included planting trees and flowers throughout the District of Columbia.

Her efforts were sometimes derided as distractions from other pressing issues, such as the Vietnam War. But she implemented them in coordination with local officials.

"Lady Bird Johnson was trying to bring out the natural beauty of Washington," said Mark Updegrove, chairman of the LBJ Foundation and a presidential historian. "Donald Trump is trying to remake the nation's capital in his own image."

Trump's assertion of power over Washington, including the continued deployment of National Guard troops, has animated the city's Democratic primary next month for key local offices, including mayor and delegate to Congress.

The first question at a forum for mayoral candidates this week focused on how to protect the Home Rule Act, the 1973 law that gave the city limited self-government. The candidates said they would stand up to Trump as needed, though one contender, Vincent Orange, noted that national Democrats had also failed the district.

"The two times that we had an opportunity at statehood, it was the Democrats who let us down," he said, referring to failed congressional attempts to make the city a state with full rights of representation.

In an interview, Janeese Lewis George, a D.C. Council member and top candidate in the mayor's race, said city officials need to do a better job of making their case in Congress for statehood. She said Trump's impact on the city is broader than the renovations, as she referred to the troop deployments as a "federal occupation" and noted the fallout from immigration enforcement activity and cuts to the federal workforce.

"The people of our city are afraid," she said. "It's the mayor's job to really let the nation know that D.C. has uniquely been left vulnerable."

Tom Davis, a Virginia Republican who often supported the city's autonomy when he was a congressman, said the renovations offer an "opportunity to bring some money into the city and spruce up stuff that you wouldn't have had otherwise."

"But this is tough," he said. "This is not a city that is in love with the president."

A fragile ceasefire holds as US awaits Iran response, Bahrain detains dozens

By ADAM SCHRECK and SAMY MAGDY Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — A tenuous ceasefire appeared to be holding Saturday after the United

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 32 of 67

States struck two Iranian oil tankers, while the country that hosts the U.S. Navy's regional headquarters said it arrested dozens of people it alleged were linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guard.

Attacks Friday cast doubt on the tenuous month-old ceasefire that the United States has insisted is still in effect. Washington is awaiting an Iranian response to its latest proposal for a deal to end the war, reopen the Strait of Hormuz and roll back Tehran's disputed nuclear program.

The U.S. military said Friday that its forces had disabled two Iranian tankers that were trying to breach an American blockade of Iran's ports. Hours earlier, the military said it thwarted attacks on three Navy ships and struck Iranian military facilities in the strait.

Meanwhile, in the small Gulf island of Bahrain, the nation's Ministry of Interior said Saturday it had arrested 41 people it alleges are part of a group affiliated with Iran's Revolutionary Guard. It said investigations are ongoing to take further action against anyone affiliated with the group but did not provide further details.

Bahrain is led by a Sunni Muslim monarchy but, like Iran, its population is majority Shiite. Rights groups have said that the kingdom has used the war between Iran and the U.S., which bases its Fifth Fleet in the country, as an excuse to crack down on dissent at home.

US says it responded to an attack in the Strait of Hormuz

Iran has mostly blocked the critical waterway for global energy since the U.S. and Israel launched the war on Feb. 28, causing a global spike in fuel prices and rattling world markets. The U.S. has imposed its own blockade of Iran's ports.

The U.S. military posted video of the two Iranian tankers as their smokestacks were struck by an American fighter jet on Friday. Earlier in the week, an American military jet shot out the rudder of a tanker the U.S. military said was attempting to breach its blockade.

A U.S. strike overnight killed at least one sailor and injured 10 others aboard a cargo vessel that caught fire, a news agency affiliated with Iran's judiciary reported. It was not clear if the ship was one of the two tankers the U.S. acknowledged striking.

Despite the attacks, U.S. President Donald Trump has insisted the ceasefire is holding. He also has reiterated threats to resume full-scale bombing if Iran doesn't accept an agreement to reopen the strait and roll back its nuclear program.

On Friday, Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said the country was not paying attention to "deadlines" and Tehran continues reviewing a U.S. proposal related to ongoing negotiations, according to state-run IRNA.

A top Iranian official also said Friday that the country's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei was in "complete health" and that he would eventually appear in public.

The comments were made by Mazaher Hosseini, who is affiliated with the office of Iran's former Supreme Leader, at a pro-government gathering. Hosseini said Mojtaba had suffered knee and back injuries but that they've largely healed and he's now in good condition.

Khamenei hasn't been seen in public since the war began and the continued absence of verified images, audio, or video of him has fueled speculation about his status. Remarks such as Hosseini's are seen by some as attempts to counter doubts that he may no longer be alive.

Calls for calm

As tensions escalate there's been a flurry of diplomacy across the globe.

Russia's foreign ministry said Saturday that it, as well as Saudi Arabia, is calling for continued diplomatic efforts to reach a "sustainable, long-term agreement" to end the war, according to Russia's foreign ministry.

Egyptian and Qatari top diplomats have also have reiterated that diplomacy is the sole path to finding a solution, according to a readout of a Saturday phone call between Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty and his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said his country has been in contact with the U.S. and Iran "day and night" in an effort to extend the ceasefire and reach a peace deal.

Moscow marks Victory Day with a scaled down Red Square parade

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 33 of 67

under tight security

MOSCOW (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday voiced confidence of victory in Ukraine as he oversaw a military parade on Red Square commemorating the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II — a show that didn't include heavy weapons for the first time in nearly two decades.

Security was tight in Moscow as Putin and several foreign leaders attended the parade, which was scaled down even as a U.S.-brokered three-day ceasefire eased concerns about possible Ukrainian attempts to disrupt the festivities.

Putin, in power for more than a quarter-century, has used Victory Day, Russia's most important secular holiday, to showcase the country's military might and rally support for his military action in Ukraine, now in its fifth year.

Speaking at the parade, Putin hailed Russian troops fighting in Ukraine, declaring that they "face an aggressive force that is armed and supported by the entire bloc of NATO," and are fighting for a "just cause."

"Victory has always been and will be ours," Putin said, as columns of troops lined up on Red Square. "The key to success is our moral strength, courage and valor, our unity and ability to endure anything and overcome any challenge."

But in a notable shift this year, the parade took place without tanks, missiles and other heavy equipment, aside from a traditional flyover of combat jets.

Officials explained the sudden change of format by the "current operational situation" and said that additional security measures have been taken in response to the threat of Ukrainian attacks. State television commentators said that the heavy weaponry was more needed at the battlefield in Ukraine.

For the first time, Saturday's parade featured troops from North Korea, a tribute to Pyongyang that sent its soldiers to fight alongside Moscow forces to repel a Ukrainian incursion into Russia's Kursk region.

Earlier ceasefires failed to hold

Russia declared a unilateral ceasefire for Friday and Saturday, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced a truce that was supposed to begin on May 6, but neither of them held as the parties traded blame for continuing attacks.

U.S. President Donald Trump announced Friday that Russia and Ukraine have bowed to his request for a ceasefire running Saturday through Monday and an exchange of prisoners, declaring that the break in fighting could be the "beginning of the end" of the war.

Zelenskyy, who said earlier this week that the Russian authorities "fear drones may buzz over Red Square" on May 9, followed up on Trump's statement by issuing a decree mockingly permitting Russia to hold its Victory Day celebrations on Saturday, declaring Red Square temporarily off-limits for Ukrainian strikes.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov shrugged off Zelenskyy's decree as a "silly joke." "We don't need anyone's permission to be proud of our Victory Day," Peskov told reporters.

Victory Day remains a rare point of consensus in Russia

Russia's bigger and better-equipped military has been making slow but steady gains along the more than 1,000-kilometer (over 600-mile) front line. Ukraine has hit back with increasingly efficient long-range attacks, striking Russian energy facilities, manufacturing plants and military depots. It has developed drones capable of reaching targets over 1,000 kilometers (more than 600 miles) deep into Russia, far beyond its capabilities before 2022.

Russian authorities warned that if Ukraine attempts to disrupt Saturday's festivities, Russia will carry out a "massive missile strike on the center of Kyiv." The Russian Defense Ministry warned the civilian population there and employees of foreign diplomatic missions of "the need to leave the city promptly." The EU said its diplomats wouldn't leave the Ukrainian capital despite Russian threats.

Putin has used Victory Day celebrations to encourage national pride and underline Russia's position as a global power. The Soviet Union lost 27 million people in 1941-45 in what it calls the Great Patriotic War, an enormous sacrifice that left a deep scar in the national psyche and remains a rare point of consensus in the nation's divisive history under Communist rule.

"We celebrate it with feelings of pride and love for our country, with understanding of our shared duty

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 34 of 67

to defend the interests and future of our Motherland," Putin said at the parade.

"Our soldiers suffered colossal losses, made a colossal sacrifice in the name of freedom and dignity of the peoples of Europe, became the embodiment of courage and nobility, fortitude and humanity, and crowned themselves with the great glory of a grandiose victory."

Victory Day parades on Red Square have involved a broad array of heavy weapons — from armored vehicles to nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles — every year since 2008. Smaller parades are held elsewhere across the country, but this time many of them have also been pared down or even canceled altogether for security reasons.

The authorities on Saturday ordered restrictions on all mobile internet access and text messaging services in the Russian capital, citing the need to ensure public safety. The government has methodically tightened internet censorship and established increasingly stringent controls over online activities, causing rumblings and rare public expressions of discontent.

Malaysia's King Sultan Ibrahim Iskandar, Laos President Thongloun Sisoulith, Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Belarus' authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko attended the festivities in the Russian capital.

Prime Minister Robert Fico of Slovakia, a European Union member, laid flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier memorial just outside the Kremlin walls but stayed away from the Red Square parade.

Speaking at a meeting with Putin in the Kremlin, Fico bemoaned the EU sanctions against Moscow that hampered trade and emphasized the importance of Russia's energy supplies to Slovakia, while Putin hailed Slovakia for honoring memory of fallen Red Army soldiers.

WHO head will oversee evacuation of passengers, crew from hantavirus-stricken cruise ship

By IAIN SULLIVAN and ELENA BECATOROS Associated Press

TENERIFE, Spain (AP) — The head of the World Health Organization arrived in Spain on Saturday to oversee the evacuation of more than 140 passengers and crew from a hantavirus-stricken cruise ship headed to the Canary Islands.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he would be heading to the Spanish island of Tenerife off the coast of West Africa, along with senior Spanish government officials, "to oversee safe disembarkation of the passengers, crew members and health experts."

The Dutch-flagged ship, the MV Hondius, is expected to arrive in Tenerife in the early hours of Sunday. Tedros said that at this point, nobody on board the Hondius was showing symptoms of the virus.

"WHO continues to actively monitor the situation, coordinate support and next steps and will keep Member States and the public updated accordingly. So far, the risk for the population of Canary Islands and globally remains low," he posted on X.

Spain's Health Minister Monica Garcia said on Friday she would be heading to Tenerife with Tedros and Interior Fernando Grande-Marlaska to coordinate the disembarkation.

Passengers will be isolated

Three people have died since the outbreak, and five passengers who left the ship are infected with hantavirus. Both the U.S. and the U.K. have agreed to send planes to evacuate their citizens from the cruise ship.

The head of Spain's emergency services, Virginia Barcones, has said passengers will be taken to a "completely isolated, cordoned-off area" once they disembark.

Hantavirus is usually spread by the inhalation of contaminated rodent droppings and isn't easily transmitted between people. But the Andes virus detected in the cruise ship outbreak may be able to spread between people in rare cases. Symptoms usually show between one and eight weeks after exposure.

According to a letter sent by the Dutch foreign and health ministers to parliament late Friday, Spain has activated the EU civil protection mechanism for a medical evacuation plane equipped for high-consequence infectious disease to be on standby.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 35 of 67

In case anyone falls ill, the medics on board the ship will inform the Spanish authorities, and the evacuation plane "will be sent to Tenerife so that the sick person can be quickly transported by air to the European mainland."

The Dutch government will work with Spanish authorities and the ship company to arrange repatriation of Dutch passengers and crew as soon as possible after arrival in Tenerife, subject to medical conditions and advice from the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the letter said. Those without symptoms will go into home quarantine for six weeks and be monitored by local health services.

As the ship is Dutch-flagged, the Netherlands may also temporarily accommodate people of other nationalities and monitor them in quarantine.

Countries scramble to track passengers who disembarked

Health authorities across four continents were tracking down and monitoring more than two dozen passengers who disembarked before the deadly outbreak was detected. They were also scrambling to trace others who may have come into contact with them.

On Friday, the WHO said a flight attendant on a plane briefly boarded by an infected cruise passenger had tested negative for hantavirus. Her possible infection had raised concerns about the virus' potential transmissibility.

The flight attendant's negative result should ease concerns among the public, said Christian Lindmeier, a WHO spokesman. "The risk remains absolutely low," he said. "This is not a new COVID."

On April 24, nearly two weeks after the first passenger had died on board, more than two dozen people from at least 12 different countries left the ship without contact tracing, Dutch officials and the ship's operator have said.

It wasn't until May 2 that health authorities first confirmed hantavirus in a ship passenger, the WHO said.

The KLM flight attendant who tested negative for the virus was working on a plane headed from Johannesburg to Amsterdam on April 25, and had later fallen ill.

The cruise passenger briefly aboard that flight — a Dutch woman whose husband died on the ship — was too ill to stay on the international flight to Europe and was taken off in Johannesburg, where she died.

The Dutch public health service is undertaking contact tracing on passengers who had contact with the ill woman before she left the plane.

A Briton, Spaniard suspected of being infected

On Friday, U.K. health authorities said a third British national who had been a passenger on the ship is suspected of being infected with hantavirus. The U.K. Health Security Agency said the person is on the island of Tristan da Cunha, a remote British overseas territory in the South Atlantic where the ship stopped in April. There was no word on the person's condition.

Spanish health officials said Friday a woman in the southeastern Spanish province of Alicante has symptoms consistent with a hantavirus infection and is being tested.

She was a passenger on the same flight as the Dutch woman who died in Johannesburg after traveling on the cruise ship, Secretary of State for Health Javier Padilla told reporters.

Two other Britons who were on the ship have been confirmed to have the virus. One is hospitalized in the Netherlands and the other in South Africa.

Authorities in South Africa are working to trace contacts of any passengers who previously got off the ship. They have focused mainly on an April 25 flight from the remote island of St. Helena in the South Atlantic to Johannesburg, the day after some passengers disembarked on the island.

Some state officials across the U.S. said they were monitoring a small number of residents who were on the ship and already went home, as well as people who may have come into contact with ship passengers. None has symptoms.

Indonesian rescuers find 1 body after volcano eruption as search continues for 2 more

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Rescuers on Saturday recovered the body of an Indonesian woman who was caught in a volcanic eruption at Mount Dukono on Indonesia's remote island of Halmahera a day earlier, as search operations continued to find the bodies of two Singaporeans, officials said.

The slain hikers were among 20 who set out to ascend the 1,355-meter (4,445-foot) volcano in defiance of safety restrictions and became stranded when Dukono erupted early Friday, spewing a thick ash column that rose about 10 kilometers (6 miles) into the air.

The woman, identified by authorities only as Enjel and known as a local hiker, was located Saturday afternoon, about 50 meters (165 feet) from the rim of the main crater, said Iwan Ramdani, who heads local Search and Rescue Office. The location of the bodies of two Singaporean climbers remains unknown, and rescue teams are continuing operations amid high volcanic activity, he said.

"The rescue efforts went through a situation that required careful calculation and a well-planned evacuation strategy," Ramdani said, "We took into account the potential escalation of volcanic activity as well as the safety of all personnel."

Hours after the eruption, 17 climbers had been safely evacuated, including seven Singaporean nationals and two Indonesians who eventually joined the rescue operation and provided information on climbing routes of the victims before the eruption. Ten of those evacuated suffered minor burn injuries.

The search operation that involved more than 100 personnel supported by drones resumed early Saturday, focusing on a 700 square-meter (7,500 square-foot) area where clues were found during earlier searches, despite hazardous terrain and continuing eruptions, according to Ramdani.

He said rescuers were prioritizing safety because Dukono's volcanic activity remains elevated.

"The main challenge in this search effort is that we are racing against ongoing eruptions," Ramdani said in a video statement, "When the authorities declare conditions safe, we move closer to the crater area, but when an eruption occurs, we must immediately secure all search personnel from potential danger."

Indonesia's volcanology agency reported multiple eruptions from early Saturday through late morning, including ash columns rising as high as 3,000 meters (nearly 10,000 feet) above the crater. Lava bursts were also observed overnight from a monitoring post near the volcano.

Mount Dukono has been on the second-highest alert level status since 2008. Authorities enforced a four-kilometer (2.5-mile) exclusion zone around the active crater in December 2024.

Local authorities formally closed all hiking routes to Mount Dukono in April and reinforced the ban following Friday's incident. The National Disaster Management Agency warned that entering restricted zones could result in legal sanctions.

The agency urged climbers and tour operators to comply with safety recommendations, noting that similar restrictions apply to dozens of other active volcanoes across the country currently at elevated alert levels.

Indonesia, an archipelago nation of more than 270 million people, sits along the Pacific "Ring of Fire" and is home to more than 120 active volcanoes.

Hungary's Péter Magyar is set to be sworn in as prime minister, ending Viktor Orbán's 16-year rule

By JUSTIN SPIKE Associated Press

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Hungary's incoming prime minister, Péter Magyar, arrived Saturday at the Parliament building to be sworn into office, ending Viktor Orbán's autocratic 16-year rule.

Magyar's center-right Tisza party defeated Orbán's nationalist-populist Fidesz in a stunning blow last month, gaining more votes and seats in Parliament than any other party in Hungary's post-Communist history.

The win, which gave Tisza a two-thirds parliamentary majority, will allow it to roll back many of the poli-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 37 of 67

cies that gave Orbán a reputation among many of his critics as a far-right authoritarian, clamp down on alleged corruption and transform political dynamics within the European Union, where the former prime minister had upended the bloc by frequently vetoing key decisions.

A Parliament without Orbán

On Saturday, Magyar entered the sprawling neo-Gothic parliament building alongside 140 of his party representatives, controlling 141 seats in Hungary's 199-seat parliament. Orbán's Fidesz-KDNP coalition will control 52 seats, down from 135, while the far-right Mi Hazánk (Our Homeland) party will hold six seats.

The 199 representatives took their oaths of office at around 11 a.m. local time. Orbán was not among them for the first time since Hungary's first post-Communist Parliament was formed in 1990.

The new national assembly has 54 women lawmakers, most from the Tisza party — more than a quarter of the total and the most in Hungary's history.

Magyar, a 45-year-old lawyer who founded Tisza in 2024 after years as an insider in Orbán's party, has vowed to end official corruption, which he argues has robbed Hungarians of economic opportunity.

The new prime minister has called on Hungarians to attend an all-day "regime-change" celebration outside Parliament to mark his inauguration and the end of the Orbán era. Several thousand people had already gathered as the new representatives were sworn in.

After he takes his oath at around 3 p.m. local time, Magyar is set to address the crowd outside.

Repairing relations with the EU

Magyar has promised to repair his country's ties with the EU, which Orbán had pushed to the breaking point, and to restore Hungary's place among Western democracies, whose standing had been called into question as Orbán drifted ever closer to Russia.

Unlocking about 17 billion euros (\$20 billion) of EU funds for Hungary frozen during Orbán's time in office over rule-of-law and corruption concerns is among the incoming prime minister's top priorities. The money is sorely needed to help jump-start Hungary's struggling economy, which has stagnated for the last four years.

In a sign of that commitment, Tisza officials say they will once again fly the EU flag on the Parliament building's facade after Orbán's government removed it in 2014.

A party to celebrate the end of Orbán's rule

Budapest's liberal mayor, Gergely Karácsony, posted an open invitation to a party by the Danube River later Saturday to celebrate Orbán's fall and the formation of the new government.

Karácsony wrote in a social media post the party was to express gratitude to Hungarians who have spent years speaking out against Orbán's system: "Teachers fired, civilians and journalists humiliated, small churches torn apart."

"We can finally leave this era behind us — but first, let us remember the everyday heroes and express our gratitude with a farewell to the system," he wrote on Facebook.

Trump's deal making with Xi next week may determine Hong Kong jailed activist Jimmy Lai's fate

By KANIS LEUNG Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Pro-democracy activist Jimmy Lai once hoped U.S. President Donald Trump could help stop the imposition of a controversial national security law. The law not only took effect but was also used to sentence him to 20 years in prison.

Ahead of an anticipated trip by Trump to Beijing to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping next week, Lai's son said his family is now hoping that Trump can help secure his father's release.

Lai, a prominent critic of Beijing, founded a pro-democracy newspaper that was shut down during a crackdown following the city's massive anti-government protests in 2019.

Observers say the former media mogul's plight symbolizes a decline in freedoms Beijing promised when the former British colony returned to Chinese rule in 1997. In an interview with The Associated Press, Sebastien Lai said he fears the clock is ticking for his 78-year-old father.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 38 of 67

Trump is expected to discuss trade, the Iran war and Taiwan with Xi. But he said he is also planning to bring up Lai, telling conservative radio host Hugh Hewitt, "there's a little bitterness, I would say, with him and Jimmy Lai."

The younger Lai, 31, said his family is hopeful that Trump could help his father, adding that it's easier to resolve than many of the other complex geopolitical issues the leaders will discuss.

He fears his father will die in prison, which would devastate the family and make him a martyr, he said. "It's a lose-lose scenario for every single person," he said.

The US diplomatic efforts

Trump has expressed sympathy for Jimmy Lai.

"I feel so badly," he told reporters in December after Lai was found guilty of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces and conspiring with others to publish seditious articles. He had raised Lai's case during his October meeting with Xi.

Mark Clifford, president of the Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation, which advocates for Lai's release, said people briefed on the October meeting told him that Xi and his staff "noted" Trump's remarks without pushing back aggressively. Clifford said that suggested they're willing to talk.

Clifford added that Trump had instructed U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent to raise Lai's release in last June's trade talks with China, according to his source. Bessent again mentioned Trump's desire to free Lai in a recent meeting with Chinese representatives, who acknowledged it without much comment, Clifford said, citing someone with direct knowledge.

"It is positive that senior Chinese officials have stopped pushing back on the issue," he said. The Treasury Department did not respond to a request for comment.

In public, though, Beijing has remained tough on Lai. In March, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun called him the mastermind behind the riots that shook the city in 2019.

On Thursday, the spokesperson's office of the ministry didn't directly answer a question about whether China would consider releasing Lai, saying that Hong Kong issues are internal affairs and foreign interference is not allowed.

The Hong Kong government earlier said Lai's case had nothing to do with press freedom. In a reply to the AP, it said Lai was convicted after an open and fair trial, and the government will ensure laws are observed and strictly enforced.

The White House did not respond to questions about how vigorously Trump would press for Lai's release.

Over 100 U.S. lawmakers in a bipartisan group sent a letter to the White House Thursday urging Trump to seek Lai's release at the upcoming summit with Xi.

Getting prisoners out has become harder

Even as U.S.-China tensions have risen, diplomacy has managed to win the release of some prisoners. In 2024, U.S. pastor David Lin was freed after nearly 20 years in Chinese prison, and Washington and Beijing traded several other prisoners under a diplomatic agreement the same year.

But activists say Beijing is becoming less willing to release prisoners who have confronted it over human rights. The Chinese Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo died at a hospital in northeast China in 2017 after foreign governments urged China to release him for cancer treatment abroad.

Human rights lawyer Jared Genser, who previously represented Liu, said a White House official told him that Trump had called Xi and urged Liu's medical release.

Under Xi's predecessor, Hu Jintao, China was more focused on economic integration and more sensitive to its international reputation, said Genser, who helped win another activist's freedom in 2007. Xi's China emphasizes sovereignty and resisting foreign interference, he said.

"China knows that by taking a very tough and unrelenting position that most countries in the world are not going to be willing to do more than privately raise a case," he said. "That self-censorship to me is the biggest factor ... in our inability to secure the release of political prisoners under Xi Jinping, as compared to Hu Jintao."

It's not clear how hard the US will push for Lai

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 39 of 67

John Kamm, founder of the Dui Hua Foundation, which advocates for political prisoners, said China previously made concessions when it wanted something, like hosting the Olympics.

But he said U.S. inattention also made it harder to win the release of jailed activists.

"I don't know of anyone in this administration," he said, "who cares about political prisoners in China." An exception might be Secretary of State Marco Rubio, he said, but Rubio's focus is on other issues.

Kamm said Trump is prioritizing trade, investment and the Iran war. But he said China could agree to release Lai if the U.S. makes concessions on Beijing's other priorities.

But Thomas Kellogg, executive director of Georgetown Center for Asian Law, said both Beijing and Washington have incentives to make a deal.

Releasing Lai would allow China to signal that it's ready to move on after almost six years since Beijing imposed the security law in Hong Kong, while Trump's administration could use a diplomatic win after "a difficult couple of months," he said.

Kellogg said winning Lai's release would help the administration earn praise even from its critics.

"If the Trump administration is pushing very hard for Jimmy Lai's release, then we could get a positive outcome," he said.

But Wilson Chan, co-founder of the think tank Pagoda Institute, believes the chance for a diplomatic solution is slim as Beijing has a message to send through Lai's case.

Chan said if the international community keeps raising Lai's case, Beijing may see him as an influential figure who still poses national security threats. But if they don't, then Beijing won't face pressure to act.

Lai's family fears he will die in prison

Lai, a British citizen, has decided not to appeal his conviction and sentence. The government, which insists Lai is Chinese, is seeking to confiscate his assets on national security grounds.

Sebastien Lai called the move another example of his father "still being attacked."

The older Lai suffered from health issues including heart palpitations and diabetes, his Hong Kong legal team said in January. The prosecution said a medical report noted his general health condition remained stable. The government insists he was placed in solitary confinement at his own request.

The younger Lai, based in London, has maintained contact with his father through letters during the latter's over five years in custody. He believes his father will want to live a quiet life if released early.

"My father will die in prison if he's not freed," he said. "The Chinese government would be complicit in killing him."

What to know about the latest wave of changes to congressional districts

By GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

The remaking of the U.S. political map accelerated this week in courts and legislatures, all of it in this round expected to boost Republicans in their attempt to keep control of Congress in November's elections.

This week's major action came in Southern states, with a significant state court ruling in Virginia and continued fallout from a U.S. Supreme Court decision last month.

Here's a look at where things stand.

Virginia court undoes new map drawn to help Democrats

In a 4-3 decision Friday, the Virginia Supreme Court stuck down a Democratic congressional redistricting plan that was approved by voters in April.

The new map was intended to give Democrats an inside track for 10 of the state's 11 seats in the U.S. House — a jump from the six they currently hold. The new lines were drawn as part of a push by both parties to redistrict for their advantage in time for the 2026 midterm elections.

The court majority cited procedural reasons for rejecting the amendment to the state constitution that paved the way for new maps. To send a constitutional amendment to voters, lawmakers are supposed to approve the measure twice — once before and once after a legislative election. The court found that they didn't comply because the initial approval came in October after early voting had begun for the general

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 40 of 67

election.

The result is that the state's previous maps will remain in place for this year's elections.

Fallout from US Supreme Court ruling leads to quick redistricting

Multiple GOP-controlled Southern states pushed this week to redraw their congressional maps in the aftermath of an April 29 U.S. Supreme Court decision that struck down a Louisiana congressional district drawn to have a Black majority of constituents.

The ruling was seen as a blow to a provision of the Voting Rights Act that requires political maps to include districts where minority populations' preferred candidates can win elections.

Louisiana quickly suspended primaries scheduled for May 16 so lawmakers could create new districts. Voting rights activists there packed the statehouse to oppose proposals for new maps that could eliminate at least one of the two current majority-Black districts.

Republicans in Alabama enacted a law Friday that would ignore the results of its May 19 congressional primaries and instead hold a new election — if a federal court agrees to lift an order for the state to have a second congressional district where a majority or near-majority of residents are Black. Republicans currently hold four of the state's six seats in the House and want to instead use a map that could allow them to win an additional seat.

South Carolina's GOP-dominated legislature met Friday to discuss a proposal to create a new map that gives the party a shot at winning all seven of the state's House seats. But some worried that breaking up the one Democratic-controlled district could make some other districts vulnerable to Democratic election wins.

Tennessee enacted a law Thursday creating a new U.S. House map that carves up a majority-Black House district in Memphis, the only one now held by a Democrat. That would give Republicans a strong chance of winning all nine of the state's seats.

The balance of power could be tipping more to Republicans

Normally, House districts are reworked only after results from the once-a-decade U.S. Census are tallied. This time it's different.

President Donald Trump urged Texas officials to draw new districts to help his chance of keeping Congress in GOP control after the 2026 midterm elections. Texas officials complied with a plan designed to bring them as many as five new seats.

Democratic-dominated California responded with a map intended to bring them five new states. Other states have followed. And in the aftermath of the Supreme Court ruling, the pace has picked up, though it's been mostly in states where Republicans have nearly all the seats already and thus not much room for gains.

Without counting the pending possible map changes in Alabama, Louisiana and South Carolina, the mid-decade redistricting has created 14 more House seats that Republicans believe they could win and six that could give Democrats an edge. Overall, that would mean a potential eight-seat advantage for the GOP ahead of a midterm election, when the president's party normally loses seats.

But as changes and court challenges play out — along with voters having their say — the results aren't certain.

Currently, Republicans have 217 seats in the House to Democrats' 212. There's one independent member. Five seats are vacant.

Alabama lawmakers pass plan for new US House primary if courts allow different districts

By KIM CHANDLER, JACK BROOK, JEFFREY COLLINS and DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (AP) — A national redistricting battle over U.S. House seats swung toward Republicans on Friday, as a Virginia court invalidated a Democratic gerrymandering effort and Republicans in Alabama approved plans for new primary elections if courts allow GOP-drawn House districts to be used

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 41 of 67

in the November midterm elections.

The Alabama legislation, which was signed quickly into law by Republican Gov. Kay Ivey, is part of an effort by Republicans in Southern states to capitalize on a recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling that significantly weakened Voting Rights Act protections for minorities.

At the Alabama Statehouse, a chaotic scene erupted as one protester was dragged from the packed House gallery by security officers. Republican lawmakers in Louisiana and South Carolina also faced staunch opposition from civil rights activists and Democrats as they presented plans Friday to redraw their congressional districts.

The action came just a day after Tennessee enacted new congressional districts that carve up a Democratic-held, Black-majority district in Memphis. The state Democratic Party sued on Friday, seeking to prevent the districts from being used until after this year's elections because of the tight time frame.

Even before last week's Supreme Court ruling in a Louisiana case, Republicans and Democrats already were engaged in a fierce redistricting battle, each seeking an edge in the midterm elections that will determine control of the closely divided House. That battle tilted further toward Republicans when the Virginia Supreme Court ruled Friday that Democratic lawmakers had violated constitutional requirements when placing a redistricting amendment on the ballot.

Since President Donald Trump prodded Texas to redraw its congressional districts last summer, Republicans think they could gain as many as 14 seats from new districts in several states while Democrats think they could gain up to six seats. But the parties may not get everything they sought, because the gerrymandering could backfire in some highly competitive districts.

Alabama primaries could be in flux

Demonstrators outside the Alabama Statehouse on Friday shouted "fight for democracy" and "down with white supremacy."

"I was out there in 1965 marching for the right to vote, and now we are back here in 2026 doing the same thing," Betty White Boynton said.

During debate inside the statehouse, Black lawmakers said the Republican legislation harks back to the state's shameful Jim Crow history. The new law would ignore the May 19 primary results for some congressional seats and direct the governor to schedule a new primary under revised districts, if a court allows it. Lawmakers also approved a similar bill related to state Senate districts.

"What happened here today is that we were set back as a people to the days of Reconstruction," Democratic state Sen. Rodger Smitherman said after the vote.

Senate Democrats shouted "hell no" and "stop the steal" as senators voted.

The special primary would happen only if the courts agree to lift an injunction that put a court-selected map in place until after the 2030 census. That order required a second district where Black voters are the majority or close to it, resulting in the 2024 election of Democratic Rep. Shomari Figures, who is Black. If a court lifts the injunction, Republican officials want to put in place a map lawmakers drew in 2023 — which was rejected by a federal court — that could allow them to reclaim Figures' district.

"With this special session successfully behind us, Alabama now stands ready to quickly act, should the courts issue favorable rulings in our ongoing redistricting cases," Ivey said in a statement.

On Friday evening, however, a three-judge panel rejected Alabama's request to lift their injunction and pave the way for changing maps. The request remains pending before the U.S. Supreme Court.

Virginia ruling centered on timing of election

Democrats had hoped to gain as many as four additional U.S. House seats under new districts narrowly approved by voters in April. But the state Supreme Court invalidated the measure because it said the Democratic-led legislature violated procedural requirements.

To place a constitutional amendment before voters, the Virginia Constitution requires lawmakers to approve it in two separate legislative sessions, with a state election sandwiched in between. The legislature's initial approval of the redistricting amendment occurred last October — while early voting was underway but before it concluded for the general election. The legislature's second vote on the amendment occurred

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 42 of 67

after a new legislative session began in January.

The state Supreme Court said the initial legislative approval came too late, noting that more than 1.3 million ballots already had been cast, about 40% of the total votes ultimately cast.

Louisiana lawmakers look at map options

A Louisiana Senate committee considered several redistricting options Friday from Republican state Sen. John "Jay" Morris that would eliminate either both or one of the current Black-majority U.S. House districts.

"Every one of these maps reduces Black voting power in every one of the districts. And I think that's a problem," Democratic state Sen. Sam Jenkins told Morris.

Morris denied that the proposed redistricting maps were racially discriminatory. He said his goal was to be "respectful of the traditional boundaries" of the state's six congressional districts.

"I don't think we should care that much about race," Morris said.

The only four Black congressmen who have represented Louisiana since the end of the Reconstruction era appealed to state senators to keep two majority-Black districts in a state where one-third of voters are Black.

Leona Tate said she was escorted as a 6-year-old girl by federal marshals through a racist white mob trying to prevent her from desegregating a New Orleans elementary school. She told lawmakers she felt they were taking a step backward in time by reducing Black political power.

"You have a choice in front of you: You can draw a map that reflects what Louisiana actually is -- a state where Black voices belong in the halls of Congress," said Tate, 71. "Or you can draw a map that tells my grandchildren that their votes don't count, that their faces don't matter and that the progress I helped build with my own two feet as a 6-year-old can be erased at will."

South Carolina considers a House map

South Carolina lawmakers held a rare Friday meeting to discuss a proposed new congressional map intended to allow Republicans a clean sweep of the state's seven U.S. House seats.

The House hearing was the first step in redistricting. But its future remains murky. The state Senate has yet to agree to consider new districts later this month, an action that requires a two-thirds vote.

The new map has some Republicans nervous. Breaking up the 6th District, represented by Democratic U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn, makes the other six districts less Republican.

At Friday's subcommittee meeting, lawmakers heard hours of testimony, almost all against the new map. The hearing included a consultant who reviewed the map, saying it appeared to be legal under the Supreme Court's decision in the Louisiana case.

"I agree if the law allows us to do it, then we can do it," Democratic state Rep. Justin Bamberg said. "But I can slap somebody's mama and it's not the right thing to do."

Some absentee ballots already have been returned for the state's June 9 primary elections. The legislative subcommittee advanced a plan to delay the congressional primary to August and reopen a candidate filing period, if a new map is approved.

Fuel shortages and high prices push adoption of EVs in Africa, led by Ethiopia

By ALLAN OLINGO Associated Press

Nairobi, KENYA (AP) — Use of electric vehicles in Africa is surging, led by Ethiopia, as soaring prices and fuel shortages compel countries to opt for cleaner and cheaper transport.

Africa imported 44,358 electric vehicles from China in 2025, according to data from China's Commerce Ministry, up from 19,386 in 2024. The shipments, valued at over \$200 million, highlight growing demand, especially in Ethiopia after it banned new imports of gas and diesel-powered vehicles in 2024.

More than 115,000 EVs are now on Ethiopia's roads, accounting for about 8% of the national fleet. In 2025, it imported a third of Africa's imports from China, ahead of other major markets in South Africa, Egypt, Morocco and Nigeria.

As the Iran war drags on, Ethiopia's fuel shortages are rippling through transport systems and daily life,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 43 of 67

reinforcing its effort to cut costly imports of oil and gas and strengthen its energy security. However that trend is raising questions about charging infrastructure and affordability.

Ethiopia's spends about \$4.2 billion on fuel imports annually, straining its foreign currency reserves.

Its minister of Trade and Regional Integration, Kassahun Gofe, said in a statement that the country also is spending up to \$128 million monthly on fuel subsidies, while shipments fell short by more than 180,000 metric tons as the imports are disrupted by Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the shipping route for about a fifth of oil from the Gulf region before the war.

The government has redoubled its campaign for quicker EV adoption, framing it as a critical buffer against external supply shocks.

"From a general perspective, it is sustainable," said Hiten Parmar, executive director of South African-based The Electric Mission. "By replacing imported fuel with domestically generated electricity, Ethiopia is strengthening its energy security position."

Ethiopia has an edge

Ethiopia has a special advantage in that more than 90% of its electricity comes from renewable sources, mainly hydro and solar. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, Africa's largest hydroelectric project, is expected to double its power generation, though the facility and has fueled a decade-long dispute over water supplies with downstream Egypt and Sudan.

"That scale of generation creates a foundation for electrified transport," Parmar said. "It allows EVs to be powered by locally produced clean energy, rather than costly imports."

"By gradually adopting EVs, that intensive fuel import expenditure can be reduced and redirected into other critical development needs," Parmar said.

Globally, the International Energy Agency estimates electric vehicles displaced more than 1 million barrels of oil consumption per day in 2024.

Countries across Africa are pushing for more EVs

Egypt, South Africa and Morocco also are pursuing a transition to EV use, adopting a mix of policy incentives, investing in manufacturing capacity and in clean energy.

"That transition is beginning to ease pressure on fuel demand," said Bob Wesonga, policy and investments lead at the Africa E-Mobility Alliance.

"That's over 100,000 vehicle owners who are no longer directly exposed to pump price shocks," he said. "In the medium to long term, this creates a buffer against global oil volatility."

For those who have switched, the savings are significant.

"A private EV owner now spends roughly \$4 a month on charging compared to about \$27 previously spent on fuel," Wesonga said. "For public transport operators, the difference is even more striking."

Charging stations and other infrastructure are still lacking

The transition to EVs faces some daunting structural hurdles, Parmar notes.

"The technology is already mature, the challenge is building it out fast enough," he said.

Ethiopia is deploying ultra-fast charging hubs in its capital Addis Ababa, but scaling them nationwide will take time and investment.

"The biggest hurdle is the last-mile power distribution," Wesonga said. "While Ethiopia has a surplus of generation, getting that power reliably to where it's needed, especially outside Addis Ababa, remains a challenge."

Frequent blackouts and delays in connecting high-capacity charging stations have slowed construction of needed infrastructure, even as demand for electric vehicles rises.

"Charging infrastructure is still heavily concentrated in the capital and along a few corridors," Wesonga said. "That limits e-mobility to specific areas and creates a bottleneck as adoption grows."

Plans to assemble EVs raise question of affordability

Ethiopia is one of several countries in Africa looking to build their own EV industries. Official data show 17 electric vehicle assembly plants are in the pipeline in Ethiopia, with plans to raise that number to 60 by 2030. It's part of a broader strategy to localize production and reduce costs.

Affordability, however, remains a major constraint. While operating costs are lower, prices of electric

vehicles remain high relative to average incomes.

"The purchase price is still out of reach for many," Wesonga said. "At the same time, restrictions on fossil fuel vehicles have pushed up the cost of used cars, creating additional barriers."

That dynamic could have unintended social impacts if not managed carefully.

"A national fleet transition is always gradual," Parmar said. "Existing combustion vehicles will remain in use for some time, and the transition needs to account for livelihoods tied to that system."

Even so, both experts say the long-term trajectory remains clear. Lower operating and maintenance costs for electric vehicles could reduce transport costs over time, easing the price of goods and improving access to economic opportunities.

Ethiopia is also looking to lessons from countries such as China and Norway, where policy support, infrastructure investment and consumer incentives have driven rapid adoption.

"This is not just about transport," Wesonga said. "It's about reshaping how the country uses energy, and who benefits from that shift."

Handwriting on newly released note matches one found after Epstein's death, experts tell AP

By MICHAEL R. SISAK Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A note that a former cellmate said he discovered after Jeffrey Epstein's first suspected jail suicide attempt was all but certainly penned by the same person as a note that authorities found in the millionaire sex offender's cell after he killed himself, handwriting experts say.

Three forensic document examiners who reviewed the notes at the request of The Associated Press concluded that they have or appear to have common authorship, with shared characteristics such as the same spacing, letter shapes, usage of capital letters and unique punctuation.

In the first note, made public this week, the writer states: "They investigated me for month — found nothing!!!" and talks about being able to choose the "time to say goodbye." The other note, which has been public for years, is a list of grievances about conditions at the jail, including the showers, food and "Giant Bugs."

While no one has definitively said Epstein wrote the notes, they point to his grim outlook before his death and echo some frustrations he conveyed to jail personnel about being confined in the crumbling Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan after living in luxury for decades. They also contain phrases he had used in the past.

Both notes, written in pen on notepad paper, include the underlined phrase "NO FUN" and end with double exclamation points — the first of which is bowed slightly with similar curvature. The first few words of each note are larger than the rest and each successive line slants away from the left margin.

"These are the kinds of things that would suggest that we're dealing with the same writer," said Thomas Vastrick, the president of the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners.

"They are written by the same person," said Bart Baggett, who founded the forensic analysis firm Handwriting Experts Inc. and has testified in court as an expert witness more than 130 times.

"Both of those documents have the same author," said Grace Warmbier, who worked for a decade for the New York City Police Department performing document examinations and handwriting analysis.

None of the experts were able to say definitively that Epstein wrote the notes, in part because there are few if any confirmed examples of his handwriting in the millions of pages of records the Justice Department recently released on the late financier.

In addition to the two jail notes, Warmbier and Vastrick also reviewed writing samples from the former cellmate, Nicholas Tartaglione, including part of a note he sent to the New York Daily News in 2019 in which he denied any involvement in Epstein's death.

Warmbier ruled out Tartaglione as the author, finding "significant dissimilarities between his handwriting and the handwriting in question."

Vastrick said Tartaglione's writing samples had "a wide range of variation from one to another" and that

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 45 of 67

there were at least some similarities that require further examination.

"At this point, I certainly would not eliminate him as a potential writer," Vastrick said. "I don't at the same time want to suggest that he is the writer."

For years, only a few people known about the note that Tartaglione claimed he found. Then, last summer, he mentioned it on writer Jessica Reed Kraus' podcast. That piqued the interest of writers at The New York Times, who convinced a judge on Wednesday to release the note, which had been sealed in an unrelated case.

Tartaglione, an ex-police officer serving a life sentence for killing four people, said he discovered the note in a book in his cell after Epstein was found on July 23, 2019, on the floor with a strip of bedsheet around his neck. Epstein was placed on suicide watch and moved to a different cell. He had no cellmate when he was found dead on Aug. 10, 2019.

Epstein and Tartaglione shared a cell for about two weeks, beginning soon after Epstein's July 6, 2019, arrest on sex trafficking charges and ending with the suspected suicide attempt. Both men were awaiting trials.

According to a chronology in the Justice Department's files on Epstein, Tartaglione told his lawyer about the note four days after the suspected July 23 attempt. There is no indication that anyone alerted jail officials or Epstein's representatives.

The note was later submitted as evidence in Tartaglione's criminal case and placed under seal amid a dispute over his legal representation. It wasn't mentioned in government reports examining the circumstances of Epstein's death, nor did it surface in the Justice Department's files. The other note, found after Epstein's death, was shown on CBS' "60 Minutes" in 2020 and is in the files.

Beyond handwriting analysis, the phrasing of the notes could give clues to their authorship. The note Tartaglione said he found contains the line: "Watcha want me to do — Bust out cryin!!"

Epstein previously referenced that line, mimicking dialogue from a 1931 "Little Rascals" film, in three emails that were included in the Justice Department's files, including one he sent to his brother four months before going to jail.

US military strike on alleged drug boat in the eastern Pacific kills 2, leaves a survivor

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. military's latest strike on an alleged drug-trafficking boat in the eastern Pacific Ocean killed two men Friday while leaving one survivor.

Video posted on social media by U.S. Southern Command shows a black, boat-shaped image before what appears to be an explosion, followed by a column of fire rising from the ocean.

Southern Command said it "immediately notified the U.S. Coast Guard to activate the Search and Rescue system for the survivor."

The White House announced Wednesday that President Donald Trump has signed off on a new U.S. counterterrorism strategy that sets eliminating drug cartels in the Western Hemisphere as the administration's highest priority.

The Trump administration's campaign of blowing up alleged drug-trafficking vessels in Latin American waters, including the eastern Pacific and the Caribbean Sea, has gone on since early September and killed at least 193 people in total. The military has not provided evidence that any of the vessels were carrying drugs. The strikes have ramped up again in recent weeks.

At the same time, Trump has sought to press regional leaders to work more closely with the U.S. to target cartels and take military action themselves against drug traffickers and transnational gangs that he says pose an "unacceptable threat" to the hemisphere's national security.

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

On the cruise ship hit by hantavirus, some fear what awaits them

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 46 of 67

at home

By DAVID BILLER and SUMAN NAISHADHAM Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — In the days since the hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship in the Atlantic Ocean, concern has taken hold among at least some of its Spanish passengers — but not so much because they fear contracting the illness. Rather, they are afraid of how they will be received back on land.

They have seen sensational news reports and devil-may-care memes ostracizing those aboard the MV Hondius, two passengers told The Associated Press by phone from the ship on Friday.

"You go onto social media — they want to dynamite the boat. They want to sink the boat," a Spanish man said.

He says he worries about being stigmatized as a viral vector to be avoided — or worse. He spoke on condition of anonymity because of these concerns, and another Spanish woman insisted on anonymity for the same reason.

"You see what's out there and you realize you're heading into the eye of a hurricane," she said. "Many people forget that in here there are more than 140 passengers. In reality, there are 140 human beings."

Coronavirus flashbacks

A cruise ship with an outbreak has dredged up COVID-19 déjà vu — but it's misplaced, according to the World Health Organization. For days, WHO officials have sought to dispel comparisons between coronavirus and hantavirus, stressing that the latter poses very low risk to the general public.

"This is very different virus. I want to be unequivocal here," Maria Van Kerkhove, the WHO's head of epidemic and pandemic preparedness, said on Thursday. "This is not the start of a COVID pandemic."

Hantavirus is usually spread by the inhalation of contaminated rodent droppings and isn't easily transmitted between people. But the Andes virus detected in the cruise ship outbreak may be able to spread between people in rare cases.

But some are dismissing health experts — just as they did during the pandemic. Iustitia Europa, an anti-establishment Spanish group that rose to prominence by challenging COVID-era restrictions, called for the MV Hondius to be barred from reaching Spanish shores.

"The Canary Islands cannot become Europe's health laboratory ... We demand transparency, responsibility, and protection for Spaniards to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past," it posted on X.

A frosty response from some Spanish politicians

Others defaulted to defensive footing. The Canary Islands regional president, Fernando Clavijo, told Spain's El País newspaper Friday he wouldn't be at ease until the ship leaves Spain and all passengers were headed to their respective quarantine destinations. Madrid's regional leader Isabel Díaz Ayuso on Thursday said she disagreed with the decision to transfer the ship's 14 Spanish passengers to a military hospital in the Spanish capital, where authorities have said they will have to quarantine.

"We've seen news that no one wants this boat. That it's a boat of infected people, a boat of multimillionaires, full of rats," the Spanish man said. "Society is in some way contaminated with a lot of noise and a lot of lies."

He said he was taking some solace in Spanish authorities' assurance of official escorts upon their arrival in Tenerife, where on Thursday port workers protested, citing lack of information provided about safety measures to be implemented.

The more than 140 passengers and crew could begin disembarking as early as Sunday.

Daily life aboard the cruise ship

The Spanish man said he was put at ease about the virus by a group of specialists who boarded while the ship was still off the coast of Cape Verde and explained the rarity of human-to-human transmission.

Passengers' day-to-day routine has been tranquil, he added. Those who venture from their cabins into common areas lounge about reading, or attend talks — all the while wearing masks and observing social distancing. Some join a 7:30 a.m. exercise group on one of the upper decks.

Others go out for air and try to spot birds; many had hoped to return from some of the most remote places on Earth with photos of wildlife, not find themselves the focus of a glaring global spotlight.

Even so, both Spanish passengers said they would go on another cruise in the future.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 47 of 67

"For me, personally, traveling is a means to ... live out what I'm passionate about — which is observing nature and documenting nature," she said. "Of course I would go on a cruise again."

Trump says Russia and Ukraine have agreed to his request for a 3-day ceasefire and a prisoner swap

By DARLENE SUPERVILLE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump said Friday that the leaders of Russia and Ukraine have agreed to his request for a three-day ceasefire and an exchange of prisoners, adding that such a halt to hostilities could be the "beginning of the end" of the long war between them.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Yuri Ushakov, Russian President Vladimir Putin's foreign affairs adviser, both confirmed the agreement.

"I asked and, President Putin agreed. President Zelenskyy agreed -- both readily," Trump said as he departed the White House to attend a dinner at his Virginia golf club. "And we have a little period of time where they're not going to be killing people. That's very good."

Trump earlier Friday had announced on social media that the ceasefire would run Saturday through Monday. Saturday is Victory Day in Russia, a holiday that commemorates the victory over Nazi Germany in World War II.

"I am pleased to announce that there will be a THREE DAY CEASEFIRE (May 9th, 10th, and 11th) in the War between Russia and Ukraine," Trump wrote. "The Celebration in Russia is for Victory Day but, likewise, in Ukraine, because they were also a big part and factor of World War II."

The Republican president said the ceasefire includes a suspension of all kinetic activity and the exchange of 1,000 prisoners by each country.

Russia had announced a ceasefire for Friday and Saturday, but it quickly unraveled, with both sides blaming the other for the continued fighting, just as they had when Ukraine's own unilateral ceasefire had swiftly collapsed earlier in the week.

Trump said he made his request for the ceasefire "directly" to the two presidents. "Hopefully, it is the beginning of the end of a very long, deadly, and hard fought War," he said.

Trump added that talks continue over ending the war that began in February 2022 "and we are getting closer and closer every day." Trump has gone back and forth over whether the war will end, at times expressing optimism and at other times saying Russia and Ukraine should be left to fight it out to the bitter end.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine's decision on how to engage with those discussions was shaped in part by the prospect of freeing its prisoners. Ukraine has made the return of prisoners of war a central demand throughout the conflict.

"Red Square matters less to us than the lives of Ukrainian prisoners of war who can be brought home," Zelenskyy wrote on Telegram. Red Square is where Russia holds its traditional military parade to celebrate Victory Day, one of the biggest holidays of the year.

After releasing his statement, Zelenskyy issued a formal presidential decree "authorizing" Russia to hold the parade, declaring Red Square off-limits for Ukrainian strikes for the duration of the event. The framing of the decree appeared designed to underscore Kyiv's claim that it holds effective targeting reach over the Russian capital, while publicly tying Ukrainian restraint to the ceasefire terms.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov later shrugged off Zelenskyy's decree as a "silly joke."

"We don't need anyone's permission to be proud of our Victory Day," Peskov told reporters.

Zelenskyy said the deal for a ceasefire was reached through a U.S.-mediated process and thanked Trump and the American team for what he called effective diplomatic engagement. He said Ukraine expected Washington to hold Russia to the terms of the agreement.

"We are counting on the United States to ensure that Russia fulfills its commitments," Zelenskyy said.

Zelenskyy said he had instructed his team to prepare everything necessary for the exchange without

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 48 of 67

delay.

Trump's announcement came hours after Secretary of State Marco Rubio struck a much more somber tone about negotiations to halt Russia's 4-year-old war in Ukraine, saying U.S. mediation efforts have not led to a "fruitful outcome" so far.

"While we're prepared to play whatever role we can to bring it to a peaceful diplomatic resolution, unfortunately right now, those efforts have stagnated," Rubio told reporters at the end of a visit to Rome and the Vatican. "But we always stand ready if those circumstances change."

Virginia Supreme Court strikes down Democrats' redrawn US House maps, giving Republicans a win

By DAVID A. LIEB and GEOFF MULVIHILL Associated Press

The Virginia Supreme Court on Friday struck down a voter-approved Democratic congressional redistricting plan, delivering another major setback to the party in a nationwide battle against Republicans for an edge in this year's midterm elections.

The court ruled 4-3 that the state's Democratic-led legislature violated procedural requirements when it placed the constitutional amendment on the ballot to authorize mid-decade redistricting. Voters narrowly approved the amendment on April 21, but the court's ruling renders the vote's result meaningless.

Writing for the majority, Justice D. Arthur Kelsey wrote that the legislature submitted the proposed constitutional amendment to voters "in an unprecedented manner."

"This violation irreparably undermines the integrity of the resulting referendum vote and renders it null and void," he wrote.

Democrats had hoped to win as many as four additional U.S. House seats under Virginia's redrawn map as part of an attempt to offset Republican redistricting done elsewhere at the urging of President Donald Trump. Later Friday, Virginia Democrats said in a filing that they intended to file an emergency appeal of the state high court's decision with the U.S. Supreme Court.

Friday's ruling, combined with a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that severely weakened the Voting Rights Act, has supercharged Republicans' congressional gerrymandering advantage heading into this year's midterm elections.

"Huge win for the Republican Party, and America, in Virginia," Trump said about the decision on his social media account.

Richard Hudson, chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, said the ruling was another sign of GOP momentum heading into the midterms.

"We're on offense, and we're going to win," he said in a statement.

Don Scott, the Democratic speaker of the Virginia House of Delegates, said Democrats respect the court's opinion but lamented that it overturned the will of the voters: "They voted YES because they wanted to fight back against the Trump power grab."

Suzan DelBene, chairwoman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, criticized the court majority for what she said was a decision that "cast aside the will of the voters," but she said the people will have the final say.

"In November, they will, and they'll power Democrats to the House majority," she said in a statement.

A longshot Democratic appeal

Democrats are taking a legal longshot in asking the nation's highest court to reverse the Virginia ruling. The U.S. Supreme Court tries to avoid second-guessing state courts' interpretations of their own constitutions. In 2023, it turned down a request by North Carolina Republicans to overrule a state Supreme Court decision that blocked the GOP's congressional map.

Still, even an unsuccessful appeal would let Democrats try to blame their failure on the conservative majority that dominates the nation's highest court, which has already infuriated the party and civil rights groups by neutering the Voting Rights Act.

Legislative voting districts typically are redrawn once a decade after each census to account for popula-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 49 of 67

tion changes. But Trump sparked an unusual flurry of mid-decade redistricting last year by encouraging Republican officials in Texas to redraw districts in a bid to win several additional U.S. House seats and hold on to their party's narrow majority in the midterm elections.

California responded with new voter-approved districts drawn to Democrats' advantage, and Utah's top court imposed a new congressional map that also helps Democrats. Meanwhile, Republicans stand to gain from new House districts passed in Florida, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio and Tennessee. They could add even more after the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the Voting Rights Act case, which has prompted some other Republican states to consider redrawing their maps in time for this year's elections.

Virginia is currently represented in the U.S. House by six Democrats and five Republicans, all elected from districts imposed by a court following a bipartisan redistricting commission's failure to agree on a map after the 2020 census. The new districts could have given Democrats an improved chance to win all but one of the state's 11 congressional seats.

The state Supreme Court's majority was critical of the state's redrawing of the congressional maps to benefit one political party. Those justices noted that 47% of the state's voters supported GOP congressional candidates in 2024, but the new map could result in Democrats making up 91% of the state's House delegation.

What was in the Democrats' map

Under the Democratic-drawn map, five districts would have been anchored in the Democratic stronghold of northern Virginia. Revisions to four other districts across Richmond, southern Virginia and Hampton Roads would have diluted the voting power of conservative blocs in those areas. And a reshaped district in parts of western Virginia would have lumped together three Democratic-leaning college towns to offset other Republican voters.

The state Supreme Court's seven justices are appointed by the state legislature, which has toggled back and forth between Democratic, Republican and split control over recent years. Legal experts say the body doesn't have a set ideological profile.

The case before the court focused not on the shape of the new districts but rather on the process the General Assembly used to authorize them.

Because the state's redistricting commission was established by a voter-approved constitutional amendment, lawmakers had to propose an amendment to redraw the districts. That required approval of a resolution in two separate legislative sessions, with a state election sandwiched in between, to place the amendment on the ballot.

The legislature's initial approval of the amendment occurred last October, during early voting for the general election, before it concluded. The legislature's second vote on the amendment occurred after a new legislative session began in January. Lawmakers also approved a separate bill in February laying out the new districts, subject to voter approval of the constitutional amendment.

Arguments over the definition of 'election'

Judicial arguments focused on whether the legislature's initial approval of the amendment came too late, because early voting already had begun.

Attorney Matthew Seligman, who defended the legislature, argued that the "election" should be defined narrowly to mean the Tuesday of the general election. In that case, the legislature's first vote on the redistricting amendment occurred before the election and was constitutional, he told judges.

But in its ruling, the Supreme Court said, "this view appears to be wholly unprecedented in Virginia's history."

An attorney for the plaintiffs, Thomas McCarthy, argued an "election" should be interpreted to cover the entire period during which voters can cast ballots, which lasts several weeks in Virginia. If that's the case, he told justices, then the legislature's initial endorsement of the redistricting amendment came too late to comply with the state constitution.

The Supreme Court agreed with that argument, writing: "The General Assembly passed the proposed constitutional amendment for the first time well after voters had begun casting ballots during the 2025

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 50 of 67

general election.”

By the time lawmakers initially endorsed the amendment, voters already had cast more than 1.3 million ballots in the general election, about 40% of the total votes ultimately cast, the court said.

The Supreme Court’s ruling affirms a decision by a judge in rural Tazewell County, in southwestern Virginia. The court had placed a hold on that ruling and allowed the redistricting vote to proceed before hearing arguments on the case.

In the dissent to Friday’s ruling, Chief Justice Cleo Powell said the election for the purpose of considering the amendment does not include the early voting period.

“The majority’s definition creates an infinite voting loop that appears to have no established beginning,” she wrote, “only a definitive end: Election Day.”

Bright lights and hot orbs: UFO files shed light on sightings but leave interpretation to the public

By SEUNG MIN KIM and COLLIN BINKLEY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Buzz Aldrin observing a “fairly bright light source” while aboard the Apollo 11. A mysterious object making “multiple 90-degree turns” at a speedy clip. A blaringly bright object doing corkscrew twists over the skies in Kazakhstan.

Those are some of the details in a new batch of files on UFOs that the Pentagon began releasing on Friday as President Donald Trump taps into the public’s long-held curiosities about “unidentified anomalous phenomena” in the broader universe. Though the Pentagon has been working on declassifying the documents for years, Trump put attention back on the topic months ago by teasing a major UFO document dump.

“Whereas previous Administrations have failed to be transparent on this subject, with these new Documents and Videos, the people can decide for themselves, ‘WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON?’ Have Fun and Enjoy!” Trump wrote Friday in a Truth Social post.

Trump’s Republican administration says the public can draw its own conclusions with the information in the files, which includes old State Department cables, FBI documents and transcripts from NASA of crewed flights into space. A new Pentagon website housing the documents on UAPs has a decidedly retro feel, with black-and-white military imagery of flying objects displayed prominently on the page, with statements displayed in typewriter-like font.

The files reflect cases that the government deems unresolved, meaning that for a variety of reasons they couldn’t be explained with certainty. The Pentagon described the files as new and “never-before-seen,” though some had been made public years ago.

Experts urge caution around the release of the new files, warning that UAP videos are often misinterpreted and mischaracterized by those unfamiliar with military technology. A 2024 Pentagon report rebutted claims that the U.S. government has recovered alien technology or confirmed evidence of alien life.

Files describe numerous sightings of UAPs

The initial release is a trove of videos, other imagery and testimony that is sure to stir more speculation among those who believe we are not alone in the universe.

For instance, a State Department cable from the U.S. Embassy in Tajikistan in 1994 details how one Tajik pilot and three Americans saw a brightly lit UAP while flying a jet over Kazakhstan. The object, according to the cable, was “making 90 degree turns, doing corkscrews and maneuvering in circles at great rates of speed.”

That’s not the only instance of erratically moving objects cited in the document release. A military report from the Aegean Sea in 2023 cited a UAP flying just above the surface of the ocean and making “multiple 90-degree turns at an estimated 80 mph” (129 km/h).

One interview with a U.S. intelligence official details an incident last year in which the official, doing a search on a helicopter, encountered a “super-hot” orb hovering over the ground, traveling about 20 miles (32 kilometers) at a speedy clip, then spotted four or five more orbs that flared up and down.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 51 of 67

In a 1969 debriefing of Apollo 11 crew members, the astronaut Aldrin recalled spotting several unusual sights, such as a "sizeable" object close to the moon and a "fairly bright light source" that the crew felt could be a laser.

One document details an FBI interview with someone identified as a drone pilot who, in September 2023, reported seeing a "linear object" with a light bright enough to "see bands within the light" in the sky.

"The object was visible for five to ten seconds and then the light went out and the object vanished," according to the FBI interview.

Another file is a NASA photograph from the Apollo 17 mission in 1972, showing three dots in a triangular formation. The Pentagon says in an accompanying caption that "there is no consensus about the nature of the anomaly" but that a new, preliminary analysis indicated that it could be a "physical object."

The documents include more than 20 video files showing unidentified objects captured by military sensors in locations from Syria and Japan to North America. The objects range from fast-moving specks captured in the distance to a football-shaped object spotted over the East China Sea in 2022. The most recent video is from Jan. 1 of this year and appears to show two circular lights flying against an inky black backdrop in North America.

Several files include military videos from the past several years that showed small ambiguous dots moving above the landscapes of Iraq, Syria and the United Arab Emirates. The white objects sometimes streaked across the screen in less than a second, while others slowly glided through the air or were followed by the camera.

Other files include written reports from U.S. military service members who were surveilling locations in the Middle East. One report described an object that was "shaped as a bouncy ball" and traveling 483 mph (777 km/h) consistently for at least seven minutes over Syria in 2023.

The object was later determined to be benign.

Among the files are hundreds of pages detailing reported sightings dating to the 1940s. A 1948 report from U.S. airmen in the Netherlands raised concerns about recurring flying saucer sightings. Swedish counterparts saw them, too, and believed they did not come from "any presently known culture on earth," the report said.

One military video that quickly caught attention on Friday appears to show an aircraft shaped like an eight-pointed star weaving through the air. The video, from 2013 in the Middle East, is probably nothing more than a hot jet engine producing a diffraction pattern in the camera, said Sean Kirkpatrick, a former director of the Pentagon's All-domain Anomaly Resolution Office, which investigates UAP.

Kirkpatrick said there's nothing unexpected in the release and warned that without analysis it will "only serve to fuel more speculation, conspiracy and arm-chair pseudoscience."

Some call for even more transparency on UFO files

Trump has previously released records related to the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, Sen. Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. that revealed little beyond what was already known.

The Pentagon has been working on declassifying documents related to UFOs for years, and Congress created an office in 2022 to declassify material. Its 2024 debut report revealed hundreds of new UAP incidents but found no evidence that the U.S. government had ever confirmed a sighting of alien technology.

A small group of Republicans in Congress has pressed for further transparency, accusing the Pentagon of holding documents back. A March letter from Rep. Anna Paulina Luna, R-Fla., demanded 46 UAP videos identified by whistleblowers. Luna said Friday those videos will be released later by the Pentagon.

Rep. Tim Burchett, R-Tenn., thanked Trump for "keeping his word" on transparency and disclosure.

"I would like to remind people that transparency won't all happen at once, it will take some time," Burchett said in a statement.

Others used Friday's release to urge further transparency into what the government knows about UAPs. The Sol Foundation, a research group focused on UAPs, pushed for passage of legislation that would force a "thorough" review of classified UAP records "with the aim of providing Americans with the full truth about longstanding government knowledge and programs concerning technologies and vehicles not

of human origin.”

“While today’s new step toward a full disclosure of government knowledge concerning UAP is welcome, many more need to be taken to bring an end to the decades of secrecy by which the American people were kept in the dark,” said Peter Skafish, the foundation’s executive director, and retired Rear Adm. Tim Gallaudet, a former acting administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency.

Suspect in Navajo woman’s disappearance sentenced to 5 years for robbery after plea deal

By SAVANNAH PETERS and JACQUES BILLEAUD Associated Press

PHOENIX (AP) — The only person ever charged in the unsolved 2021 disappearance of Navajo elder Ella Mae Begay, whose case became emblematic of a crisis fueled by disproportionately high rates of violence faced by Native Americans, has been sentenced to five years in federal prison.

U.S. District Judge Douglas Rayes in Phoenix on Friday accepted an agreement in which Preston Henry Tolth pleaded guilty to robbing Begay. Under the agreement, Tolth was credited with three years’ time served and prosecutors dropped an assault charge and agreed not to prosecute him in the future if Begay’s case develops.

The sentencing effectively closes a yearslong case that has been troubled by a lack of physical evidence and the suppression of a confession from Tolth, who also is Navajo.

During Friday’s hearing, family members urged Rayes to reject the agreement. Begay’s niece tearfully reiterated that they didn’t want Tolth released without him leading investigators to Begay.

“A 62-year-woman is still nowhere to be found. No amount of time is enough if he won’t tell us where she is,” said Seraphine Warren, who later left the courtroom when it was apparent the judge was moving forward with the sentencing.

A beloved grandmother of nine and talented weaver of Navajo-style pictorial rugs, Begay was 62 when she vanished from her home in Sweetwater, Arizona, on the Navajo Nation in June 2021. Tolth’s sentencing comes amid a week of awareness for the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples movement, which highlights the disproportionate number of Native Americans who are missing or have been killed.

In the years since Begay went missing, her family members have organized searches, pushed law enforcement for answers and even walked across the country to keep a public spotlight on her case. Advocates have compared Begay’s case to that of Gabby Petito, a young white woman whose disappearance the same summer drew a frenzy of news coverage, social media attention and law enforcement action that ultimately led to the discovery of her remains in Wyoming.

Navajo Nation police and FBI agents identified Tolth as a suspect within days of her disappearance. Tolth, whose father was dating Begay’s sister, initially denied any involvement. In a later interrogation, an FBI agent lied to Tolth, telling him police found Begay’s truck and were processing evidence that would implicate him. In response, Tolth waived his right to remain silent and confessed to stealing Begay’s pickup truck, beating her and leaving her for dead on the side of the road.

It is typically legal for U.S. law enforcement to fabricate evidence during interrogations. But Rayes ruled that in this instance, the FBI agent failed to “scrupulously honor” Tolth’s initial refusal to speak and threw the confession out. A panel of appellate court judges agreed.

In the absence of that confession, U.S. Attorney Tracy Van Buskirk said Friday that the plea agreement was the government’s best attempt at securing a reasonable sentence. Speaking about Tolth’s effort to help investigators find Begay, Van Buskirk said Tolth wasn’t familiar with the Sweetwater area and had been drinking alcohol on the night when he robbed her.

In court Friday, Begay’s son Gerald Begay called the agreement a “failure.”

“It shouldn’t be that way,” Gerald Begay told the judge.

Jane McClellan, a lawyer for Tolth, said her client acknowledged robbing Begay, showed officers where he thought he might have left her on the night of the crime and doesn’t have further information.

“He is remorseful for his actions,” McClellan said. “He has taken responsibility for his actions.”

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 53 of 67

In an unusual move, Rayes rejected a previous plea agreement that called for Tolth to be released after three years of time served, saying it was overly lenient. Begay's family members had presented anguished testimony and said they would prefer to the case went to trial.

Navajo Nation public safety director Michael Henderson said finding Begay is still a priority for tribal law enforcement.

"One of the hindrances is that the federal investigation is still pending," Henderson said.

Once federal law enforcement officially close the case, Henderson said, Navajo Nation police may gain access to information that will aid their search.

Canvas system is online after a cyberattack disrupted thousands of schools

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH and COREY WILLIAMS Associated Press

Tens of thousands of students studying for final exams around the world Friday regained access to a key online learning system after a cyberattack had earlier knocked it offline, throwing schools and universities into turmoil.

Elizabeth Polo was in a creative writing class at the University of Maryland late Thursday afternoon when a classmate shouted, "Canvas got hacked." A message from a hacking collective flashed on her computer screen.

"Our whole class just like was like freaking out about it," said Polo, a junior. "Our poor professor was trying to get everyone to calm down but it was just kind of chaos."

Across academia, the outage set off panic and confusion as students and faculty members found themselves locked out of a platform they rely on to manage grades and access course notes and assignments. Colleges scrambled to reschedule final exams as students lost any way to access materials they needed to study.

Instructure, the company behind Canvas, said in an update late Thursday that the system was available for most users.

"Instructure discovered the unauthorized actor involved in our ongoing security incident made changes to the pages that appeared when some students and teachers were logged in," Instructure said Friday in a statement. "Out of an abundance of caution, we immediately took Canvas offline to contain access and further investigate."

Instructure also said it confirmed that the unauthorized actor exploited an issue related to its Free-For-Teacher accounts. The company has temporarily shut down those accounts.

Instructure did not say whether it paid a ransom nor has it said what happened with the compromised data.

Rich in digitized data, the nation's schools are prime targets for far-flung criminal hackers, who are assiduously locating and scooping up sensitive files that not long ago were committed to paper in locked cabinets. Past attacks have hit Minneapolis Public Schools and the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Hackers breached data days before the outage

A hacking group called ShinyHunters claimed responsibility for the breach at Canvas, said Luke Connolly, a threat analyst at the cybersecurity firm Emsisoft. The hacking group posted online that nearly 9,000 schools worldwide were affected, with billions of private messages and other records accessed, Connolly said.

The message that flashed on Polo's computer screen urged individual schools to reach out directly to the hacking group to negotiate a settlement and threatened to leak data if they didn't. She said that Canvas later took that message down, replacing it with a message saying the site was undergoing scheduled maintenance.

Just before 1 a.m. Friday, Polo was able to submit an assignment on Canvas, but she now worries personal data has been compromised.

Canvas went down just as deadlines were hitting

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 54 of 67

The outage happened just as a deadline arrived for semester-long projects in one of Gwyneth Doland's journalism classes at the University of New Mexico.

"They were a little hyperventilating," recalled Doland, who extended the deadlines. "None of these platforms are fail-proof. I'm glad that they got that lesson."

That the attack came with finals looming came as no surprise to Huseyin Can Yuceel, the security research lead at Picus Labs.

"Timing is everything, because they want to inflict pain as much as possible," he said, "so they can extort money out of it."

Teachers said they had to find workarounds to help students study for exams and submit final assignments. Some schools, such as the University of Texas at San Antonio, announced they were pushing back finals scheduled for Friday in response to the outage.

Rod Uzat, a professor of Educational Leadership at the University of Texas Permian Basin, pushed back the posting of grades by a day.

"The concern is for those of us who were doing the grading if there's anything left," Uzat said.

Rhongho Jang, a computer science professor at Wayne State University in Detroit, was finalizing grades for a class of 94 students when the system went down. He keeps paper copies of the student exams, but all of the semester assignments, which make up half of the final grade, are done online.

If those assignments and grades could not be recovered, Jang would have given his students full credit.

"I didn't want to penalize them," he said. "We cannot judge based on the data we don't have. The final responsibility is still on the server."

A reliance on tech makes schools vulnerable

The breach underscored how much schools depend on outside companies' digital platforms to keep their operations running.

"What it boils down to is concentration risk," said Joseph Blankenship, a vice president and research director at Forrester. He said any space, including education, is particularly vulnerable when there's only one or maybe two key providers hosting essential technology.

Allan Liska, of the cybersecurity firm Recorded Future, said the outage did appear deliberate, not a glitch, and that Instructure was trying to figure out how widespread the problem was and make sure the hackers were no longer inside its system.

"There's no indication at this point that any ransom has been paid," Liska said. "And it likely is still a little too early for a ransom to have been paid. You know, normally these negotiations kind of drag on for a while."

Connolly described ShinyHunters as a loose affiliation of teenagers and young adults based in the U.S. and the United Kingdom. The group also has been tied to other attacks, including Live Nation's Ticketmaster subsidiary. ShinyHunters posted online that it was not commenting on the Canvas incident.

ShinyHunters, or an offshoot, also was behind a previous smaller breach of Instructure, Liska said. Sometimes small breaches reveal weaknesses that threat actors later exploit in future leaks, said Yuceel, who likened it to a leak in a boat.

"You fixed it, but you already have the water in the boat," he said.

US stocks rise to records after a solid jobs report overshadows higher oil prices

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The U.S. stock market rose to records Friday following the latest sign that the nation's job market is doing better than economists expected.

The S&P 500 climbed 0.8% to an all-time high after a report said U.S. employers added 115,000 more jobs than they cut last month, even though the war with Iran is raising fuel costs and uncertainty for everyone. The Dow Jones Industrial Average edged up by 12 points, or less than 0.1%, and the Nasdaq composite rallied 1.7% to its own record.

While hiring slowed from March's level, it was still nearly double what economists expected. And it helped

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 55 of 67

the S&P 500 close out a sixth straight winning week, its longest such streak since 2024. The U.S. stock market has been blasting higher since late March, in part on hopes that the war will not mean a worst-case scenario for the global economy and that the Strait of Hormuz will reopen to allow oil tankers to deliver crude from the Persian Gulf again.

It's still to be determined if those hopes are warranted or just wishful. U.S. forces fired on and disabled two Iranian oil tankers on Friday after exchanging fire with Iranian forces in the Strait of Hormuz overnight. It's the latest flare-up in fighting to raise doubts about the tenuous month-old ceasefire that the United States has insisted is still in effect.

The price for a barrel of Brent crude oil rose 1.2% to settle at \$101.29 following the latest volleys of fire. That's below its heights above \$119 during the war, but it's still much more expensive than its roughly \$70 level from late February before the fighting began.

One big factor helping to support the U.S. stock market despite the war's uncertainties is the strong profits that companies have been reporting for the start of 2026.

Monster Beverage jumped 13.6% after the energy drink maker joined the parade of companies topping analysts' expectations for profit and revenue for the latest quarter. It benefited from strong growth outside the United States, and total net sales from there made up about 45% of its total, the highest percentage ever for the company.

Akamai Technologies leaped even more, 26.6%, after its results squeaked past expectations. It announced a \$1.8 billion deal to provide cloud infrastructure services to an unnamed client over seven years. The cybersecurity and cloud computing company is benefiting from the surge in investment in artificial-intelligence technology.

Voracious demand for AI helped CoreWeave report revenue for the latest quarter that was more than double what it was a year earlier, but its net loss was worse than analysts expected. It also gave a forecasted range for revenue in the current quarter whose midpoint fell below analysts' expectations. The stock of the company, which offers AI computing power to customers over the cloud, fell 11.4%.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 61.82 points to 7,398.93. The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 12.19 to 49,609.16, and the Nasdaq composite climbed 440.88 to 26,247.08.

In stock markets abroad, indexes fell across much of Europe and Asia. Germany's DAX lost 1.3%, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng dropped 0.9% for two of the bigger losses.

South Korea's Kospi was an exception, and it inched up 0.1% to another all-time high.

In the bond market, Treasury yields eased and remained lower after a preliminary report suggested sentiment among U.S. consumers is stuck near its lowest level since 2022. Consumers told the survey from the University of Michigan they're concerned about both high gasoline prices and tariffs, though their expectations for inflation in the coming year softened by a bit.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury fell to 4.36% from 4.41% late Thursday and from 4.45% early this week.

Lower yields can bring down rates for mortgages and other kinds of loans going to U.S. households and businesses, which in turn can give the economy a boost. Lower yields also tend to push upward on prices for stocks and other kinds of investments.

The 10-year Treasury yield, though, remains well above its 3.97% level from just before the war.

US fires on and disables 2 more Iranian tankers as tensions rise in the Strait of Hormuz

By ADAM SCHRECK, BEN FINLEY and MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — U.S. forces fired on and disabled two Iranian oil tankers on Friday after exchanging fire with Iranian forces in the Strait of Hormuz overnight. The United Arab Emirates, meanwhile, reported another Iranian missile and drone attack.

The attacks cast more doubt on a tenuous month-old ceasefire that the United States has insisted is still in effect. Washington is awaiting an Iranian response to its latest proposal for a deal to end the war, reopen the strait and roll back Tehran's disputed nuclear program.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 56 of 67

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said he hopes to receive "a serious offer" from Iran later Friday.

The U.S. military said Friday that its forces had disabled two Iranian tankers that were trying to breach an American blockade of Iran's ports. Hours earlier, the military said it thwarted attacks on three Navy ships and struck Iranian military facilities in the strait.

Iran has mostly blocked the critical waterway for global energy since the U.S. and Israel launched the war on Feb. 28, causing a global spike in fuel prices and rattling world markets. The U.S. has imposed its own blockade of Iran's ports.

The UAE's Defense Ministry meanwhile said three people were wounded after air defenses engaged two ballistic missiles and three drones launched by Iran. It was not clear if all were successfully intercepted.

US says it responded to an attack in the strait

The U.S. military posted video of the two Iranian tankers as their smokestacks were struck by an American fighter jet on Friday. Earlier in the week, an American military jet shot out the rudder of a tanker the U.S. military said was attempting to breach its blockade.

Late Thursday, the U.S. military said it thwarted Iranian attacks on three Navy ships in the Strait of Hormuz and struck Iranian military facilities in response. It said no American ships were hit.

"They threaten Americans, they are going to be blown up," Rubio told reporters Friday.

Iran's Foreign Ministry condemned what it called "hostile" U.S. military action, saying it violated the ceasefire. "Every time a diplomatic solution is on the table, the U.S. opts for a reckless military adventure," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi posted on X.

A U.S. strike overnight killed at least one sailor and injured 10 others aboard a cargo vessel that caught fire, a news agency affiliated with Iran's judiciary reported. It was not clear if the ship was one of the two tankers the U.S. acknowledged striking.

U.S. President Donald Trump has insisted the ceasefire is holding. He also has reiterated threats to resume full-scale bombing if Iran doesn't accept an agreement to reopen the strait and roll back its nuclear program.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said his country has been in contact with the U.S. and Iran "day and night" in an effort to extend the ceasefire and reach a peace deal.

Images show apparent oil slick off Iranian terminal

Satellite images reviewed by The Associated Press show what appears to be an oil slick in the Persian Gulf emanating from the western side of Kharg Island, Iran's main crude export terminal.

Images taken Friday show the slick covering about 71 square kilometers (27 square miles) and appear to show oil still leaking from the terminal, said Ami Daniel, CEO of maritime intelligence firm Windward AI.

Daniel estimated that the equivalent of roughly 80,000 oil barrels has spilled from Kharg Island since the slick was first detected by satellite images Tuesday. It's unknown whether the spill was caused by a malfunction, an airstrike or something else.

"This is the risk of fighting in an oil-rich area," said Daniel, adding that it's unlikely any cleanup efforts will be launched in Gulf waters that have become an active war zone.

He said the spill appears to be spreading southwest and within the next two weeks could potentially reach the shores of the UAE, Qatar or Saudi Arabia.

Nina Noelle, an international crisis operations expert with Greenpeace Germany, said Friday that preliminary assessment and recent images show the spill beginning to disperse and it appears unlikely that it will impact land. She said depending on wind, waves and current conditions, parts of the slick could still possibly affect some sensitive marine habitats.

"More likely, it will dissipate offshore under prevailing conditions," Noelle said.

The Pentagon declined to comment on whether the U.S. military was tracking the spill or whether there had been recent strikes on the Iranian island. Based on the imagery taken earlier this week, the spill occurred before the most recent round of U.S. strikes.

Rubio says 'unacceptable' for an Iranian agency to control strait

Rubio said Friday that it's "unacceptable" for Iran to have a government agency that vets and taxes ships

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 57 of 67

seeking passage through the strait.

Lloyd's List Intelligence, a shipping data company, reported Thursday that Iran has created such an agency, known as the Persian Gulf Strait Authority.

The Iranian effort to formalize control over the channel raised new concerns about international shipping, with hundreds of commercial vessels bottled up in the Persian Gulf and unable to reach the open sea.

"Is the world going to accept that Iran now controls an international waterway?" Rubio said. "What is the world prepared to do about it?"

Iran has effectively closed the strait, a vital waterway for the shipment of oil, gas, fertilizer and other petroleum products, while the U.S. is blockading Iranian ports.

A Chinese-crewed oil tanker was attacked near the strait. China has continued to import oil from Iran despite the effective closure of the waterway.

China's Foreign Ministry expressed concern, saying the tanker was registered in the Marshall Islands with Chinese crew on board. There were no casualties reported.

An oil tanker that passed through the Strait of Hormuz in mid-April arrived off South Korea's coast on Friday with 1 million barrels of crude. South Korea, which last year imported more than 60% of its crude through the strait, has capped prices of gasoline and other petroleum products.

NFL and referees agree on a 7-year collective bargaining agreement, avoiding potential work stoppage

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

The NFL and the NFL Referees Association agreed Friday on a new seven-year collective bargaining agreement that avoids a potential work stoppage and use of replacement officials.

The agreement, which was approved by the union's board of directors and ratified by a vote of the membership, runs through the 2032 NFL season.

"We see this new CBA as a partnership with the league that benefits our membership but also seeks to make our game better. It is good to get these negotiations behind us so we can focus on preparing for the 2026 season," union President Carl Cheffers said.

The NFL's collective bargaining agreement with the referees association had been set to expire on May 31, and the two sides began negotiating in the summer of 2024.

The league began the onboarding process for replacement officials last month because negotiations weren't progressing. But they won't be necessary.

The league and the union said in a joint statement that the deal covers a wide range of issues including economics, performance and accountability.

"This agreement is a testament to the joint commitment of the league and union to invest in and improve officiating," said Troy Vincent, NFL executive vice president of football operations. "It also speaks to the game officials' relentless pursuit of improvement and officiating excellence. We look forward to working together for the betterment of the game."

Detailed terms weren't released.

The NFL had sought increased access to officials in the offseason, a practice squad or bench of officials, a new formal training program and control of playoff assignments based on performance. A person with knowledge of the new deal told The Associated Press those priorities were met in the agreement. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because contract details weren't publicized.

A stalemate in 2012 resulted in a 110-day lockout and replacement referees were used.

That led to several high-profile mistakes, including the Fail Mary when Russell Wilson completed a desperation pass to Golden Tate in the closing seconds to lift Seattle over Green Bay in a Monday night game. Tate pushed off so he should've been penalized for offensive pass interference. He appeared to wrestle the ball away from a Packers defender and was given credit for a catch even though two officials had called it differently.

There weren't as many glaring errors when the NFL also used replacement officials for one week of

exhibition games and the opening week in 2001 before the labor dispute was resolved shortly after 9/11, and the regular officials returned in time when the season resumed following a one-week break.

Evidence points to human remains at home linked to Kristin Smart's killing, sheriff says

By HAVEN DALEY and JANIE HAR Associated Press

ARROYO GRANDE, Calif. (AP) — A California sheriff said Friday that evidence suggests human remains were present at a home connected to the man convicted of killing Kristin Smart, a 19-year-old college student who went missing in 1996.

San Luis Obispo County Sheriff Ian Parkinson said they cannot say whether the remains are those of Smart or whether authorities will seek another warrant to start digging on Susan Flores' property. Her son, Paul Flores, was convicted in 2022 of killing Smart, whose body has never been found.

The search began Wednesday after authorities served a warrant Wednesday at the home in the central coast town of Arroyo Grande more than 150 miles (240 kilometers) northwest of Los Angeles. Authorities have not specified what prompted the search, but scientists specializing in human decomposition and soil took samples from the ground.

"We believe that based on what we're looking at evidence-wise -- scientific evidence -- that a human's remains were there at one time -- or still there. We can't call it Kristin, but there's evidence to support human remains," Parkinson said during a news conference.

Smart went missing from California Polytechnic State University in May 1996 after returning from an off-campus party. Prosecutors alleged she was killed during an attempted rape and that the last person she was seen with was Paul Flores, a fellow student. She was declared legally dead in 2002.

The decades-old case has captivated the public, fueled in part by a podcaster who helped investigators by bringing forward additional witnesses. Chris Lambert of the "Your Own Backyard" podcast first reported the search of the home.

"We remain hopeful that this current search will be successful and look forward to the outcome," the Smart family said in a statement, adding that they "continue to feel the amazing support of the local community which provides us with great strength to continue this journey to bring Kristin home."

Parkinson, the sheriff, said Friday he was not sure how long they would search the property, but that Susan Flores could not return until investigators felt they were finished.

"We are not leaving that house until we are sure that we have checked everything," he said.

Attempts to reach Susan Flores for comment this week have not been successful. She has never faced criminal charges related to the case.

Parkinson said the property has changed over the years and investigators have to move items to deploy ground-penetrating radar, which can detect anomalies. He said they might need multiple search warrants to dig, including excavating cement.

Tim Nelligan, an expert in soil vapor testing, confirmed by phone Thursday that he was on the premises, gathering samples from the yards of Flores and a neighbor. He said his team has, in general, "come up with a methodology to assess soil vapor" and its relation to "human cadaver decomposition," but that he could not discuss the current investigation.

Soil vapor sampling, which is an evolving science, involves collecting underground gas samples to detect volatile organic compounds associated with human decomposition.

Lambert, the podcaster, said he did not know much about the search, but was optimistic investigators could locate Smart's body. He said past searches of Susan Flores' home have never been thorough.

"This property in particular has been overlooked for quite some time," he said Thursday in front of the house.

Paul Flores and his father, Ruben Flores, were arrested in 2021.

Prosecutors alleged Smart's remains were buried on Ruben Flores' property and later moved. He was acquitted of accessory charges. That property is different from the one currently being searched.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 59 of 67

Paul Flores was sentenced in March 2023 to prison, where he has been physically attacked at least twice. In 2024, a judge ruled that he must pay just over \$350,000 to Smart's family for costs they incurred after her death.

The family has said it would forgo restitution if Flores would tell them where the woman's body was. Flores' attorney, Harold Mesick, said in 2024 that the defense did not know where her remains are. Flores maintains his innocence.

US employers defy economic shock from Iran war and add a surprisingly strong 115,000 jobs in April

By PAUL WISEMAN AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — America's employers delivered a surprising 115,000 new jobs last month despite an economic shock from the Iran war.

Hiring beat the 65,000 jobs forecasters had expected, though it decelerated from the 185,000 jobs created in March. The unemployment rate remained at a low 4.3%, the Labor Department reported Friday.

The Iran war has caused the biggest disruption of global oil supplies in history and sent average U.S. gasoline prices surging past \$4.50 a gallon this week. But the conflict hasn't done much damage to the American job market so far. And the import taxes — tariffs — that President Donald Trump imposed last year haven't turned out to be as high and as damaging as originally feared.

"The labor market is not booming, but it is proving harder to break than many feared," said economist Olu Sonola of Fitch Ratings.

Healthcare added 37,000 jobs last month and transportation and warehousing companies 30,000. However, manufacturers cut 2,000 jobs in April and have shed 66,000 jobs over the past year despite Trump's protectionist policies aimed at creating factory jobs.

"Businesses to some extent are viewing the conflict in Iran as temporary," said Gus Faucher, chief economist at the financial firm PNC. "We're seeing strong business investment, particularly around tech and AI. The economy continues to expand. We've weathered some shocks. The worst of the tariff impact is likely over."

Still, Faucher cautioned that "the longer conflict in Iran lasts, the higher energy prices go, the longer they stay elevated the greater the drag on the economy."

Among those worrying is Michael Cramer, co-founder and CEO of online retailer Adagio Teas. He expects to freeze hiring this year. He typically adds anywhere from five to six workers per year to help pack up online tea orders at the company's warehouse in East Rutherford, New Jersey. Adagio Teas, which has about 50 workers, has seen a slight drop in sales after the Iran war drove up gasoline prices and squeezed shoppers, particularly those in lower-income brackets. Cramer is worried that shoppers are opting for less expensive supermarket tea to cut costs.

"You only hire when you have more orders that you can fill," he said. "I don't envision us being in that position for the remainder of the year. I think the remainder of this year is going to be fairly bumpy."

Labor Department revisions shaved 16,000 jobs from February and March payrolls.

Average hourly earnings rose 0.2% from March and 3.6% from April 2025, consistent with the Federal Reserve's 2% inflation target.

The number of people in the U.S. labor force dropped last month, and the share of those working or looking for work — the so-called labor force participation rate — dropped to 61.8%, lowest since October 2021.

After the U.S. and Israel launched their attacks Feb. 28, Iran shut down the Strait of Hormuz, through which about a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passes. The disruption has caused a painful increase in the price of energy and led many economists to downgrade their estimates for global and U.S. economic growth.

But the job market keeps chugging along this year.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 60 of 67

The economy is getting a boost from big tax refund checks this spring, arising from Trump's tax cut legislation last year; the refunds allow consumers to spend more freely, giving companies an incentive to add workers in response to rising sales.

The job market is showing intermittent signs of recovery after a bleak 2025. Employers last year created just 9,700 jobs a month, fewest outside a recession year since 2002. High interest rates and uncertainty over Trump's economic policies held back hiring.

The March and April hiring figures marked the first consecutive months of job growth above 100,000 since the end of 2024.

The recent uptick in hiring raises hopes that the job market will break out of a recent rut — in which Americans who have jobs are relatively secure from layoffs but jobseekers struggle to find work.

Angela Paniccia, 33, of Queens in New York City was laid off by an educational travel company in December. The job search can be frustrating. "You'll never hear back or you'll get just a generic 'We're moving on with someone else' without feedback," she said.

Many of the openings at colleges and other employers in her field simply don't pay enough to support someone living in one of the country's most expensive cities. To help with the rent, she's been working part-time for a caterer. "I've always had a full-time job," she said. "Admittedly, I'm struggling with the loss of daily routine."

U.S. hiring has been dominated by one industry: Healthcare companies, catering to an aging American population, have added 456,000 jobs over the past year; other employers have combined to cut 205,000 over the 12 months that ended in April.

Still, Heather Long, chief economist at Navy Federal Credit Union, noted that last month's job gains extended beyond healthcare. Retailers, for example, added 22,000 jobs and construction companies 9,000. "America's hiring recession appears to be over," she wrote. "Average job gains in 2025 were an anemic 10,000 a month. So far in 2026, the average is 76,000."

Simbe Robotics Inc., which deploys five-foot tall robots that scan shelves for out-of-stock items in more than 1,000 stores worldwide, is eager to hire. Co-founder Brad Bogolea started the company with a handful of workers and now has 100, many of them software and artificial intelligence engineers. Simbe has its pick of candidates. Applications more than doubled over the past year, partly because of layoffs elsewhere in the technology industry. Applications for robotics software engineer jobs are up 127% over that time period, Bogolea said.

The Labor Department's monthly jobs report consists of two parts.

For the so-called household survey, the government collects data from 60,000 households to calculate the unemployment rate and the share of people who are working or looking for work, among other things.

For the so-called establishment survey, the government gathers information from about 119,000 businesses and government agencies, representing 622,000 worksites, to calculate the number of jobs in the economy, how many hours Americans work and the hourly wages they receive.

The establishment survey is subject to revisions — sometimes big ones — because some employers submit their responses late or have to correct what they already sent in. The Labor Department — like government statistical agencies in other countries — has also been contending with a drop in the share of employers that respond to the survey, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the revisions and problems collecting the data, most economists, businesses and investors consider the monthly jobs report to be a reliable gauge of how the labor market is doing.

Friday's jobs data will likely keep the Fed on the sidelines, as it holds its key rate unchanged while evaluating the economic impact of the Iran war. Fed officials are increasingly focused on inflation, which has risen quickly since the war, driven higher by spikes in gasoline prices.

Inflation jumped to 3.3% in March, a two-year high and far above the Fed's target. The Fed typically keeps its rate unchanged -- or even raises it -- to combat inflation, while it cuts rates to spur more growth and hiring. Early this year many Fed policymakers were worried the job market was stalling and leaned toward rate cuts. But in more recent months hiring has stabilized, undermining the case for cuts.

Friday's jobs report, PNC's Faucher said, "actually makes it less likely that we see a rate cut anytime soon because the Fed can say, 'The job market is solid. Let's get inflation back down to 2%. This is not the time to cut rates.'"

Rubio presses Europe on Iran action as he seeks to mend ties with Italy and Vatican

By GIADA ZAMPANO and NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio urged European allies Friday to move beyond rhetoric and take concrete action against Iran, even as he sought to repair strained ties with Italy and the Vatican during a two-day visit following tensions over the U.S.-Israeli war in Iran.

Speaking after meetings with Premier Giorgia Meloni and Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani, Rubio warned that Tehran was attempting to assert control over the strategic Strait of Hormuz, calling the move "unacceptable" and a threat to global security.

"Everybody says Iran is a threat. Everybody says that Iran can't have a nuclear weapon ... but you've got to do something about it," Rubio told reporters in Rome. "If the answer is no ... then you better have something more than just strongly worded statements to back it up."

Clear 'red line'

Rubio said Iran was trying to normalize control over an international waterway, a precedent he warned could encourage similar actions elsewhere. He also cautioned Tehran against targeting U.S. maritime assets, saying the United States had thwarted attacks on three Navy ships in the strait.

"The red line is clear. They threaten Americans, they are going to be blown up," he said.

Rubio said Washington was pursuing a diplomatic track, including a proposed U.N. Security Council resolution aimed at preserving freedom of navigation. He added the U.S. was awaiting Iran's response on Friday to ongoing diplomatic efforts.

Rubio's visit comes after weeks of sharp disagreements between Washington and Rome over the Iran war, tariffs and U.S. President Donald Trump's criticism of both Meloni and Pope Leo XIV.

Differences remain over Iran war

Meloni described her meeting with Rubio as "constructive, frank and productive," focused on both bilateral relations and major international issues. She said the talks covered strategic topics, including the Middle East, freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, Ukraine, China and areas of Italian interest such as Libya and Lebanon.

"We both understand how important the trans-Atlantic relationship is, but we also understand that each country must defend its own national interests," Meloni stressed after the meeting.

Tajani struck a more conciliatory tone after meeting his U.S. counterpart, reaffirming the importance of the trans-Atlantic alliance.

"I am convinced Europe needs America — Italy needs America — and the United States also needs Europe and Italy," Tajani said, adding he hoped "tensions have been calmed."

He said discussions covered the Iran conflict and its spillover into Lebanon, as well as Venezuela and Cuba. The U.S. State Department said Rubio also raised the need to protect economic interests and end the war in Ukraine.

Despite the effort to ease tensions, differences remain over the Iran conflict. Italy has opposed the U.S.-Israeli bombing campaign, with Meloni calling it "illegal," and has resisted involvement in offensive operations.

Tajani said Italy would be prepared to contribute naval forces to demine the Strait of Hormuz once a permanent ceasefire is reached, and would maintain its role in the U.N. peacekeeping mission in Lebanon. He also stressed the importance of continued U.S. troop presence in Europe amid concerns about possible reductions.

No final decision on NATO troops adjustments

Rubio said "no final decision" had been made on NATO troop adjustments, noting that any changes

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 62 of 67

would depend on U.S. national interests and global priorities.

The U.S. has announced a decision to pull 5,000 military personnel from Germany and Trump has threatened to withdraw more troops from Italy and Spain over their stance on the war.

Italy, a key logistics hub for U.S. and allied operations in the Mediterranean and beyond, has already signaled limits to its cooperation. In March, it declined to allow U.S. bombers bound for the Middle East to use a base in Sicily without parliamentary approval, reflecting constitutional constraints and strong domestic opposition to the war.

Meloni, weakened by a recent referendum defeat and facing public unease over the conflict, has insisted that any use of Italian bases for offensive operations would require parliamentary backing.

The war has also raised economic concerns in Italy, with Meloni warning that disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz risk driving up energy costs and inflation, while U.S. tariff threats weigh on the country's export-driven economy.

An attempt to de-escalate at the Vatican

Rubio also sought to ease tensions with the Vatican following Trump's criticism of the pope's calls for peace. After a lengthy meeting on Thursday with the pontiff and Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Rubio said Washington remained committed to a "productive and fruitful" relationship with the Catholic Church.

"The president's perspective is clear. He thinks that Iran is a threat, and it needs to be addressed. And that position remains unchanged," Rubio said.

Rubio confirmed that Cuba was also discussed at the Vatican, with Washington hoping the church's Caritas charity organization would continue distributing humanitarian aid.

Rubio said the U.S. has provided about \$6 million in humanitarian aid to Cuba, to be distributed through Caritas, should the Cubans allow it. He added Washington has also offered up to \$100 million in additional aid, but the Cuban government has not accepted it so far. Rubio blamed Cuba's government for blocking assistance and worsening conditions, describing it as "incompetent."

U.S. officials said the Vatican talks underscored strong bilateral ties and a shared commitment to promoting peace, even as differences over the Iran war persist.

The Latest: Stricken cruise ship heads for the Canaries as authorities rush to identify contacts

By The Associated Press undefined

MADRID (AP) — Spanish authorities are preparing to receive a hantavirus-stricken cruise ship headed for the Canary Islands.

Health officials plan careful evacuations of the more than 140 passengers and crew when the MV Hondius arrives in Tenerife this weekend.

At least three passengers have died, and several others are sick. None of the remaining passengers or crew is currently symptomatic.

The U.S. and the U.K. are arranging flights to repatriate their citizens. The World Health Organization says the risk to the wider public is low. Health authorities are tracking passengers who disembarked before the outbreak was detected.

Here's the latest:

A lot of unknowns about the illness and treatment

There is no specific treatment or cure, but early medical attention can increase the chance of survival.

Despite years of research, many questions have yet to be answered, including why hantavirus infection can be mild for some people and severe for others and how antibodies are developed. Some researchers have been following patients over long periods of time in hopes of finding a treatment.

"In the Americas, hantavirus infection is very serious, but it's also quite rare," said Steven Bradfute, an associate professor and associate director of the Center for Global Health at the University of New Mexico

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 63 of 67

Health Sciences Center, which specializes in hantavirus research.

"And so for a time that probably led to less research into it because of funding priorities, but I know there's been a lot of interest in funding hantavirus work of late," he said.

What researchers do know is that rodent exposure is key.

The best way to avoid the germ is to minimize contact with rodents and their droppings. Use protective gloves and a bleach solution for cleaning up rodent droppings. Public health experts caution against sweeping or vacuuming, which can cause virus particles to get into the air.

Dutch woman's remains have been repatriated

South African health department spokesperson Foster Mogale told The Associated Press that the body left Johannesburg on a KLM flight on Thursday.

Posthumous tests on the woman's body came back positive for hantavirus.

Her 70-year-old husband was the first passenger to die on board the MV Hondius on April 11. His body was taken off the cruise ship in the South Atlantic Island of St. Helena on April 24, when she also disembarked to accompany it.

She traveled from St. Helena to Johannesburg on a commercial flight and was trying to take another flight home when she fell seriously ill at O.R. Tambo International Airport. She died at a nearby hospital on April 26.

She was one of dozens of cruise ship passengers who disembarked at St. Helena.

It's unclear if her husband's body, which remained on St. Helena, has been repatriated.

US will offer repatriation flight for Americans on board the cruise ship

The State Department says it is in direct contact with a number of American citizens on board the cruise ship and will offer them a special flight home from Tenerife when the vessel arrives there this weekend.

The department said Friday that U.S. diplomats will be available to provide consular services in Tenerife to the Americans on board and has arranged the special repatriation flight in coordination with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Spanish government.

Suspected hantavirus case on Tristan da Cunha was a ship passenger

The person suspected of having hantavirus on the island of Tristan da Cunha was a passenger on the cruise ship that had an outbreak of the disease, the British Foreign Office said.

A British government official indicated the patient was an island resident and was hospitalized but did not say how they may have come in contact with the virus.

Stephen Doughty, the U.K. minister of overseas territories, said in a message sent to the remote British overseas territory that his thoughts were with "the islander currently in hospital and their spouse who is isolating."

The Foreign Office would not provide additional details, and emails from the AP seeking additional information from Tristan da Cunha officials were not returned.

Infections have been fairly uncommon

Hantavirus infections are relatively uncommon globally. The WHO reported that in 2025, eight countries within the Americas had documented 229 cases and 59 deaths.

Argentina's health ministry said hantavirus led to 28 deaths nationwide last year. The ministry on Tuesday reported 101 hantavirus infections since June 2025, roughly double the caseload recorded over the same period the previous year.

In the U.S., federal health officials began tracking the virus after a 1993 outbreak in the Four Corners region — the area where Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah meet. It was an astute physician with the Indian Health Service who first noticed a pattern of deaths among young patients.

Most U.S. cases are in Western states. New Mexico and Arizona are hot spots, likely because the odds are greater for mouse-human encounters in rural areas.

This outbreak may have come from Argentina

Detailed investigations of the cruise ship outbreak are ongoing, notably to determine its source.

Investigators in Argentina suspect that the cases were initially contracted during a birdwatching trip in

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 64 of 67

Ushuaia, at the country's southern tip, two officials told AP.

Argentina has seen a surge of hantavirus cases that many local public health researchers attribute to climate change.

Officials have found evidence of Andes virus, a version of hantavirus found in South America.

What to know about hantavirus

The virus usually spreads when people inhale contaminated residue of rodent droppings. Hantaviruses have been around for centuries and are thought to exist around the world.

But global health officials say the risk to the general public remains low because the germ does not easily spread between people.

"This is not the next COVID, but it is a serious infectious disease," said Maria Van Kerkhove, director of epidemic and pandemic preparedness at the World Health Organization. "Most people will never be exposed to this."

The disease gained renewed attention last year after the late actor Gene Hackman's wife, Betsy Arakawa, died from a hantavirus infection in New Mexico.

International effort to trace passengers spans four continents

Health authorities across four continents were continuing to track down and monitor passengers who disembarked the ship before the deadly outbreak was detected. They are also trying to trace others who may have come into contact with them since then.

On April 24, nearly two weeks after the first passenger had died on board, more than two dozen people from at least 12 different countries left the ship without contact tracing, the ship's operator and Dutch officials said Thursday.

It wasn't until May 2 that health authorities first confirmed hantavirus in a ship passenger, the World Health Organization said.

The KLM flight attendant who tested negative for the virus was working on a flight headed from Johannesburg to Amsterdam on April 25, and had later fallen ill. She was taken to an isolation ward at an Amsterdam hospital on Thursday.

The cruise passenger briefly aboard the flight — a Dutch woman whose husband died on the ship — was too ill to stay on the international flight to Europe. She was taken off the plane in Johannesburg, where she died.

US and Britain to repatriate citizens when ship reaches Spanish island

The MV Hondius is expected to reach Tenerife, off the coast of West Africa, on Saturday or Sunday.

Passengers "will arrive at a completely isolated, cordoned-off area," said Virginia Barcones, Spain's head of emergency services, on Thursday.

The MV Hondius is a Dutch-flagged vessel and Dutch officials said Friday they were also in close contact with the ship's owner and authorities of countries whose citizens are on board.

The United States has agreed to send a plane to the Canary Islands to repatriate its 17 citizens from the cruise ship, Barcones said. The British government also said it will charter a plane to evacuate the nearly two dozen British citizens on board.

Joni Lamb, who started one of the largest Christian TV networks, has died

By JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

Joni Lamb, who with her late husband founded the Daystar Television Network and guided it to become one of the world's largest Christian TV networks, died Thursday. She was 65.

Lamb, the network's president, had been suffering from serious health issues before sustaining a back injury that caused her health to deteriorate, the network said in a statement. A cause of death was not released.

"Joni's love for the Lord and for the people we serve shaped this ministry from the beginning," the network's board of directors said in the statement.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 65 of 67

The network said its ministry will continue on and that Lamb made sure a leadership team was in place. She and her husband, Marcus Lamb, who died in 2021, began broadcasting in the Dallas area with a single station in 1993. Five years later, Joni Lamb began hosting her signature daily women's show.

Based in Bedford, Texas, the Daystar Television Network grew to broadcast in more than 200 countries and has aired shows from many well-known evangelists, including Joel Osteen and T.D. Jakes.

The network said it reaches 2.3 billion homes worldwide.

Its ministry was rooted in Pentecostalism, the Christian tradition known for its spirit-filled worship, and its belief in modern-day miracles and everyday battles with evil influences.

In addition to being the network's president and working behind the scenes, Joni Lamb could be seen on the air hosting "Joni Table Talk" and discussing daily issues.

She stood beside her late husband in 2010 when he admitted on television to an affair with a woman years before. Marcus Lamb also alleged that three people tried to extort money from him to stay quiet.

Joni Lamb said at the time that when she learned of his infidelity she was devastated and prayed to the Holy Spirit, who told her, "He's worth fighting for."

The couple said they had healed their marriage and had hoped to keep the matter private.

"All you can do is tell the truth and take your pain and use it to try to help someone else," Joni Lamb said.

Following her first husband's death at age 64, she married Doug Weiss two years later. Together they hosted the show "Ministry Now."

David Attenborough, the excited but hushed voice of nature programs, turns 100

By DANICA KIRKA Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The BBC is hosting a party for David Attenborough at the Royal Albert Hall. Cinemas are playing his nature films. Friends have spent weeks lavishing praise on the man and his work.

But the world's most famous wildlife presenter is likely to be uncomfortable with all the attention as he celebrates his 100th birthday on Friday, said Alastair Fothergill, the producer of some of Attenborough's most well-known documentaries and the director of Silverback Films.

"He's always been very clear to all of us that work with him: 'Remember, the animals are the stars, I'm not,'" Fothergill told The Associated Press. "So, yes, surprisingly for one of the most famous men on the planet, he doesn't like being famous at all."

Glorious gorillas

But Attenborough has had to accept the accolades this week as scientists, politicians and conservationists celebrated the man who has brought frolicking gorillas, breaching whales and tiny poisonous frogs into living rooms around the world for more than 70 years.

Through BBC programs such as Life on Earth, The Private Life of Plants and The Blue Planet, Attenborough has illuminated the beauty, ferocity and sometimes downright weirdness of nature in a hushed melodic voice that conveys his own awe at what he is witnessing.

Viewers who might never leave their hometowns were transported to the Himalayas, the Amazon and the unexplored forests of Papua New Guinea. But behind the stunning images was an attention to scientific accuracy that helped teach people about complex subjects like evolution, animal behavior and biodiversity.

And as the evidence mounted, he began to sound the alarm about climate change, ocean plastic and other human-caused threats to the planet.

That helped people understand not only how life evolved but, more importantly, why we have to protect it, said Professor Ben Garrod, an evolutionary biologist at the University of East Anglia and himself a broadcaster who has worked alongside Attenborough.

Attenborough, Garrod believes, initially saw himself as a neutral observer but was compelled to speak out when he saw that politicians, business leaders and the public weren't taking the emergency seriously.

"He is showing you the majesty, the ferocity, the fragility of the natural world. He shouldn't have ever had to have turned to policymaking and advocacy," Garrod said.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 66 of 67

"I think it's very easy for a lot of people to say, 'He should have done it sooner. Why didn't he act 20 years, 30 years, 40 years ago?'" Garrod then asked: "Why didn't we?"

Fond of fossils from the start

Born in London on May 8, 1926, the same year as the late Queen Elizabeth II, Attenborough was raised on the grounds of what is now the University of Leicester, where his father was a senior leader.

His fascination with nature developed when he was a young boy, riding his bicycle into the surrounding countryside where he collected treasures such as abandoned birds' nests, the shed skin of a snake and, most importantly, fossils.

"I'd find a fossil and show it to my father and he'd say 'Good, good, tell me all about it.' So I responded and became my own expert," Attenborough told Smithsonian Magazine in 1981.

He went on to study geology and zoology at the University of Cambridge.

In 1952, Attenborough joined the BBC, working behind the scenes on "everything from ballet to short stories." After he'd been there about two months, the capture of a "living fossil" off the coast of East Africa caused an international stir, and he was asked to produce a short piece about the coelacanth.

That story was told in the studio by Professor Julian Huxley, an evolutionary biologist, who used pickled wildlife specimens and a photograph of a coelacanth to explain the fish's significance.

But Attenborough thought television could do more.

"I'd always wanted to do films on animals around the world," he recalled in a 1985 interview with The Associated Press. "But the attitude was, 'We've got TV cameras in the studio. What's this about spending money abroad?'"

In 1954, he finally persuaded the BBC to let him accompany a London Zoo team that traveled to West Africa to collect specimens. That began a decade as host and producer of "Zoo Quest," kick-starting his career in the field.

The privilege of his life

One of the most famous moments of that long career came during the 1979 series "Life on Earth," when Attenborough encountered a family of mountain gorillas in a forest on the border of Rwanda and what was then Zaire (now Congo).

During that scene, voted one of Britain's top TV moments of all time, a young gorilla lies across his body while several babies try to remove his shoes. Attenborough grins, laughs and is speechless with delight.

"I honestly don't know how long it was," Attenborough later told the BBC. "I suspect it was about 10 minutes, or even a quarter of an hour. I was simply transported."

"Extraordinary, really," he reflected. "It was one of the most privileged moments of my life."

A character everyone could understand

Attenborough has combined his knowledge of television, an understanding of his audience and his commitment to science to create a character who could deliver complicated issues surrounding wildlife, conservation and natural history to a mass audience, said Jean-Baptiste Gouyon, a professor of science communication at University College London.

"Basically he gave wildlife television a figure, a front of the house person ... which has come to embody television discourse about nature," Gouyon said.

And on this, his centenary, his fans made a point of finding him. In a recorded audio message he said he thought he would mark the day quietly. As if.

"I've been completely overwhelmed by birthday greetings from preschool groups to care home residents and countless individuals and families of all ages," he said. "I simply can't reply to each of you all separately, but I would like to thank you all most sincerely for your kind messages."

And he isn't planning to stop now, Fothergill said.

"He said to me recently he feels unbelievably privileged that a man in his late 90s is still being asked to work. And, you know, he will go on forever. He will die in his safari shorts."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, May 9, 2026 ~ Vol. 26 - No. 338 ~ 67 of 67

Today in History: May 9, FDA approves first birth control pill

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, May 9, the 129th day of 2026. There are 236 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On May 9, 1960, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration conditionally approved Enovid for use as the first oral contraceptive pill.

Also on this date:

In 1754, the famous political cartoon "Join or Die" was first published by Benjamin Franklin in the Pennsylvania Gazette newspaper.

In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson, acting on a joint congressional resolution, signed a proclamation designating the second Sunday in May as Mother's Day.

In 1951, the U.S. conducted its first thermonuclear experiment as part of Operation Greenhouse by detonating a 225-kiloton device (nicknamed "George") on Enewetak Atoll in the Pacific Ocean.

In 1974, the House Judiciary Committee opened public hearings on whether to recommend the impeachment of President Richard Nixon. (The committee ultimately adopted three articles of impeachment against the president, who resigned before the full House took up any of them.)

In 1980, 35 people were killed when a freighter rammed the Sunshine Skyway Bridge over Tampa Bay in Florida, causing a 1,300-foot section of the southbound span to collapse.

In 1992, a buildup of methane gas and coal dust triggered a massive explosion in the Westray Mine in Nova Scotia, Canada, killing 26 coal miners.

In 2019, Pope Francis issued a groundbreaking new church law requiring all Catholic priests and nuns to report clergy sexual abuse and cover-ups by their superiors to church authorities.

In 2023, a jury found Donald Trump liable for sexually abusing advice columnist E. Jean Carroll in 1996, awarding her \$5 million in damages.

Today's Birthdays: Producer-director James L. Brooks is 86. Musician-songwriter Sonny Curtis (The Crickets) is 89. Actor Candice Bergen is 80. Musician Billy Joel is 77. Former U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo is 75. Actor John Corbett is 65. Singer Dave Gahan (Depeche Mode) is 64. Hockey Hall of Famer Steve Yzerman is 61. Rapper Ghostface Killah is 56. R&B singer Tamia (tuh-MEE'-ah) is 51. Actor Rosario Dawson is 47. TV personality Audrina Patridge is 41. Actor Grace Gummer is 40. Musician Shaboozey is 31. Actor Mary Mouser is 30. Singer-songwriter Kenya Grace is 28. Actor Cree Cicchino is 24.